

ואהבת לרעך כמוך - זה כלל גדול בתורה



Yeshivat Hakotel Presents

A 3rd Worldwide Achdus Torah Learning Program
Bring the Geulah by Bolstering Ahavas Yisrael
Rebuild the Beis HaMikdash by Reconnecting Klal Yisrael
Join Leading Rabbonim, Educators, and Speakers

ה' אב, תש"ף - JULY 26, 2020

US WEST - 7:00 am - 12:00 pm US CENTRAL - 9:00 am - 2:00 pm US EAST - 10:00 am - 3:00 pm
UK: 3:00 pm - 8:00 pm Israel: 5:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Vayichan Weekly Choveret

This weekly Choveret will help prepare us for the pre Tisha B'Av Vayichan Ahavas Yisrael program by offering Ahavas Yisrael divrei Torah and materials to learn with your family over Shabbos.

May the choveret and the program help us come to truly love our fellow Jews as Hashem intends!
Have an Amazing Shabbos!

פרשת השבוע

בארץ ישראל: חקת
בחוץ לארץ: קרח

זמני הדלקת נרות

ירושלים 7:09pm ג'והנסבורג 5:08pm
ניו יורק 8:13pm לונדון 9:04pm
לוס אנג'לס 7:51pm טורונטו 8:45pm

JOIN THE ACHDUS MOVEMENT AT VAYICHAN.COM

The program is in memory of the recent niftarim and for a refuah shelema for cholim.

IN LOVE WITH EVERYTHING HOLY

RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL

Maybe it was ordained On High that I should have to take a circuitous route to meet my rebbi — that I should first be required to survey the vast landscape of Yiddishkeit.

I grew up on Grove Street in old Monsey, our family the only Modern Orthodox baalei teshuvah — perennial outsiders in a predominantly yeshivish neighborhood. We were raised to be open, accepting, and respectful of all. My parents chose their Jewish destiny; we were always made very aware of our responsibility to think for ourselves and “do our own thing” in avodas Hashem. Our background allowed us the opportunity to explore the Torah’s many different pathways.

After a year in Eretz Yisrael, when I was trying to learn Torah seriously for the first time as a student at Yeshiva University, the challenge of “finding my place” in avodas Hashem was real. I was drawn to chassidus, engaged intellectually with Modern Orthodoxy, enamored of “the yeshivah world,” and ideologically at home in religious Zionism. There was so much beauty and opportunity in the diversity of Jewish communities. Yet so much seemed scripted, and the search for self, more like deciding which box to fit into, which set of cultural norms to adapt. As aspiring bnei Torah, did we really have to choose one way to the exclusion of all others?

While perusing old copies of the Jewish Observer between classes on the fifth floor of the YU library, I got my answer. I finally met the tzaddik who would become a formative influence and inspirational force in my life: Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz ztz”l. A tribute marking Reb Shraga Feivel’s 35th yahrtzeit penned by Rav Yitzchak Chinn, a close talmid, took my breath away.

The piece described an episode that took place in 1943, just a couple of blocks from where I’d eventually grow up in Monsey. Reb Shraga Feivel was sitting outdoors with a group of yungeleit, and asked one to turn over a large stone embedded in the ground. As he did, swarms of insects scurried about in every direction.

Said Reb Shraga Feivel: “Do you see those creatures? For their entire existence under that rock, they believed the world to be a dark, dreary place. By overturning that stone, you have revealed a whole new world, filled with light and beauty. In exposing them to the sun and sky, you’ve introduced a new dimension of reality into their lives.

“That is our mission in this world — to roll the heavy stones off souls and reveal the Yiddishe neshamah, to allow the ohr haShechinah to shine. When we have moved the boulders, we can lift our eyes to the Heavens, behold our Creator, and know our Yiddishkeit.”

In meeting Reb Shraga Feivel, I felt as though a stone had been lifted — and a new ray of light was shining in.

Reb Shraga Feivel defied definition and categorization; not tethered to any specific one of the shivim panim laTorah, he embodied the infinite expansiveness of Yiddishkeit. Reb Shraga Feivel's way of learning Torah revealed its awesome unity: plumbing the commentary of Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch to explain challenging passages in Tanya — and vice versa. Chassidus, mussar, nigleh and nistar — for Reb Shraga Feivel, it was all One.

