

Bringing the Farbrengen Home

EAT WELL!

by Rabbi Yossy Gordon
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This week's Torah portion, Parshas Vayeishev, tells of the travails of Yosef, the son of our Patriarch Yaakov, in dealing with his brothers, and his experiences in Egypt which eventually led up to his appointment as viceroy of Egypt.

Yosef relates two of his dreams to his brothers which reveal that his destiny is to be the boss. Here are the dreams in a nutshell:

Dream 1: Yosef and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field, when Yosef's sheaf stood upright. The brother's sheaves then stood around Yosef's, and bowed down to it.

Dream 2: The sun and the moon and eleven stars, representing his brothers and his father and surrogate mother, Bilhah, bowed down to Yosef.

Now the Torah is not in the habit of telling stories without reason. Every letter is necessary. Why do we need to read about two dreams, when they both seem to convey the same message about Yosef's eventual sovereignty over his family? OK, the first dream did not include his father and surrogate mother. Then skip it and go straight to the second dream.

The Rebbe explains a vital lesson from the two dreams:

The first dream used earthly objects, sheaves of grain. The second dream used heavenly objects, the sun, moon and stars. This teaches that that though one is involved in worldly affairs (sheaves of grain), one remains



intimately connected to spirituality (heavenly bodies like sun, moon and stars).

This manifests itself when a Jew performs a mitzvah (good deed) for the sake of Heaven. For instance, a physical act such as eating is something that everyone does to stay alive. However, when one eats for the sake of acquiring strength to perform a mitzvah, then the act of eating achieves a new level of holiness because it becomes part of a mitzvah.

All are capable of performing everyday physical tasks for the sake of Heaven. The Rebbe told the following short story:

The Rebbe Maharash, Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn (1834-1882), had a servant named Bentzion who was a simple and sincere individual. One day the Maharash overheard his then young children, Rabbi Sholom Ber and Rabbi Zalman Ahron, having a discussion about spiritual ability. He asked them to listen to his conversation with Bentzion.

Rebbe Maharash: "Bentzion, did you eat today?"

Bentzion: "Yes."

Rebbe Maharash: "Did you eat well?"

Bentzion: "What does 'well' mean? Satisfied, thank G-d."

Rebbe Maharash: "Why did you eat?"

Bentzion: "In order to live."

Rebbe Maharash: "Why do you want to live?"

Bentzion: "So I can be a Jew who does the will of G-d."

Bentzion then let out a sigh as if to say that he does not even know if he is at the level he should really be at.

Every person, no matter their spiritual or physical level, can perform everyday physical acts for the sake of Heaven and enjoy a meaningful connection with our Creator. G-d responds with blessings for good health, nachas and prosperity.

Postscript: It is never inappropriate to wish good things upon our fellow Jews. So even though Chanukah doesn't arrive till Sunday night, it is certainly already time to wish a Happy Chanukah to all. Happy Chanukah!

May G-d guard our brethren in Israel and the world over from harm and send us Moshiach speedily. May He protect the armed forces of Israel and the United States wherever they may be. Shabbat Shalom!! L"Chaim!!! Chazak!!!!

Just שו"ת Me A Question

Q: What is the proper way to discard the menorah and the candle box that has the brachos on it?

A: The menorah can either be kept for next year, or wrapped in a bag and discarded. The box with the brachos should be put in sheimos.

Q: We say the whole Hallel on Pesach (1st 2 days), Shavuos & Sukkos, which are holidays from the Torah. Why do we also say the whole Hallel on Chanukah, which is a Rabbinic holiday?

A: The gemora says that every day of Chanukah marks the miracle of the oil lasting one more day, and therefore we recite the entire Hallel. (Erchin 10b).

