

Chabad of Venice & North Port

Shalom Times

A LITTLE NOSH FOR THE SOUL | HIGH HOLIDAYS 5783



INSIDE: FULL GUIDE FOR A SWEET NEW YEAR

EXPANSION OF CHABAD OF VENICE

NEW! HEBREW SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

WHAT CHABAD HAS MEANT TO ME



Use this QR code to
find a High Holiday
service near you!



Shalom!



Shalom Times

is published by
Chabad of Venice & North Port
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Venice, FL 34293
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The Shalom Times is published four
times a year before the Jewish Holidays.

To advertise in the magazine, please
contact info@chabadofvenice.com
or call 941-493-2770.

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DEDICATED TO THE LOVE AND INSPIRATION OF THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

His personal devotion to each and every
individual Human as well as his dedication to
G-d and His Torah, continue to inspire the
Chabad center here in Venice.



Welcome to our High Holiday edition of the Sholom Times! Consider this our oversized Rosh Hashanah greeting card, with hand-written wishes for a sweet and happy New Year. We hope you enjoy this edition which explores the profound meaning behind many of the celebrations taking place throughout this New Year.

These days offer so many opportunities to connect to our roots and with one another. That's why we're thrilled to offer a wide variety of events throughout the next two months: sure to inspire and enliven.

First and foremost, the **High Holidays** - Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, are going to be days to remember. We're excited to welcome our guest cantor, Moshe Pekkar, leading the prayers, and our new associate Rabbi, Yosef Buchman, assisting the Russian speaking audience. In addition to services, for the first evening of Rosh Hashana, there will be a holiday dinner, where all of us will be able to sit together and welcome the new year in good spirit.

After bringing us together in awe during those holy days, the calendar will then encircle us with wooden walls and a bamboo roof for the holiday of **Sukkot** - the holiday of joy! At Chabad of Venice, our motto is 'Judaism. Done Joyfully'; therefore, it should come as no surprise that we hold these days especially dear.

Sukkot Under the Stars is our annual outdoor celebration, where friends and family gather together, under the embrace of the sukkah - sharing laughs, drinks, and a holiday meal. Our **Klezmer Sukkah** Celebration transports each and every one to a world of smiles and laughter. With The Yiddish Cowboys Klezmer band, subs & soup, and shaking of the lulav and etrog, it's sure to be a blast! For the little ones, there will be a Sukkah Time Machine offering special games and sensory experiences that will re-enact the Jewish people's miraculous travels through the desert. Then, as a grand finale to the holiday season, **Simchat Torah** (the Joy of the Torah) will be held in a fashion appropriate to its name: with friends in shul, Torah in hands, and feet in full swing!

Once we conclude these special days, having gleaned a deeper appreciation for Judaism, we begin the project of infusing that excitement into our everyday life. It's to that end that we are thrilled to launch a brand new initiative - **The Hebrew School for Adults**. Beginning in November, everyone will be able to gain an understanding for the foundations of Judaism in a hands-on, fun exploration of our values, ideals, and wisdom. See article on page 6 for more information.

We're counting the days until we hear the shofar blow, inaugurating this incredible fall season. Until then, we wish for you and yours to be sealed in the book of life, happiness, and health.

Rabbi Sholom & Chaya Rivka Schmerling

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

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Free Pickup. For more information contact us.

PLANNED GIVING:

Consider a lasting legacy by including Chabad of Venice in your will.



We are fully responsibly to raise our own budget and are supported by individuals that care.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Chabad of Venice & North Port is a tax-exempt IRS-registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
All donations of real estate can provide you with the maximum tax benefits allowed by law.

B"H

EXPERIENCE

HIGH HOLIDAYS

HIGH HOLIDAY SERVICES WITH MEANING AND MELODY!

No Affiliation Necessary / Traditional and Inspirational Services

Warm and Friendly Atmosphere / Special Children's Program & Service

ROSH HASHANA EVE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

6:00 pm Evening Services

7:00 pm Rosh Hashanah Dinner (RSVP required)

ROSH HASHANA DAY I

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

9:30 Shacharit

10:30 Main Service

11:00 Children's Program

11:45 Shofar Sounding

1:30 Buffet Kiddush Luncheon

6:00 pm Family Service (30min) Shofar & Tashlich

ROSH HASHANA DAY II

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 9:30

Shacharit

10:30 Main Service

11:45 Shofar Sounding

1:30 Buffet Kiddush Luncheon

YOM KIPPUR EVE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4

7:00 Kol Nidrei

YOM KIPPUR DAY

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5

9:00 am Shacharit

11:00 Main Service

11:30-12:30 Children's Program

12:00 Yizkor Memorial Service

5:00 Second Yizkor Service

5:30 Mincha

6:30 Neila Closing & Shofar Blowing

Followed by Buffet Break-Fast

SUKKOT (DAILY MINYAN 10:00AM)

Sun, Oct 9. 7:00pm Sukkot under the Stars

Wed, Oct 12. 5:00pm Live **Klezmer** Celebration

SHMINI ATZERET & SIMCHAT TORAH

Sun, Oct 16. Maariv 7:00 pm

Mon, Oct 17. Shacharit 10:00 am - 12:00pm Yizkor

Mon, Oct 17. 7:30pm Simchat Torah Celebration

Tue, Oct 18. 10:00am Torah Completion



CANTOR MOSHE PEKKAR
OUR TALENTED CHAZZAN FOR
THE HIGH HOLIDAYS



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LOVINGLY LEADING AND
INSPIRING OUR COMMUNITY



RABBI YOSEF BUCHMAN
RUSSIAN-SPEAKING RABBI
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There is NO CHARGE for seats

Your donation is greatly appreciated

RSVP REQUIRED

www.ChabadofVenice.com/HH22

Or Call: 941.493.2770

EXPANSION OF CHABAD OF VENICE

As Florida residents have seen, in the past few years, our state has become the top moving destination for Americans: many looking for a peaceful place to raise their children, and others are looking for a place to enjoy their retirement years. This population growth has affected many areas, from real estate to restaurants and, of course, the Jewish community as well.

Over the 17 years at Chabad of Venice, we've strived to create a home for each Jew in our area by offering a gamut of programs, including adult education classes, the Hebrew School of the Arts, the Smiles on Seniors program for the elderly, among many other initiatives.

However, with dozens of new families moving to the area, and a mission to ensure that every Jew - native or new arrival - is provided for in a loving and non-judgemental fashion, we couldn't rest on our laurels and keep the status quo.

Instead, to grow in measure with our incredible community, we've brought an additional couple to the area! Late this year, our community welcomed Rabbi Yosef and Hadassa Buchman to the Chabad of Venice family. The couple has been assisting with the current programming, and expanding the youth and teen programming, as well as the Russian-speaking activities. (Both Yosef and Hadassa are native speakers).

Besides these roles, Rabbi Yosef has been leading additional classes and learning individually with members of the community. His wife Hadassa will also take on the role as coordinator for Chabad's proud team of volunteers throughout their many events and activities.

We are thrilled to have them on board, and are truly grateful to all our donors and partners that transformed their arrival from dream to reality.

The pair have had an incredible journey to Venice. Hadassa was born in Donetsk, Ukraine, and later moved to Kiev before finally landing in Machon L'Yahadus in Brooklyn, NY. After concluding her studies there, she met Yosef, a Rabbinic student with a similar Russian background. They chose to settle in Morristown, New Jersey, at the Rabbinical College of America, where Yosef taught and earned his rabbinic certification (smicha).

Now they've arrived in Venice, together with their two-year-old daughter Brocha and eight-month-old son Sholom Ber. The parents of Rabbi Yosef are immigrants from the former Soviet Union and are proud members of Chabad of Venice.

Hadassa's parents had to flee Ukraine due to the conflict, and have also arrived in our community, just a few weeks before Rosh Hashana.

Welcome, Rabbi Yosef and Hadassah, to Venice!



[r-l] Rabbi Yosef, Brocha, Sholom Ber, Haddassa.

