

# LIVING JEWISH

חב"ד  
כל חודש לכל אזור  
1,056

## Tell Your Children

### 50 Years Ago and Right on Time

When a Chabad donor was blessed by the Rebbe for something fifty years down the line, he never could have imagined how the Rebbe's words would come to fruition so exactly at the right time.

The year was 5737 (1977), and the Rebbe was holding a farbrengen for Yud Bet Tammuz, marking 50 years since the release of the Rebbe Rayatz from Soviet imprisonment and exile. Chabad of Santa Monica was founded several years earlier by the legendary Chabad shliach Rabbi Avraham Levitansky and his wife Rebbetzin Levitansky.

#### First Permanent Home

For four years, they moved their Chabad activities from one rental space to another. In 5737, they purchased a small house that just barely fit their needs, and Santa Monica Chabad had its first permanent home.

"One of my father's dear friends and supporters then was a lovely man named Mr. Semelman", Rabbi Eli Levitansky, who today runs the operations at Chabad of Santa Monica, told Anash.org.

"He was very invested in the down payment and purchase of this modest, first home for the Chabad House, and he flew with my father to present the Chabad House key to the Rebbe."

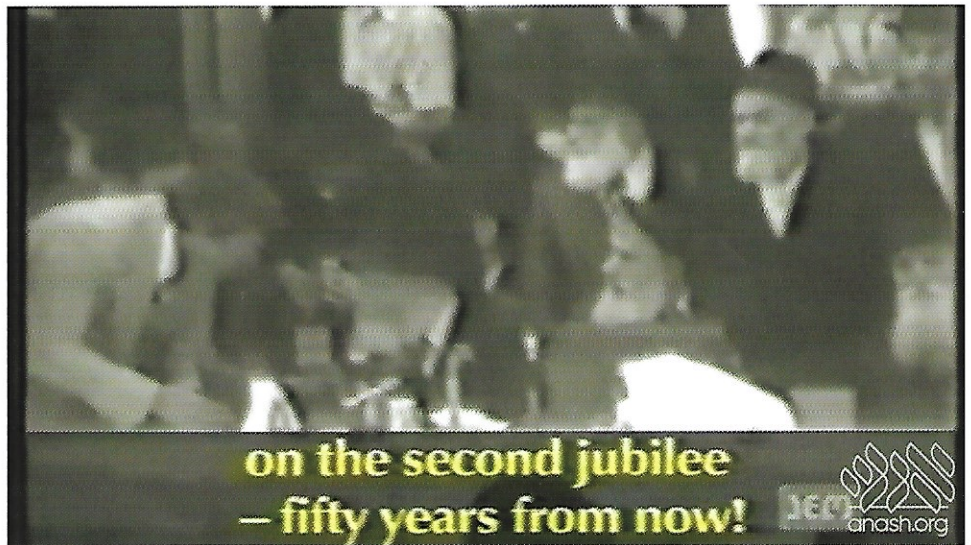
In between the Rebbe's talks, Mr. Semelman approached the Rebbe and presented him with the key to the new Chabad House they had just purchased.

"This is the key to the new Chabad House in Santa Monica, California, in honor of the Rebbe Rayatz's fiftieth year of Yud Bet Tammuz," he told the Rebbe.

The Rebbe accepted the key and replied, "may G-d Almighty bless you to make the same thing on the second jubilee, fifty years from now!"

The Rebbe then instructed him to say l'chaim, that "it should be a good start."

It was a short encounter that lasted half a minute and could have easily been forgotten in the flow of the farbrengen, were it not for the fact that it was caught on video.



Mr. Semelman receiving the Rebbe's blessing upon presenting the Chabad House key.

#### The Video Revealed

The video was eventually uncovered some 12 years ago, and the Levitansky family was amazed to discover the highly unusual blessing the Rebbe had given them at the time.

"We looked at each other in wonder—what a unique blessing!" Rabbi Levitansky recalls. "It was so unusual and so specific. Wow. And a 'wow' it remained for us."

Three years after the encounter at the farbrengen, they sold that property and purchased a bigger one, the current home of Chabad of Santa Monica.

