

BH. Droscha day 1 Rosh Hashanah, 5777-2016

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### **TAKING A PAGE OUT OF THE ENEMY'S PLAYBOOK**

I was asked to render a Rabbinic Opinion on whether computers are masculine or feminine.

My first reaction was computers are masculine, because they contain an enormous amount of data, but they remain clueless...

But on the other hand, computer seem to be feminine because no one besides their creator know how they work...

So what's the conclusion, which one is it?

My verdict is computers are definitely feminine, because they never forget anything... Somewhere in the system, in the hard-drive, the chip, it's in there for eternity, and someday it'll emerge...

Dear friends, today is the Day of Remembrance. G-d doesn't forget anything.

We pray He remembers all our good deeds and heartfelt prayers, and inscribes us all for a SHANA TOVA, an amazing New Year with health, happiness and prosperity.

#### **Passing of Ellie Weisel:**

In July the Jewish world suffered the loss of Noble Laureate Elie Wiesel, the eloquent "witness" of the Holocaust

Lost his father and mother and sister in the camps.

He would speak of the eight words repeated by the Germans without emotion:

**"Women to the right; men to the left"—eight words that sent millions to their deaths.**

**When he first began speaking about what had happened people weren't interested...**

**His first book Night, written in the 50s, was rejected by dozens of US publishers.**

Finally, in 1959 one publisher bought "Night," paying Wiesel an advance of \$100.

In the first 18 months after its publication in the United States, "Night" sold only 1,046 copies. Today it has sold more than ten million copies.

**Wiesel once told this funny story.** He remembers being asked to lecture about "Night" to a Jewish men's club in 1960. He prepared his talk for two months, but on the way to the lecture "it hit me they must have made a mistake," and did not realize the book was a concentration camp memoir - hardly a popular subject. So Wiesel told the audience his book was a romance novel. No one objected, because no one had read the book!

**As he wrote in Night: "Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, that turned my life into one long night.**

**Never shall I forget that smoke.**

**Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky.**

**Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my faith forever.**

**Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence that deprived me of the desire to live.**

**Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes.**

Quite a number of Holocaust survivors took their lives. Wiesel himself has contemplated it.

**But Wiesel decided instead to embrace life, love and humanity, ultimately rebuilding his life from the ashes, creating a family, and becoming a spokesman for hope and conscience the world over.**

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### **His relationship with the Rebbe**

As he himself wrote, this was in no small part as a result of his relationship with the Rebbe, Rabbi Schneerson, my mentor and teacher, the founder and leader of this Chabad House and Chabad all over the world.

They spent hours together, in private conversation and developed an impressive correspondence. He often came to the Rebbe's public gatherings and consulted the Rebbe.

**The longest private letter of the Rebbe** was one written to him discussing how one can believe in G-d after Auschwitz. In it the Rebbe urged Wiesel to stop living in the shadow of death and to blow Hitler a final punch by getting married and building a Jewish family.

**In 1969 he married.** The Rebbe sent a beautiful bouquet of flowers to the wedding.

**When his wife Marion gave birth to their son,** on the day of his son's bris, he writes, friends sent gifts. "But the most moving gift came from an unexpected place." It was a beautiful bouquet of flowers sent from the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Wiesel once told the Rebbe at the end of a long, soul stirring conversation:

**"Rebbe, I want to ask that you teach me how to cry again."**

Like many survivors, Wiesel could not cry. Wiesel recalls how the death of his father in Buchenwald had traumatized his capacity for tears. The light of his world was extinguished, he writes. "But I did not cry, and this is what causes me the most grief: this inability to cry. The heart had petrified, the fountainhead of tears had dried up."

So Eli Wiesel pleaded with the Rebbe, "Make me able to cry again!"

**Rebbe: "Yes, but that's not enough. I will teach you to sing," the Rebbe said.**

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**The Rebbe taught that we fight evil with goodness, we fight darkness with light!**

**He was as hell bent on positivity and on life as the evil doers are hate and death.**

**Like he told Wiesel, you want to avenge Hitler, build a strong Jewish family.**

**Don't just sit and cry... Sing!**

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**Here's a picture of Manny Shurka in the watch tower** overlooking the tracks into Auschwitz wearing his tefillin! He had to bribe and steal his way in... the watch tower isn't exactly open to tourists... But he got in... He just HAD TO WEAR HIS TEFILLIN... RIGHT THERE... at that spot...

