

L'Chaim

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March 4, 2011 – 28 Adar I, 5771

1161: PEKUDEI

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Living with the REBBE



This week's Torah portion, Pekudei, relates how Moses made a personal account of all the silver and copper that was donated to build the Sanctuary. The purpose of this inventory was to remove any doubt that the donations were not being utilized for their intended purpose.

The Midrash, however, relates that Moses came up short when tallying the amount of silver: 1775 shekalim of silver were unaccounted for. At that moment, a heavenly voice rang out and proclaimed, "The 1775 [shekalim of silver] were used to make the hooks of the pillars." In this way G-d declared Moses to be beyond all suspicion, as it states, "Not so My servant Moses; in My entire house he is [the most] faithful."

A question is asked: If G-d's sole intent was to attest to Moses' honesty, why was it necessary for him to make an account in the first place? Why couldn't a "heavenly voice" have proclaimed Moses' faithfulness without his having to actually go through the process of counting?

We learn from this that there was a deeper intent behind Moses' taking inventory, a purpose that went beyond merely tabulating the amounts of precious metals that were donated or to remove suspicion.

Rather, Moses played an integral role in the function of the Sanctuary itself, as will be explained.

Although the Sanctuary was erected with the contributions of individuals, at the same time, it was a product of the Jewish people as a whole. This transformation - from a collection of donations made by disparate individuals into an entirely new, collective entity - was brought about by Moses, the leader of the generation.

When an individual Jew makes a contribution, his state of mind is an important factor. Some people make a donation willingly and with all their heart, while others are more hesitant. Moses, however, the Jewish "king," whose "heart is the heart of the congregation of Israel," was able to combine and unite the singular contributions and turn them into a collective whole.

One of the reasons the Sanctuary is called "the Sanctuary of testimony" is that the Divine Presence resting within it attested to G-d's having forgiven the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf.

Moses, the only Jew who remained absolutely untainted by the sin, was thus the only person who could effect this transformation and cause G-d's Presence to dwell in the physical world. ■

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe Vol. 26

Constant Change

Be like the sun - ever constant in your principles, never wavering on your journey or straying from your path. Be like the moon - ever changing with each experience, always wandering into a deeper truth and exploring tangents of growth.

The sun and the moon symbolize a spiritual struggle. On the one hand, we recognize that, if the world is to be moral and ordered, we must operate by a set of immutable principles, ethical axioms and spiritual laws. On the other hand, we are neither angels nor robots - we must grow, experience, and in the process of living and learning, reveal insights - new truths, if you will.

And the process of growth itself requires periods of darkness, times when the established disintegrates, like the shell of a seed within the darkness of underground, so that a new perception, a more insightful understanding, may sprout and grow.

And these two symbolic opposites - the sun and the moon - play out their opposition in their yearly cycles. The seasons - nature's time - follows the sun. The months - man's time - follows the moon. And we have two calendars that reflect this difference. The solar calendar tells us when to sow, when to plant, when to harvest - when to let the land lie fallow. The lunar calendar, upon which the Jewish calendar is based, tells us when our efforts wane and understanding fails, when we must retreat and evaluate (Tishrei, the month of the High Holidays, for instance), and when joy ascends (our current month of Adar, for example).

As the moon waxes, so some times demand we engage, reveal; as it fades, so some times demand we withdraw, reconsider and conceal.

In a regular year, the calendars emphasize the difference between the cycles and the spiritual imperatives - adherence to principles or the growth process of truth - they represent. For in a regular year, the two calendars are out of sync, uncoordinated.

But in a leap year - like this year - we reconcile the two. The solar calendar and the lunar calendar - and the spiritual imperatives they represent - align and progress in complement to each other. We achieve this reconciliation by adding a month - a second Adar.

Thus, a leap year teaches us an important lesson. We must be steadfast, adhering always to the principles of the Torah. For the the mitzvot of the Torah come directly from G-d's Will; they are infinite, always and everywhere relevant, always and everywhere the same.

Simultaneously, though, we must constantly move forward, progress in our understanding, uncover new insights, new perspectives, new transformative values.

In a leap year we combine faithfulness and originality, constancy and change. And in our personal lives, in our Divine service, we must also, and always, combine these two.