Over the course of 46 years since then, the Shul on this property grew over time into a full-service Chabad House and Jewish center, expanding into a wide range of activities that have hosted everything from summer camp, Hebrew School, Shabbat and Festivals, Farbrengens, adult education, kapparot, and literally everything in between.

"For many, many years, we've been busting at the seams", Rabbi Levitansky says. "Even during my father's lifetime, he was looking for ways to expand, but the adjoining properties were not available, and we were already maximizing our space.

"And so we marched on, always improvising, always adjusting, making do, making

the best of it, and keeping an eye on the horizon, looking for opportunities."

#### Sudden Opportunity

As the Chabad House continued to grow, they set their sights on the property adjacent to the center. Acquiring it would allow them to expand their facilities and broaden their programming for the community. But the neighboring property owners refused to sell, and for years, the conversations went nowhere.

Until about two months ago. At the beginning of March, out of nowhere, the property next door to Chabad House came on the market. Having waited for this moment for so long, they pounced without delay and made an offer on the property.

*continued on page three*

#### Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	7:13	8:30
Tel Aviv	7:29	8:33
Haifa	7:21	8:34
Beer Sheva	7:28	8:30
New York	8:12	9:21



## The Ashes of the Red Heifer

The ashes of the Red Heifer prepared by Moshe were divided into three parts: one part was used to purify those who had become impure through contact with the dead; a second part was used to purify the kohanim who would prepare subsequent Red Heifers; and a third part was placed “for safekeeping.” What is the purpose of keeping ashes “for safekeeping”?

This can be understood in light of the eternal spiritual meaning of the mitzvah of the Red Heifer. The Torah states that in order to prepare the ashes of the heifer, the kohen must go outside the camp, and while he is engaged in burning the heifer and preparing its ashes, he himself becomes impure. From this we learn an eternal lesson in loving one’s fellow Jew and caring for another Jew.

### Going out to Save

When one sees a Jew in whom, outwardly, no connection to G-d is apparent, one might think that if he has fallen so low, he is already lost (G-d forbid). The Torah teaches otherwise: Moshe gave us the power to purify every Jew—even one who is in the lowest spiritual state, symbolized by the “impurity of the dead.”

The evil inclination may then argue further: even if we have the power to uplift and purify him, why are we obligated to descend to such a low level ourselves, where we might become spiritually affected? Must a person lower his own spiritual standing for the sake of another Jew?

### The Power of Moshe

The Torah answers: “This is the statute of the Torah.” This expresses the very essence of Torah—that one must dedicate oneself for another Jew and do good for him, to purify him, even if it requires going outside the camp and becoming, in some sense, “impure”.

And when a person nullifies himself for the sake of another Jew, he reveals the essence of his own soul.

However, there remains a concern: a person who sees success in influencing others might mistakenly think that the success comes from his own power—“my strength and the might of my hand that has accumulated this wealth for me.”

Therefore, Moshe left a special portion of ashes intended to sanctify the kohanim who would prepare future Red Heifers. This ensured that anyone purifying others would remember that he does so not by his own power, but by the power of Moshe.

## Not to Lose Oneself

Yet even this is not enough. A person might become so involved in public work and influencing others that he forgets about himself and his own spiritual state. For this purpose, Moshe set aside a third portion of ashes “for safekeeping.” A person must remember that he too may be susceptible to a form of “impurity of the dead,” G-d forbid, and therefore he also requires purification through the ashes of the Red Heifer.

This combination, devotion to helping others with awareness of one’s own spiritual condition, is the key innovation of Torah: the integration of both directions.

On one hand, one must act for others, as the verse says: “When you see a naked one, you shall clothe him”—when you see a Jew “naked” of mitzvot, you must ensure he performs mitzvot, puts on tefillin and wears tzitzit. On the other hand, the verse continues, “from your flesh you shall not hide.” One must remember that he too is “flesh”—and even coarse, physical flesh that requires soaking, salting, and washing.

This combination leads to true purification, culminating in the complete purification of the Redemption.

