

The Rebbe

Parshas Va'era

28th of Tevet, Blessing of the Month of Shevat, 5752.

[NOTE: In connection with the passing of the chassidic rabbi, Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak, of blessed memory, Hecht, on the eve of Shabbat. From the first pioneers among the emissaries of the Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak (of blessed memory), in the United States, the director of the Chabad institutions in New Haven, Connecticut

The discourse reflects on the passing of Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak Hecht, a prominent Chabad emissary, and its connection to the teaching, "One who dies on Erev Shabbat, it is a good sign for him." The Rebbe draws parallels between the timing of his passing and the broader spiritual themes of preparation, refinement, and ultimate perfection inherent in Shabbat and the Messianic era.

The teaching from Tractate Ketubot that dying on Erev Shabbat is a "good sign" is explored both in its simple meaning and its deeper implications. Erev Shabbat, a time of preparation for holiness, symbolizes the culmination of spiritual service, just as the transition from worldly toil to the sanctity of Shabbat signifies rest and renewal. The passing on Erev Shabbat is likened to Adam's "deep sleep," which led to the creation of Eve and an amplification of vitality through progeny. Similarly, death on Erev Shabbat represents the rectification of death's negative aspects and the potential for eternal life and continuity through descendants and spiritual influence.

The Rebbe emphasizes the continuation of Rabbi Hecht's mission of spreading Torah, Judaism, and Chassidut. His dedication to his work, even until his final days, embodies the unity of action and purpose, as reflected in his name: "Moshe," symbolizing leadership and Torah, and "Yitzchak," denoting joy and eternity. This union serves as an inspiration for ongoing efforts to expand and strengthen the institutions he founded.

The family name "Hecht" is also significant, symbolizing the purity and resilience of fish, which are not subject to the evil eye and reflect the enduring qualities of Yosef's descendants. This imagery ties into the service of refining mundane matters and elevating them to holiness, aligning with the preparation for the ultimate redemption.

The Rebbe concludes by urging continued growth and renewal in Rabbi Hecht's legacy, encouraging the expansion of Torah learning and outreach efforts. This serves as a tangible way to affirm the teaching that "just as his descendants are alive, so too he is alive." The ultimate goal is hastening the coming of Moshiach, the resurrection, and the eternal Shabbat, when all will be united in the sanctity of the Third Temple. This underscores the central message: the sanctity of life and service transcends physical boundaries, leading to eternal vitality and joy.

END NOTE]

⌘) At the end of Tractate *Ketubot* we learned: "If one passed away on the eve of Shabbat, it is a good sign for him" (since he enters rest immediately).

The beginning of the matter: When Rabbi [Yehuda HaNasi] became ill, Rabbi Hiyya went to him and found him crying. He said to him, "Rabbi, why are you crying? For we have learned: If one passes away with laughter, it is a good sign for him; with weeping, it is a bad sign for him; if his

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face is upward, etc.; if his face is toward the people, etc.; if his face is radiant, etc.; if he passed away on the eve of Shabbat, it is a good sign for him, and so forth. If he passed away from intestinal illness, it is a good sign for him, as most of the righteous pass away from intestinal illness."

[Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi] said to him, "I am crying over the Torah and the mitzvot [that I will no longer be able to fulfill]."

[NOTE: Ketubot 103b and see also Avot d'Rabbi Natan Chapter 25, Section 2, and in the writings of the Arizal Shaar HaGilgulim, Introduction 23, and others: "Anyone buried on the eve of Shabbat does not experience the torment of the grave because the sanctity of Shabbat separates the impurity from them without the pain of the grave's torment." **END NOTE]**

And regarding the reasoning for the matter (the need for two positive signs), it can be explained as follows: Even after negating the bad sign of "dying with weeping," based on Rabbi's intention and thought—"I am crying over Torah and mitzvot"—there is still a need to negate the possible presumption of a bad sign from Rabbi's weeping as it appears outwardly and visibly (since no one knows what is in another's heart).