That we reconcile by adding a month, and that month is Adar, also teaches us something of importance. For first we must have the solar calendar. First we need the adherence to the principles of the Torah, that is, practical observance of the mitzvot. Only then can we vary and move.

Also, the month we add is Adar - the month of joy. When we are in spiritual concert, our joy is doubled. And, conversely, to double our joy we must be in spiritual concert - constant in observance, growing in knowledge. ■

MEZUZAH
DID YOU
KNOW???



The Art of Mezuzah – Part III, The Parchment

The quality of parchment which has now been achieved is called g'vil. This is a heavy, thick substance. Jewish law enjoins us to use a more delicate quality of parchment called klaf.

The epidermis is unsuitable for parchment and is removed early in the process. In the case of sheepskin, two remaining layers of skin can, with great skill, be separated from each other. The dermis is then called klaf, and the under-skin is called duchsustus.

Another way to obtain the klaf is to scrape away the under-skin while the skin is still stretched on the frame. A special knife is used for this consisting of a large semicircular blade set in a thick mount which is held with both hands. The setting of the blade at exactly the right angle is very important. A mistake at this stage might split the skin; after this it may well not be possible to continue to process it and all the scribe's work will have been wasted.

The klaf is now taken off the frame and every square inch of it is rubbed carefully with different grades of pumice stone and chalk in order to obtain the rich smooth surface which is necessary for writing. After at least a few weeks maturing in a dry atmosphere the parchment is at last ready for the writing of a mezuzah or tefillin. ■

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Shabbat, in addition to the regular Torah portions read in shul, we will also read Parshat Shekalim, the Torah portion in which G-d commands Moses to take a census of the Jewish people by collecting a half-shekel from each one. The Rebbe explains that a census emphasizes the unique importance of each individual while at the same time reminding us that every Jew's existence is bound to that of his fellow man.

The concept of "loving your fellow man" is further emphasized by the fact that every Jew, no matter how rich or how poor, was required to give the exact same amount of money, a half-shekel. Moreover, the half-shekalim that were collected were used to bring communal offerings on behalf of the entire Jewish people. And although we are in exile we can still fulfill the mitzva of half-shekel by carrying out the custom of giving three half-dollars to charity before Purim.

These gifts will hasten the Redemption, for then "Moshe will gather," i.e., Moshe, "the first redeemer and ultimate redeemer," will gather every single Jew and proceed to Israel, to Jerusalem, to the Third Holy Temple.

Though we do not yet have the Third Holy Temple to which we could bring communal sacrifices, these mitzvot apply equally today. For, the Torah is infinite, not limited to time and place. While the physical Sanctuary was destroyed, the spiritual aspects of the service in the Temple are still carried out today through learning Torah and doing mitzvot.

When a Jew makes a contribution toward a sacred cause, it is immediately matched by a corresponding kindness from G-d to him. Sincere human effort is met halfway by Divine Grace, thus a goal which may at first seem unattainable to a person can actually be reached, because his goodness evokes a corresponding heavenly benevolence.

May our good deeds combined with G-d's benevolence finally bring us to attain our ultimate goal, the coming of Moshiach. ■

The Rebbe Writes

Erev Shabbos Parshas Shekolim, 5726 [1966]

To All Participants in the "Evening With Lubavitch" in Philadelphia, Pa., G-d bless you - Greeting and Blessing:

It is significant that the "Evening With Lubavitch" is taking place on Rosh Chodesh Adar [the new month of Adar]. In olden days, when the Beis Hamikdosh [Holy Temple] was in existence, the first day of Adar was noted for the "Shekolim Call" which went out on that day, whereupon every Jew contributed a half-shekel [coin] to the Sanctuary chest which provided the public sacrifices in behalf of all the Jewish people.

The saintly Rebbe the "Tzemach Tzedek" (so named after his monumental Halachah [Jewish Law] work) [Rabbi Menachem Mendel, third Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch] - and this year marks the 100th anniversary of his demise - in discussing the Mitzvah [commandment] of Machtzis haShekel [the half shekel] in one of his renowned Chassidic-philosophical works, offers some insights into this Mitzvah requiring no more and no less than half a shekel. It indicates, he explains, that when a Jew makes a contribution toward a sacred cause, it is immediately matched by a similar benevolence from G-d to him, in accordance with the principle that human initiative acts like an impulse which calls forth a corresponding impulse from On High. The two, together, constitute the complete Shekel haKodesh ("holy shekel").

