**Brooklyn torah gazette**

**For parshas vaeschanan 5782**

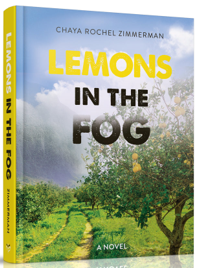
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**A Yeshiva Bochur’s Struggle**

**To Deal with Mental Illness**

**By Daniel Keren**

(“Lemons in the Fog”: A Novel by Chaya Rochel Zimmerman, 246 pages, Menucha Publishers, Inc., 2020)



“Lemons in the Fog,” is an easy reading experience that touches on a very sensitive (i.e. scary and painful) topic of mental illness in the frum community (Orthodox Jewish) community. It tackles the long-held stigma that has prevvented many of us from providing necessary medical and psychiatric care in a timely manner to those members of our families who to no fault of their own suffer from debilitating mental illness.

Chaya Rochel Zimmerman’s recent novel explains that with the proper medical intervention and with a more sympathetic support and compassion from members of the frum community, those who suffer from varous mental illnesses if treated with respoect and not with revulsion can lead productive lives.

**A Yeshiva Student from Los Angeles**

The protagonist in the novel “Lemons in the Fog” is 19-year-old Meir Rosen, a yeshiva student from Los Angeles learning in a Jerusalem yeshiva catering to American boys who enjoy the opportunity to learn Torah in a new and more exciting environment overflowing with that special kedusha (holiness) tthat is unique to the Holy City.

That is until certain dark forces took control of him and resulted in his not being able to keep pace with his chavurso (study partner) or control his behavior. Using the voice and thoughts of Meir, Mrs. Zimmerman clearly explains to the reader the concept of Bipolar disorder (or manic depression) – a mental health condition that causes extreme mood swings that inclde emotional highs (mania or hypomania) and lows (depression.)

Very few in the frum community understand the reality of mental illness conditions such as the bipolar disorder that struck the protagonist in “Lemons in the Fog.” Unfortunately for Meir Rosen, the rabbis in his yeshiva knew only to throw “their” problem back on Meir’s family and with no tips to the parents on where they could get help.

And sadly for Meir, his outbreak of mental illness came at a time when his older sister Batsheva was preparing to enter the world of shidduchim (dating for marriage) thus creating the so called “Perfect Storm.” Basically, his father and mother emotionally in deep fear of the stigma that would occur to the family if others disovered that Meir had “a serious problem” resulted in their dumping him into a rehab center in Eretz Yisroel, where nobody they knew would ever discover of their shameful secret.

**Productive Lives Often Require Difficult Decisions**

In “Lemon in the Fog,” we discover how Meir Rosen has to make the ultimate choice of either making those difficult decisions to carve a productive life for himself by struggling to overcome the seemingly overwhelming darkness surrounding him by carefully taking his daily medications and listening to the advice of his case worker, doctor and social worker teacher. Without making those difficult decisions Meir would need to heal himself, the result would be to take the easy step of just falling into a life of fulltime depression.

In trying to overcome his manic depression, Meir learns the important lesson of the need to learn how to be sympathetic and empathetic to the sufferings of others and perhaps more importantly in his own case to come to terms with his relationship with his family and to not let his bitterness towards them create a permanent chasm that would not only harm his parents and siblings, but more imporantly himself.

Reading “Lemons in the Fog” will help the reader to gain a clearer insight into the stigma of mental illness. I highly recommend this book and especially for those who are beginning the chapter of having to deal with this problem themselves or with a family member.

Mrs. Zimmerman at the end of her book, provides the reader with infornation on various groups that can help members of our community to deal with and overcome the debilitating problems of mental illness.