MM MARC MILES
— ATTORNEY AT LAW —

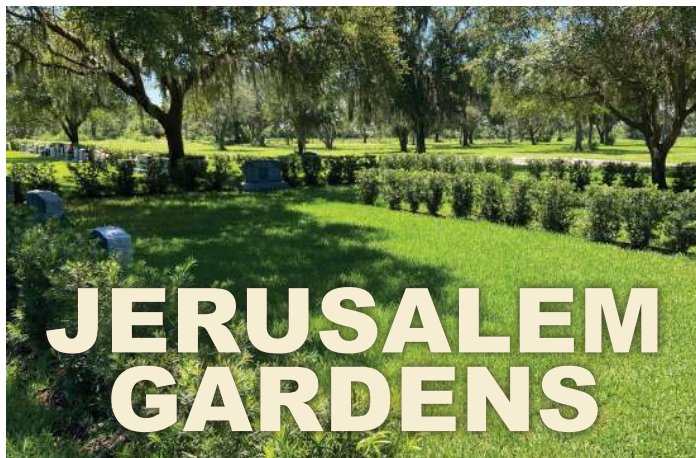
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JERUSALEM GARDENS

We are pleased to announce that Chabad of Venice has acquired its very own Cemetery "Jerusalem Gardens" located at Venice Memorial Gardens, 1950 Center Rd.

We have partnered with Farley Funeral Homes to provide a full Jewish funeral service, including Chevra Kadisha - The Jewish Burial Society.

For Cemetery Burial Spaces & Chevrah call Chabad: (941) 493-2770

For Farley Funeral Home call
Venice: (941) 488-2291
North Port: (941) 426-2880

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Oren Z. Plous
MD, FACS

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Dr. Plous is a Diplomat of the American Board of Ophthalmology and Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. Eminently qualified, notably caring about your vision.

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- RETINAL TEARS/DETACHMENTS
- ALL OTHER CONDITIONS OF THE RETINA AND VITREOUS



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Oren Z. Plous MD FACS

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BRAND NEW!

Hebrew School for Adults!

Learn Hebrew, Study Torah and Jewish history!
with Lunch

TUESDAYS AT 12:00 pm



Hebrew School for Adults

On average, a person who spends a week at Chabad of Venice will walk away with a bagel and lox, a few new life-long friends, and a handful of new enlightening ideas. The first two are gained at our Shabbos, holiday, and social events; however, the latter is gleaned from a variety of different classes offered at Chabad.

- Our **9:30 am Shabbos** class delves into the interesting ideas found in the weekly Torah portion.
- **Monday's 10:30 am Tanya** / Kabbalah class gives insight into the Torah's mystical dimension.
- On **Tuesdays at 10 am**, Chaya Rivka's Women's Book Club gives everyone the Jewish lens into today's modern world.

These classes were begun and have continued because of the incredible thirst for knowledge that this community has. However, one request that we receive from attendees of each class, is for an opportunity to learn the basics of Judaism; to have an understanding of the building blocks from which the parshah, kabbalah, and Torah as a whole are built. "What's in a mezuzah?" "How am I supposed to pray?" "What is the meaning of shabbat candles?" These questions haven't found a home in any particular class we've offered, but that's about to change.

Beginning November 1st, we're truly excited to begin the **Hebrew School for Adults**, to take place on **Tuesdays from 12 - 1 pm**. During this special hour, Judaism 101 will be explained, over lunch and through casual discussion. Attendees will gain, week by week, genuine understanding of the concepts that form the cornerstones of our people's heritage - like holiday customs, meaning behind prayers, and Jewish history.

Our goal is that the program live up to its name, and offer a grounded, practical education to those who were not privileged to have a Jewish education in their youth, as well as to those who did attend a Hebrew school, but today have lost clarity on the ideas.

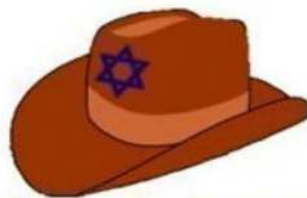
Come, bring a friend, and learn at the school your children and grandchildren can't get enough of!

To sign up: www.chabadofvenice.com/adult or call 941.493.2770

KLEZMER IN THE SUKKAH

WED OCT 12, 5:30 PM
CHABAD OF VENICE 21560 ANGELA LN, VENICE

\$18 advance -\$25 at Door. Kids Free



**YIDDISH
COWBOYS**



Michael Drapkin - Clarinet, Rebecca Heintz - Accordion
Isaac Mingus - Bass Aaron Nix - Drums

Live Klezmer Music - Lulov

Subs & Deli Food - Kids Program

Tickets: www.chabadofvenice.com/klezmer

941-493-2770



**JOIN US FOR A FASCINATING AND
THOUGHT PROVOKING LECTURE:**

CREMATION OR BURIAL?

More and more people today are choosing cremation, citing reasons such as the environment, cost, mobility and discomfort with decomposition. Yet throughout the millenia, traditional Judaism has insisted on burial of the dead. WHY? This fascinating, informative and friendly talk is getting people thinking about the issue in a whole new way.

Get the information you need to make what potentially is the last decision you may ever make!



Join the internationally renowned speaker and acclaimed author **Doron Kornbluth** to learn the Jewish perspective, traditions, and laws pertaining to this vital topic in Jewish life.

**IN PERSON at
CHABAD OF VENICE
MONDAY, OCT 24 AT 12:00 PM**

\$10 LUNCH IS SERVED

www.chabadofvenice.com/doron



Soup and Salad ^{B"H} in the Sukkah

Sunday, October 9
7:00 PM
Chabad of Venice
Sukkah
Free of Charge

Celebrate together
1st Night of Sukkot
while enjoying soup
and salads in the
Sukkah!

CHABAD
VENICE

^{B"H}
CHABAD OF VENICE

SIMCHAT TORAH

celebration

MON, OCT 17 AT 7:30PM

ALL ARE WELCOME!


Bring the entire family
to celebrate the Torah!

FREE OF CHARGE



CTEEN ♥ CARES? ^{ב"ה}

WHAT *is* CTEEN




The Chabad teen club is for teens in 8th-12th Grade who are looking to make a difference in our community in a warm, friendly, exciting and stress-free environment. - Create strong Jewish friendships • Gain community service experiences (SSL eligible) • Enjoy fun themed refreshments

As the fastest growing Jewish Teen Network in the world, CTeen of Venice believes in the power of youth—transforming the teen years into a time of leadership, purpose and self discovery.

Our Venice chapter is part of the International CTeen community, which is 30,000+ strong worldwide. In addition to our own events, we will partner with other Chapters, as well as join the International CTeen Shabbaton in New York City.

For teens, this inspires a greater sense of pride and belonging with the global Jewish youth community.



FOR INFO & TO JOIN GO TO WWW.CHABADOFVENICE.COM/CTEEN

ב"ה

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INSPIRING JUDAISM THROUGH THE UNIVERSAL
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ART

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www.chabadofvenice.com/chs

YOU'RE A MASTER PIECE

A BROKEN TEENAGE BOY LEARNS A LIFE
LESSON ABOUT ART FROM THE REBBE
AND QUICKLY DISCOVERS THAT HIS
IMPERFECTIONS CREATED THE MOST
PERFECT, MOST VALUABLE MASTERPIECE.

Suffering from typical adolescent angst, a teenage boy once went to the Rebbe for advice. He asked the Rebbe: How come G-d didn't just create us as angels? If He had, we would be perfect and wouldn't make mistakes and create problems.

The Rebbe explained that G-d doesn't want us to be perfect; He wants us to be unique individuals who grow and learn from our experiences and mistakes. Then, the Rebbe asked the boy if he understood the difference between a photograph and a portrait.

"You take a picture when you want to capture a perfect replica of something you see. A portrait, on the other hand, is always filled with inaccuracies. It can never be a perfect reproduction of something like a photograph can. If anything, the better the portrait, the more creative license that went into it to bring out the meaning, color, and beauty that does not always exist in the surface look."

That's why portraits can sell for millions. People pay for the artwork because it is a reflection not only of the subject but of the artist. The Rebbe explained that angels are G-d's photographs. We, however, are G-d's portraits.



SARA ESTHER CRISPE

travels the world as a motivational speaker, is a relationships coach, serves as the Chief Content Creator for the wellness company, Opyrus.com, and is the Co-Director of the educational non-profit, Interinclusion.org. A mother of four, she lives with her husband in Danby, Vermont where they run Jewish experiential retreats.

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WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY

SARA ESTHER CRISPE

HOW CAN WE CREATE A HEALTHY COMMUNITY? HOW DO WE JOIN TOGETHER AND CONNECT WITH PEOPLE SO DIFFERENT FROM OURSELVES? AS SARA ESTHER CRISPE EXPLAINS, IT'S A JOURNEY OF SELF-REFLECTION AND ACCEPTANCE. JOIN HER AS SHE LEADS US THROUGH THIS PROCESS

The Torah portion read the Shabbat prior to Rosh Hashana, Nitzavim, begins:

"You are all standing this day before the L-rd, your G-d: the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officers—every person of Israel."

Prior to beginning the year from anew, we gather together as a group, as a community. One term for "community" is *tzibbur*, and it refers to piling and amassing diverse objects, assembling together different things.