Even while quoting freely from the writings of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohein Kook, Reb Shraga Feivel maintained a close friendship with and deepest respect for Reb Yoelish, the Satmar Rebbe. At Torah Vodaath and Beis Medrash Elyon, classic yeshivah learning was complemented with shiurim on Tanach and tefillah, the teachings of Reb Tzaddok HaKohein of Lublin with insights on the intricacies of biblical grammar. Rambam's Shemonah Perakim and Rebbe Nachman's Sippurei Maasios, Chovos Halevavos, Ramchal and the Tzemach Tzedek.

Fusion implies bringing together of separate, individual parts to form a complete whole. Reb Shraga Feivel didn't "fuse" discrete parts; he was drawing from a higher source. "The Tree of Life was in the center of the Garden" (Bereishis 2:9). Reb Shraga Feivel taught: No matter how disparate the various ideas and approaches in Torah that we learn may seem to be, they are all different approaches to the Eitz Chayim. As long as the Tree of Life is "b'soch haGan" — and Torah is at the center — it can be approached from all directions.

Reb Shraga Feivel carried the dialectic within himself: charisma and humility, passionate activism and hisbonenus, intellect and emotion. A gadol who saw himself as a regular person, "Mr. Mendlowitz" shunned all honorifics and trappings of kavod. A public figure, constantly surrounded by talmidim, who relished privacy and quiet. An idealist with two feet firmly on the ground, Reb Shraga Feivel upheld unwavering fidelity to his Hungarian upbringing, while attuning his incredible sensitivity to the needs and realities of the postwar American Jewish community.

Uncompromising in his dedication to truth — at a time when ideology mattered — Reb Shraga Feivel was unabashed in voicing staunch opposition to innovations he felt threatened tradition, but still managed to maintain respectful working relationships with those he vehemently disagreed with.

"Hashem sefasai tiftach" — in asking the Ribbono shel Olam to open our mouths and sing His praise, we aim to emulate His infinite nature, to be big, expand our boundaries, open our borders. As Reb Shraga Feivel would say: "Der seichel iz elastish" — the mind is elastic. If we are intellectually honest, it can be stretched from one extreme to another. Hotziah mimasger nafshi.

Reb Shraga Feivel's natural expansiveness validated drawing from approaches in Yiddishkeit that seemed to conflict: "Some souls drink from Tanya. Others from the Ramchal. Still others from Rav Hirsch. I drink from all of them, though at any given

time, I might drink from one in particular.” From Reb Shraga Feivel came “insider” confirmation that the search for truth and the fulfillment of ratzon Hashem is more about “a Torah perspective,” as opposed to “the Torah perspective.” “Taamu u’reu ki tov Hashem,” for a searching Jew, Reb Shraga Feivel catered a fresh, bountiful, and spiritually healthy smorgasbord of theological opportunity.

Reb Shraga Feivel’s open heart felt the joys and pain of Klal Yisrael, burned for Torah, and was deeply connected to Eretz Yisrael — in love with everything holy. Sensing the Divine vitality that pulsates through all of creation, he was a baal avodah who heard all of nature singing Hashem’s praise. Reb Shraga Feivel enjoyed spending time in nature, and often looked toward the sky, davening from what he called “the siddur of David Hamelech.” When a talmid inquired of his rebbi’s preference of davening next to a window: “He thinks I’m looking out, but actually, I’m looking in.”

Reb Shraga Feivel’s singular focus on “looking in” — on living a life of penimiyus, nurturing the inner worlds of others, and encouraging in-depth limud HaTorah — inoculated against superficiality. Every Jew can be an “insider.” With Torah at the center, we are all equally close.

Reb Shraga Feivel suffered a heart attack when he heard that the Old City had fallen into Jordanian hands during Israel’s War for Independence. Doctors warned him against learning Baal Shem Tov al HaTorah — Reb Shraga Feivel’s excitement when learning the heiliger Baal Shem made his sensitive Jewish heart race dangerously. “V’hasirosi lev ha’even v’nasati lachem lev basar.” In the end of days the Navi Yechezkel promises that Hashem will remove our hearts of stone and restore our natural hearts of flesh — a fleishige heart that senses that every moment in this world is revelation of Hashgachah pratis and an opportunity to draw close to Hashem. Or as Reb Shraga Feivel would say, “Der grester glick fun leben iz leben alein — the greatest fortune in life is life itself.”