“Lemons in the Fog” by Chaya Rochel Zimmerman can be found in Jewish bookstores or from the publisher by clicking [www.menuchapublishers.com](http://www.menuchapublishers.com) or emailing [sales@menuchapublishers.com](mailto:sales@menuchapublishers.com)

*Reprinted from the August 5, 2022 edition of the Jewish Connection.*

**The Important Skill of Gaining Satisfaction**

Ben Zoma said: Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot. (Ethics 4:1)

The attainment of true wealth lies within a person's ability to be satisfied with his lot, regardless of that person's circumstances. Acquiring this skill is an attainable goal. It does not depend on actual fulfillment of one's desires, and can only be achieved when there is meaning to one's existence. Our commitment to the Torah can change the most miserable of fates into a meaningful existence. *(Ethics From Sinai)*

Run to perform even an easy mitzva (Ethics 4:2)

The intent is not that we should merely run to perform a mitzva, but that we should observe the mitzvot with joy, vitality and vigor. Even a mitzva which appears easy and insignificant should be observed with enthusiasm and devotion.

For the reward of a mitzva is a mitzva, and the reward of a transgression is a transgression (Ethics 4:2)

Reward and punishment are not extraneous treatments given to those with a surplus of merits or sins; they are natural consequences of what we do. Do one mitzva, and from Heaven you will be aided to do more; commit a transgression, and opportunities to transgress further will be placed before you. *(Maimonides)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vaeschanan 5757/1957 edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Night Torah Protection**



**QUESTION:** **What does it mean when it says (Eiruvin 18b) that a house where the sound of the Torah is heard at night, that house will not destroyed?**

**ANSWER:** Now, that’s like all the statements in the Scriptures and in the Gemara – preventing the destruction of a house depends on various factors and this is one of the factors. Many times we suddenly see, chas v’shalom it shouldn’t happen, but we see sometimes that a house is broken up.  Sometimes an illness suddenly strikes, chas v’shalom, or another tragedy and the parents are gone; both parents are gone.  It happens.  Sometimes, there’s a breakup.  A tragedy.  One parent, the father runs away.  It happens, chas v’shalom. There are all kinds of ways that a house can be attacked.

Now a house is a very precious building block of our nation.  Every Jewish home is of inestimable value to us, besides for being the greatest value to the members of that house.  And therefore we have to utilize all factors available that will stabilize such a house.  And one of the big factors is if the sound of the Torah is heard there at night.  Hakodosh Boruch Hu is going to try preserve a house like that; it means He has a personal interest in that house, so to speak.  He is interested that this house should continue.  And therefore it’s going to be protected against many vicissitudes which otherwise would come in and break up a house.



Chas v’shalom, when a house breaks up, a Jewish house, it’s a churban of a little Beis Hamikdash.  And one of the ways of ensuring the survival of that house is to take out a gemara at night; if you don’t know gemara take out a chumash and say Torah aloud at night – even a little bit – at your table.  You don’t realize – the entire atmosphere changes in that house.  And Hakodosh Boruch Hu already has a very big interest in preserving that house.

*Reprinted from the August 4, 2022 email of Toras Avigdor (Tape #133).*

**The True Definiation of Poverty**

Rabbi Yonatan said: "Whoever fulfills the Torah in poverty will ultimately fulfill it in wealth..." (Ethics 4:9)

Poverty is not necessarily measured in financial terms. On the contrary, our Sages commented that it is with regard to one's knowledge that one is defined as being rich or poor. And poverty in knowledge is relative. Just as a member of the middle-class is dwarfed by a magnate's wealth, so too, all of us feel impoverished when we realized the infinite scope of the Torah's wisdom. This sense of poverty should awaken a thirst which will motivate earnest and sincere effort in Torah study. *(Sichot Kodesh, Naso, 5746)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vaeschanan 5757/1957 edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**The Power of the Shema and**

**The Jew’s Recognition of the**

**Reality of Our G-d is One!**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



In this week's Torah portion, Vaeschanan, we learn of one of the Torah's positive commandments, which is to recite "Kriyas Shema," the central proclamation of our faith, twice each day.

The Torah specifies when we must say it: "when you lie down," i. e., at night, and "when you rise," i.e., during the day.

"Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One. And you shall love...and you shall speak of them...when you lie down and when you rise...and upon your gates."

With the declaration of "Shema Yisrael," the Jew testifies that G-d is One, and that nothing else exists except for Him.

The word echad, one, is composed of three letters: alef, chet and dalet.

The numerical equivalent of alef is one. G-d is alone and unique in the universe.

The numerical equivalent of chet is eight. Only G-d is King over all seven firmaments and the earth below.