As Elias Canetti, Jewish Nobel Prize winner for Literature, says: "Jews are different from other people, but in reality, they are most different from each other," (*Crowds and Power*).

The 17th-century Kabbalist, Rabbi Nathan Nata Shapiro of Krakow, explains in his work *Megaleh Amukot* that the word for "community," *tzibur*, should be understood as an acronym:

צ Tzaddik: Tzaddikim: Righteous

ב Beit: Beinoni: Intermediary

ו Vav: And

ל Reish: Rasha: Not So Righteous

To have a community, all categories must coexist.

It's easy to want to forget those who we don't feel are worthy of our respect, those we don't feel deserve to be included. Yet this is our reminder that everyone is part of our community, and no one can be left out.

And that is true about ourselves as well. We might categorize ourselves as fitting into one of these three categories, and then place another in a different box, but in truth, I am all three, and you are all three. Within each and every one of us exists the righteous dimension, the intermediary part, and the not-so-

righteous aspects.

The letter that binds the righteous and intermediary with the not-so-righteous is the letter "Vav." The letter itself is also a word meaning "hook" and a conjunction in Hebrew grammar. But more so, the Vav is known as *Vav Hahipuch*, a transformative letter that can be used to change the future to past and the past to future. By having the righteous connected to the intermediary and the not-so-righteous, both of them can be rectified and transformed to become righteous! That is the power of true connection.

But how do we connect to someone or something so different from ourselves?

The numerical equivalent of the word *tzibbur* is equal to that for the word *rachamim* = 298. *Rachamim* means "empathy," and empathy is the key in order to truly connect. Empathy is not feeling sorry for the pain of the other, it is actually feeling the pain of the other.

Beautifully, we see that the root of *rachamim* is *rechem*, which means "womb." When we feel that the other is a part of ourselves, we can experience compassion and empathy, and be open to working through issues. If you are told that the baby within your womb has a problem, it is not the baby's problem, it is *your* problem, and you love your baby and will do whatever you need to do to solve that problem.

A community is a united group, an empathetic group, and one where each and every individual can recognize the strengths and weaknesses in themselves and accept those in the other so that we can grow, develop and rectify ourselves and the world around us. When we approach ourselves and others with love, that is when we can experience transformation.

This is why we read this statement, of how we all stand together before our Creator, right before Rosh Hashanah. He knows we are not angels, because He didn't create us to be perfect. But He did create us with the ability to connect with others and become better people. For, after all, a community is comprised of a diverse group of individuals, each with his or her own unique talents and abilities, and each an essential part of the whole.

What's new about the JEWISH NEW YEAR?



I love the mad rush leading up to the High Holidays, starting with my guest list and food prep that always includes a last-minute search for the head of a fish. Rosh Hashanah is that time of year when I see old friends at the service and try to figure out how to build my sukkah. To me, the Jewish New Year is a beautiful season that envelops you like a warm hug from your Jewishness.

This year made me ponder what exactly is "new" about the Jewish New Year? People often say that Rosh Hashanah marks the birthday of the world. But according to the Torah, the world was "born" six days before the first Rosh Hashanah. So apparently, plenty of action was happening on earth before the last day of Creation, when Adam and Eve came about.

In fact, the Torah tells us that the oceans and rivers were loudly swimming with fish, and colorful wildlife roamed freely through mountains and hills, drinking the clean spring water. And I'm sure they enjoyed the gorgeous sunsets too. Yet, that wasn't enough, we had to wait for Adam and Eve to come along before we celebrated a New Year.

If you think about it, there are four primary life forms, known philosophically as the "Four Kingdoms," ranging from inanimate rocks and water to the growing trees and vegetables to the animal kingdom and human life. Interestingly enough, the Rebbe, in a 1953 letter, points out that in a world made of mineral, vegetative, animal, and human life, the timing of the Jewish New Year is precisely on the day humanity was created. Only at the birth of society does the Prophet pronounce, "This is the day of the beginning of Thy works!"

The Rebbe sees the "Four Kingdoms" as a compelling idea because

▼ ▼ *The real celebration can only start
once your
humanity is born* ▼ ▼

we all have the four within us. We all journey from inanimate life to the growth stages and wild, animated existence, but the lesson is that the real celebration can only start once your humanity is born.

In other words, I could drive a nice car or eat an expensive steak, but the real party will only start once I discover my human spiritual purpose. If you look at the calendar date for Rosh Hashanah, it's clear that the world itself sees the "mentsch" with a higher purpose as the real cause for celebration.

This idea can be tremendously helpful if you ever experience chaos or get so busy that you lose focus. That's because we not only live in a world made of the "Four Kingdoms," we all go through the kingdoms daily. Things like push-ups, eating oatmeal with fresh blueberries, and filling the car with gas, for example, only involve mineral, vegetative, and animal life. But when we pray, study, and help others, we quickly discover the true humanity in our day.

It all started 5783 years ago on the sixth day of Creation when G-d created Adam and Eve. When they were "born," Adam and Eve immediately proclaimed: "Come, let us worship, bow down and kneel before G-d our Maker." At that moment, they inspired the whole universe to work towards a higher purpose of creating an abode for the Divine on earth. At that moment, the human ability to serve a higher power uplifted, engaged, and ultimately allowed everything around them to click.

Adam and Eve demonstrated that our purpose and mission to make the world an abode for the Divine is how the "four kingdoms" seamlessly merge into one. The fragmented parts of our lives find wholesomeness specifically through our ultimate purpose. That was the first Rosh Hashanah. Happy New Year!

(Based on a 1953 Rosh Hashanah message from the Rebbe)

High Holidays Reservations & Yizkor Memorial Book

Please send form back, or go online to
www.chabadofvenice.com/hh22

Thank you for the High Holidays Services Information. I/We will attend:

ROSH HASHANA

- ☐ Sun, Sept 25th. Evening Services 6:00pm
- ☐ Sun, Sept 25th. Holiday Dinner 7:00pm
- ☐ Mon, Sept 26th. Rosh Hashana Day 1
- ☐ Mon, Short Shofar & Tashlich 6:00pm
- ☐ Tues, Sept 27th. Rosh Hashana Day 2

YOM KIPPUR

- ☐ Tue, Oct 4th. Kol Nidrei 7:00pm
- ☐ Wed, Oct 5th. Main Services 10:00am
- ☐ Wed, Oct 5th. 1st Yizkor 12:00pm
- ☐ Wed, Oct 5th. 2nd Yizkor 5:00pm
- ☐ Wed, Oct 5th. Neila Closing Service 6:30pm

Spiritual Seats:

For those who will be unable to attend Services in person; we are offering you the option to still be part of our Service. Via Spiritual Seats, the Rabbi will include your names in the prayers thereby giving you a sense of belonging and the powerful Divine merit of Holiday attendance.

☐ Please pray for me and my family. Feel free to share any names or requests:

Rosh Hashanah Dinner to welcome in the New Year of 5783!

Enjoy the taste and traditions of Rosh Hashanah. Celebrate with an elegant holiday dinner with family, friends and community, spiced with spirit, song and meaningful insights. Sunday, September 25 at 7:00 pm (service at 6:00 pm)

☐ Adult: \$50 | ☐ Child: \$20 (3-12)

Dinner Sponsorship Opportunities:

☐ Bronze Sponsor: \$360 (Includes one seat) | ☐ Silver Sponsor: \$500 (Includes 2 seats)

☐ Gold Sponsor: \$1000 (Includes 2 seats)

High Holiday Donation:

Chabad of Venice offers High Holiday services at no charge to the community. As always, our services are without charge and participation is voluntary. In light of the increased costs we appreciate your financial participation.

___\$54 ___\$100 ___\$180 ___\$360 ___\$540 ___\$1000 ___\$3600 ___\$5000 Other \$_____

Add \$_____ for Yizkor Booklet Entry (Form on other side)

Please order my own: ___ Talis \$75. ___ Kittel \$75 (Yom Kippur White Robe) ___ Lulav & Etrog Set for Sukkot \$50 (set)

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Address: _____

City, State & Zip Code: _____ Email: _____ Total: \$_____

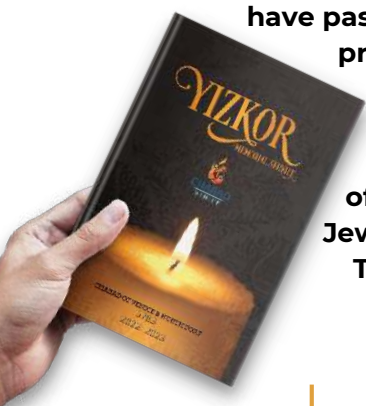
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Please make checks payable to:
Chabad of Venice & North Port, 21560 Angela Ln, Venice FL 34293

Yizkor Book Entry Form
On the other side



The Yizkor prayers are said in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur, and the last day of each of the Festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. In these prayers, we ask G-d to remember the souls of family and friends who have passed on. Attending a Yizkor service, and/or giving Tzedakah in advance of Yizkor, provides us with a special opportunity to connect with our loved ones.



