

The HINDA Institute

Helping Individuals Ascend



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Sivan 28: An American at Sinai

The Day the Rebbe and Rebbetzin Arrived in the U.S.A.

By Rabbi Shais Taub

Call me a cultural bigot, but every aspect of the way I view reality is affected by my identification with the country in which I was born and raised. I am a Jew, but American ethnocentrism is embedded in my synapses.

That's why this Thursday, June 22, 2017, is "my holiday." The date coincides with the anniversary of the Jewish calendric date of 28 Sivan, on which the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, and his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, arrived safely on American soil after barely escaping Nazi-occupied France.

Unlike any other day that I celebrate, the 28th of Sivan is about the shift from "over there" to "right here." And by "right here," I mean the center of my completely subjective universe—America.

My peers and I are part of a historical anomaly. We grew up in a strange reality, where half the world's Jews live on the opposite side of the planet than almost every single one of their ancestors.

In the nearly four thousand years since our forefather Abraham was born, a lot has happened; but, as much as we wandering Jews have wandered, it has all basically been within a tight radius of our homeland. Consider that for the first several centuries of exile, most Jews lived in Babylonia, present-day Iraq. From Israel to Iraq is like from Los Angeles to Phoenix. Even as time went on and the diaspora increased in size, most of us were still in the same basic part of the world. Whether you're a Jew whose family comes from Poland or Morocco, Yemen or Lithuania, your ancestors never resided anywhere other than what in modern terms can conveniently be described as a three-hour flight from Tel Aviv.

When we were kids, grown folks used to tell us that if we dug a hole deep enough, we'd come out the other end in China. You see, because China is supposed to be on the other side of the earth. If you're on the West Coast of the United States, however, China is nine time zones away while Israel is ten. There's actually a technical term for "the exact opposite side of the Earth." It's called an antipodes. In Britain, they still sometimes refer to Australia and New Zealand as the Antipodes and to its inhabitants as Antipodeans.

If the Land of Israel is the epicenter of Jewishness, then what is the antipodes of Jewishness? Imagine a globe that is tilted so that instead of the North and South Poles being at the top and the bottom, Jerusalem is on the "top" and its antipodes on the "bottom." You'll get a whole new perspective of Earth. Africa, Europe and most of Asia become the "upper hemisphere," while North America becomes just as much "down under" as Australia.

So, the mass migration of Jewish populations in the past century doesn't just constitute a geographical shift. In a way that is much more than just symbolic, we left what has historically been the "Jewish" side of the planet and settled on what is in so many ways the very opposite

end of the Earth.

Earnest grownups tried to deal with our upside-down generation by building museums and sending us on summer trips to Israel, symbolic acts that, in the end, only seemed to lend grave finality to the message that authentic Jewish culture and heritage were indeed only to be found somewhere either eastward in space or backward in time. At times, that message faded into nothing but the nearly inaudible siren song of nostalgia whose magnetic pull we implicitly understood as a sort of reverse Manifest Destiny, retreating back away from the future and back away from the direction of the promise of the westward-moving sun.

If I were to sum up the past hundred years of Jewish history in a nutshell, I'd say: To find an American Jew under forty whose great-grandfather, or great-great-grandfather, was strictly observant back in the Old Country is no big deal. Most were. To find an American Jew under forty whose grandfather was observant, now you're talking one out of ten. Whether it was Enlightenment, Communism, the Holocaust or the lure of assimilation, that's for the historians to analyze. But my peers weren't the ones who abandoned ship. By the time we were born, nobody was even drifting in lifeboats anymore.

My great-great-grandfather was a pious Jew in Russia. My great-grandfather moved to this side of the world and made a conscious choice to deprive my grandfather of a bar mitzvah. According to the trajectory of things, I shouldn't have had a chance.

Yet—and here's where this June 22nd comes in—I look like my great-great-grandfather, not like my great-grandfather. My children will not only have bar and bat mitzvahs, they go to Jewish day schools and study Torah in fluent Hebrew.

But my story is not unique. Among my generation, many have managed not to fall off the earth. If I would ask any one of them to explain why the lapse lasted only a generation or two instead of turning the tide in their family forever, they would basically tell the same story.

There was a change. And we can point directly—at every step of the way—to the same cause, the same influence at work. The "rabbi of the Lubavitchers in Brooklyn," who arrived in America today, was reaching out in places where people like me, my parents, my siblings, my cousins, aunts and uncles, and friends all kept being shown a way back to our roots without having to cross the sea to find it.

