

L'Chaim

FREE
Take One!

Weekly Publication
for every Jewish Person

February 18, 2011 – 14 Adar I, 5771

1159: KI SISA

This month's L'CHAIM has been generously sponsored by:



Printed Circuit Board Design & Assembly
Pressure Gauges • Industrial Supplies

Harris Weisman

P: 480.464.8700 • Fax: 623.321.7910 • www.libertyaz.com

Living with the **REBBE**



In the Haftorah which accompanies this week's Torah portion of Ki Tisa we read about Elijah the Prophet and his famous confrontation with the prophets of Baal. Elijah addressed the Jewish nation and said, "How long will you waver between the two? If G-d is truly G-d, then follow Him, and if it is Baal, then go after him."

Elijah told the Jewish People: your inability to choose between the 2 alternatives is the worst possible spiritual path, even worse than choosing idolatry.

How can anything be worse than idolatry - ascribing G-dly powers to an object? Is it not better to reach some sort of compromise, to maintain a belief in G-d, but to nevertheless incorporate some elements of paganism? Why did Elijah say that it is preferable, G-d forbid, to actually worship idols?

Maimonides wrote that idol worship arose from human error, from a faulty understanding of the natural world. When some people looked at the physical forces of nature, they mistakenly believed that the forces themselves should be worshiped, not realizing that it is G-d who causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall.

When a person worships an idol, be it one made of stone, or the planets and stars in the sky, he thinks that by placating these objects he will receive more blessings in his life. This, then, is the difference between a true idolator and a Jew who straddles the fence, never making a clear choice between idolatry and worship of the One, true G-d.

An idol worshippers may one day arrive at the conclusion that idolatry is wrong and return wholeheartedly to G-d, after having admitted his error. But it is far more difficult for a person who is "straddling the fence" to realize the error of his ways and see that he is committing a sin. For his part, he thinks that he is still a good Jew, for he still maintains the outer semblance of Jewish observance.

An idolator, even one who believes in a false god, believes that his god is the source of all life. He seeks spiritual truth, albeit in the wrong direction. But one who professes to believe in G-d yet secretly pledges obedience to an idol seeks not truth, but convenience and comfort. He wants to benefit from both worlds, covering all possible bases.

A person who vacillates is also more detrimental to those around him. An idol worshippers is more easily avoided, and not likely to lead others astray, who could be deceived by outward appearances.

Elijah's message holds true for us today. It is far easier to avoid obvious pitfalls in spiritual matters than to stand on guard against finer, less conspicuous compromises. But it is these finer points which ultimately define our intellectual honesty and our faith. ■ *Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

The Seed

There's a wonderful story for children called "The Carrot Seed." It's about a little boy who plants a carrot seed in the ground, waters it and waits for the seed to turn into a carrot. All those around him are doubters. They tell him "it won't come up." But the little boy waits and watches - and soon enough, his faith is rewarded. The top of a carrot breaks through the soil and appears above the ground.

If the little boy had dug into the ground at any time, to see if the seed he planted was still there, what would he have seen? If, affected by the doubts of those around him, he just "had to check to make sure the seed was still there," would it have been? And even if it had been, once he'd moved the dirt and exposed the seed, would it have survived?

When we look at a mighty oak tree, we know that it came from an acorn. But if we were to search beneath the roots, even using a microscope or x-rays, we wouldn't find the acorn (perhaps a small remnant, but not the acorn). In the process of becoming an oak tree, the acorn disappears into the ground. It's as if the acorn never was.

All our actions are seeds. What we do, what we say, even what we think, are seeds we sow. The kind of plant they will become - or if they will grow at all - depends on the kind of seed we sow, and also on our approach to the planted seed.

If we plant acts of goodness and kindness, then a great oak may result. If we speak well of another, or hold back from gossip, the seed might be that of a productive apple

tree. Words of Torah read in a book, studied in a class, discussed around a dinner table, could become a giant sequoia!

We may not recognize - we probably won't recognize - the seed we planted in the orchard or forest of trees. Because often a seemingly small, insignificant action on our part might be seen, noticed, observed by another person who is inspired by our action and who makes a decision to plant his own seeds. We cannot know the effect of all of our seed planting or sometimes even that we have planted seeds.

In the children's story, the little boy did was actually something he didn't do - he didn't interfere. Having done what he needed to do, what he was supposed to do, he kept his hands out of the dirt - literally. In our terms, he kept his ego out of the process. He wasn't worried what happened to "his" seed - imagine if he'd opened the ground and not found the seed! What panic and despair! And yet, if the seed must perish for the plant (carrot, oak, or apple) to grow, then the departure of the seed was a good thing.