This is achieved by adding another positive sign (in addition to the positive sign of dying from intestinal illness, there is also the positive sign of dying on the eve of Shabbat). These two positive signs counteract the potential presumption of a bad sign from Rabbi's weeping.

ב) And clarification is needed regarding the matter itself:

The addition of the positive sign of "dying on the eve of Shabbat" negates only the bad sign of "dying with weeping." However, (seemingly) it does not nullify (or correct) the reason for Rabbi's weeping—"I am crying over Torah and mitzvot," i.e., the cessation of Torah and mitzvot after death. Regarding this matter, there is (seemingly) no difference whether the death occurs on the eve of Shabbat or on other days of the week. And as emphasized in the words of the *Gemara* concerning the death of King David, who requested to die on the eve of Shabbat (where it can be suggested that he desired the additional merit of "dying on the eve of Shabbat").

And the Holy One, Blessed Be He, said to him: "For better is one day in Your courts than a thousand"—one day that you sit and engage in Torah is more precious to Me than a thousand offerings that your son Solomon will offer before Me on the altar."

This means that the merit of engaging in Torah and mitzvot, even for just one day, surpasses the merit of "dying on the eve of Shabbat."

And furthermore, and primarily: How can it truly be said (in the context of Torah truth) that "dying on the eve of Shabbat is a good sign for him" (and similarly regarding other modes of death about which it is said, "it is a good sign for him")—a "good sign" in relation to the event of death, the opposite of life and the ultimate opposite of goodness according to Torah, the Torah of life, our life and the length of our days? As it is written, "which a person shall do and live by them," and not that he shall die by them, which is why saving a life overrides the entirety of the Torah. For the ultimate perfection, according to the will of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, as expressed in His Torah, is specifically in the life of the soul within the body!

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It can be said that the key point of the explanation is this: The "good sign" of "dying on the eve of Shabbat" signifies and emphasizes the rectification of the undesirable aspect inherent in the very concept of death. Consequently, the reason for Rabbi's weeping over the cessation of Torah and mitzvot is also nullified (and rectified), as will be explained below.

א) This will be understood by first explaining the beginning and root of the concept of "dying on the eve of Shabbat is a good sign for him"—as it was on the first eve of Shabbat: On the first eve of Shabbat, the sixth day of creation, the day Adam HaRishon was created, there was a semblance of and parallel to the concept of death: "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept" (*Bereishit* 2:21). Sleep is described as "one-sixtieth of death." And although deep sleep and sleep are, seemingly, undesirable—representing a cessation of vitality (one-sixtieth of death)—this is a sign (which causes and brings about something) of goodness. Through this process, an increase in vitality occurred, even to the extent of an incomparably greater addition.

As the verse continues: "And He took one of his ribs... and built it into a woman" (*Bereishit* 2:22), and "Male and female He created them" (*Bereishit* 1:27), "He blessed them and called their name Adam" (*Bereishit* 5:2), and "He blessed them, saying: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth" (*Bereishit* 1:28). This represents the drawing and revelation of the infinite power to bring forth children and descendants until the end of all generations. In addition to the vitality of the person, which is limited, there was an increase in unlimited vitality (an incomparable addition of vitality) continuing through the lives of his offspring and their offspring indefinitely.

Its parallel can be found on every Rosh Hashanah, which is fixed on the first of Tishrei, the sixth day of creation (since the world was created on the 25th of Elul). It is explained in Kabbalistic texts that on every Rosh Hashanah, there is a parallel to the event described as "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs... and built it into a woman" (*Bereishit* 2:21-22). This is because Ze'er Anpin and Malchut (man and woman) return to a state of "back-to-back," as they were at the beginning of creation when they were created as "two faces," male in front and female behind. In order for them to return to the state of "face-to-face," the process of separation (*nesira*) must occur, as in "He took one of his ribs," where the two faces created together in the initial creation were separated.