*(the Rebbe, Likkutei Sichot, volume 4)*

## From Our Sages



### Sacrifice for Torah

#### *The Body Resists*

“This is the law: if a man dies in a tent...” (Numbers 19:14). Reish Lakish said: “How do we know that the words of Torah endure only in one who ‘kills himself’ over it? As it is stated: ‘This is the law: if a man dies in a tent’” (Berachot 63a). This is because the body naturally resists matters of intellect and spirit. Therefore, a person must, as it were, “die” for the sake of Torah.

*(Maharal of Prague)*

#### *Putting the Ego to Death*

The words of Torah do not endure among the forceful and strong-willed, but among the humble—among those who “put themselves to death,” who “kill” their own power and self-importance.

*(Iturei Torah)*

#### *The World is as Though Dead*

Rabbi Ephraim Zalman Margolies had many business interests, but whenever he studied Torah he would shut himself in his room and give no attention to business matters. He would say, “a man dies in a tent” means that when a person sits and studies Torah, he should be like one who is “dead” to all worldly concerns.

#### *One Who Does Not Learn*

The Rebbe Rayatz said, “one who does not study Torah every day becomes coarse, ignorant, and harmful to the Jewish people.”

#### *Beacons of Light and a Source of Success*

Communal Torah classes in the synagogue are beacons of light and a source of success both materially and spiritually, for those who study and for their families.

*(the Rebbe)*

### Genuine Love

A Jew who had withdrawn from worldly matters and practiced much self-affliction and fasting came to Rabbi Shlomo Chaim of Koidanov and said:

“I do not understand how I am to fulfill the commandment, ‘love your fellow as yourself.’ After all, I hate and despise my own body—am I then supposed to hate the body of another as well?”

Rabbi Shlomo Chaim replied, “you hate your body because you have separated yourself from the world, practicing self-affliction and engaging in many fasts. But if you were not acting as such, you would love your body with genuine love.

“Therefore, another person—who is not acting as you and has not withdrawn from the world—you should love with true love, just as you would love yourself were you not an ascetic.”

This issue of Living Jewish is dedicated in memory of Izak Michel ben Eliezer Nota.

May his neshama have an aliyah.



## The Lesson of the Red Heifer

Jews who observe Torah and mitzvot often find themselves needing to explain the rationale behind the commandments. Some mitzvot are easier to explain, while others are beyond human understanding. In those cases we say: not everything is within our grasp. There are mitzvot that transcend our understanding, and we fulfill them in the spirit of: "I have decreed a statute, I have issued a decree; you have no permission to question it."

Naturally, we tend to feel more comfortable with mitzvot that can be understood. Our aspiration is to fulfill even the incomprehensible mitzvot with the same completeness and inner conviction. Chassidus, however, teaches that the aspiration should be the opposite:

"Human intellect says that one should observe the *chukim* (statutes) with the same vitality as one observes the *mishpatim* (rational laws). Just as *mishpatim* should be observed because reason obligates them, even had G-d not commanded them, so too *chukim* should be observed because they are G-d's command. But the truth is that *mishpatim* should be observed the same way *chukim* are observed, because the primary reason for observing all mitzvot is that they are G-d's command" (*Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim*, vol. 1, p. 84).

### Self-Nullification Before G-d

Chassidus demands that we fulfill every mitzvah—even the simplest and most logical one—not because we understand it, but because G-d commanded it. We must honor our parents not because reason dictates it, but because it is G-d's will. We must refrain from harming another person's property not because it is morally right or because society could not function otherwise, but because G-d commanded us not to do so.

When the Torah introduces the laws of the Red Heifer, it begins with the words: "This is the statute of the Torah." It does not say, "This is the statute of the Red Heifer" (as it says elsewhere, "this is the statute of the Passover," and similar expressions), but "the statute of the Torah."

This hints that the concept of a *chok* (statute)—performing a mitzvah solely because it is the Divine will, without understanding—should characterize the entire Torah, not merely the mitzvah of the Red Heifer. All mitzvot should be fulfilled out of nullification to G-d, not because we understand.