That's a Jewish revenge!

No doubt Hitler's ghost... in whatever depth of purgatory it abides... turned over a thousand times at that moment...

**That's the Rebbe's way... we fight murder with mitzvahs, hate with love, darkness with light!**

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**Joke about Anti Semite who sent the rabbi a picture of a PIG, and the rabbi sent him back a picture of a rabbi.**

**“You sent me a picture of your grandfather so I sent you a picture of my grandfather...”**

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**In the words of King David in Psalms: Meiovei techakmeini... From mine enemies do I become wise!**

Sometimes we need to take a page out of the enemies’ playbook.

**We need to be as obsessed with goodness as the bad guys are with evil!**

**Even though hate is a more powerful than love, because it requires no sacrifice and is fed by the selfish ego...**

**We need to dig deep inside and bring out a love that is as powerful as the enemy’s hate**

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I want to share with you 4 simple but powerful lessons from the enemy’s playbook:

(Maybe it’s like the four “kashes” of Pesach, 4 lessons)...

**Lesson #1: The Nazis understood that every Jew counts!**

They didn’t just random killings... They kept lists, systems, headcounts, searches, in homes, in cellars, under floorboards... Why?

He understood that every Jew counts... we can’t let even one Jew fall through the cracks!

The Rebbe taught us the EVERY JEW COUNTS! We need to find a way to reach out to EVERY JEW, man woman and child, wherever they may be, and bring them home to their heritage and to their people. We can’t let even ONE fall through the cracks....

To this end, he dispatched emissaries, rabbis and rebbetzins, to every corner of the world... there was nothing random about his approach... he made plans, and lists, and systems...

Just in my own family...

I have brother in laws and sister in laws in Chabad in Bangkok, Thailand; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Frankfurt, Germany and... Ghana, Africa!

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of Great Britain famously said of the Rebbe:

“The Rebbe was G-d’s answer to the Hitler.

Much as Hitler HUNTED DOWN EVERY JEW WITH HATE

The Rebbe made his life’s mission to search out every Jew with love!

Every one counts... we can’t let even one fall through the cracks....

Each one is precious... each one is equal in the eyes of G-d

Each one is an integral part of the Jewish people, a precious child to our Father in Heaven...

Each single one!

The Nazis understood this... it was the bedrock of their evil plans... for the implementation of the FINAL SOLUTION...

The Rebbe understood this... it was the bedrock of his loving embrace and his vision to prepare the world for what the prophets call the FINAL REDEMPTION... when the entire world unites with love and goodness under the one G-d....

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Lesson #2 that we might take out of the Nazi’s evil playbook was the urgency, everything was a rush...

As Rebbetzin Yungreis obm writes in her memoires about the shouting... SHNELL SHNELLL – (fast...fast...)

SHNELL - They RUSHED to round us up to be deported...

SHNELL – they RUSHED to SHOVE us into the cattle cars...

SHNELL – they RUSHED to gets us off the trains and to the selection...

Dear friends, we need to be equally urgent about spreading goodness... and yiddishkeit...

Thinking about visiting a friend who is hospitalized... don’t postpone it... SHNELL, get in the car and go!

You’ve been considering picking up the phone to an estranged friend or family member? Stop hesitating... SHNELL!

**You've been kicking around the idea of koshering your kitchen or taking the family to Shul on Shabbos, SHNELL – get going!**

**Problem often is we make a resolution to do the mitzvah, but when are we gonna start? Tomorrow... next week, next month, next year, next millennia, you know how it goes...**

**This is important! It's actually urgent! No time to waste!**

**Every mitzvah and good deed makes the world better... it brings more healing and love to a pained world... and brings it closer to the FINAL REDEMPTION!**

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And what about the haters of our own times... how about taking a page out of their playbook...

**So for Lesson # 3: Notice how they indoctrinate kids literally from infancy...**

strapping them with bomb belts and uniforms, training them to hate Israel and the West...

We wonder why they hate us so much...

Because they start 'em young! They don't wait... They rob them of their minds and hearts right out of the gate of childhood...

We gotta fight back... we gotta do the same with goodness...

Problem is we don't start 'em young, we wait till their bar mitzvah, or older... it's too late...