Before the separation, there must be a state of dormita (sleep), a cessation of vitality, for the purpose of building Malchut, so that it can reunite with Ze'er Anpin in a state of face-to-face unity. A similar concept occurs on the sixth day of every week (which parallels the sixth day of the six days of creation), where there is a dormita (deep sleep) in Ze'er Anpin, a process of separation, through which the unification of Ze'er Anpin and Malchut is achieved on Friday night. Similarly, regarding the overall timeframe of the "six thousand years during which the world exists" (*Shit Alfei Shnin*), which correspond to the six days of the week—on the sixth millennium, the eve of Shabbat, at the end of the period of exile, there occurs the *dormita* of Ze'er Anpin, a process of separation (*nesira*). Through this process, the perfection of the

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unification between Ze'er Anpin and Malchut (the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and Knesset Yisrael) is achieved, culminating in the day that is entirely Shabbat and rest, for eternal life.

It becomes even clearer that this teaching of our sages, "One who dies on the eve of Shabbat, it is a good sign for him," is closely connected to the conclusion (completion and perfection) of Tractate *Ketubot*. The term *ketuba* refers to the unity between man and woman (and similarly symbolizes the marriage between the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and Knesset Yisrael). This unity represents the completion and perfection of the concept of the *ketuba*. Therefore, as Tractate *Ketubot* nears its conclusion (leading up to and in proximity to the concept of unity), it discusses "dying on the eve of Shabbat," which corresponds to the *dormita* of Ze'er Anpin for the purpose of separation (*nesira*), through which the ultimate unity will occur. This marks the completion and perfection of the *ketuba* in the future, when the ultimate birth (completion and perfection of unity) will take place in the world, including even in the plant kingdom. This is reflected in the conclusion and sealing of Tractate *Ketubot*: "In the future, all barren trees in the Land of Israel will bear fruit."

ד) Based on the explanation at the beginning regarding the root of the matter, "one who dies on Erev Shabbat, it is a good sign for him," it is also possible to explain the concept in relation to a person's spiritual service. For in addition to its simple meaning, there is also a lesson and guidance (as is the case with all matters of Torah, which is derived from the word for "instruction") for the person studying this statement of our sages in their spiritual service as a soul in a body for long and good days:

Since on Erev Shabbat (after midday), there exists the concept of the "dormita" of Zeir Anpin—a time of sleep above—it corresponds to a time of sleep below, as we find in the conduct of great chassidic leaders (such as the chassidic master Rabbi Hillel of Paritch and others), who would sleep during this time (since it is a time of rest above).

It can be suggested that this is the meaning of the phrase, "one who dies on Erev Shabbat" – the sleep (which is considered "one-sixtieth of death") on Erev Shabbat after midday.

וּמִיָּמִינוּ יָפָה לוֹ "And it is a good sign for him" – Since through the sleep, a renewal of vitality is achieved, as it is known that during sleep the soul ascends above and draws life from the Source of Life above. Through this, there is an added increase in strength and vigor in the study of Torah (the revealed aspects of Torah, and especially the inner dimensions of Torah, in a manner of understanding and comprehension, as in the teachings of Chabad Chassidut), with physical and mental tranquility. This begins immediately after the sleep, as the obligation to study Torah applies to every moment of the day, and especially on Erev Shabbat and in proximity to the onset of Shabbat, since Shabbat is particularly connected to Torah, as our Sages of Blessed Memory said: "The Torah was given to Israel on Shabbat."

It can also be added regarding the precision of the phrase "a good sign for him"—that the sleep on Erev Shabbat, through which there is an addition and renewal of vitality in Torah study, serves as a "sign" (which causes and brings about) for the addition and renewal of vitality in Torah study in ultimate perfection, in the revelation of the "new Torah that will emerge from Me" in the future, for the day that is entirely Shabbat and rest for eternal life.