Again and again I have returned to Yonoson Rosenblum’s masterful biography of Reb Shraga Feivel; it is a book that changes my life at each new stage I reread it, each time feeling a deeper yearning for Reb Shraga Feivel’s guidance, his expansive heart filled with ahavas Hashem and ahavas Yisrael, nuance and complexity.

Working in the Jewish community, I am privileged to see the absolute best of Klal Yisrael. But even when everyone has only the best of intentions, things can often get personal, and worthy mosdos of different stripes step on each other’s toes. Dedicated professionals and volunteers, even rebbeim and menahalim, passionate for their specific cause, can get territorial over donors, programs — even social services. It’s hard not to get caught up in all of it. Business is business, people are people. Asking myself, “What would Reb Shraga Feivel do?” invariably leads to clarity and magnanimity, ayin tovah and expansiveness. Reb Shraga Feivel was never confined or defined by where he worked — even by the yeshivos he founded, nurtured, and led. When the fledgling Yeshivas Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin was struggling with recruitment, Reb Shraga Feivel transferred some of his most prized talmidim there, sending his best guys to join “the competition.”

It wasn’t that Reb Shraga Feivel was so confident in his yeshivah that he was unafraid of competition; he simply saw that in the world of truth and penimiyus, there is no

competition. Ovdei Hashem are all working for the same Boss, at different points in the Garden, facing the same Center. Reb Shraga Feivel would remind his talmidim — in and out of yeshivah — that regardless of our professional identity, we are all “sheluchei d’Rachmana,” messengers on a mission from G-d.

As Reb Shraga Feivel’s 70th yahrtzeit approaches on Gimmel Elul, I am thinking about the tzaddikim hatehorim described by Rav Kook — the purely righteous who do not complain about darkness, but instead increase light. Now more than ever, how desperately we crave Reb Shraga Feivel’s purity, righteousness, and encouragement, to lift the stone that covers our hearts, weighing us down and blocking out the light. I’d grown up literally around the corner from that tree under which Reb Shraga Feivel sat with his talmidim decades earlier, feeling like a perennial outsider. Maybe my not being born to a particular derech with set minhagim and clear mesorah was Hashem’s way of setting the stage for the unlikely keshet I feel with Reb Shraga Feivel. If in our search for meaning we are motivated l’Sheim Shamayim, then we are all insiders. When we aspire to live each moment with penimiyus, we will find our place in the Torah world, cleaving to the Eitz Hachayim, the Tree of Life at the center of our lives. Enough complaining about our generation and all that is lacking! “L’oro neilech” — the time for us has come in our search for dveikus to do the heavy lifting, for the ohr haShechinah, for Soul-Glow. Tzaddikim b’mitasam nikra’im chayim — Reb Shraga Feivel zy”a, chai v’kayam!¹ —

¹ Originally Published on mishpacha.com, Rav Judah Mischel. August 18th 2018. Originally featured in Mishpacha, Issue 722. Rabbi Judah Mischel, executive director of Camp HASC and former rebbi at Yeshivas Reishis, is a popular teacher of chassidus and founder of Tzama Nafshi, an organization dedicated to fostering Jewish education and inspiration. He lives with his family in Ramat Beit Shemesh, where he is a talmid muvhak of mashpia Rav Avraham Tzvi Kluger and translator of his works. © The Mishpacha Group Inc. All rights reserved.

LOVING THOSE JEWS: THE URGENT IMPERATIVE OF JEWISH UNITY

REBBETZIN SARA YOHEVED RIGLER

"Atomic inspectors have found that Iran recently understated by a third how much uranium it has enriched, United Nations officials said Thursday." This tidbit in February 2009 *New York Times* was followed by another tidy piece of information: "The officials also declared for the first time that the amount of uranium that Tehran had now amassed – more than a ton – was sufficient, with added purification, to make an atom bomb."

The *Times* goes on to quote Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control: "It's worse than we thought. It's alarming that the actual production was underreported by a third."

If Mr. Milhollin, sitting in Wisconsin, is alarmed, how should those of us sitting in Israel feel? Iran's President Ahmadinejad has repeatedly threatened to "wipe the Zionist entity off the map." Now, his 5,600 busily spinning centrifuges (in one site alone) will soon put that dream within his reach.

Of Persian Rulers and Genocide

We've been there before. In the year 355 BCE, Ahashverosh, the ruler of Persia (modern-day Iran) issued an edict "to destroy, kill, and exterminate all the Jews, young and old, women and children, on one day." Before the designated date in the month of Adar arrived, however, the plan was thwarted. That salvation is commemorated every year since as the holiday of Purim.