My holiday is the 28th of Sivan, because that's the day, that we were given not only a chance for spiritual survival down here on the bottom half of the planet, but to actually get to feel like we are at the center of things! To be at the forefront of bringing Judaism's message to the whole world—even the upper half of the world. It reminds me of what the Rebbe said at a gathering one year on the 28th of Sivan, "When you lift up a building, you've got to pry it up from the bottom."

Jewish story

By Rabbi Tuva Bulton

This Shabbat we read Parshat Chukat which contains many interesting events; the unfathomable commandment of the Red Cow, the deaths of Miram and Aaron, the cessation of the water from the rock, Moses striking the rock,...and more. But perhaps the strangest story here is the "Bronze Serpent": The Jews complained once too much, G-d got angry, sent deadly serpents to kill them and then told Moses to make a serpent of bronze, put it on a pole and whoever looked at it (in the direction of G-D) would live.

This story seemingly makes no sense.

First of all, why did G-d get mad? Since when is complaining punishable by death?

Second; why did G-d tell the Jews to look at a snake-statue which is very similar to idolatry? Why didn't G-d just tell them to look up to the heavens? Why a statue?

Finally (and most important), Torah means 'Teaching'. What does this 3,000 year old, bizarre story come to teach us? Also, last week the Torah reading was 'Korach', the story of a Jew who turned the entire Jewish nation against Moses shortly after they left Egypt and received the Torah. Is there a connection between Korach and Chukat?

To understand this here is another story that I heard years ago from a good friend.

About fifteen years ago an Israeli multi-millionaire businessman who we will call Jerry was on the top of the world. He toured the globe enjoying the best hotels, restaurants, cars and anything that money could buy. He was a self-made-man who loved his creator (i.e. himself). Saying; "My talents and strength gave me all these riches." (Deut. 8:17) and the sky was the limit almost. One of the most grandiose building projects of all time in Israel, the Azreali business complex in Tel Aviv, was nearing its completion and Jerry was given an opportunity to purchase the entire top (49th) floor!

It would cost him several tens of millions of dollars but he had the money, or could easily borrow what was lacking and it looked like a promising investment. He examined all sides of the deal with his lawyers, took a lot of advice and was just about to say yes until one of his best friends came up with a better investment. "What?" His friend exclaimed. "For price of one floor of the Azreali you can buy ten whole offices buildings in Hungary! And the economy there is on the rise! In just two-three years you'll have your entire investment back.. and after that... pure profits! Get in on it now before it's too late and it's all sold. It's a sure thing!!" Jerry took his friend's advice, dropped the Azreali idea, took loans and invested all he had in Hungary and within just months..... lost it all.

Suddenly every penny he had saved and slaved for was gone and he was even a debtor! And after he liquidated all his assets and even sold his house to pay his debts he still owed Seventeen Thousand shekels to the Israeli Revenue Service. Things happened so fast that he almost didn't have time to digest it all. At first he even tried to deny it saying. "After all, that's busi-

ness; right? ups and downs! Right? It will pass! The main thing is to smile, keep my eye open for opportunities, think positively; soon I'll be on the top again. Even more than before! Etc. etc." But reality began creeping up on him when he tried to get the 17,000 shekels. He soon discovered that his old friends weren't as friendly as before. Doors that used to open for him were now locked and people weren't returning his phone calls. With no collateral, the banks refused to loan him money on any terms. He was getting desperate, things were looking very bad. But then an old friend returned one of his calls. "Jerry, how are you? I hear you're looking for a loan. Come up and see me, I think I owe you a few favors from the good days. Whatever you want I'll try to help."

But as irony would have it, this friend's office was nowhere other than ... the 49th floor of the Azrieli center! Jerry, still full of confidence took the elevator to his friend's office, signed for the loan, shook his hand, put the bills in his inside coat pocket and exited the office to the plush corridor. The door closed behind him and he was alone, it was quiet with only soft recorded music coming through the ceiling. Jerry began to realize the irony of it; this whole floor could have been his! With nothing better to do he decided to walk around and have a look. After a few minutes of strolling he noticed a set of stairs leading up to a large metal door, which he ascended and opened the door. A cold autumn wind blew into his face. It was the door leading to the roof, 'why not', he thought to himself as he went out.

Ahh it was beautiful! From here he could see far into the distance; the Judean hills in one direction, the wide, vast Mediterranean sea on the other. He just stood there, thinking and trying to enjoy the weather when suddenly a loud thud behind him broke his thoughts; a quick glance revealed that the wind slammed the door shut. He decided it was time to go back. Jerry went to the door and tried to open it but ... it was locked. He tried peering from all sorts of angles to figure out the latch but he couldn't. So he began to pound on the door and when that didn't work, to kick at it. For sure someone would hear. But no one did. The wind was getting stronger and colder now and he wasn't really dressed for this. He looked around for some object to hit the door with, to attract attention and get out but there was none. He still had a good hour before dark; people were probably still in their offices so he pounded, kicked and yelled but there was no response.