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ה) Based on this, it is possible to explain the content of the saying, "One who dies on Erev Shabbat, it is a good sign for him," also in regard to the simple meaning of the words: Just as the first sleep (of Adam, the first man) on Erev Shabbat was for the purpose of adding and renewing vitality (as mentioned above in section 3), so too, death on Erev Shabbat is for the purpose of adding and renewing vitality. The explanation for this is in two parts:

1. Our Sages of Blessed Memory said, "Jacob our father did not die... just as his descendants are alive, so too is he alive." Through the continuation of the life of his descendants (true life, since Torah, which is Jacob's essence, is true life), he, too, is considered alive. Moreover, this concept of "he is alive" is realized in its truest sense, with eternal existence (unlike something finite, which is false by nature). This is revealed in the continuity and eternal nature of his descendants' life after his passing. It is specifically then that the eternity and truth of "he is alive" become openly apparent. Thus, through death, an addition and renewal of life occur—namely, the revelation of the eternity and truth of life.
2. And primarily: The cessation of life through death is for the purpose of an addition and renewal of life as a soul in a body at the resurrection of the dead, when the life of the soul in the body will be eternal life.

This becomes even clearer when considering that at the conclusion of Tractate Ketubot (following the introduction of "one who dies on Erev Shabbat..." near the end of the tractate, as mentioned above at the end of section 3), the discussion concerns the resurrection of the dead: "The righteous in the future will sprout and rise in Jerusalem... the righteous in the future will stand in their garments, all the more so from a needle, etc."—souls in physical bodies in this physical world, where all matters within it will then be in a state of ultimate perfection. Just as it is stated, "In the future, wheat will grow as tall as a palm tree and rise atop the mountains... and it will be as large as the two kidneys of a great ox" (continuing the discussion),

Based on this, one can explain the interpretation of the statement, "One who dies on Erev Shabbat, it is a good sign for him": Since Erev Shabbat emphasizes that the cessation of life is for the purpose of an addition and renewal of life, the timing of death on Erev Shabbat is a "good sign for him," indicating that his death is in a manner that highlights, in a revealed way, only the positive aspect of the addition and renewal of life. This includes both the addition of the eternity and truth of life through "his descendants are alive," and primarily through the resurrection of the dead, which is closely connected to the time of burial.

It follows that this "good sign" indicates and emphasizes the rectification of the undesirable aspect of death. Consequently, it also rectifies the cause of Rabbi's weeping over the cessation of Torah and mitzvot. For when the righteous rise at the resurrection (at the beginning of the Messianic Era, forty years before the general resurrection of the dead for all of Israel), the continuation of Torah and mitzvot will exist—and moreover, in an elevated and more complete manner, as "the fulfillment of Your will." This is especially so according to the opinions that mitzvot will not cease to exist in the future (even after the resurrection of the dead).

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And it can be said that the primary intention of our Sages of Blessed Memory in the statement, "One who dies on Erev Shabbat, it is a good sign for him," in the Torah—the Torah of life and the Torah of kindness—is (not in its literal sense, God forbid, but rather) regarding a person's service in the life of the soul within the body, for long and good days, in visible and revealed goodness (as mentioned above in section 4). Particularly after this has already occurred literally (in the case of individuals of exceptional standing), this suffices (more than enough) to fulfill the obligation on behalf of all other Jews (with regard to the literal occurrence, God forbid). Consequently, for them, this matter will exist solely in the realm of spiritual service, for long and good days, culminating in eternal life (without any interruption whatsoever) in the future to come.

י) And the above-mentioned is particularly connected to the event of "one who dies on Erev Shabbat" in its literal sense on this Erev Shabbat. By way of introduction: Every individual from Israel is a part of and connected with the entirety of Israel, a single and complete structure. This refers to a chassid who was connected with and devoted to the honor of the holiness of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe, the leader of our generation. He was entrusted and tasked by him with establishing and managing institutions for the dissemination of Torah, Judaism, and the wellsprings of Chassidut outward. His entire life was dedicated to fulfilling this mission until his final day—Erev Shabbat Kodesh, the Shabbat on which the month of Shevat is blessed, the 10th of which is the *yahrzeit* of the one who sent him, the honor of the holiness of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe, the leader of our generation (as mentioned above). Certainly, there is a lesson and directive to be drawn from this, "The living should take it to heart," particularly regarding the continuation of the mission of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe, the leader of our generation, for all generations in spreading Torah, Judaism, and the wellsprings outward.