**G-d is the Sole Sovereign Over All Four Directions**

The numerical equivalent of dalet is four. This expresses the concept that G-d is the sole Sovereign over all four directions: east, west, north and south.

By saying the "Shema," the Jew negates the independent existence of the world. He declares that all of creation -- the celestial spheres, the earth below and the four winds -- are completely nullified before Him. G-d is the One Who sustains and rules over them; without Him, they would not exist. G-d is One; there is nothing else but Him.

A Jew is obligated to recite the "Shema" by night and by day, two opposites that allude to the variety of situations and circumstances a Jew will encounter throughout his life.

Nighttime, in the allegorical sense, is a time of spiritual darkness, when G-d's light is hidden and concealed. At such times it is hard for the Jew to perceive G-dliness; his spiritual condition is as dark as night.

Daytime, by contrast, is a time when the sun illuminates. Symbolically, this alludes to the illumination of the Jew's soul, when G-dliness is readily perceived and apparent.

**The Entire World is Only G-dliness**

Yet regardless of one's spiritual condition, no matter if it is day or night, the Jew must always remember (and remind others) that the entire world is only G-dliness! G-d is the only King of the universe. G-d is One.

Indeed, man's function is to reveal G-d's oneness within creation, and the obligation to nullify the world in His presence is independent of our personal situation and circumstances.

"Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One... when you lie down and when you rise."

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vaeschanan 1997/5757 (Issue #481) edition of L’Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 4.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Vaetchanan 5782**



This week’s parsha begins the seven-week period of consolation and condolence that bridges the time space between Tisha b’Av and Rosh Hashana. In order to properly prepare for the oncoming year and its challenges one must first be comforted by the vision of better times ahead and the belief in one’s ability to somehow overcome those omnipresent challenges. Healing occurs when one believes that there is yet a future ahead.

All medical doctors agree that hope and optimism on the part of the patient are great aids in the process of recovering from illness or injury. If we would not have time and vision to recover from the sadness before the advent of the High Holy Days then those most meaningful days of our year would clearly be diminished measurably in our minds and hearts.

Throughout the book of Dvarim, Moshe’s pain at not being allowed to enter the Land of Israel is manifestably present. But Moshe is strengthened, and even somewhat consoled, by his vision of his student and loyal disciple, Yehoshua, succeeding him in the leadership of Israel, and in his firm conviction that the people of Israel will successfully conquer and settle the Land of Israel.

Comfort and consolation come in varying forms. What comforts one individual may not be effective for another. But again, all agree that such consolation is a necessary ingredient in the restoration and rehabilitation of those who were depressed and saddened. There is no substitute for consolation and healing. Otherwise, it is impossible to continue in life.

The parsha also deals with the Ten Commandments of Sinai. I have often thought that the repetition of this subject, which seemed to be adequately covered once in the Book of Shemot, teaches us an important lesson, which again may serve to be a source of consolation to us.

The “first” Ten Commandments was given at the beginning of the Jewish sojourn in the desert of Sinai. There was no Golden calf, no complaints about the manna, no spies, no Korach, no plagues of snakes – nothing had yet occurred to diminish the light and aura of Sinai. In such a perfect society, there is no reason not to recognize the values and laws of the commandments as being valid and even necessary in practice.

But now Moshe stands forty years later, after all the disappointments and rebellions, the backsliding and the pettiness, the death of an entire generation, and reassures us in the “second” Ten Commandments, that all those values and rules have not changed at all. The lesson of the immutability of Torah and Halacha is engraved upon the Jewish heart and mind.

Many things have happened to the Jewish people since Moshe’s speech before his death. Many have mistakenly thought that all the changes in technology, economies, world orders, etc. have made the Ten Commandments, Torah and Halacha somehow less relevant.

Moshe stands and speaks to us to remind us that the basic anchor of Jewish life, and in fact of all world civilization, lies in those words of Sinai. Everything has changed but human beings have not changed. And neither has G-d’s instructions for us.

Shabat shalom.