**When the child is a year old, teach him to kiss the mezuzah... with its message of love of G-d and of man**

**When she's 3 years old, let your daughter light her very own personal Shabbat candles... to spread light of Shabbat with its message of warmth, love, family and faith...**

**Don't wait... The enemy brainwashes their kids from the womb that human life is meaningless... Let's empower our kids, right from the womb, that life is precious...**

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**And Lesson # 4: Be a Lone Angel**

Homeland security experts everywhere are wringing their hands... trying to figure out how the civilized world will manage to reign in the terror, especially when committed by lone wolves acting alone.

**In Israel problem the last half year of stabbings, individuals acting on their own, no weapon, just a knife from their kitchen**

The hate may be inspired by Isis or Islamic Jihad. But when individuals act alone, with their own initiative and resources, the enemy seems to remain elusive and unstoppable.

Random acts of hate, everywhere, anywhere. It's all over the place, how do you squash it? Big problem.

I'm gonna leave that problem to the authorities

But in terms of our spiritual and moral response, in terms of **fighting darkness with light**, we gotta do be doing the same thing...

If you're inspired to spread goodness, to visit the sick, encourage the lonely, help the needy, celebrate Jewish practice proudly, or any other step in the direction of goodness, don't wait for organizations to lead the effort.

Feel like doing good? Just do it!

**You don't need weapons...** rabbinic training etc, just grab something from your kitchen, your own tefillin, your own challah, and share it with someone else

If we each acted "alone", as lone "angels of love", we'd flood the world with goodness. We'd be an unstoppable force for good! There would be absolutely no way to stop the flood of goodness because it's not centralized; it's everywhere! It's out of control!

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This too was one of the great innovations of the Rebbe - the "mitzvah campaign" – just do mitzvahs at every opportunity, whenever wherever...

**Did you ever get approached by a kid to put tefillin on a street corner or at an airport?**

**It's a lone angel looking for a chance to do another random mitzvah...**

**Story of tefillin in the barber shop**, we wrapped tefillin with one of the workers, then another Jew asked to do it, and then the owner pointed out that the other guy sitting at the far seat was Jewish but he denied it... Was a self-denying Jew... and certainly never had a Bar Mitzvah. We all "twisted his arm" (pun intended...) and he wrapped the tefillin with us. We danced around the shop in celebration of his first tefillin which I called "his bar mitzvah". The next day he sent me a heartwarming thank you email, telling me how much the experience meant to him, one of those emails that a rabbi receives which he files in a special "precious" file...

(A gentile... observing all of this... finally asked if I get paid for every prayer...)

The Rebbe taught us the importance of goodness, not to pass up a mitzvah...

**I used to hope getting onto an airplane** that the people sitting near me would be gentiles, because if it's a yid you gotta talk tefillin or Shabbat candles, or some torah thought... you can't relax... if it's a non-Jew, you could sit back and enjoy...

Then the Rebbe came out with the campaign to speak to non-Jews about their 7 mitzvahs and about faith and prayer... OMG ... you can't get a break... now when I get onto the airplane I'm praying the guy sittin' next to me doesn't speak English...

At any time, in countless cities around the world, Jewish men and women, inspired by the Rebbe, are sharing mitzvahs with their fellow Jews; helping them wrap tefillin, light a Shabbat candle, study Torah, visit the sick, or fulfill any other mitzvah.

**When I have a chance for a quick tefillin wrap but I get lazy**, I think what's the big deal if we don't do this one mitzvah... I remind myself that I'm not the only meshigineh doing this... At this very moment there are tens of thousands of lone angels all over the world doing mitzvahs... right now at this very moment.. my one more mitzvah, and one for each of them, equals thousands... thousands of hearts touched, thousands of lives blessed and uplifted... thousands! And all I gotta do is this one right here!

**It's out of control... thousands, tens of thousands, of lone angels, doing good deeds,**

**Spreading Judaism, faith, optimism, to men and women, Jews and non Jews, all over the world...**

**It's everywhere... It's out of control... it's unstoppable...**

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**And it's for everyone – not just Chabadniks!**

You don't need to be a card carrying Chabad'nik to do this... try it... I'm telling you it's a thrill!

**Shabbat dinner – Orly Sherman always inviting people over to celebrate Shabbat**

**There's a woman sitting in this room** who has a custom, whenever a new Jewish family moves onto their street she brings over a freshly baked Challah and Shabbat candle sticks.