We can ensure that your loved ones are remembered at these four times. By inscribing your loved ones in the Yizkor Book, we will announce their name as a part of the Keil Malei prayer at each of the four Yizkor services throughout the coming Jewish year of 5783. To participate, please fill out the form below.

Name	Hebrew Name	Father's Hebrew Name	Relationship (exp. father)	Date of Passing (optional)



☐ Yizkor Book Entry: \$18 per name (free for Chabad Members)



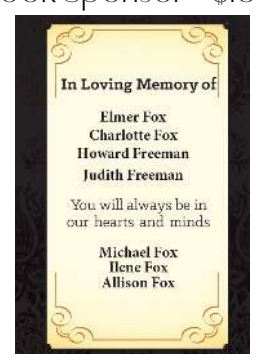
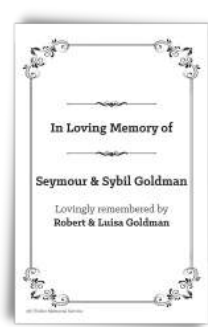
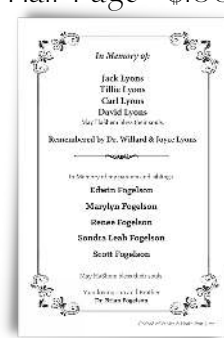
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Are You Ready for the Family Reunion?

By Ben Sherman

There was a time when all Jews got together in Jerusalem for the largest family reunion of its kind. Surely it was the most talked about convention of its time, where royalty would be seen and heard, top military officials would be present, and everyone who was anyone was there, really. It was a massive convention all about being Jewish. Can you imagine the type of Jewish pride felt at that event? People must have gone home pumped to be a part of the holiest nation on earth with a mission so vital the world itself was depending on it.

The idea for this event is actually a commandment in the Torah and it's called Hakhel.

WHAT IS HAKHEL?

In Temple times, the entire Jewish family would ascend upon Jerusalem, as the Jewish king would read out loud selected passages of the Torah. The Torah instructs us to basically recreate the experience of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai. This mega event would be held on Sukkot while the visitors had already come from all over Israel to partake in the festivals. Afterwards, the crowds would disperse and go back to their homes throughout the land, having revitalized their reverence for being Jewish.

How often were these reunions called for? Just like there is a weekly cycle of workdays followed by a Shabbat, there is a seven year cycle where the Torah commands us to let our fields rest and to celebrate a shmita or sabbatical year. At the conclusion of the seventh year, there

is a biblical mandate for the Jews to converge on Jerusalem to fulfill the mitzvah of Hakhel.

5783 IS THE YEAR OF HAKHEL

Hakhel literally means to gather together. Sadly, once the Temple was destroyed the actual Hakhel ceremony in Jerusalem was suspended for the duration of the present exile.

The idea and commandment of Hakhel is singled out in Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 612) as "a strong pillar and [source of] great honor for our religion." And like all other mitzvot, its spiritual content applies at all times and at all places. And it's Hakhel this year! 5783 comes right after a sabbatical year in Israel.

Jewish Unity and Jewish observance could always use a boost, and we can use this year to gather our friends and neighbors to recommit to our mission given to us at Sinai.

Although the historic Hakhel was observed on one day in the holiday of Sukkot, the concept applies throughout the year, and the entire year is known as the Hakhel year.

Likewise with the jubilee (Yovel) that was celebrated every fifty years, when bondmen returned to the freedom of their homes and fields were restored to their original owners. The entire year is called Yovel even though it centered around one high moment — the sounding of the Shofar on Yom Kippur.

Since the purpose of Hakhel is not the assembly in itself, but rather the height-

ened awe of G-d that results from it thereafter, the whole of that year is permeated with the spirit of Hakhel.

You can celebrate Hakhel by making mini family reunions. Why not start with your own family or just invite friends and neighbors. Think of it as a year of getting together. A year of Jewish unity. It's our year to reach out and recharge. 🍷

Looking for ways to celebrate Hakhel? Try some of these easy-to-do ideas:

10 WAYS TO HAKHEL:

1. Invite friends and family over for a Havdalah service.
2. Go online and do research about your favorite mitzvah and invite friends over to discuss.
3. Host a kosher wine tasting and talk about being Jewish.
4. Host a dinner party and talk about the blessings for food.
5. Invite friends over for Jewish Story Night and read to adults or kids.
6. Call an old friend for a virtual reunion.
7. Ask everyone to update their Facebook status with a mitzvah they plan to do.
8. Take group photo with a hand drawn "Hakhel" poster and tag your friends.
9. Create a hashtag #Hakhel for your events.
10. Look for a Hakhel event near you and attend.

Holiday Basics

Your Guide to a Sweet New Year

What's in the name?: Rosh Hashanah (Head of the Year). The Kabbalists teach that, what your brain is to your body, Rosh Hashanah is to the year. It's the Head of the Year. It's the nerve center of the year. So what happens on Rosh Hashanah impacts the entire year.

AKA: Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance) in our prayers, blessing at candle lighting, and in the Kidush.

Observance: Hear the Shofar. The ram's horn, the Shofar, was used to warn people of danger or call them to return, regroup, and also coronate kings. The Shofar was heard at Mount Sinai, and the Shofar will herald the arrival of Moshiach. On Rosh Hashanah make sure to hear the Shofar on both days (unless one day is Shabbat).

Edible Traditions: Eat apple dipped in honey on the first night to symbolize our desire for a sweet year. (See blessing in Machzor page 46.) We have a head of a fish to symbolize our desire to be at the "head of the class" this year. Pomegranates symbolize our wish for a year full of mitzvot and good deeds as a pomegranate is filled with seeds. Eat a new fruit on the second night and recite the Shehecheyanu blessing. (See Machzor page 46)

What is Tashlich?: On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, a special prayer is said near a body of water with fish in it. Water is a symbol of Divine kindness. Fish symbolizes an ever-open eye, making it the perfect place to pray for Divine mercy. (See Machzor page 291.)



Rosh Hashanah
Sept. 25-27



Yom Kippur
Oct 4-5

Definition: Yom Kippur means "Day of Atonement." Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year.

The 5 Don'ts: 1) Abstain from food and drink. 2) Do not wash your body. 3) Do not anoint your body with creams or lotions. 3) Do not wear leather footwear. 5) Abstain from marital relations.

How We Prep: In the early morning hours before Yom Kippur, we take a fish, or chicken, or money and give it to charity in the Kaparot ceremony. (See Kehot's Machzor for Yom Kippur, page 2.) Request and receive a slice of honey cake. Should you ever need to ask for anything this year, let it be for this piece of cake. Eat a festive meal, immerse in a mikvah, and give extra charity. In the late afternoon, we eat the pre-fast meal. Ask your parents for a blessing, bless your children, and light a memorial candle (if applicable). Girls and women light candles 18 minutes before sunset.

What To Wear: We wear white as a sign of purity. In addition, men wear a tallit during the Kol Nidrei and Yom Kippur eve service.

Historical background: Sukkot means "Huts." The Jews enjoyed the protection of the miraculous "clouds of glory" as they traversed the Sinai Desert following the Exodus. Therefore, G-d commanded us to dwell in a Sukkah for the duration of Sukkot (on the Jewish calendar Tishrei 15-21).

AKA: Z'man Simchateinu (The Time of Rejoicing). All holidays are joyous. However, Sukkot is the only holiday called "The Time of your Rejoicing."

Observance: Eat all your meals in the Sukkah hut, and otherwise regard it as your home. **SHAKE:** Take the Four Kinds: a) an Etrog (citron), b) a Lulav (palm frond), c) three Hadassim (myrtle twigs), and d) two Aravot (willow twigs). On each day of the festival (besides Shabbat), we recite a blessing bringing them together in our hands, and wave them in all six directions: right, left, forward, up, down, and backward. Taking the Four Kinds is also known as "Shaking the Lulav." For instructions, visit www.JewishNewYear.com.

Chol Hamoed: (Literally, "the weekday of the holiday") refers to the "intermediate period" of the festivals (Tishrei 17-20). We eat in the Sukkah, shake the Lulav, drink wine and rejoice, but work is permitted.