This is the first lesson: we must strive to keep our egos out of the seed-planting. We don't have to identify a mitzva (commandment), a good deed, a positive action or thought or idea, as ours. We just need to plant the seeds.

The little boy also watched. He had faith. He didn't know when the carrot would appear, but was sure it would. Isn't that the faith we really want? An unshakable assurance that the "fruit of our labor," the end result of all of our seed planting, will be the perfect world of the days of Moshiach? ■

MEZUZAH DID YOU KNOW???



The Art of Mezuzah – Part I, The Parchment

The only material that a mezuzah can be written on is parchment. The parchment used for mezuzahs or tefillin is not ordinary parchment.

From the very first stages, the parchment must be worked for the sake of the mitzvah. This means that the scribe must have in mind (and may verbally express) that he is preparing the parchment in order that a Torah scroll, tefillin, or mezuzah will be written on it.

The Torah says in connection with Tefillin (Exodus 13:9) "...In order that the Torah of G-d should be in your mouth." The Sages explain that this means that the parchment for the Tefillin scroll must be made from an animal permitted to be eaten according to Jewish law -- a kosher animal. However it is not required to be ritually slaughtered. Usually the skin of a calf or a lamb is used. ■

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

As there are two months of Adar this year (this year being a leap year), this week contains Purim Katan (the "minor" Purim).

The day after Purim Katan is Shushan Purim Katan, Shushan Purim being the day Purim is celebrated in walled cities such as Jerusalem.

As there are very few customs associated with Purim Katan and Shushan Purim Katan let us take a moment to understand the significance of Shushan Purim according to Chasidut.

The celebration of this holiday was instituted in connection with the Land of Israel. Our Sages decreed that Shushan Purim be celebrated in any walled cities that existed at the time of Joshua's conquest of the Land of Israel.

In this manner, they paid respect to the Holy Land, giving its walled cities the honor given to Shushan even though they had been destroyed by the time of the Purim miracle.

However, the holiday's name is connected with a city in the Diaspora - the capital city of Achashveirosh, king of Persia (and thus the capital of the entire civilized world).

The use of the name "Shushan" expresses the completion of the Jews' mission to refine the material environment of the world. There are several levels in the fulfillment of this task; for example, the transformation of mundane objects into articles of holiness. On a deeper level, this involves the transformation into holiness of precisely those elements which previously opposed holiness.

Shushan Purim shows how Achashveirosh's capital city was transformed into a positive influence, indeed, an influence so great that it is connected with the celebration of Purim in the walled cities of Israel.

May we use all of the extra spiritual energy given to us on Purim Katan and Shushan Purim Katan to transform the mundane into the holy and that which opposes holiness into holiness, until the whole world is transformed into a dwelling place for G-d in the Messianic Era. ■

The Rebbe Writes

28 Adar, 5721 (1961)

The principle of unity is the essence of Judaism, since Abraham first proclaimed monotheism in a world of idolatry, which came to full fruition at the revelation at Mount Sinai.

For true monotheism, as professed by us, and as explained in the Jewish religion, is not only the truth that there is only one G-d and none with Him, but that there is "nothing besides" Him (ein od milvado), that is the denial of the existence of any reality but G-d's, the denial of pluralism and dualism even the separation between the material and spiritual.

It is interesting to note that the more the physical sciences advance, the closer one approaches the principle of unity even in the world of matter.

For, whereas formerly it was the accepted opinion that the plurality and compositeness in the material world can be reduced to some 100 odd basic elements and entities, and physical forces and laws were regarded as being separate and independent, not to mention the dichotomy between matter and energy.

But in recent years, with the advancement of science, the basic elements themselves were reduced to several more elementary components of the atom, viz. electrons, protons and neutrons, and even these were immediately qualified as not the ultimate "blocks" of matter, until the discovery was made that matter and energy are reducible and convertible one into the other.

It is well known that the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of general Chasidus, taught, and Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad Chasidus, explained and amplified, that every detail in human experience is an instruction in a person's service to his Maker.

Thus, what has been said above about the advancement of science, exemplified also the progress of human advancement in the service of G-d.

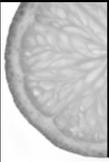
Man possesses two apparently contradictory elements, no less incompatible than the incompatibility of matter and spirit, the counterpart of which in the physical world is matter and energy.