'Hey, what a fool I am!' He slapped his forehead and said to himself, "My cellular phone! I can just call someone with my cellular phone!" But when he took it out he discovered that the battery was dead. Totally dead! Of all times for this to happen! But he didn't lose his composure. He had to work fast. He went to the edge of the building, peered over the small protective fence and began waving his arms and yelling to the people far below which, after just five minutes, he realized was totally futile. There was no way that anyone would hear him over the wind 49 floors below. But he had to remain calm. It was his only chance. Soon it would be dark and really cold. And there was no where to get protection from the wind, which was getting colder by the minute. Suddenly he had an idea. The money! He had 17,000 shekels in

his pocket. For sure if he threw a 200 shekel note down people would look up to see where it was coming from... and see him. He pulled out a stack of bills, removed one, looked over the fence and threw it. He watched as it floated crazily in the wind and finally, after several minutes, landed on the other side of the street. He watched helplessly as someone stopped, bent down, picked it up and continued walking.

This time he took out five bills, 1,000 altogether and let them drop... but it was the same thing. No one noticed them until they hit the ground, then they picked them up, looked around for more and kept going.

He knew what he had to do! It was his only chance! He took all the money from his pocket, tore the band that held them neatly in a pack and with a yell, threw it below as hard as he could. With his last optimism he gazed as it scattered far below him. He removed his shirt and began waving it frantically for someone to notice. But he couldn't believe his eyes; not only did no one look up or hear his cries for help; they were all arguing down there about who saw which bill first!

He looked around on the roof, the sun was setting, it was still light enough to see, but he saw nothing that might help him. He looked up at the dimming sky and his eyes filled with tears. Suddenly he felt small and weak. He needed help..... he was sure that there was hope. The sky said so. It was obvious... he wasn't alone.

He yelled out, "HaShem! HaShem! (G-d! G-d)... help! Help me!" A second ago he didn't even believe there was such a thing but now it was clear.

Suddenly his eye caught a medium sized sack of sand ... small pebbles. Why didn't he see it before? But there it was! He dragged it to the fence, took a handful, said a prayer, threw it over the side and began waving his arms and looking down again. Sure enough, this time it worked! People began cursing; looking up pointing and screaming at him. Probably all of them called the police because in just moments the door burst open, police with guns drawn stormed through, put handcuffs on him and took him to the station. He was saved!

It took some serious explaining. He was lucky that no one was really hurt from his pebbles and, of course, he lost the 17,000 shekel and still owed the taxes. But after a few days they accepted his story and let him out.

But he said that it was well worth it. Not only he got saved but he got adjusted as well.

For the first time in his life he got a good look at how foolish he had been; the people on the street taught him. They were just like him; all the time money was raining down they never looked up... only down for more money. But as soon as they started feeling the pebbles hurting them they looked up to see

where they were coming from.

Jerry never looked up when he had money, he felt he was G-d incarnate. But when he began to hurt he realized he needed help to change.

Jerry began taking classes in Judaism, began doing the commandments and, as far as anyone knows, today is a totally observant Jew.

This answers our questions. The reason G-d told Moses to make a snake and put it on a pole was not just to make the Jews look up at G-d, but rather to realize that the SOURCE of misfortune and evil is also G-d and the reason G-d creates it is for us to transform it.

Namely, that when we pay attention ONLY to its source we can not only eradicate the bad but even transform its energy to holiness. (Much as Moses transformed the staff before Pharaoh to a snake and back again (Ex. 4:4) or Nachum Gamzu transformed sand to arrows (Taanis 21) (see Lekutei Torah of Chabad 61:4). This is a very deep lesson to all of us. It is difficult to believe in G-d when there are hard times ... but sometimes it is even more difficult when we succeed. Then, just like Jerry in our story, we feel certain that we ourselves are G-d.

This is the serpent... the feeling of self importance and lack of humility that must be raised on a 'pole'. We must realize, as Jerry did in our story, that this destructive egotism, like everything else, is a creation of G-d, which, with G-d's help, can be transformed.

And that is why G-d got angry when the Jews complained; because rather than trying to improve the world around them they were allowing the world to bring them down. The OPPOSITE of what they were created for!

And this was also the mistake of Korach in the previous Torah portion. He convinced the Jews that after experiencing G-d at Sinai they no longer needed Moses and could totally trust themselves. But he, too, was wrong. We Jews are 'chosen' to transform the egotism of the world to blessing, meaning and joy. And this can only be done with the guidance of Moses, or the Moses of each generation.