Moreover, though human endeavor must be voluntary and spontaneous, the assurance has been given that where there is a resolute intention, the person receives aid from On High to carry it to fruition in the fullest measure.

To be sure, the physical Sanctuary in Jerusalem was destroyed and the sacrificial service has since been interrupted. Nevertheless, in a spiritual sense the Sanctuary and all that was connected with it have never ceased; they exist in our daily experience and practice of the Torah teachings and Mitzvos. This is one of the aspects of our infinite Torah, which is in no way subject to the limitations of time and place.

The Mitzvah of the Half Shekel teaches us, among other things, that human effort, provided it is sincere and resolute, is "met halfway" by Divine Grace. Thus, though the goal may, at first glance, seem too ambitious or even beyond reach, we are not limited to our own human resources, since our initial effort evokes a reciprocal "impulse" from On High which assures the attainment of even the "unattainable."

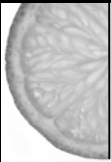
The Mitzvah of the Half-Shekel was originally related to the Beis Hamikdosh, where simple material objects were transformed into things of holiness, through dedication and sacrifice. Such is the unlimited power which the Creator vested in the Jew by means of the Torah and Mitzvos originating in the En Sof (Infinite).

Every Jew has the power to transform small and ordinary things of nature into values and categories which transcend Nature - through living his daily life in accord with the will and command of G-d. In this way the Jew fulfills his purpose in life and the ultimate destiny of Creation, namely, to make an abode for the Holy One here on earth, in fulfillment of the Divine command, "Let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them." (Exod. 25:8).

To the realization of this destiny of the individual Jew and of the Jewish people as a whole, the Lubavitch activities in all parts of the world are dedicated.

I take this opportunity to extend prayerful wishes to each and all participants in the "Evening With Lubavitch." May it be a source of lasting inspiration to you all, and an abiding influence towards the experience of a fuller, nobler, and, indeed, holier daily life, where the material "half-shekel" is balanced by its heavenly counterpart "in the scale of holiness" (b'Shekel haKodesh), ensuring a harmonious and truly happy life, materially and spiritually.

With blessing, ■



SLICE OF

LIFE

Learning Another Perspective

by Ronald L. Rosenfield

As a Reform Jew, I thought taking a six-session course with the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute (JLI) - the "educational arm of the worldwide Chabad Lubavitch movement" - would require my fending off proselytization while focusing on course content. What I found instead was a remarkably open atmosphere that welcomed secular as well as halachic points of view.

Although my love of Judaism has not been grounded in formal Jewish learning, I have always been curious about the traditional and contemporary answers to questions of "what do we, as Jews, believe and why?"

So when I received one of JLI's eye-catching mailers about 18 months ago, I decided to risk putting myself into what I thought would be an uncomfortable environment because one of the course offerings particularly intrigued me. Set in the time that the rise of Rome spelled the fall of Jerusalem, "Portraits in Leadership" would examine six sages of the era. This combined my general Jewish interests with a particular interest in ancient history. I had read a lot of fact and fiction pertaining to the Middle Ages and feudalism, and I could now travel back centuries earlier through a Jewish perspective.

I walked into a room at The Mandel JCC, having armed myself with defenses I never needed to use. Immediately I was put

at ease by the accepting nature and candor of our instructor Rabbi Yossi Marozov and by the openness of my fellow students. I also was taken with the dialectic approach to our topics - an ideal milieu for a trial lawyer who is hardly a wallflower.

Rabbi Yossi, who often responded to challenges with "Those are valid views and criticisms," made an ancient period, the insights of our sages, and tenets of our faith all come alive. We learned about Rabbi Akiva, who sacrificed his life for the Torah; the teachings of Hillel; and Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai. Totally new to me was the story of Rabbi Yochanan, who had the wisdom to put the preservation of the Torah before the preservation of the First Temple - understanding that our people could survive without the Temple but not without Torah.