Of course, understanding is immensely valuable. A person identifies more deeply with what he understands, feels the significance of his actions, and performs them more completely. Nevertheless, Torah and mitzvot cannot be founded solely on understanding and logic.

Human intellect is highly flexible. Today a person understands the value of a mitzvah, and tomorrow he may reach a different conclusion.

### Faith in the Days of Moshiach

Therefore, Chassidus emphasizes *kabbalat ol*—acceptance of the Divine yoke—as the foundation of all Torah and mitzvot. A Chassidic saying states: "An intellectual who relies on his own understanding is more likely to err than one who acts out of acceptance of the yoke."

So too, the Rebbe explained, "things that today require faith will, in the days of Moshiach, be grasped through intellect, understanding, and comprehension. The faith of that time will be directed toward matters that are far more exalted—things of which today we have no conception whatsoever, not even at the level of faith."

## 50 Years Ago & Right on Time

*continued from page one:*

"This acquisition would truly change everything", Rabbi Levitansky explains. "We prayed our offer would be accepted. After some jostling and back and forth, our offer was accepted, baruch Hashem, and we entered into escrow."

Finally, Chabad of Santa Monica would have the adjacent property, the Chabad House would double in size, and open the door to a significant expansion of the Chabad House activities in the years ahead.

It was then that they recalled the video from fifty years prior: "May Hashem Almighty bless you to make the same thing on the second jubilee, fifty years from now!"

### Realization of the Blessing

"We were thunderstruck," Rabbi Levitansky told Anash.org. "We thought we knew what this purchase would mean — it would double the size of the Chabad House, provide outdoor space for children, and functional space to expand our work. We even knew it would make our father's dream come true.

"But we did not realize that it would also make the Rebbe's statement a reality!"

In an unbelievable chain of events, the closing came just as the beginning of the fiftieth year to when the Rebbe had given his blessing. The new Chabad House was to be bought at the beginning of the second jubilee of the Rebbe Rayatz's year of redemption.

"We feel incredibly connected to the Rebbe right now," Rabbi Levitansky said. "The Rebbe's holy blessing and open prophecy is coming true in these days, in our times, through our hands."

"To say that we are excited about this story would be a terrible understatement," he added. "There aren't really any words to describe our feelings at this time."

*Reprinted from Anash.org (to contribute to the new Chabad House, <https://charidy.com/ChabadSMonica26>)*

## Moshiach Now

### Dancing in the Streets

During the seven days of festivities following the wedding of the Rebbe Rashab in Elul 5635 [1875], the chassidim celebrated with indescribable joy. On one of those days, his father, the Rebbe Maharash, sat at his window and watched them dancing in the garden in dozens of circles. Turning to the two chassidim who stood next to him, he said: "See, my children, how chassidim are glad in the joy of a mitzvah. This is how Jews will dance in the streets when Moshiach comes!"

*Likkutei Dibburim (Kehot, English translation), reprinted from From Exile to Redemption with permission from Sichos in English*



Order Living Jewish — Simply scan the QR code to read online.  
Scroll down to order.

Order printed copies for distribution, available for pickup at your local Chabad House (in Israel) or a digital subscription (a PDF sent to your email).

To dedicate an issue of  
Living Jewish contact:  
[livingjewishweekly@gmail.com](mailto:livingjewishweekly@gmail.com)

## Resilience and Vision

Rabbi Shalom Pasternak's path to becoming a shliach and founding a yeshiva in Tzfat was not typical. Originally from Philadelphia and a graduate of Vassar College, his early years included a deep involvement in music, especially jazz piano. Alongside intellectual curiosity and artistic expression came a search for meaning that eventually led him to Torah learning, Chabad, and semicha.

After marrying Roni in 2002, the couple moved to Tzfat while the English-speaking community was developing. Rabbi Pasternak continued his Torah studies and pursued semicha while he and his family opened their home to students, visitors, and seekers.

In 2009, he founded Yeshiva Temimei Darech with the vision of creating a serious Torah environment for English-speaking students, honoring each student's strengths and journey.