I refer to the Divine soul and animal soul, or, on a lower level, the Yetzer Tov and the Yetzer Hora (the inclination toward good and the inclination toward evil). But this incompatibility is evident only in the infantile stage of progress in Divine service, comparable to the plurality of elements and forces which were presumed to exist in physical nature.

But, just as the appreciation of the underlying unity of nature grew with the advancement of science, so does perfection in the Divine service lead to the realization of the essential unity in human nature, to the point where the Yetzer Tov and the Yetzer Hora become one, through the transformation of the Yetzer Hora by and into the Yetzer Tov, for otherwise, of course, there can be no unity and harmony, since all that is holy and positive and creative could never make peace and be subservient to the unholy, negative and destructive.

And in this attained unity the Jew proclaims, [Shema Yisroel] "Hear O Israel, G-d our G-d, G-d is one."

This is also what our Sages meant, when they succinctly said - as they often compress far-reaching ideas into a few concise words - that the words, "And you shall love G-d, your G-d, with all your heart (levovecho)," which immediately follow Shema Yisroel, mean: with both your Yetzers, with the Yetzer Hora, as with the Yetzer Tov. ■



SLICE OF

LIFE

Going Home

by Mordecai Hahn-Markowitz

It all started a few years ago after I visited Poland with my son's class; it continued with tape recording my cousin's account of some of his Holocaust experiences, and was enhanced by the bond forged with our cousins in Salzburg. On a deeper level it started long before, on the day of my brit mila (circumcision) when I was named for my great-grandfather, Mordecai Markowitz. And it was spurred by 20 years of growing up in the loving presence of my grandfather Eugene, Mordecai's son, who instilled in me the strong Jewish identity that has shaped so much of who I am.

The start was promising but the continuation foundered. My desire to find and visit grandfather Mordecai's grave was a dream I talked about, but no more.

In early 2004 my cousins in Salzburg told us that Mordecai lived in Batyu, a small village near the town of Munkasch in Ukraine. But still I did nothing. Then one day I told my office manager that I would like to find the burial place of my great-grandfather. Her response: "You told me that a few years ago!"

The (justified) verbal slap in the face finally spurred me into action. Through the internet, I contacted Rabbi Arye Linker of the Rabbinical Centre of Europe (RCE). Rabbi Linker, a former American who (like me) has lived in Israel for many years, heads up the RCE division that works to preserve Jewish cemeteries in Europe. He told me of a Chabad Rabbi, Menachem Mendel Taichman, who lives in Uzhgorod.

I contacted Rabbi Taichman, who was more than cooperative. He told me that he was not certain about the state of the Jewish cemetery in Batyu but he agreed to travel there on my behalf and find out. And he did just that.

In mid-August I received an email from Rabbi Taichman that he had visited the cemetery in Batyu. He had remembered visiting there a few years earlier on behalf of an

American family who paid for a fence to be built around the cemetery. He had examined each gravestone - and the fifth one he saw was that of Grandfather Mordecai!

I had given the rabbi the name of Mordecai's father, Ya'akov Zvi, and also sent him the acrostic that was on Mordecai's gravestone. The rabbi mentioned finding on the gravestone "Mordecai ben Ya'akov Zvi"; he did not mention seeing the last name and made only an oblique reference to additional words on the stone. Rabbi Taichman noted, how many "Mordecai ben Ya'akov Zvis" could there be in a small place such as Batyu?

Two weeks later on a Friday morning, I left Israel on a flight to Budapest with a continuing flight to Uzhgorod. The flight to Uzhgorod was what I imagined: a propeller plane with only five passengers. A taxi took me to Hotel Uzhgorod: modern, clean and nice, the only place in town where people spoke English.

It was late Friday afternoon when I got to the hotel. Rabbi Taichman and his wife had invited me to their house for a "small" meal before Shabbat. Afterwards I accompanied the rabbi to the synagogue, a short walk from his house. After services we returned to the rabbi's house for dinner. The rabbi and his wife (both Israelis) and their five children, are obviously used to guests.

For me, it was a chance to experience a world that is close to my heart but far removed from my secular, cynical milieu. I highly recommend this spiritual therapy. But above all was my feeling of indebtedness to a rabbi who only for the sake of doing a mitzva for a fellow Jew, brought me closer to touching my family roots.

Shabbat was peaceful and very "Shabbisdik": morning services; another Shabbat meal at the rabbi's house with more singing and even dancing; a rest before the afternoon services; more eating and then the evening prayers and Havdala.