After that course, I paid more attention to subsequent JLI mailings. Meanwhile, I had started to pursue a master's degree in bioethics at Case Western Reserve University after decades of specializing in medical legal issues as a trial attorney. So by the time "Medicine and Morals" was offered this past fall, I was looking for ancient and modern Jewish perspectives on issues I was studying in my master's program: in vitro fertilization, abortion, organ donation, end-of-life decisions, euthanasia, putting one's life at risk for another.

And I had another compelling reason to delve deeply into "Medicine and Morals." I had recently been diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Suddenly, my secular and Jewish curiosity about current bioethical issues took on new meaning. Despite my heavy regimen of cancer treatments (now successfully concluded), I did not miss a class. I was motivated to understand halachic and secular perspectives studied in each week's topic. I learned that much comes down to morality ... and that those principles have not changed much over time.

I consider the JLI courses a gift each of us should try for our own edification and because they deserve our support. The classes are well constructed, and the instructors are exceptionally well prepared. The students offer disparate points of view. With 300 communities around the world offering the same classes simultaneously, you can be on vacation in Orlando or London and take the class you'd have taken in Cleveland.

So often we support wonderful Jewish causes and programs without drawing a direct, tangible benefit. When you take a JLI course, you help perpetuate an outstanding program while personally reaping an intellectual and spiritual reward. Perhaps the description of the first course I took phrased it best: "One part biography,? one part history,? all parts inspiration." ■

Ronald L. Rosenfield is a practicing attorney and a student of bioethics at the CWRU Medical School. This article was first published in the Cleveland Jewish News and is reprinted by permission. www.clevelandjewishnews.com To find a JLI class near you visit myjli.com or call 718-221-6900.

As stones of memorial to the Children of Israel (Ex. 39:7) When Joseph was in Egypt and was tempted by Potifar's wife, the image of his father Jacob appeared to him, saying, "The names of all your brothers will one day be inscribed on the stones of the High Priest's breastplate. Do you want your name to be missing if, G-d forbid, you commit this sin?" The 12 stones of the breastplate serve as a memorial for all of Israel. When a person reminds himself that all Jews were represented on it, he too will be too embarrassed to transgress.

(Meshech Chachma)

And the Children of Israel did according to all that G-d commanded Moses. And they brought the Tabernacle to Moses (Ex. 39:32-33)

This contains an important lesson in how to build the individual "Sanctuary" that exists in every Jewish home: The first thing is to establish it according to "all that G-d commands," observing mitzvot (commandments) carefully and scrupulously. The next step is to bring it to "Moses," the singular Jewish leader of a given generation, to allow the Divine Presence to rest in it.

(Likutei Sichot)

These are the accounts of the Tabernacle (mishkan); the Tabernacle of the testimony (Ex. 38:21) That the word "Tabernacle" is repeated alludes to the two Holy Temples - the spiritual one that exists in the celestial spheres above and the physical one that was built by the Jews below to reflect spiritual reality.

(Likutei Sichot)

These are the accounts of the Tabernacle (Ex. 38:21) The numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word for "these" is 36, alluding to the 36 righteous people who exist in every generation. These holy people are likened to a sanctuary, and are also "taken" by G-d as a pledge, for they suffer on account of the sins of the generation.

(Pardes Yosef)

Thoughts that Count

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Shacharis 7:00am Sunday 8:00am Monday/Thursday 6:45am Minchah/Maariv 6:00pm Shabbos 5:55pm Shabbat Shabbos Mevarchim Tehillim Minyan 8:00am Shacharis 9:30am Light Candles 6:09pm Shabbat Ends 7:04pm		

It Once Happened The anteroom adjoining the study of Rabbi Yitzchak Meir, founder of the Chasidic dynasty of Gur, was filled with people waiting to be received by the Rebbe and to be helped by his counsel and blessing.

Near the Rebbe's door stood his personal secretary, Reb Bunim, who presided over the waiting list; as soon as the door opened and a chasid would emerge from the Rebbe's room, all eyes would turn toward Reb Bunim, who would signal to the next in line to enter.

In the entranceway appeared a man, dressed in the manner of the wealthy Jewish merchants of the time: high boots of glossy leather, a heavy gold watch-chain draped across the vest, a fur-lined jacket enveloping a generous girth in defense against the Polish winter. But an anxious and care-worn face belied the luxurious attire; here was a man who had his troubles despite his wealth.