We can learn how to respond spiritually to our current Persian predicament by examining the Book of Esther.

The antidote for a mortal threat to the Jews is unity of the Jews.

When Haman, a Hitler prototype, approached the Persian king with his plan for genocide, without naming the Jews, he described them as, "a certain nation scattered and dispersed among the peoples." This characterization of the Jews as divided, indeed disunited, was the spiritual flaw that allowed the edict of extermination to be promulgated.

Once alerted to the threat, Esther (who by Divine manipulation was chosen to be Queen of Persia) directed Mordechai to provide a spiritual back-up for her daring plan to topple Haman. She told Mordechai: "Go and gather together all of the Jews..." The commentaries point out that this act of unity was the antidote for the disunity that had left an opening for the edict of genocide in the first place. The Jews, realizing the fatal danger facing them, united in prayer and fasting. The result was a sudden and complete reversal of fortune. The Jews were not only saved, but were elevated to a glorious position in the empire.

Our Fatal Flaw

Let's face it: We Jews are a factious people. The adage "Two Jews, three opinions" loses its humor when we understand that our divisive tendency could be – and has

been – our ruin. The Talmud states that the destruction of the Holy Temple, the end of the Jewish state in 70 CE, and the beginning of our torturous 2,000-year exile was attributable to one thing: hatred among Jews.

The problem is not our diversity, but rather our divisiveness. The Jewish People issued from 12 distinct tribes, each different in its nature, proclivities, and way of relating to the world. Yet God expects us not only to get along, but also to love each other. Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest rabbis in the Talmud, identified the core principle of the Torah: "Love your neighbor as yourself." This mutual love is not just a lofty ideal, but a compulsory commandment. And when we fail at loving each other (because we don't even try!), we plunge into an abyss of exile, anti-Semitism, terrorism, and war.

Thus the key to annulling edicts of extermination is unity among Jews, called in Hebrew *ahavat Yisrael*, loving your fellow Jews. *Ahavat Yisrael* means loving all the Jews in the world, no matter how much they differ from you religiously or politically, no matter how they dress, where they live, or what opinions they profess. No matter how much you like to argue, no matter how sure you are that your position alone is right, no matter how much your hatred issues from your noble adherence to Truth, the sobering reality is that *Ahavat Yisrael* is the only anti-nuclear-missile weapon we have.*

Practicing Ahavat Yisrael

In order to actually practice *Ahavat Yisrael*, we have to first expunge from our behavioral repertoire *lashon hara*, evil speech. This denotes all negative, critical, and condemning remarks, even if they're true.

Loving fellow Jews while continuing to condemn is akin to drilling holes "just" in the stern.

Trying to practice loving your fellow Jews while continuing to condemn "just them" (the Jewish groups you dislike) is akin to building a boat and drilling holes "just" in the stern. Judgmental words will sink us all. Thus the first step in practicing *Ahavat Yisrael* is to declare a moratorium on speaking negatively about other Jews, whether individuals or groups. [For more on the mitzvah of not speaking *lashon hara*, [click here.](#)]

The second step of *Ahavat Yisrael* is to proactively love others by working in the following four areas:

1. Addressing internal negativity that gets in the way of loving others
2. Restoring close relationships
3. Pursuing *Ahavat Yisrael* in your own community
4. Connecting to the entire Jewish People

The first area means working to rid yourself of anger, resentment, hatred, fear, and grudges that keep you from loving yourself and other people. A turning point in my own life came when I was a student at Brandeis in the turbulent 60s and belonged to S.D.S., a radical leftist organization devoted to seeking peace in Vietnam. I read a statement by Alan Watts: "Peace can only be made by those who are peaceful," and realized that our bickering, intolerant, indeed hateful, group had to first change ourselves before we could change the world. While working on oneself is a long and arduous process, [Judaism provides a wealth of teachings](#) on how to rid oneself of internal negativity.

The second area involves making up with your husband, parents, children, siblings, or other relatives which whom you have a strained relationship. There can be no harmony within the Jewish people if there is discord among families. This may entail phoning (or,

even better, visiting) a relative, and saying, "I'm sorry. I love you and want to have a relationship with you," even if the other person instigated the quarrel.

