

L'Chaim

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Living with the REBBE



"And it came to pass on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel," begins this week's Torah portion, Shemini.

"Moses said: This is the thing that G-d has commanded you to do; and the glory of G-d will appear to you."

G-d's command was to build the Sanctuary.

The Children of Israel, under the guidance of Moses, Aaron and his sons, were busy for seven days making all the preparations that were necessary for its erection. It was in the merit of these seven days of training for the service of the Sanctuary that the Jewish people were worthy of G-d's presence descending on the eighth day, when the Sanctuary was actually built and the Divine Presence began to dwell within it.

What lesson can we derive from the fact that G-d's presence was revealed on the eighth day, after seven days of intense preparation?

Chasidic philosophy explains that the number seven is symbolic of the world as it exists in nature, subservient to natural law and order.

An example of this is the seven days of the week, which represent a whole and complete cycle. The number eight, on the other hand, represents a deviation from this natural order, and thus symbolizes that which is supernatural.

The numbers seven and eight are also significant when speaking about G-d:

Seven represents the type of G-dliness that is contained within the physical world and hidden within the laws of nature;

Eight alludes to G-d's supernatural and miraculous intervention in daily affairs.

Yet even that G-dly light which exists on a level above the limitations of nature is not totally disassociated from physical existence. On the contrary, the number eight is only reached after the number seven is attained.

Applying this principle to ourselves, we see that even though a Jew's service to G-d may be limited by the confines and constraints of circumstance, when he tries with all his heart to go beyond these limitations he is rewarded with an infusion of holiness that can only be granted from Above.

Accordingly, the seven days of preparation served to pave the way and ready the Sanctuary for G-d's holy presence to descend on the eighth day.

This principle holds special significance for us today, for even though we stand on the threshold of the Messianic Era, we are still bound by the constraints of the exile until Moshiach is actually revealed.

We must therefore bear in mind that our service now actively prepares the world for the Final Redemption and the open revelation of G-dliness that will prevail. ■

Jewish Nesting Dolls

Why is it that in difficult times, that suddenly we remember not only that we are Jews, but that there is an all-Powerful G-d who really controls the world?

Take, for example, the recent tragedy in Israel, when Ehud and Ruth Fogel and three of their pure, precious children - including their three-month-old daughter Hadas - were brutally murdered by bloodthirsty terrorists on Shabbat.

Jews the world over - no matter what their day-to-day association with Israel, the Jewish people and Judaism - cried Jewish tears. Twenty thousand students in the Amit school system in Israel dedicated their studies to the Fogels during the week after the slaying. A global call for Jewish women to light Shabbat candles and have in mind the Fogels on Shabbat eve following their deaths was answered by tens of thousands of women and girls.

Why? Why did people who never met the Fogels, or never heard of their settlement in Itamar or Ariel where they lived before Itamar or Gush Katif from where they were "disengaged" in the summer of 2005 cry, study, light, do?

The answer to the "why" is really quite simple, and maybe because of its simplicity it is often overlooked. In an age when self-help books continually top the best-sellers charts, when our society approaches the ancient Greeks' idolization of the human mind and ability to reason, it is often hard to accept the seemingly intangible, non-cerebral explanation of "the Jewish soul." But, "current events" throughout Jewish history, have always led us back to the unmistakable fact that within every Jew is the magnificent treasure of the Jewish soul.

So, why does it so often take a tragedy - sometimes personal, sometimes global - or sometimes, thank G-d, a happy event or victorious occasion, to bring out the Jewish soul? And then again, why often is this personal discovery only momentary, fleeting, and the soul soon relegated to its hidden space?

Imagine a set of nesting dolls: those little wooden Russian peasant figurines or their variation we've all seen or played with. No matter what our age, we delight in opening the doll, only to find a slightly smaller one inside, which we expectantly open. Then, we find a slightly smaller one, and a slightly smaller one inside that, on and on until, at last, we find the tiniest doll which does not open. That minute doll, if you will, is the essence of the Jew, the "yiddishe neshama" - the Jewish soul. And the Jewish soul, though not a physical entity, is just as real as the smallest nesting doll.

The tiny figurine can be covered and enclosed by layers of bigger dolls. But bigger doesn't necessarily mean better, for we all know the tremendous disappointment of opening all the dolls just to find that the smallest one is missing.