Hoshana Rabbah: Great Salvation (Tishrei 21) is the seventh day of Sukkot, and it closes the period of Divine judgment that began on Rosh Hashanah. On this day, we encircle the Bimah (synagogue reading table) seven times while holding the Four Kinds. We also take a bundle of five willow branches and beat them against the ground after the Hakafof ceremony.



SUKKOT
Oct. 9-16

For more details on the High Holidays
visit www.JewishNewYear.com



shmini Atzret/simchat Torah
Oct. 16-18

Shemini Atzeret: Literally The Eighth (Day) of Restriction (Tishrei 22-23), is a biblical festival that comes right after the seven days of Sukkot, which is how it got its name, "The Eighth Day." It is a day of unbridled joy, surpassing even the joy of Sukkot.

Israel vs. Diaspora: In the Diaspora, Shemini Atzeret is a two-day holiday. The second day is known as Simchat Torah. In Israel, Shemini Atzeret is a one-day holiday (which includes Simchat Torah).

How to Celebrate?: Shemini Atzeret is a biblical holiday, with candle lighting 18 minutes before sundown and a festive meal that begins with Kidush over wine. Shemini Atzeret evening service features the seven Hakafof and dancing with the Torah, similar to Simchat Torah. The morning service features the Yizkor memorial service after the Torah reading. It's not Sukkot, so there is no need for shaking the Lulav, but many have the custom of still eating and drinking in the Sukkah without making the special blessing upon the Sukkah.

Custom: Sometime before sundown, it is customary to go into the Sukkah, have a bite to eat, and "bid farewell" to its holy shade. As the sun sets and Simchat Torah begins, we no longer use the Sukkah. All eating and drinking return to our homes.

Simchat Torah: "The Joy of the Torah." It is the most joyous occasion as we celebrate our Divine inheritance and our intrinsic inner connection to the Torah.

Let's Dance: Simchat Torah features the Hakafof, held on both the eve and the morning of Simchat Torah. We march and dance with the Torah scrolls seven times around the reading table in the synagogue. Notice that we will be dancing with the Torah while it is closed, showing that the joy is not only from what the Torah teaches but from what the Torah is.

Rejoice!

IT'S TISHREI



THE MONTH BEFORE:

During Elul, the month before the High Holidays, we begin practicing blowing the Shofar daily and reciting **Psalm 27** in our daily prayers. The code of Jewish Law encourages people to visit the resting place of a great tzadik to pray to G-d before the High Holidays. Many people today use the online form at www.OhelChabad.com to send their letters for blessings to the resting place of the Rebbe.

WANT MORE DETAILS?

Contact us or visit
ChabadofVenice.com



IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR WHEN WE SWAP BEACH BAGS FOR TALLIT BAGS, AND TWITTER FOR THE SIDDUR. THE MONTH OF TISHREI IS FULL OF MOMENTOUS OCCASIONS AND MEANINGFUL CUSTOMS AND RITUALS. IT'S LIKE THE FREE WI-FI ZONE AT THE AIRPORT WHERE YOU DOWNLOAD EVERYTHING YOU'LL NEED BEFORE YOU TAKE OFF INTO A FRESH NEW YEAR.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
SEPT 25 ELUL 29 <i>Erev Rosh Hashanah</i> Shofar is not blown Give extra <i>charity</i> . <i>Light candles</i> 18 minutes before sunset. <i>Bless</i> your friends with the words "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year."	SEPT 26 TISHREI 1 <i>Rosh Hashanah Day 1</i> Hear the Shofar Light candles after nightfall Happy Birthday Adam & Eve. On this day 5783 year ago G-d said: "Let us make man in Our image."	SEPT 27 TISHREI 2 <i>Rosh Hashanah Day 2</i> Hear the Shofar Do <i>Tashlich</i> at a body of water Havdalah after nightfall On this day in 1677 BCE our matriarch Sarah passed away after hearing the good news that her husband Abraham had not sacrificed her only son Isaac.
OCT 2 TISHREI 7	OCT 3 TISHREI 8	OCT 4 TISHREI 9 <i>Erev Yom Kippur</i> <i>Kaparot</i> Give extra <i>charity</i> . <i>Light candles</i> 18 minutes before sunset. <i>Fast</i> begins Remove <i>leather shoes</i> <i>Kol Nidrei</i> prayer
OCT 9 TISHREI 14 <i>Erev Sukkot</i> <i>Light candles</i> 18 minutes before sunset. Kidush and all meals in the <i>Sukkah</i> , and dip challah in honey! On <i>Sukkot</i> , supernal "guests" grace our <i>Sukkah</i> . These guests are known as <i>Ushpizin</i> . Tonight's Guest: Abraham	OCT 10 TISHREI 15 <i>Sukkot Day 1</i> Shake the <i>Lulav</i> and <i>Eitrog</i> Kidush and all meals in the <i>Sukkah</i> and dip challah in honey! <i>Light candles</i> after nightfall Tonight's Guest: Isaac	OCT 11 TISHREI 16 <i>Sukkot Day 2</i> Shake the <i>Lulav</i> and <i>Eitrog</i> Kidush and all meals in the <i>Sukkah</i> and dip challah in honey! <i>Havdalah</i> in the <i>Sukkah</i> after nightfall Tonight's Guest: Jacob
OCT 16 TISHREI 21 <i>Hoshana Rabba</i> Shake the <i>Lulav</i> and <i>Eitrog</i> Perform <i>Hoshanot</i> All meals in the <i>Sukkah</i> <i>Light candles</i> 18 minutes before sunset Outside of Israel: Perform <i>Hakafot</i>	OCT 17 TISHREI 22 <i>Shemini Atzeret</i> Recite <i>Yizkor</i> Memorial Prayer Begin Prayer for Rain <i>Light candles</i> after nightfall Perform <i>Hakafot</i> and dance with the Torah	OCT 18 TISHREI 23 <i>Simchat Torah</i> Perform <i>Hakafot</i> and dance with the Torah Kidush and all meals in the house and dip challah in honey <i>Havdalah</i> after nightfall



WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SHABBAT

SEPT 28 | TISHREI 3
Fast of Gedaliah

Fast day mourning the assassination of the Jewish royal Gedaliah ben Achikam in 423 BCE

SEPT 29 | TISHREI 4

Did you know?

The Shofar is made of a ram's horn to recall the Binding of Isaac which also occurred on Rosh Hashanah, in which a ram took Isaac's place as an offering to G-d. We evoke Abraham's merit as we pray for a year of life, health and prosperity.

SEPT 30 | TISHREI 5

Light candles 18 minutes before sunset.

OCT 1 | TISHREI 6

Torah portion Vayeilech

Shabbat Shuva, Shabbat of Return

Passing of Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson (1879-1964), mother of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

OCT 5 | TISHREI 10
Yom Kippur

No eating or drinking

Sounding of Shofar at conclusion of Neilah

Havdalah & break-fast after nightfall

On this day G-d said: "I forgive the Jewish people" (for the sin of the golden calf) and G-d gave Moses the 2nd Tablets).

OCT 6 | TISHREI 11

Start building Sukkah.

Don't forget to order your set of the Four Kinds.

OCT 7 | TISHREI 12

Light candles 18 minutes before sunset.



OCT 8 | TISHREI 13

Torah portion Ha'azinu

Yahrtzeit of Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch, 4th Chabad Rebbe who authored many books and traveled throughout Europe to pressure the Czarist regime to halt its instigation of pogroms against the Jews.

OCT 12 | TISHREI 17
Chol Hamoed

Shake the Lulav and Etrog

All meals in the Sukkah

Tonight's Guest: Moses

OCT 13 | TISHREI 18
Chol Hamoed

Shake the Lulav and Etrog

All meals in the Sukkah

Tonight's Guest: Aaron

OCT 14 | TISHREI 19
Chol Hamoed

Shake the Lulav and Etrog

All meals in the Sukkah

Tonight's Guest: Joseph

Light candles 18 minutes before sunset.

OCT 15 | TISHREI 20

Torah reading for Shabbat Chol Hamoed

No Shaking the Lulav and Etrog on Shabbat.

All meals in the Sukkah

Tonight's Guest: David

CANDLE LIGHTING BLESSINGS

1. Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the light of...

Bo-ruch a-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ho-olom a-sheer ki-de-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-sov ve-tzi-vo-nu le-had-lik ner shel...

SHABBAT:

Sha-bos ko-desh

FESTIVALS:

Yom Tov

ROSH HASHANAH:

Yom Ha-zi-karon

YOM KIPPUR:

Yom Ha-kipurim

2. Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us and let us reach this time.