Rabbi Pasternak never viewed creativity as separate from Torah life. At Tzfat's annual One Flame Lag B'Omer Festival, founded by Pasternak in 2018, he performs as pianist with the yeshiva's Kabbalah Dream Orchestra, sharing the stage with celebrated artists such as Nisim Black, Zusha, and Alex Clare. This year, the festival included a memorable moment when alumnus and Jewish recording artist Ari Lesser received his semicha certificate on stage.

Even through years shaped by war and uncertainty in northern Israel, Rabbi Pasternak continued building.

Today, that vision expands with a new in-person semicha program led by Rabbi Yaakov Goldstein, renowned posek and author, combining practical halacha and hands-on shi-mush to help train future Rabbis, educators, and community leaders.

To get in touch, call the Yeshiva at 0525326717

### Cooking Tip of the Week

**Chocolate Tehina Bars:** Mix 1 cup tehina, ½ cup coconut sugar, 2 eggs, ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder, ¼ cup spelt flour, and 1 tsp vanilla. Bake in a lined pan at 170°C for 22 minutes. Cool, cut, and enjoy. A hit!

Alizah Hochstead  
alihazh@hotmail.com

### Halacha Corner – Fish and Meat Pots

There is no need to have separate pots for fish and meat. While there is a danger to mix fish and meat together, plaitat kelim, the taste that remains in pots, is not a danger, and the same pot may be used for both fish and meat.

While there are those who are strict to designate separate pots for fish and meat, this is only a chumra, a stringency, and only lechatchila, in the first instance. After the fact, if fish was cooked in a meat pot or vice versa, all agree that there is really no problem.

A possible explanation for this chumra is that often it is difficult to clean a pot thoroughly, and it is possible for some fish or meat remnants to have remained in the pot. However, if the pot is absolutely clean, it seems like there would not be any problem to use the same pot for fish and subsequently for meat or the opposite.

Rav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, shlita, member of the Badatz of Crown Heights; One Minute Halacha, #19, reprinted from crownheightsconnect.com



**Question:** To what extent should parents get involved with children's marital issues?

**Answer:** This is an important and highly relevant question. Throughout a child's life, parents provide guidance, support, and encouragement. They comfort their children during difficult times, celebrate their successes, and help them navigate life's challenges. Guiding a child toward marriage is one of the most rewarding and emotional transitions a parent experiences. Even after marriage, many children continue to benefit from parental support as they learn to build a home.

At the same time, marriage changes the dynamic. There is now a spouse whose feelings and privacy must be considered. A spouse may feel uncomfortable knowing that personal marital matters are being shared with parents. Even well-intentioned advice can sometimes create tension or be perceived as taking sides. Thus, parents should approach these situations with sensitivity and caution.

Parents often possess wisdom gained through life experience. It is healthy to keep a "finger on the pulse" by periodically checking in and noticing when a child seems troubled. What appears catastrophic to a newly married child may, in fact, be a normal adjustment. A calm and reassuring perspective can help a child recognize that differences, misunderstandings, and occasional rough patches are often part of the process of learning to live together.

However, parents should also be aware of the difference between normal marital friction and abuse. While all couples experience disagreements, abuse can involve patterns of control and intimidation; manipulative behaviors designed to assert dominance and diminish the victim's sense of self-worth. While we often think of abuse as physical, emotional abuse is real and its impact can be profound and lasting. If a parent suspects that abuse may be present, it is wise to seek guidance from a qualified professional.

In conclusion, parents should avoid excessive interference while remaining attentive and supportive. A word of encouragement or perspective can be helpful. When concerns about abuse arise, professional guidance is essential to determine the best course of action.

Aharon Schmidt, relationship and shidduchim coaching: [aharonschmidt@gmail.com](mailto:aharonschmidt@gmail.com) / [www.youtube.com/@aharonschmidt](http://www.youtube.com/@aharonschmidt). Send questions to this email.

\*Five-week marriage seminar for men beginning the 5th of Elul (August 18th). Contact [aharonschmidt@gmail.com](mailto:aharonschmidt@gmail.com) for details.



Real service, in real English - That's why Anglos in Israel choose TCS Telecom!



Call us for help: 02-655-0332 or  
From US: 1-866-929-5012