Accordingly, it is fitting to reflect on the lessons and directives derived from the name of the deceased, including the family name, as will be explained below.

ר) In his two names—"Moshe Yitzchak"—there is an allusion, primarily, to his connection with the honor of the holiness of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe:

"Moshe"—the concept of *lthpashtuta d'Moshe b'chol dara v'dara* (the extension of Moshe in every generation), Moshe Rabbeinu of our generation.

"Yitzchak"—the second name of the honor of the holiness of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe, named after joy and laughter, as it says, "All who hear will laugh with me."

The essence and completion of this joy and laughter will be in the future redemption through our righteous Moshiach (*the first redeemer is the final redeemer*), as it is written, "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter," when it will specifically be said to Yitzchak, "For you are our father."

And it is possible to add to the content of the two names—in connection and relation to his service in fulfilling the mission of the honor of the holiness of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe:

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Among the differences between Moshe and Yitzchak is that Moshe lived for 120 years, as it is written, **"I am 120 years old today; today my days and years are complete,"** representing the fullness and completion of a person's life (**"and his days shall be 120 years"**), as well as his service on this earth.

In contrast, Yitzchak lived for 180 years, representing the ultimate perfection of longevity, surpassing the other forefathers: Jacob, who lived 147 years, and even Abraham, who lived 175 years.

The combination of both (in the name of one person) indicates an addition to the perfection of service (120 years) through longevity (180 years). Moreover, this addition is achieved in the same manner as the essential service (120 years):

There are those who, after engaging in their work for an extended period and meriting to see good fruits from their efforts, think that the time has come to rest from the intense toil of their service. Consequently, they already anticipate the conclusion and completion of their work (and even its ultimate perfection—in the days of Moshiach).

And there are those who, even after completing their work, desire and strive to add even more. However, even so, this addition is not in the same manner as the essential work but rather as an additional effort.

The true perfection is emphasized in the combination of the two names, **Moshe** and **Yitzchak**, demonstrating that even the additions (after the completion of the work), in the continuation of work for long and good days (up to 180 years, as in the years of Yitzchak), are carried out in the same manner as the essential work (before its completion, up to the perfection of 120 years).

This is evident from the conduct of the deceased, who was not content with the existing state of completion but continued to engage in all aspects of the work with the same energy, vitality, and joy (as emphasized by the name **Yitzchak**, which signifies joy) throughout his life, until his final day. This is apparent from the inquiries about managing the institutions, which continued to arrive here even in his last days.

n) It is also possible to add a hint in the family name Hecht—a name of a fish, which, despite being a predatory fish, has the unique quality of being a kosher fish. Furthermore, it is particularly beloved in connection with the mitzvah of eating fish on Shabbat. Fish are associated with the idea that "water covers them, and the evil eye does not rule over them," and this parallels the descendants of Yosef, including, especially, the offspring (students and emissaries) of Yosef of our generation—the honor of the holiness of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe, the leader of our generation—about whom it is said, "And they shall multiply like fish in the midst of the land."

The aspect of a predatory fish corresponds to what is written about Binyamin, "Binyamin is a ravenous wolf"—a "holy prey" that refers to the general service of refining and elevating the sparks of holiness. These sparks are "seized" from worldly matters and uplifted to holiness, as

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hinted at in the numerical value of Teref (prey), which equals 288 plus 1. This alludes to the 288 sparks that fell during the shattering of the vessels in the world of Tohu, whose refinement and elevation to holiness are accomplished through drawing and revealing the Alef—the Master of the world.