Bo-ruch a-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ho-olom she-he-che-ya-nu vi-kee-yi-ma-nu vi-hi-gee-an-u liz-man ha-zeh.

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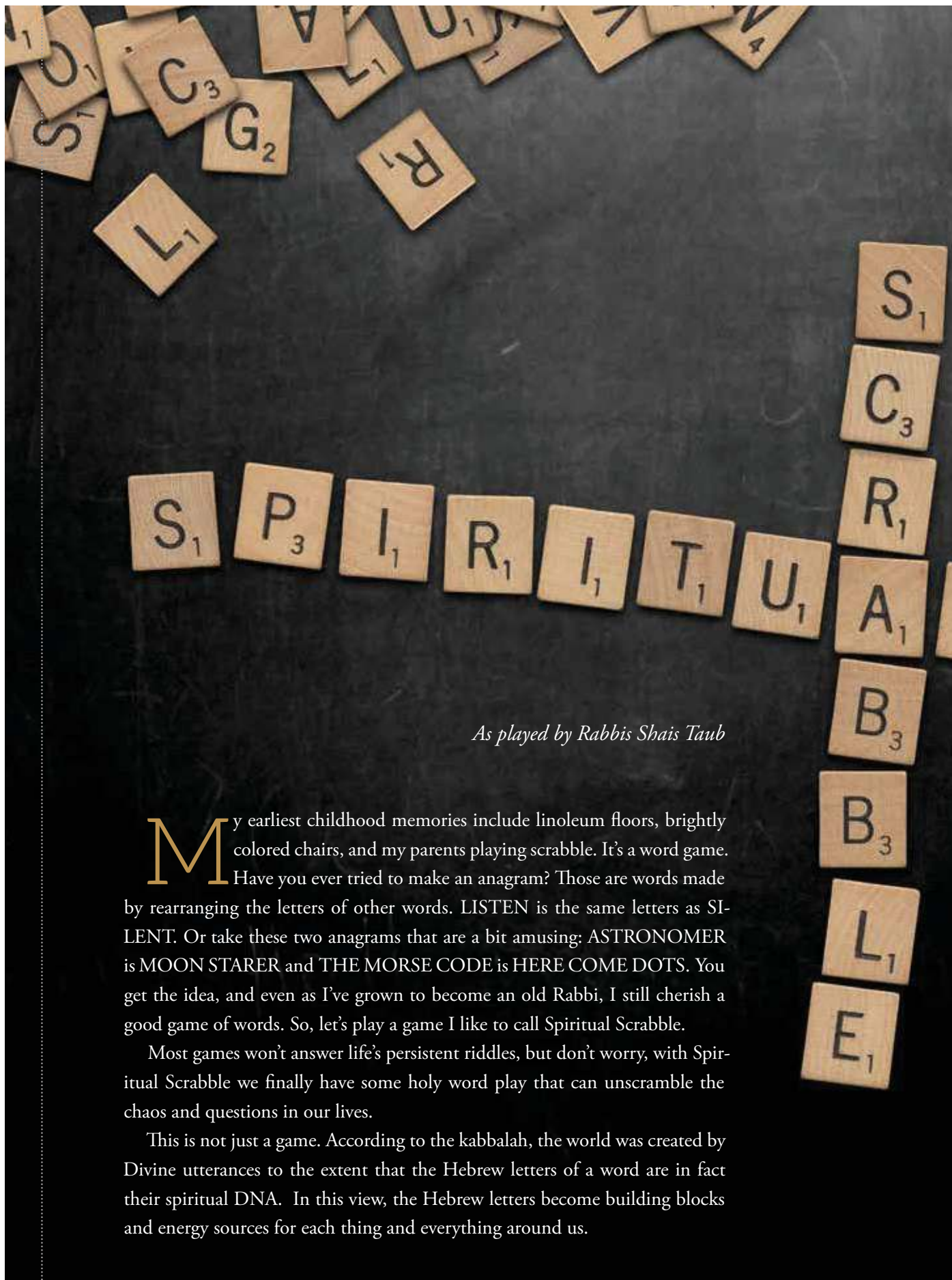
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As played by Rabbi Shais Taub

My earliest childhood memories include linoleum floors, brightly colored chairs, and my parents playing scrabble. It's a word game. Have you ever tried to make an anagram? Those are words made by rearranging the letters of other words. LISTEN is the same letters as SILENT. Or take these two anagrams that are a bit amusing: ASTRONOMER is MOON STARER and THE MORSE CODE is HERE COME DOTS. You get the idea, and even as I've grown to become an old Rabbi, I still cherish a good game of words. So, let's play a game I like to call Spiritual Scrabble.

Most games won't answer life's persistent riddles, but don't worry, with Spiritual Scrabble we finally have some holy word play that can unscramble the chaos and questions in our lives.

This is not just a game. According to the kabbalah, the world was created by Divine utterances to the extent that the Hebrew letters of a word are in fact their spiritual DNA. In this view, the Hebrew letters become building blocks and energy sources for each thing and everything around us.

THE CREATOR OF SPIRITUAL SCRABBLE KNEW THAT NOT EVERY PLAYER WILL BE DEALT A GREAT SET OF LETTERS. IN FACT, MANY PEOPLE TODAY ARE LIVING IN CHAOS DEALING WITH A VERY UNLUCKY SET OF CARDS.

When I speak nothing usually happens. When someone tells you “You’re all talk,” that’s not a compliment. Yet, when G-d speaks suddenly there is day and night, a sun and a moon. The very words of the Creator make reality happen. Conveniently, the Hebrew word for “thing” (דָּבָר) is the same Hebrew letters as the word “word” (דְּבַר). So you see where this is going.

On Rosh Hashanah we blow the Shofar (שׁוֹפָר) the ram’s horn that is sounded in synagogues around the world. The cry of shofar is a call for repentance, but is there a message in the letters of shofar itself? The Talmud says that shofar (שׁוֹפָר) also spells shifru (שִׁפְרוּ) which means to improve or polish. The message is clear. Whoever you are, there is a version of you that is really polished. The shofar reminds us to be the best version of ourselves.

The word “polished” is really key here. In life, the game is not about switching or replacing letters, it’s not about being someone else, it’s about being a polished and best you. Jewish philosophy doesn’t just believe that a bad situation can eventually be replaced by a good situation. Our Jewish faith is deeper than that, we actually believe that our weaknesses and failures, the negativity itself, can become good. We just need to “rearrange the letters,” so to speak.

The Creator of Spiritual Scrabble knew that not every player will be dealt a great set of letters. In fact, many people today are living in chaos dealing with a very unlucky set of cards. How can there be any Divine joy in playing that game?

One of the definitions of exile is a reality in which everything is jumbled up. Indeed, our people’s exile started with the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians and our people being taken as captives into Babylon. The name Babylon “Bavel” (בָּבֶל) literally means “bilbul,” (בִּלְבּוּל) something that is “mixed up.”

In Exile, we are confused. We lose our clarity and our vision. And, as a result, the world around us gets mixed up, too. But the true purpose is to not just get rid of the bad; we must somehow turn our mistakes into our successes, which was its true purpose all along.

It’s like what the founder of Chasidim, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov taught on the verse “וְעַתָּה צָרָה הִיא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִמֶּנָּה יִשְׁעַ” —this is a time of distress for the Jews and from it they will be saved.” The simple reading is that the time of distress is followed by, and replaced by, a time of rescue and salvation. The Baal Shem Tov, however, reads it more deeply. The time of distress itself is actually the source of the salvation and becomes the salvation. Thus, the verse may be read “this is a time of distress for the Jews and from it [from the distress itself, it will come about that] they will be saved.”

The Baal Shem Tov goes further and explains that if you take the letters of tzarah (צָרָה) which means “distress” and you look deeply, you will see how they form a new word.

Do you remember on Noach’s Ark he had a window to let the light in? That window was called a tzo-har (צוֹהַר). That’s right, the tzarah, the challenge, is just a concealment. It’s like a brick wall in front of the truth. But you learn to see through the wall and that distress itself becomes like a window of truth and the tzarah becomes a tzohar.

So look at the letters in your life, perhaps, there is a good move you can make. ●

>Rabbi Shais Taub has delivered lectures to audiences on six continents. He writes a weekly column in Ami Magazine and is the author of *G-d of Our Understanding*. He currently serves as scholar-in-residence at Chabad of the Five Towns in New York.