The third area entails working in your local Jewish community. This can be done on an individual level, such as visiting your local Jewish nursing home or volunteering for a local Jewish charity, or you can initiate a community project, such as running a bake sale to benefit unemployed members of the community.

Stop, empathize, and say: "These are my people, part of my family."

The fourth area involves enlarging your heart to feel the joys and woes of the entire Jewish People. Kassam rockets falling on Israel's southern towns? The persecution of the Jews of Venezuela? Anti-Semitic attacks on Jews in France? Our response to each of these should be to stop, empathize, and say to ourselves: "These are my people, part of my family." Identifying with all the world's Jews and embracing them is an essential part of *Ahavat Yisrael*.

Another way to connect to the Jewish people as a whole is to share your wisdom and love for Judaism with other Jews. For example, if you like an article you read on Aish.com, send it out to Jews in far-flung places. If you've read a book about Judaism that inspired you, recommend it to a Jewish co-worker.

Practicing *Ahavat Yisrael* requires a daily stretch beyond our comfort zone. For example, this morning I was on my way somewhere when a downcast-looking neighbor started speaking to me. Although I was short on time, my commitment to *Ahavat Yisrael* got me to stop and listen to her. After 15 minutes, she smiled and said to me: "I cried for four hours this morning, but the more I speak to you, the better I feel." That's what *Ahavat Yisrael* looks like.

Three months before he died, Rabbi Noah Weinberg, zt"l, the founder and dean of Aish HaTorah, went to the world's foremost rabbi, Rav Elyashuv, to speak about the dangers facing the Jewish people. Rav Elyashuv told him: "The danger to the survival of the Jewish people is greater now than it was in the darkest days of the Holocaust."

Rabbi Weinberg's final message was: The threat is real. Our enemies are determined. We Jews must be equally determined. As Purim proved, the tried-and-true weapon for staving off our annihilation is Jewish unity. You may be wondering, "Why just work on loving all my fellow Jews? Why not love everybody?" Although loving all human beings is indeed a Jewish value, because all humans were created "in the image of God," resolving to love the whole world is like resolving to become a world-class tennis player when you haven't yet mastered getting the ball over the net. Loving, which is a far more difficult skill than playing tennis, must be mastered in stages, or rather concentric circles. The innermost circle is yourself. If you don't love yourself, you cannot love others. The circle closest to you is your family. People who profess to love the whole world but who haven't spoken to their father in years are self-deluded.

If you are Jewish, the next circle is the Jewish people. If you claim to love the whole world, but can't stand half of the 14 million Jews in the world because they differ from you religiously or politically, you are like a person on a Greenpeace boat trying to stop the slaughter of whales while wearing a genuine fur coat. The next circle is all human beings. And the last circle is all sentient beings. If you can get to that level, you've won Wimbledon²

² Reprinted with permission from Aish.com

KIDS CORNER



Search through the letter in order to find the words that represent

Ahavas Yisrael Word Search!!!

O	O	R	E	H	T	E	G	O	T	M	O	Y	O
H	M	J	O	M	H	I	I	C	E	A	V	S	H
A	O	U	R	E	A	E	T	O	R	A	H	W	Y
S	S	H	R	V	C	H	A	V	H	M	L	E	T
H	H	A	M	O	I	I	C	R	I	I	N	J	I
E	I	V	F	L	A	A	A	M	T	T	S	M	N
M	A	I	A	S	I	A	E	N	I	A	O	H	U
F	C	K	M	E	J	E	L	S	I	S	I	H	M
I	H	A	I	M	T	S	R	F	U	S	R	H	M
N	O	I	L	D	N	E	I	R	F	D	R	O	O
A	M	B	Y	G	C	A	A	A	A	D	H	A	C
D	A	B	E	E	O	R	R	E	H	S	R	C	H
I	M	A	H	U	T	A	H	A	R	F	H	I	A

GOAL
HAR SINAI
TOGETHER
FRIEND
RABBI AKIVAH
HEART
COMMUNITY
FAMILY
TORAH
MOSHIACH
HASHEM
LOVE
JEWS
ACHDUS
SIMCHA

Something to put into action this week:

Ahavas Yisrael starts with the people closest to you!! Lend a helping hand to your parents with cleaning up on shabbos

Thinking question of the week:

When was the last time that you did not feel Ahavas Yisrael and how did it make you feel?³

SHABBAT SHALOM!

³ Please submit Ahavas Yisrael material to hkarben@gmail.com