**Arnie Herz** will often tell a new client who would be receptive to it that he needs to put on tefillin if he wants me to represent him!

**Sanford Lewis** was in shul last day of Sukkos last year when I asked the people to take their lulav sets home and try to find a Jew with whom to share the mitzvah. I explained how precious a mitzvah it is and that it is a powerful blessing for health and prosperity, and that this was the last day to do this mitzvah for this year. I notice Sanford head for the door, then he mumbles something to himself, turns around and picks up his lulav set, and leaves. I made nothing of it... About an hour later the preschool moms begin to arrive. A couple moms come to the front office and they're telling Sara about this guy who was walking around the coffee house near Stop n Shop shaking the lulav with people... I overhear this and come running in to find out who this mitzvah man might be. Did he look like a rabbi with a black hat? "no, he looked like a normal person..." I'm wondering who is doing mitzvahs in my town? Why didn't I get the memo? Did the competition come to town? About 20 minutes later Sanford rolls into the office with a huge smile saying:

**"We got 13!"**

**Michael Greif** and I have a mutual friend who I'm gonna call Mitch (not his real name). Mitch lives upstate in the *boondox* someplace, he and I have had our paths crossed over the years, and he's always told me I'm the only rabbi he likes and that he wanted me to officiate in the event of his death. He later told me that he planned to be cremated. I told him if that's the case than I cannot bless the ceremony, nor do I think it's a good idea for him because...Nazis cremated Jews... It's bad for the body and the soul (and the environment)... However, my relationship was not a close one and we don't see much of each other so I wasn't able to change his mind.

A few weeks ago Michael Greif mentions that he's going upstate for the weekend to visit with Mitch. Now, Mike and Mitch a known each other for 50 years and have a very strong relationship. So I told Mike about the cremation thing and asked that find an opportunity to discuss it with Mitch. Upon returning to Shul Monday morning Mike proudly announced: Mission accomplished!

**It's an army of lone angels. It's unstoppable. It's gonna conquer the world with goodness and with mitzvahs! We're all drafted!**

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So friends we discussed 4 lessons we can take right out of the enemies playbook:

1. Every Jew counts, we can't allow even one to fall thru the cracks

2. Don't postpone goodness, shnell, it's urgent, get right to it
3. We gotta start our kids young, right out of the womb
4. We can all be lone angels for goodness.

So I close with this: In June there was the little 7 year old Japanese boy, **Yamato Tanooka**, who was left by his parents by the side of a mountain road in the woods as punishment for misbehaving... A huge search took place with hundreds of soldiers and volunteers... watched closely by millions, perhaps billions around the world... all praying for his safety...

When the army eventually found him... six days later... alive and well... in a hut... (thank Heavens for a happy ending to that one...) the boy asked the soldiers if his parents were even looking for him... if ANYONE had been looking for him... if anyone cared about him...

**Are you kidding?! ANYONE looking for you?! THE WHOLE WORLD WAS LOOKING FOR YOU!**

**My dear friends: Sometimes we wonder – do I really matter... is my life really important, to G-d, to the world... to the Jewish people...**

**Sometimes we feel a little lost... in the thicket of life...**

**Like our Father in Heaven might have just left us there... alone... and walked away...**

**We wonder if our decisions really matter...**

**How important is it anyway that my children marry Jewish...**

**Does it really matter that I become knowledgeable about my heritage...**

**Does it really matter if I celebrate Shabbat and if I invite my Jewish neighbor to join me?**

**Does anyone really care?**

**We come to SHUL Rosh Hashanah, we've been found and brought back to our Father in heaven**

**And ask the question little Yamato asked...**

**"Was anyone looking for me?"**

**Are you kidding?**

**The whole world is looking for you!**

**We need each one. Like in a family, where each child is integral, no Jew is dispensable... to our people... to G-d...**

**YES! MY JUDAISM AND THAT OF MY FAMILY IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT...**

**WE CAN'T LET EVEN ONE JEW FALL THROUGH THE CRACKS...**

**Each of us is needed to be active Jews**

**And urgently, today, not tomorrow**

**And to share it with our children and with anyone we come in contact with**

**Those who keep scheming and dreaming of a final solution,**

**WE FIGHT BACK TO BRING THE WORLD CLOSER TO THE GREAT DAY OF THE FINAL REDEMPTION!**