The Shul
at the Lubavitch Center
6701 Old Pimlico Road
Baltimore. MD 21209

www.chabadshul.org

July 11, 2026 **Matot - Masei — Shabbat M'vorchim** **26 Tammuz, 5786**

Signpost

The court is obligated to straighten the roads to the cities of refuge, to repair them and broaden them. They must remove all impediments and obstacles ... . Bridges should be built (over all natural barriers) so as not to delay one who is fleeing to [the city of refuge]. The width of a road to a city of refuge should not be less than thirty-two cubits. "Refuge, Refuge" was written at all crossroads, so that the murderers should recognize the way and turn there. (Mishneh Torah, Laws Regarding Murder and the Preservation of Life 8:5)

The "cities of refuge" were six cities in the Land of Israel designated as havens for murderers. A person who killed would flee to the nearest city of refuge, where he would be safe from the vengeance of his victim's closest relative (the "avenger of the blood") until he was brought to trial before the Sanhedrin, a tribunal of twenty-three judges that tried capital cases. It was the court's responsibility to ensure the accessibility of the cities of refuge by improving the roads leading to them and posting signs with the words miklat, miklat ("refuge, refuge") to show the way.

On the spiritual plane, there also exist six "cities of refuge" for the spiritual "murderer." Life, in the true and ultimate sense, is connection with the divine source of being and vitality; an act of transgression against the divine will is a subtle form of "murder," as it hinders the flow of vitality from G-d to creation. The words of the Torah, say our sages, are the "cities of refuge" for the destroyer of spiritual life: if he flees into the Torah and immerses himself in it, the Torah will protect him from the adverse results of his deed.

The Torah contains 613 mitzvot, or commandments. However, the great majority of them require certain circumstances to obligate and enable their fulfillment: there are mitzvot that can be observed only at certain hours of the day, or only on certain days of the year; mitzvot that can be observed only in the Land of Israel, or only in the Holy Temple; mitzvot that pertain only to men, only to kohanim ("priests"), only to employers, or only to farmers; and so on. But there are six mitzvot—to believe in G-d, to avow His oneness, to renounce idolatry, to love G-d, to fear Him, and to avoid temptation to sin—that pertain to all times, to all individuals, to all places and in all circumstances, so that they are readily accessible to one who seeks refuge from his faults and failings, whomever he might be and wherever and whenever the desire to rectify his life might strike him. These are the six readily accessible spiritual "cities of refuge" for the errant soul.

But a haven is of little use if it is inaccessible or its location is unknown. As is the case with the physical cities of refuge, it is the community's responsibility to "straighten the roads ... to repair them and broaden them ... remove all impediments and obstacles" and post signs at all crossroads.

This imperative has special meaning to us today, when the roads of life are teeming with spiritual refugees. It is our sacred duty to station ourselves at all the crossroads and serve as living signposts, calling out "Refuge! Refuge!" and pointing the way to the haven of Torah.

(based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe from www.chabad.org)

Piloted by the Past

These are the journeys of the Children of Israel who left the land of Egypt in their legions, under the charge of Moshe and Aaron. Moshe recorded their goings out for their journeys according to the word of HASHEM, and these were their journeys for their goings out. (Bamidbar 33:1-2)

It would seem that there are two types of journeys being spoken about here. One is "their goings out for their journeys" and the other is "their journeys for their goings out". The first one is "under the charge of Moshe and Aaron and according to the word of HASHEM. What then is the second one referring to?

There are two particular trees that are spoken about in the Garden of Eden, one is the Tree of Life and the other was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What is the difference between these two trees and the practical application to us? The Tree of Life is in reference to the Torah. It maps out for us a way of living, how to happily navigate through this life and reach the bliss of Olam Haba. The Talmud refers to this approach as "the long way which is the short way". There is a requirement of labor and study and dutiful obedience but in the long run, it is a fruitful path. When assembling anything, it always helps to have instructions. The more complex the item the

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bigger the user's manual. A bicycle is a page or two and a car is already a thicker book. How about the Book of Life?! How full and rich and sophisticated must that be!?

Shlomo HaMelech writes in Mishlei (3:5-6), "Trust in HASHEM with all your heart and do not rely upon your understanding. Know Him in all your ways, and He will make your paths straight." What are his instructions for life listed here? Don't rely on your own assessments but rather to trust in HASHEM wholeheartedly. Do the right thing at each moment. and then you will have created, with HASHEM, a beautiful picture. Life is like a paint by number painting. "Plan A" produces results that are well beyond our wildest and limited imaginations. This is the objective way to engage the subjectivity of life.

The second tree is the School of Hard Knocks. It is driven by experimentation and chock full of trials and errors. It's a whole other way of learning. The tuition for this school is temptingly low. In fact, it is zero. It costs nothing up front, however, in the end it is very expensive. This is the subjective way to arrive at objectivity and it may cost us years and decades of life, valuable relationships, health, and more, to discover what could have been learned much earlier. This is "the short way which is the long way".

Sometimes a kid will be sent to my office. He will enter very upset. I will ask him to wait and then, when he is more at ease, I will ask him what happened. I am usually met with a barrage of claims about how everyone is to blame and it's not his fault at all. I then calm him down by telling him, "You are not in trouble!" His facial expression immediately relaxes and normalizes. I will explain, "I honestly don't know what happened. Not only are you not in trouble, but today could be a great day, if we learned from what just happened. This may be the reason you came to school today or this year. However, if you fail to learn something, then you are in trouble but not with me. You are in trouble with your-self. This problem will likely repeat itself again and again throughout your life until you figure out what you need to learn. It is probably better for you to learn it here and now and with me helping you rather than after a lifetime of denial. Now let's figure this out together. Slowly, now, what happened?"

It is said that the most successful person is not the one who makes the fewest mistakes but rather the one who learns the most from his mistakes. I once took my whole family on a boat trip. I was the captain of that excursion, and I required "a crash course". (not a very inspiring term) I learned that a boat steers unlike a car. The rudder is moved in the back and the boat moves in the opposite direction. A car steers from in front and goes where the wheels point. Sometimes we look into the future and often we are piloted by the past.

(by Rabbi Label Lam from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Mr. Shmuel and Mrs. Mirra Siegel are co-sponsoring Kiddush this Shabbat
in memory of Shmuel's mother,
Riklah Shleimshah bas Avrom Mottel haKohen — **Renee Siegel**,
whose yahrzeit is the 2nd of Av.
Mr. Avi and Mrs. Elana Blumenthal are co-sponsoring Kiddush this Shabbat
in honor of
their baby daughter Chaya Hadassah.

Yahrzeits This Week:

Jill Bluemthal	29 Tammuz - Monday night / Tuesday	for mother	Gittel bas Moshe
Shmuel Siegel	2 Av - Wednesday night / Thursday	for mother	Riklah Shleimshah bas Avrom Mottel haKohen
Bluma Lewin	2 Av - Wednesday night / Thursday	for mother	Anyah Dansah bas Yosef

DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 7/10 — 25 Tammuz
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 7/11 — 26 Tammuz
Shacharit 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:28 a.m.
Minchah — 8:05 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Shkiah — 8:35 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 9:22 p.m.

Sunday, 7/12 — 27 Tammuz
Shacharit —8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Monday, 7/13 — 28 Tammuz
Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Tuesday, 7/14 - 29 Tammuz
Shacharit— 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Wednesday — Rosh Chodesh Av, 7/15 — 1 Av
Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Thursday, 7/16 — 2 Av
Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Friday, 7/17 — 3 Av
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Shabbat Candles — 8:12 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.