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

**The Reluctant Chassidic Rebbe**

R' Eliyahu Guttmacher was born near Posen (Poznan) in eastern Germany (today, Poland) on Rosh Chodesh Av 5556 / 1796. After studying in the yeshiva of Rawicz, he became, at age 19, a student of R' Akiva Eger, rabbi of Posen. He remained in R' Eger's yeshiva for four years and was a favorite of the teacher.

Even as a youth, R' Guttmacher studied assiduously and remained awake late into the night writing down his Torah insights. A turning point in his life occurred when he discovered a copy of the Zohar with the marginal notes of his teacher, R' Eger. R' Guttmacher had previously believed, as did most people, that R'Eger was opposed to the study of Kabbalah.

However, upon realizing that his teacher did, indeed, delve into that subject, the student began his own study of Kabbalah. As an outgrowth of this study, R' Guttmacher began to reflect upon the causes of our exile and the steps that we can, and must, take to end it.

He came to believe that the spiritual state of the Jewish people was declining rapidly and it was necessary to force the arrival of mashiach, something that could be achieved only if the Jewish people strengthened their attachment to Torah and returned to Eretz Yisrael. He strongly encouraged the establishment of both yeshivot and farming communities in the Holy Land, and when most leading rabbis either did not support his call (and many openly opposed it), he declared that the Sattan / the prosecuting angel had blinded them in order to delay the Redemption.

R' Guttmacher's study of Kabbalah also drew him close to the chassidic movement, and, in time, he was surrounded by chassidim of his own. He tried to discourage people from seeking his blessings, saying that he was merely an ordinary person. R' Guttmacher also said that just in case his prayers carried any weight in Heaven, he was already praying for all Jews; therefore, there was no need to visit him. However, all of his efforts to be left alone were futile.

R' Guttmacher published several pamphlets describing his ideas about the Redemption and the return to Eretz Yisrael. He also left behind many manuscripts on "traditional" Torah subjects, and some of his commentaries are published in the back of the standard Vilna edition of the Talmud. (Some of his larger works were first published in the 1970's and 80's.)

He also kept a diary, which he closed with the words: "I am leaving for my world [i.e., Olam Haba] comforted that the Shechinah pines for those who love it. I feel that the three part cord - the Torah, the Holy One, blessed is He, and Yisrael - is in the process of being tied again." (Encyclopedia La'chassidus).

*Reprinted from the Parshat Voeschanan 5782 email of R’ Yedidye Hirtenfeld’s parsha sheet for the Young Israel of Midwood (Brooklyn, NY) – whY I Matter.*

**Cats: 8 Jewish Facts**

**By**[**Dr. Yvette Alt Miller**](https://aish.com/authors/84110707?aut_id=4960)



*Just in time for International Cat Day!*

Growing up with cats, I learned a few valuable lessons.  Unlike dogs, you have to earn cats’ affection over a long time - but once they finally warm up, you feel you’ve earned their trust. Cats are fun to watch. Leonardo da Vinci was right when he famously said even “the smallest feline is a masterpiece.”

Judaism has a lot to say about cats, from ancient times to today. In celebration of International Cat Day, August 8, 2022, here are eight Jewish facts about cats that you probably didn’t know.

Cats Were Worshipped in Ancient Egypt

When the ancient Israelites left behind slavery in Egypt, they also left behind the idolatrous lifestyles of the Egyptians.  Cats were an integral part of Egyptian polytheistic worship. The Egyptian goddess Bastet said to be the daughter of Re, the sun god, and was depicted in cat form.

Egyptians wore cat amulets and offered bronze statues of cats as religious offerings.  Huge cemeteries of mummified cats have been found in Egypt; ancient Egyptians were also often buried with statues and mummies of actual cats.

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**Egyptian goddess Bastet**

**Jews Have Kept Cats Since Ancient Times**

The Talmud describes cats living in Jewish homes in ancient times. They were particularly prized for their ability to hunt snakes and keep residents safe. The Jewish sage Rav Pappa was thought to have counseled against entering houses that had no cats in them at night, lest one step on a snake accidentally ([Talmud Pesachim 112b:10](https://www.sefaria.org/Pesachim.112b.10?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker)).