The man scanned the crowded room and a frown clouded his already despondent features. Impatiently, he made his way to the secretary. "I must see the Rebbe on an urgent matter," he whispered. "How much longer is the man inside going to be?"

"Have a seat," said Reb Bunim evenly, "and I'll put you on the list. What is your name, Reb Yid?"

"You don't understand," said the man, certain that the secretary indeed did not understand. "I must see the Rebbe now. I have an important meeting tomorrow in Warsaw, and I must be on my way shortly."

"But surely, Reb Yid, you don't expect me to let you in before all these people," said Reb Bunim. "Some of them have been waiting for hours..."

"That's exactly my point," said the visitor, who was beginning to lose his patience with the insolent secretary. "I cannot wait for an hour, or even half an hour. I wish to speak with the Rebbe immediately. You can save your lists for people with more time on their hands."

"I'm sorry," said Reb Bunim somewhat heatedly, rising to the challenge to his authority. "You must wait like everyone else..."

The crack of the merchant's palm against the face of the secretary resounded through the room, which fell into a shocked silence.

It took Reb Bunim several seconds to realize he had been slapped, and when he did, he just stood there, unable to utter a word. Nothing like this had ever happened in the Rebbe's waiting room, where no one dared even raise his voice at the Rebbe's secretary. In fact, the only one in the room not paralyzed by incredulity was the assailant himself, who, satisfied that he had at last made himself understood, proceeded toward the Rebbe's door.

At that very moment the door opened, and Rabbi Yitzchak Meir stood in the doorway. "How dare you raise a hand to a fellow Jew," he thundered. "I shall not receive you," he added, "until you have secured the forgiveness of the man you so unjustly attacked." With that, he closed the door behind him.

For a long second the merchant stood staring at the Rebbe's closed door. Abruptly, he turned on his heels and fled from the room.

Something in the man's face caught Reb Bunim's eye and caused him to hurry outside after his assailant. There he found him leaning against his coach, his large body racked with sobs.

"You?" said the man, when he saw who had followed him outside. "What do you want of me now? You have destroyed our last hope."

"Your last hope for what?" asked Reb Bunim quietly. "For fifteen years we've been childless, my wife and I," wept the man. "We've tried everything... We've been to all the doctors... I had hoped that the Rebbe would pray for us..."

"Come with me," said Reb Bunim, grabbing hold of the merchant's hand. Before the visitor knew what was happening, both were standing in the Rebbe's room.

"Rebbe!" said Reb Bunim. "I swear that I will never forgive this man, not in this world and not in the world to come, unless the Rebbe promises that he and his wife will be blessed with a child!"

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir looked from the anguished face of the merchant to the determined face of his secretary. Slowly, a smile broke out on his face. "May it so be the will of G-d," he finally said, "as Reb Bunim says..." ■

Moshiach Matters

Our Sages said that although the First and Second Holy Temples were destroyed, they were never totally taken from the Jewish people but are only being held for a future date as a pledge. According to Jewish law, the guardian of a pledge is obligated to return it to its owner in perfect condition when the proper time comes. The Third Holy Temple will therefore possess all of the same qualities and characteristics as the First and Second Temples that were held as a pledge until Moshiach's coming. ■ *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

What's In A Name?

ACHINOAM means "my brother is pleasant." King Saul and King David both had wives named Achinoam.

ADIN is from the Hebrew meaning "beautiful, pleasant, gentle." In the Bible (Ezra 2:15), Adin was one of the people who returned to Israel with Zerubabel from the Babylonian exile.

News

Megillat Esther The newly released Kol Menachem Megillah has commentary and insights anthologized from Classic Rabbinic texts and the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The commentary is contemporary and relevant, and is a delightful blend of mystical, historical, and religious messages. Compiled and adapted by Rabbi

Chaim Miller. **When Every Moment Is Precious** Does it really bother G-d when we sin? Is serving G-d out of fear sufficient? When is a desire to do a mitzva (commandment) not good? What effect does prayer have on the person? These are some of the deep issues discussed in the Chasidic discourse, *When Every Moment Is Precious*, delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1952. This latest release in the Chasidic Treasure Chest series was translated by Rabbi Eli Touger and published by Sichos In English. ■