A portrait of Susan Cain, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a black top and a bright pink scarf. She is resting her chin on her hand, looking thoughtfully at the camera. In the background, a white shelf holds a few books and a bronze statue of a person.

MEET SUSAN CAIN

SUSAN CAIN'S BOOK, *QUIET*, HAS BEEN ON THE NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLER LIST FOR YEARS EARNING HER FAST COMPANY MAGAZINE'S TITLE OF ONE OF THE MOST CREATIVE PEOPLE IN THE BUSINESS, AND LINKEDIN CONSIDERS CAIN TO BE ONE OF THE TOP INFLUENCERS IN THE WORLD. IF YOU HAVEN'T READ HER BOOK, YOU MAY HAVE SEEN HER TED TALK (OVER 30 MILLION VIEWS) THAT BILL GATES CONSIDERS ONE OF HIS ALL-TIME FAVORITE TALKS. THE FOLLOWING IS FROM HER NEW BOOK, *BITTERSWEET* THAT EXAMINES HOW BROKENNESS CAN MAKE US WHOLE AGAIN.

SHARDS OF HOLINESS

BY SUSAN CAIN

I come back, always, to the metaphoric response of the Kabbalah — the mystical branch of Judaism that inspired Leonard Cohen's broken "Hallelujah."

That, in the beginning, all of creation was a vessel filled with divine light. That it broke apart, and now the shards of holiness are strewn all around us. Sometimes it's too dark to see them, sometimes we're too distracted by pain or conflict. But our task is simple — to bend down, dig them out, pick them up. And in so doing, to perceive that light can emerge from darkness, death gives way to rebirth, and the soul descends to this riven world to learn how to ascend. And to realize that we all notice different shards; I might see a lump of coal, but you spot the gold glimmering beneath.

When my father died of COVID, we held a tiny graveside service. The twenty-five-year-old junior rabbi delivering the eulogy, who hadn't known him personally but agreed to preside over a stranger's pandemic funeral, praised my father's love of G-d. I smiled, thinking: "He didn't know Dad."

My father was proudly Jewish, but he was impatient with formal religion. But even as I rolled my eyes, I realized that this was an outworn reflex; the way I saw it now, the rabbi's remark no longer seemed incongruous. My father did love G-d, but by another name — by many other names.

I see now that my father spent a good portion of his life gathering the shards of the Kabbalah's broken vessel. Like all of us, he was far from perfect. But he was constantly doing beautiful things just for their sake. He loved orchids, so he built a greenhouse in the basement. He loved the sound of French,

so he learned to speak it fluently, though he rarely had time to visit France. He loved organic chemistry, so he spent his Sundays reading "orgo" textbooks.

He showed me, by example, that if you want to live a quiet life, you should just live a quiet life; that if you're a humble person who has no use for the spotlight, to just be a humble person who has no use for the spotlight. No big deal. (These latter lessons later became the basis of my book *Quiet*.)

I watched, too, how he fulfilled his roles as a doctor, a father. How he studied medical journals after dinner, spent the extra hour sitting at the bedside of every last one of his patients in the hospital, and kept training the next generation of gastroenterologists until he was well into his eighties. How he shared with

his kids the things he loved, like music and bird-watching and poetry, so that one day we would love them too.

One of my earliest memories is asking him, over and over again, to play the "Chair Record" (Beethoven's "Emperor" concerto, whose name I was too young to pronounce). We're drawn to the sublime domains, like music, art, and medicine because they're beautiful and healing and manifest

love, divinity, or whatever you want to call it.

My father and I talked on the phone just before he died. He was in the hospital, trying to breathe.

"Be well, kid," he said, as he hung up the phone. And I intend to. And so, I hope, will you.

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“OUR TASK IS TO
BEND DOWN, DIG
THEM OUT, PICK
THEM UP.”

What Chabad Has Meant To Me

I am a student of political science. I graduated from The George Washington University (“GW”) in 1972. It was a time, not unlike today, of tremendous polarization, civil strife, and demonstrations. That’s why I went to GW, the nation’s capital. I wanted to be “where the action is” (*a common expression at the time*).

Today I would be called a conservative. But if I were to classify my political philosophy, I’d call it “liberalism”. Not as it is referred to today, but in its “classical” definition.

In September 2021, there was an illuminating article in the Wall Street Journal by Barton Swaim, a critique on liberalism by Benjamin Storey and Jenna Silber Story, the book “Why We Are Restless: On the Modern Quest for Contentment”.

It explains that liberalism began in the 16th and 17th centuries, embodied in the Enlightenment in the 18th century. It was a response to the violent political struggles of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. European philosophers and political leaders sought a political worldview where a man was able to hold his own views and practice his own religion without regard to the dominant culture.

The beginnings of liberalism are most clearly expressed in the philosophy of John Locke (1632-1704). It was a time when people were strongly committed to churches, communities, businesses, and families.

Classical liberalism is the core political ideology upon which the United States is based. Where government and society embrace free markets, limited government, representative democracy, individual freedom, strict limits on state power, and religious neutrality.

Our founding fathers were principally Deists, learned in the laws of Moses, and believed in the moral teachings of Judaism and Christianity – but not the divinity of Jesus. Thomas Jefferson, in his initial and overriding statement in the Declaration of Independence, proclaimed separation necessary and required when “the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of **Nature’s God entitle them**” (*emphasis added*). He also wrote The Jefferson



Bible, where he omitted all references to Jesus Christ. Jefferson did so not because he was anti-Jesus, but because this was a nation created upon the premise of one nation, under God, with no state sanctioned religion. Freedom “of” religion, not freedom “from” religion.

When I was young, the understanding of liberalism was virtually unquestioned. Not anymore. “Classical liberalism” is under attack, from those who believe markets generate inequality, democracy works only when it achieves the right outcomes, Individual freedom is uninteresting unless it serves a group identity. The state is everything. Religion is not only subservient to “secularism”, secularism and government are the religion.

Order in America is under attack—and not without reason. Debate, the fair and reasonable exchange of ideas in Washington is a thing of the past. The education system idealizes victimhood, race, group identity, and athletic participation and bathroom use based on a child’s sexual declaration. Much of the mainstream media, traditionally an impartial observer, investigative journalism based on facts and in search of truth, has become a partisan polarizing player with its own bias. The US intelligence community, together with interest groups and external actors have been tied to conspiracy theories of the “deep state”. Even corporate leaders and professional sporting

leagues, who until recently could be counted on to champion patriotism and the hard working “American Way”, eagerly follow the woke mob.

As for us, whatever family, friends, and acquaintances we may talk to, we rarely engage in discussions about the ultimate issues.

What do I mean by “ultimate issues”? I think it was 2012. I was at the Chabad Purim celebration. Rabbi Schmerling received a call from his brother-in-law, Rabbi Hillel. Rabbi Schmerling handed me the phone. He said, “Rabbi Hillel wants to talk to you”. Rabbi Hillel asked – “Reuven, what’s your purpose in life?” We talked for what seemed like an hour. My purpose? I guess I had a general “catch-phrase” idea, but I really didn’t know.

In secular society, that question --- What is your purpose in life? --- Is it really asked anymore? I know you can go to a motivational seminar, read a business coaching book or schmooze about it (*Been there, done that*). But is that question *really* asked and discussed in everyday life? If I posed it to younger people, I suspect the typical response would be “What do you mean?”. If I pose it to working people, the likely response is “to retire”.

We need to get back to asking the ultimate questions. What good can we do today? Ask about God, the nature of the universe, how to be a positive role model to our children and grandchildren, how to engage our brethren and live productive lives?

I was brought up in a conservative synagogue. Jewish theology and values were “Cliff Notes” studied (*Does anyone remember Cliff Notes?*). I just wanted to get through it. I did all the right things for all the wrong reasons. I didn’t learn very much. I was the proverbial 3-day Jew. And then I met Chabad, or should I say, Chabad met me.

I was a real estate attorney from Rhode Island. In 1999 Rabbi Yossi Laufer was purchasing a home in Warwick, Rhode Island. It was to be his personal home and Chabad House. He applied for a mortgage. The bank gave him a list of 6 attorneys he could choose from to handle the closing. Rabbi Laufer chose me (*I think it had something to do with my name*).

Over the years Rabbi Laufer would regularly come to the office, matzah at Pesach, honey cake at Rosh Hashanah, shake the lulav on Sukkot, donuts at Hanukkah, lay tefillin and say the Shema. I would humor Rabbi Laufer (*or so I thought*), and then give him a check and shoo him away – until the day came that I needed him.

We were having issues with our 20-something year old son, religious issues. We all met. It was an intervention of sorts. Things didn’t get resolved. The fact is it was unrealistic of me to expect a miraculous turn-around following years of intra-family disharmony, and an acrimonious divorce.