Sunday morning. This was to be the big day: I was going to Batyu! Joined by Rabbi Taichman, one of his local assistants and two Taichman boys, we set out. Batyu is some 40 km from Uzhgorod, close to the Hungarian border. The rabbi hadn't promised to come - he was busy with the preparations for a Holocaust Memorial Service scheduled for the next day - but in the end he was able to join me and I was happy.

Once we arrived things happened quickly - and dramatically. We saw an elderly woman. I asked the rabbi to find out if she remembered my great-grandfather. Markowitz? Yes, she remembered. She said that he sold newspapers and magazines from his house. Is the house still standing? Yes, and she agreed to take me to it. In a few minutes I found myself standing in front of the house where Mordecai had lived. Later, when back in Israel, in a conversation with my cousin, he confirmed that Mordecai had indeed sold newspapers and magazines.

Finding the house was an unexpected bonus but the real emotional high point was at the Jewish cemetery located right in the village, between two houses. The cemetery is quite small, about 100 standing gravestones.

As I approached Mordecai's gravestone my heart began to pound. Not only did the stone show the names of Mordecai and his father but also his last name - Markowitz - and in addition, the acrostic that my cousin had remembered, word for word! The words on the stone also said that Mordecai died in old age on 17 Iyar 5702.

The feeling of relief at knowing that I had found the grave quickly made way for the emotion swelling up inside me. As I read from the book of Psalms, the tears began to flow. At that moment I had no doubt that what Rabbi Taichman said was true: that G-d was with me in Batyu, that He wanted me to be there. I believed then and still believe, that Mordecai himself, my grandfather, my father, my cousin, and also Mordecai's descendants who survived him, only to be killed shortly thereafter in the Holocaust - were all with me that day. I know that my grandfather Eugene's soul was looking down and smiling at me, in Batyu. ■

Reprinted with permission from *ESRA Magazine* issue 153

Feb/March 2010, www.esra-magazine.com

Moshiach Matters

Our Sages highlight the connection between children and redemption by interpreting the verse, "Do not touch My anointed ones (meshichai)" (Chronicles I 16:22), as referring to Jewish children. Why are children given this title? - Because they have no other genuine concern besides Mashiach. A child truly wants to live in a world of peace, harmony, knowledge and joy, and these are the very qualities that will characterize the Era of the Redemption. ■

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, *Shushan Purim Katan* 5752 - 1992)

What's In A Name?

ORNA is Hebrew, meaning "pine tree," or "let there be light."

OVADIA is Hebrew, meaning "worshippers" or "servant of G-d." In the Bible, (Ovadia 1:1) Ovadia was one of the 12 minor Prophets known as "Trei Asar." He was a righteous convert, a descendant of Isaac's son Esau from the nation of Edom.

News

New Torah Scrolls A new Torah scroll was dedicated in Brighton, England, and paraded to its home at the Holland Road Shul. The community wrote the Torah in honor of the 50th birthday of Rabbi Pesach Efun, director of Lubavitch of Brighton. A new Torah was completed in Melbourne in memory of Rabbi Aryeh Leib Kramer, an emissary of the Previous Rebbe and the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It will be used by small communities in need of a Torah. A new Torah scroll, donated by the Jewish community of Mexico City, was welcomed to its home at the Chabad in Cozumel, Mexico. Friends & supporters of the Chabad community in Venice, Italy, joined together to welcome a new Torah. ■

Important Times – Scottsdale, AZ	February 18 – 25	Brought to you by: Chabad-Lubavitch in Cyberspace	Re-printed by:
<i>Shacharis</i> 7:00am Sunday 8:00am Monday/Thursday 6:45am		Chabad of Scottsdale	
<i>Minchab/Maariv</i> 6:00pm Shabbos 5:40pm		(480) 998-1410	chabadofscottsdale.org
<i>Shabbat</i> <u>Chassidus Club</u> 8:15am <u>Kabbalah of Cholent</u> 9:05am <u>Shacharis</u> 9:30am	Copyright © 2010 Lubavitch Youth Organization www.lchaimweekly.org	The Jewish Learning Center of Scottsdale 480.443.5362	
Light Candles 5:56pm	Shabbat Ends 6:53pm		

It Once Happened The Chozeh interrupted the discussion, and advised them to let the horses' reins go free and let them go where they would.

They did as he said, and they travelled quite a few miles on the road before meeting a peasant who told them that the town which they had reached was not the one they had been searching for. Nevertheless, as Shabbat was quickly approaching, they had to stop over and find some lodging for the night.