It is possible to further explain the connection and relevance to Erev Shabbat, the time of preparing fish for Shabbat (as the Sages said: "Whoever toils on Erev Shabbat will eat on Shabbat"), based on the teaching of our Sages: "Remember it before and guard it afterward. From here, they said that one should add from the mundane to the sacred. It is like a wolf that preys before and after." This hints at the ultimate purpose (completion and perfection) of the general service (toil) during the six weekdays in refining and elevating the mundane matters of the world. These, too, ascend and become included in the sanctity of Shabbat (adding from the mundane to the sacred).

Thus, the preparation of fish (representing the "work of the predatory wolf") is on Erev Shabbat, while their consumption occurs on Shabbat (the time of rest that follows the labor, as "the wolf has preyed"). Based on this, it is possible to further explain the "good sign" of "one who dies on Erev Shabbat"—indicating the completion and perfection of the work in refining the matters of the world ("a wolf preys"), and therefore, he immediately enters into rest.

ו) The lesson and guidance from the aforementioned event, "The living should take it to heart": First and foremost, even after his passing, there must be a continuation of the existence and expansion of the institutions he was involved with in fulfilling the mission of the honor of the holiness of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe. Moreover, this should be done with increased vigor and strength, in a manner of added vitality and renewal—"Just as his descendants are alive, so too he is alive" (as mentioned above in section 5).

This is especially relevant through his household and family, who should live, his descendants in the literal sense—"His descendants are alive"—with an increase in all aspects of life, both spiritual and physical, in a healthy soul within a healthy body, for long and good days, up to 120 years (as in the years of Moshe), and even beyond that, up to 180 years (as in the years of Yitzchak).

And since the beginning of all matters is in the Torah, "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it... and he raised many disciples," it is appropriate to propose and encourage (as "we attend to public needs on Shabbat") the initiation of an expansion in the continuation and growth of the aforementioned institutions through the publication (in preparation for the "shloshim") of a Torah innovation booklet. This should include words of inspiration in matters of Torah and mitzvot (including in the local language) and involve the participation of the students of these institutions, his family members, relatives, friends, and others. Within this publication, the names of supporters and contributors should also be publicized, for surely they will continue to support and contribute even more to the maintenance and expansion of these institutions, as "it is a mitzvah to publicize those who perform mitzvot."

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Through this, there will be a greater increase in the matter of "just as his descendants are alive, so too he is alive," in a manner of an "eternal remembrance." This will further hasten the ultimate and true eternal perfection (eliminating the need for an "eternal remembrance") in the form of eternal life that will follow the resurrection. And additionally, it is essential to note that the event of "one who dies on Erev Shabbat" is a "good sign" (if there is still a need for signs), as the completion and perfection of the service of clarifying and refining the mundane matters in the manner of "a wolf preys" is accomplished through the descendants of Yosef (the honor of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe, the leader of our generation), who are likened to fish. Everything is prepared for the feast, the feast of the future to come ("for the day that is entirely Shabbat and rest for eternal life"), when the completion of the perfection of eating fish (after the completion of the preparation on Erev Shabbat) will be through the flesh of Leviathan, and likewise, the wild ox and preserved wine.

May it be Your will—and this is the main point—that there will no longer be a need for "signs" regarding the completion and perfection of our actions and service in preparation for the Redemption, for immediately and without delay—on this holy Shabbat day—our righteous Moshiach will come.

Then, "those who dwell in the dust will awaken and sing," including him (who became one who "dwells in the dust" on this Erev Shabbat), among them, and the honor of the holiness of my teacher and father-in-law, the Rebbe, the leader of our generation (the one whose yahrzeit is on the 10th of Shevat), will be at their forefront, along with all of us—the entire Jewish people of this generation.

This includes souls in bodies, in eternal life (without interruption, God forbid), all coming together—together with synagogues, study halls, and houses of good deeds (including the aforementioned institutions, in the simplest sense) outside of Israel—to our holy land, to Jerusalem, the holy city, to the holy mountain, and to the Third (and triple) Temple, immediately and without delay.