But it did affect me. I began to question my life, and the example I was setting for my two sons, and, God willing, my grandchildren to be.

It’s 2009. I’ve sold the law firm. We’ve moved to Venice. I’m playing tons of golf, 3 to 4 times per week. I’m retired. I’m in “paradise”. And I’m bored.

One afternoon Rabbi Sholom Schmerling knocks on our door. He said Rabbi Laufer told him we’ve moved here. I invited the Rabbi in, he saw Whiskey on the counter, he said, “Let’s make a L’Chaim”! I replied, “A L’Chaim? You’re my kind of rabbi”!

Rabbi Schmerling invited me to stop by his Chabad House. All of 1,250 sq. ft. in a nondescript, tired looking little strip center on US-41. He began to mail us information on courses of study. Weeks passed. I’m not interested. Then one day my wife, Luisa (2nd administration, my Catholic wife), suggested I check out a class that I may find interesting, intellectually stimulating, it may be what I need.

I went, but I wasn’t sure, yet I continued. Slowly, very slowly it began to grow on me. I began to learn Torah and attend Shabbat services. I began to question my life, retirement. I decided to go back to work. I became a REALTOR®. I wanted to be part of a community, help it grow, not just be a retired “drop-in, drop-out”.

But more than anything, and while I still had breath to breathe, I wanted to be a positive influence for my family, a spark to ignite the precious beauty and wisdom of Judaism, living a Torah based life, as best as I can. It’s never too late.

**I invited the Rabbi in, he saw
Whiskey on the counter, he
said, “Let’s make a L’Chaim”! I
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kind of rabbi”!**

I found my purpose in life.

What does Chabad mean to me? If not for Chabad, I would not be who I am today. It has exposed me to the study of Torah, which speaks to me intellectually and spiritually. As a lawyer, I find it foundational to the philosophical and ideological principles of our nation, our values, our morals/ethics.

Like all of us, I am a work in progress. Luisa? She's more than the glue that holds our family together, she's planned our life. I am certainly not an observant Jew. But that is not my purpose. I wake up every morning happy and excited. I try to lay tefillin, learn some Torah. I don't always do it. But I am always ready to take on the day, enlightened by my Torah learnings, Jewish values. I think it makes a difference and rubs off on those I touch, at least I hope it does.

More than anything, Luisa and I strive to be a positive example to Mitch, Carrie, Elijah, Shlomy and Shayna. We are grateful that they are all self-reliant, leading productive lives, and a source for good to those they touch. We think it fair to say that in observing what Chabad has done for and means to us, has contributed, in some measure, to Carrie and Mitch's decision to send Elijah to the Denver Jewish Day School. That brings us great joy. B'H.

So, I leave you with this. We end each of the 5 Books of Torah proclaiming: **Chazak! Chazak! V'nitchazek!** (*Be Strong! Be Strong! And Let us strengthen each other!*) Life is not easy. It is not supposed to be. God gave us free will. It requires us to make decisions. The Constitution, indeed, the United States, is one of the greatest gifts of the Torah. Amongst so many other things, they collectively provide a road map on how to make "good" calculated decisions, based on a cost/benefit analysis, with trust in ourselves and God. And to listen. Really listen to each other, particularly those with different views. **Shema!**

The Pledge of Allegiance. "Land of the free, home of the brave". Are we becoming the land of the safe, home of the scared? I for one am not. The Preamble to our Constitution includes the infamous words "in order to form a more perfect union". The American experience is never complete. It falls upon each of us to improve, elevate the human

condition and America. It has no end. It requires risk and strength. Our founding fathers, family who preceded us, and those amongst us who more recently arrived whether from the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, all came at great personal risk and sacrifice (*and far too many gave the ultimate sacrifice*), but all came to live together free and with shared values as Americans. It is an unending struggle.



The struggle. I referenced earlier that sound decision making requires a calculated cost/benefit analysis. On a macro societal level, the lessons from COVID are not yet complete, although one of them portends a natural proclivity in human nature to accept the benefit of safety at the cost of freedom. That should be concerning to everyone. Fear

paralyzes.

Although concerned that the character of our culture and foundational principles are at risk, I fear not. I am an American Jew. We are the land of the free and home of the brave. And it is the supreme, and personal, and collective obligation of every single one of us to keep it.

For thousands of years, we Jews have concluded, thrice a day, Shacharit, Musaf and Mincha with the powerful affirmation of "AlTearah" (*phonetically*). It means "Fear not" or "Do not fear". These words appear more than any other words in the Torah, over 80 times.

"Do not fear sudden terror, nor the destruction of the wicked when it comes. Contrive a scheme, but it will be foiled; conspire a plot, but it will not materialize, for God is with us. To your old age I am with you; to your hoary years I will sustain you; I have made you, and I will carry you; I will sustain you and deliver you. Indeed, the righteous will extol Your Name; the upright will dwell in Your presence".

- **By: Robert S Goldman**
(Reuven ben Shimon Michel)

2 January 2022 | 3 Shevat 5782

The Last Laugh

BY DAVID SACKS

DAVID SACKS IS AN AMERICAN TELEVISION WRITER AND PRODUCER. HIS CREDITS INCLUDE 'THE SIMPSONS', FOR WHICH HE WON AN EMMY AWARD, AND '3RD ROCK FROM THE SUN', FOR WHICH HE RECEIVED A GOLD-EN GLOBE AWARD. DAVID SHARES HIS THOUGHTS ON COMEDY AND ULTIMATE POWER OF JEWISH JOY.

The great Talmudic Sage, Rabbah, always began his lectures with a humorous statement. According to the Baal Shem Tov, humor ushers a person's mind from constricted consciousness to expanded consciousness.

A person in a place of expanded consciousness sees the totality of creation before him. He sees G-d's presence and goodness acting upon everything. And he realizes that anything and everything that happens is an expression of G-d's love for us, whether we understand it at the moment or not.

Constricted consciousness is, of course, the opposite, it's the understandable impulse to take things too literally, believing that they are not a part of something greater.

Humor's greatness is in its awesome ability to lift one out of depression into a place where G-d's unseen constant love and goodness becomes palpable and real.

Humor and laughter, while significant in themselves, are subsets of a more prominent topic, Joy! One of the surprising things I learned when I started studying Torah was the central focus our religion puts on happiness.

As Rebbe Nachman once said, people are sad because nothing is going right for them, but what people don't realize that nothing is going right for them because they're sad!

On the verse, "For you shall go out with joy" (Isaiah 55:12), the Kotzer Rebbe explains, "The beauty of joy is that it has the power to extricate us from all our troubles."

Joy means being in touch with the bigger picture, being in a state of expanded consciousnesses. The Chasidic revolution that took place in Jewish thought properly restored Joy to the forefront of Jewish values.

Many people think of Torah as an intellectual discipline, but there is a vital emotional component; Joy. And if humor is

the vehicle that transports us from constricted consciousness to expanded consciousness, then laughter is our reaction to that dizzying process.

Personally, from a comedy perspective, the surest way to get a laugh is by juxtaposing the expected with the unexpected. Thus, when we're convinced that the world is one way and the opposite happens the result is laughter.

Our patriarch Isaac (Yitzchak) corresponds to Gevurah or strength, yet Yitzchak is Hebrew for "laughter." So you might ask what gevurah/strength or discipline have to do with laughter?

When Issac's mother, Sarah, was a motherless woman of ninety the last thing you would expect is a baby! And what happens?

A baby! Laughter itself! Thus, Yitzchak becomes the embodiment of the unexpected. That's the explanation from the comedy standpoint.

But, on a deeper level, Isaac represents the ultimate strength it takes to hold on to our dreams. As such, he becomes the spiritual repository of Abraham and Sarah's most intractable desires. And this is gevurah or strength itself.

Psalms 126 says that in the Messianic era, "our mouths will be filled with laughter." Why? Because laughter, in its highest and holiest expression, is our reaction to the realization that the world is so much bigger, deeper, and more beautiful than we ever gave it credit for. When we realize this, our only response will be to laugh.

The laughter Isaac represents is the ultimate goodness promised to us in the Messianic Era. The Kabbalists say that when this day comes, let it be soon, G-d will grant us the eyes to see that we never left the Garden of Eden at all.

Once we understand this secret, we're in on the ultimate joke, that it is all good and it always was.

*"Joy means being in touch
with the bigger picture,
being in a state of expanded
consciousnesses."*

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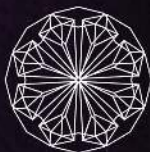
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