At that point the Chozeh announced to his chasidim, "This Shabbat I am not to be known as a rebbe." From this they understood that he wanted to be inconspicuous for some reason of his own. It was also understood that they would be on their own in finding appropriate accommodations.

So, they entered the town and made their way to the synagogue, knowing that, according to time-honored custom, strangers always received an invitation from some villager for the Shabbat meal. Sure enough, they all received invitations, except for the Chozeh who, in his usual fashion prolonged his prayers until all the other congregants had left. There was, however, one very old man who also remained in the shul (synagogue) and sat singing the traditional Shabbat tunes.

The old man noticed the stranger and asked him, "Where will you be having your meal?"

The Chozeh replied, "I don't know yet."

"Well, I would suggest that you have your Shabbat meals in the local inn, and after the Shabbat ends, I will go around and collect the money to pay the bill."

"No," replied the Chozeh, "In that inn, they don't even light Shabbat candles. No, I wouldn't make kiddush (the Shabbat blessing over wine) in such a place."

"Well, I would invite you to my own home, but we really don't have much of anything to eat or drink."

"Don't worry, I don't eat very much, and I don't drink very much either."

"All right, so, you'll come home with me," said the old man, still sitting with his prayer book in his hand. "Tell me, where do you come from?"

"I come from Lublin."

"You don't say! Why, you don't happen to know the tzadik (righteous person), the Chozeh, do you?"

"It so happens that I know him very well. I spend all of my time with him."

The old man's eyes lit up like a fire. "Please, what can you tell me about him?"

"Well, what kind of things do you want to know?" asked the Chozeh.

"To tell you the truth, I have fasted one day every week for years, so that I might merit to set my eyes on the tzadik. You see, many years ago, when he was just a little boy, I was his teacher. In those days he was a regular boy, just like all the rest, nothing special about him. But now, I hear he performs miracles and is a great tzadik. Every day when his turn came to read from the prayer-book, he would be missing. And when he would finally turn up, I would always spank him. Then, one day I decided to follow him. I was curious to see where he went all the time. So, I walked a little distance behind him, and followed him into the forest. There, he sat down and cried out from the depths of his heart, 'Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad!' From that day on I never spanked him again."

The Chozeh was greatly moved by the old man's recitation, and it was clear to him why G-d had directed his path to this out-of-the-way little village. He revealed to the old man his real identity, and the old man fainted away. After he was revived, the tzadik told him not to reveal to anyone else who he was.

After the end of Shabbat the Chozeh and his followers continued on in the originally intended direction. They arrived at an inn and enjoyed the Melave Malka meal, bidding goodbye to the Shabbat Queen. When they had finished, the Chozeh told them, "Let's return to the village now, for it is time for us to pay our last respects to the old man I stayed with. He has just departed from this world." They returned and said the eulogy for the old man who had such a burning love for tzadikim, that G-d granted him his greatest wish. ■

And the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath (Ex. 31:16) **Thoughts that Count**

The holiness of Shabbat exists independently of the Jew; all he is enjoined to do is guard it. Yet at the same time, the Jew is commanded to observe Shabbat by his own actions, adding to its inherent holiness with his preparation and service. (Sefer Hamaamarim Tav Shin)



And you shall make a basin of copper... and they shall wash their hands and their feet (Ex. 30:18, 21) In our time, when prayer takes the place of the priests' service in the Holy Temple, we wash our hands before praying. Yet in distinction to the priests of old, Maimonides concludes that also the face (and the feet, if warranted) must be washed prior to praying. The hands and feet enable a person to perform practical actions, but the face and head contain the person's higher faculties - the intellect, the faculties of sight and hearing, and the ability to speak. When the Holy Temple was in existence and Jews enjoyed a more direct relationship with G-d, only the outer extremities needed purification. Unfortunately, during the exile, a Jew's most sublime gifts are often abused, applied towards matters unworthy of their attention, making their purification before prayer also necessary. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)



Everyone who sought G-d went out to the Tabernacle of Meeting, which was outside the camp (Ex. 30:7) In actuality they were looking for Moses, yet the Torah states that they were seeking G-d. We thus learn that receiving the leader of the generation is the same as receiving G-d Himself. (Jerusalem Talmud, Eruvin)



This shall they give...half a shekel (Exodus 30:13) The commandment to give a half-shekel was in order "to make an atonement for your souls," to atone for the sins of the Jewish people. The amount was therefore set at precisely half a coin, to show that G-d Himself is responsible for the other half. Had He not created the Evil Impulse to tempt us in the first place, we would never transgress. (Reb Simcha Bunim)