*****Cat amulet***

Elsewhere, the Talmud notes that dreaming about a cat can be a sign of change. In some contexts the dream can denote that good things will happen to the dreamer; in others, it’s thought to denote something negative (Talmud [Berachot 56b:18](https://www.sefaria.org/Berakhot.56b.18?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker" \t "_blank)).

**Learning Modesty from a Cat**

Every cat owner knows how neat and fastidious our feline friends can be.  Their  neat qualities were  recognized by the great sage Rabbi Yohanan who noted that we can learn many good traits from animals. He counseled that “Even if the Torah had not been given, we would nonetheless have learned modesty from the cat…” ([Talmud Eruvin11b:29](https://www.sefaria.org/Eruvin.11b.29?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker)). Something to think about the next time you watch your cat obsessively clean itself and its litter box.



**Caring for Pets and Feeding Them  First**

Having a cat – or any other pet, for that matter – is a big responsibility.  King Solomon, said to be the wisest of all men, declared that “A righteous person considers the life of his animals” ([Proverbs 12:10](https://www.sefaria.org/Proverbs.12.10?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker)).  According to Jewish law before buying a pet, we must first make sure that we can afford to care of the animal’s needs for food, shelter, and medical care.  If you can’t, don’t acquire it. (Jerusalem Talmud, [Ketubot 4:8](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Ketubot.4.8?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker" \t "_blank))

Jewish law states you must feed your pet before feeding yourself ([Talmud Gittin 62](https://www.sefaria.org/Gittin.62?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker), [Berachot 40a](https://www.sefaria.org/Berakhot.40a?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker" \t "_blank)).  Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) advised us to develop an extra sensitivity when it comes to our pets, and suggested that we not so much as taste a bite of food before making sure that our animals are fed.

**Cats Inspire Us as Fierce Hunters**

King David penned the *Perek Shirah*, the Song of the Universe, which celebrates the beauty of the earth’s inhabitants.  According to this beautiful poem, each creation is part of the vast, majestic pattern of the Divine.  When it comes to cats, King David singled out their magnificent hunting abilities.  [A cat sings](https://aish.com/the-song-of-the-cat/), “I pursued my foes and overtook them, and did not return until they were destroyed” ([Psalms 18:38](https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.18.38?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker)).  It’s a stirring image, using the instantly recognizable instance of a cat stalking its prey to inspire us to similar bravery in battle.

Cats Stimulate our Human Need to Love

According to the Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953), many of us think about love all wrong. Love doesn’t lead to giving. It’s the opposite: by giving, we come to love.

Rabbi Dessler used the example of parents giving to our children. The love a parent has for his child is greater than the love a child has for a parent because parents give to them constantly, taking care of them, feeding and clothing them, soothing their worries and watching out for them. Giving generates love.



In fact, the Hebrew word for love, *ahava*, hints at this relationship.  The root of *ahava* is *hav*, meaning “give”.  The more we give, the more we feel affection for others.

The giving nature of relationship is no less true when it comes to pets. Taking care of pets and receiving their affection in return helps to satisfy the fundamental human desire to connect and to give.

**2 Million Cats in Israel**

Anyone who’s ever walked down a street in Israel knows that cats are as common as squirrels and rabbits are in America.  This harks back to the time of

British rule, when British soldiers imported cats to the Holy Land to help control rodent populations.  Since then, the cat population in Israel has grown.



Today, Israel is home to over 2 million [cats](https://aish.com/judaism-and-common-superstitions/), many of them living wild in cities and towns.  Israel’s warm climate, combined with the generosity of many Israelis who often feed street cats, has allowed the cat population to burgeon.

**Israeli Feline Innovation**

Given the popularity of cats in Israel, it’s no surprise that the Start-Up Nation has seen some impressive inventions to help pet owners to take care of their cats.  Take PetPace, an Israeli invention that was named Israel’s Most Promising Startup in 2015. It uses a smart collar to monitor a cat’s pulse, respiration, calories, activity levels and movement.

Israeli artist Ruth Kedar, who designed Google’s logo, also designed a smart litter box which tells cat owners when the litter needs to be changed. Another Israeli startup, CatGenie, even invented a self-changing litter box.

*Reprinted from the August 8, 2022 posting on the website Aish.com*