The Jewish soul, the "piece of G-d" which He invests in each one of us, can never be lost. Though initially covered by bigger, more elaborate, seemingly better layers, part of our life-long job is to work at uncovering our soul, allowing its presence to be felt, thereby enriching our lives.

Sometimes the uncovering of the soul happens through hard-work, sometimes, quite by accident. Sometimes, someone else tries to help us, or G-d, Himself, eases the way. But, just as it is within our power to nest it once again within larger figures, we also have the ability to keep it uncovered. ■

MEZUZAH

DID YOU
KNOW???The Art of Mezuzah – The Lines

The first step in the actual writing of the mezuzah is the ruling of twenty-two lines with a bone stylus.

The letters of the sacred text will be written suspended from these lines (rather than resting on the lines). The ruling of these lines is not just to guide the scribe's hand, but an integral part of the scribal laws handed down from the time of Moses. ■

**A WORD FROM
THE DIRECTOR**

This Shabbat a second Torah scroll is taken out of the ark and Parshat Para, a special chapter enumerating the laws of the red heifer, is read. The ashes of the red heifer (of which only nine have ever existed) have the power to remove the spiritual impurity that is caused by contact with a dead body. The tenth and final red heifer will be prepared by Moshiach, who will purify the Jewish people in the Messianic era.

The mitzva of the red heifer is a prime example of a "chok" - a commandment that completely transcends human understanding. While the person upon whom the ashes were sprinkled was purified, the one who performed the ritual was rendered unclean. The mitzva of the red heifer has long been derided by the non-Jewish world for its inconsistencies. The Evil Inclination wants Jews, too, to feel uncomfortable about it. But like other commandments in this category, it reminds us that the basis for our observing Torah and mitzvot is not how much of Judaism we can understand and "agree" with. A Jew's faith in G-d is higher than the limitations of the human mind.

Of course, as human beings blessed with intellect we are obligated to study Torah and comprehend it to the best of our ability. Faith and intellect are two sides of the same coin, each one complementing the other and making us complete. But the bottom line is that the Torah is Divine, and we can't expect to understand everything.

The mitzva of the red heifer thus contains an important lesson: G-d promised us Moshiach; it doesn't matter if it makes "sense," or if there are skeptics who ridicule our belief. In the same way our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt in the merit of their faith, so too must we remain strong until the Final Redemption with Moshiach is a reality.

May it happen at once. ■

The Rebbe Writes

18th of Adar II, 5725 [1965]

Insofar as I have heard about your husband, I am surprised to read your description of his present state of discouragement. Surely he knows that it is not only a matter of world outlook for a Jew, but one of the very foundations of the Jew's faith, that G-d's Providence extends to everyone individually, and in every aspect of one's individual life. How much more so where it is not only an individual matter, but is related to the parnasa [income] of the whole family. At the same it should be remembered that G-d's Providence is a benevolent Providence; that G-d is the Essence of Goodness and desires to do good, for, "It is in the nature of the good to do good." Therefore, it is easy to see how right King David was in the holy Tehillim [Psalms] when he said, "G-d is with me, I shall not fear," "G-d is my shepherd, I shall not want," etc. It is only necessary to reflect upon this frequently and deeply, and all anxiety and worry will be dispelled at once.

Needless to say, trust in G-d does not mean relying solely on miracles. For the Torah demands the Jew to do everything possible in the natural order of things in matters of parnasa, etc., except that he should at the same time remember success and blessing comes from G-d. And so it is written in the Torah, "G-d will bless you in all you do."

If the above is true in every case and at all times and places, it should certainly be obvious to Jews in our own times, since every one of us has seen G-d's kindness, especially Jews who had a miraculous escape from the dangers of the second World War. How can one allow himself to be so confused by the Yetzer Hara [evil inclination] as to be so overcome by anxiety or worry?

Of course there are times when things do not go as expected or as desired. But the Torah has already forewarned us to regard such times as temporary trials and tests of one's faith in G-d. As a matter of fact, the stronger remains one faith in G-d even under adverse circumstances, the sooner it will become clear it was all a matter of a test. But this faith should not be merely a matter of lip service, but must have the full force of conviction. And this is not hard to achieve, if one reflects on what has been said above, and frequently, calmly and objectively.