**א גוט שבת און
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Message from an IDF Chaplain

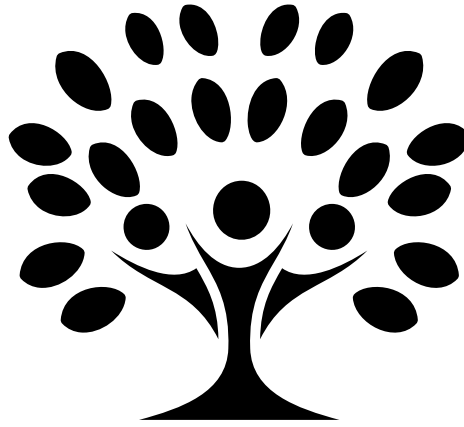
19 Kislev: The Alter Rebbe's Message for Our Times

by Judah Pe'er
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One of the most striking teachings of the Alter Rebbe, Rebbe Schneur Zalman of Liadi, is also one of the simplest: every Jew carries within them an eternal spark, a piece of divine light that cannot be diminished, stained, or lost. It's not poetic embellishment. It's a radical statement about identity and responsibility, and it cuts straight through the layers of cynicism, factionalism, and exhaustion that define too much of our communal life.


The Alter Rebbe insisted that this spark is not something a person earns. It doesn't depend on learning, observance, or background. It is fixed at the core of every Jewish soul, utterly equal in its essence. If that is true, then the way we look at one another has to change. We can't talk ourselves into believing that another Jew is beyond reach or beneath concern. We don't get the luxury of writing people off. The divine spark demands that we approach every person with a baseline of reverence.

Unity, in this framework, isn't negotiated. It's inherent. The soul, the Alter Rebbe teaches, is one root branching into many bodies. The divisions we obsess over belong to the outer layers: personality, ideology, tribe, trauma. The inner layer, the spark itself, is indivisible. If we actually let that idea guide how we treat each other, we would argue differently, disagree differently, and show up for one another with a seriousness that's mostly missing from our public life.



The Alter Rebbe's point isn't that everyone is perfect. He understood human weakness as clearly as anyone. His insistence on the soul's eternal spark is not an excuse to overlook wrongdoing, but a mandate to see people in full. Even in moments of conflict, even when someone stumbles, they are not reduced to their worst impulses. Their core remains intact. And because their core remains intact, they are always deserving of care, dignity, and the possibility of return.

This teaching feels almost countercultural today. The instinct to divide comes easily. The instinct to claim moral or ideological superiority comes even easier. But the Alter Rebbe asks something harder of us. He asks us to let the eternal spark be the anchor of how we relate to one another. To see that spark in the stranger. To remember it in the friend who disappointed us. To honor it in the person whose views provoke us. To believe that beneath everything, there is a point of unity that has never fractured.

If we took that seriously, even a little, our community would look different. Our politics would soften. Our debates would sharpen in substance but cool in temperature. And our sense of shared destiny would stop feeling like a slogan and start feeling like what it truly is: a spiritual reality waiting for us to live up to it. 

Chassidic Story

Dr. Liberman from the city of Vitebsk was an observant Jew and acclaimed medical expert. He would only see patients of Shabbos if there was a dire emergency within walking distance of his home.


One Shabbos afternoon he lay down after the meal and had a dream. A Rabbi with a golden beard and penetrating eyes rebuked him. "It is not right to refuse to see patients on Shabbos who live far," the Rabbi said in the dream, "it could be a matter of life or death."

The doctor awoke from his nap to a knock on the door. He overheard his attendant saying, "I'm sorry but the doctor will not travel on Shabbos."

The attendant finally brought a desperate farmer from another village into the waiting room. His daughter was gravely ill and has just taken a turn for the worse. A horse and wagon was waiting outside. The farmer pleaded with Dr. Lieberman to attend to his daughter.

"Let's go," said Dr. Lieberman with the dream still fresh in his mind. Indeed the girl was quite ill but the doctor was able to give her certain medicine and remained by her side until after Shabbos. In a short while she made a complete recovery.

Shortly afterward Dr. Lieberman was invited to a medical convention in Lubavitch. He was not a Chassid but was happy to take the opportunity to visit the Rebbe - R' Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson for the first time. Upon entering the office, he became quite unnerved as he recognized the face the Rebbe as the unknown rabbi from his dream.

"I don't know about your dream," the Rebbe said, "but I did advise the farmer to seek your medical advice and I'm glad he followed my advice." 

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