This is the message of the teachings of Chabad, called Chassidut (see your local Chabad House for details) the guidance and wisdom of the Chabad Rebbes, the Moses of each generation. And this too will be the accomplishment of Moshiach; to convince ALL mankind to, just as Jerry did, transform the 'serpent' and improve the world.

And we can begin now: We should do all we can to be think, speak and act more positively but meanwhile that even one more positive thought, word or deed can tilt the scales and bring Moshiach NOW!

Jewish Joke

Abe was talking to his neighbor. "I've just bought a new hearing aid, Issy. It was very expensive at \$2,000 but it's state of the art and worth every penny."

"Really," says Issy, "What kind is it?"

"Twelve thirty."

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Helping Individuals Ascend

9401 Margail Avenue
Des Plaines, IL 60016

Phone: 847-296-1770
Email: chabad@chabadandfree.com



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Please make a request to your Chaplain that you would like a visit from a Rabbi in JULY.

HINDA Family Division Connect your family member (parent, spouse, sibling, child etc.) with our Family Division! Please contact us for more information.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: All mail sent to the Hinda Institute should be addressed to our Inmate Advocate. Letters should NOT be addressed to Rabbi Scheiman. Please use this mail-

Upcoming Observances

Tuesday July 11—Tammuz 17 is a fast day, devoted to mourning the breaching of Jerusalem's walls and the other tragic events that occurred on this day and repenting and rectifying their causes. We refrain from all food and drink from "daybreak" 4:00am until nightfall 9:00pm. Special prayers and Torah readings are added to the day's services.

"Three Weeks" Begin

July 11, The 17th of Tammuz also marks the beginning of The Three Weeks period of mourning which culminates on the 9th of Av- August 1, commemorating the conquest of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Holy Temple and the dispersion of the Jewish people.

Weddings and other joyful events are not held during this period; like mourners, we do not cut our hair, and various pleasurable activities are limited or proscribed.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe urges that the Three Weeks should be a time of increased giving of charity and Torah study (in keeping with the verse (Isaiah 1:27), "Zion shall be redeemed by law, and her returnees by charity"), particularly the study of those portions of Torah that deal with the laws and the deeper significance of the Holy Temple.

Monday July 31 and Tuesday August 1—The Fast of Tishah B'Av

Mourning the destruction of the Temple and the exile of Israel, we abstain from eating and drinking, bathing, the wearing of leather footwear, and marital relations—for the night and day of Av 9 (i.e., from sundown on Av 8, July 31 8:00pm to nightfall on Av 9, August 1 8:40pm). It is customary to sit on the floor or a low seat until after midday. Torah study is restricted to laws of mourning, passages describing the destruction of the Temple, and the like. The tefillin are worn only during the afternoon Minchah prayers.

Wednesday September 20 through Friday September 22— Rosh Hashanah

The Jewish New Year. We observe this holiday by

ing address to contact us by mail:

Inmate Advocate
The Hinda Institute
9401 Margail Ave
Des Plaines, IL 60016

Housing Resource: For any families trying to find a rental for their loved one to parole to upon release. Contact Mr. Marcus. This applies even to register with the state upon release. There is a fee for his services . Don Yosef Marcus—(847) 361-7770

saying special prayers with a Machzor, blowing the Shofar and eating sweet foods (apple dipped in honey).

Sunday September 24—(postponed) Fast of Gedalia

Mourning the killing of Gedaliah , we abstain from food and drink from dawn 5:15am to nightfall 7:30pm; selichot prayers are included in the morning prayer.

Friday September 29– Saturday September 30— Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year and the "Day of Atonement"

For twenty-six hours, from several minutes before sunset on Tishrei 9-Septemebr 29 6:20 pm to after nightfall on Tishrei 10-Septemebr 30 7:20 pm, we "afflict our souls": we abstain from food and drink, do not wash or anoint our bodies, do not wear leather shoes, and abstain from marital relations.

In the course of the day we hold five prayer services: Maariv, with its solemn Kol Nidrei service, on the eve of Yom Kippur; Shacharit; Musaf, which includes a detailed account of the Temple service; Minchah, which includes the reading of the Book of Jonah; and Ne'illah, the "closing of the gates" service at sunset. We say the Al Chet confession of sins ten times, and recite Psalms every available moment.

Wednesday October 4 through Friday October 13—Sukkos and Simchas Torah

During the joyous holiday of sukkos we eat in a out hut called a Sukkah and shake the Arba Minim, the 4 types, a Lulav, a Esrog, Hadasim and Aravos.

The last 2 days we celebrate the conclusion of the yearly Torah reading cycle.

Please notify your Chaplain at least 45 days in advance, if you would like to observe any of these days, so that proper accommodations can be made.