I trust that the above lines will suffice and that you, on your part, will also be a source of encouragement and confidence to your husband. May G-d grant that you should have good news to report in the spirit of Purim on which we celebrate the reversal of the Jewish position from sadness to gladness and, in the words of the Megila, "For the Jews there was light, joy, gladness and honor."

P.S. You may, of course, show this letter to your husband, if you think it will serve a useful purpose. The important thing is that the message of the letter should be effective, and that you should soon be able to report about an improvement in your husband's state of mind, to go about his business with confidence and joy, and this will be the first step to an improvement in parnasa.



10th of Menachem Av, 5714 [1954]

I have received your letter in which you described your habits which are not according to the Torah and also your conduct, etc.

It is surely unnecessary to emphasize that all this depends on yourself and that you must make a determined effort to overcome your bad habits. At the same time you must never be discouraged if you find the going hard and sometimes without success, for discouragement is one of the very tricks of the Yetzer Hara in order to weaken the fighting spirit of the Yetzer Tov [inclination to good]. It is one of the favorite - and most effective - weapons of the Yetzer Hara, especially among young people. So never become discouraged and never think the battle lost, but keep on fighting; be on guard to overcome a bad habit as soon as it seems to tempt you.

For a tikun [rectification] I suggest you learn by heart a few kapitlach Tehillim [chapters of Psalms], a few Mishnayot, and after learning it well from the Tanya learn also by heart the following:

From kapital [chapter] 41 until page 112 second line - lifnei hamelech, from time to time reflecting on the contents of it and reciting it when you are not otherwise engaged in learning. This will help you in your battle to improve yourself and G-d will help you. ■



SLICE OF LIFE

Be Prepared:

Adventures of a Scout Mom

by Peshah Leah Tanny

When I tell people I'm a Scout Mom, they find it amusing. A Lubavitcher woman, mother of 11, better known as a musician and writer, doesn't fit the image of a Boy Scout Leader.

My family has been involved in Scouting for almost 20 years. When my son Binyamin, was 11-years-old, he wanted to go to "real" camp, not what he called "a hotel in the country." A friend suggested we contact Dr. Howard Spielman, the Scoutmaster of Troop 54 in Massachusetts.

Dr. Spielman introduced us to Kosher Jewish Scouting and "real" camp where boys sleep in tents, go rock-climbing, build campfires and go on week-long canoe trips.

That summer Binyamin went to Camp Kunatah for the first time. My husband and I doubted that there could be a glatt kosher, Sabbath observant Boy Scout Camp so we drove down from Montreal to see it!

Binyamin eventually became an Eagle Scout, the highest rank in Boy Scouts in the United States, and a Chief Scout, the highest rank in Canada. He is probably the only Jewish kid to have done this in both countries!

We now have three more boy scouts in the family: Avi, 24, is a Life Scout; Yehuda, 17, is almost an Eagle Scout; and Reuven, 11, is a Tenderfoot Scout and our camp bugler.

Because we live in Montreal and are part of a U.S. troop in Massachusetts, with a summer camp in the Catskills, we travel considerable distances to join with our troop a few times a year. When my younger boys became active in scouting, I started attending scouting events with them, and participating as a Scout Leader.

The only country in the world where Scouting is still boys' only is the U.S., but the leaders can be female. Troop leaders, scout parents, and other volunteers help plan, chaperone and teach merit badges at events.

Merit badges are given for mastery of subjects such as electronics, mammal study, communications, swimming - there's one for just about everything. The merit badges, along with other requirements, are necessary to complete certain "ranks" in scouting. There are also Jewish badges and awards, such as the "Ner Tamid" and "Etz Chayim" awards, given for Jewish studies and participation in the community.

We've attended the Winter Conclave in Milton, Massachusetts, for the past five years. My boys look forward to it all year. It's an intense four days of skiing, trips, activities, merit badge sessions, campfires and getting together with friends from all over the U.S. and Canada. The food is strictly kosher and the boys daven (pray) and learn together.

During conclave I teach communications and textiles, and do the testing for the French and Spanish Interpreter strips. This past December I also taught tracking - identifying animal tracks and habitats of native species.

The summer camp is now located at the J. Fred Billett Camp in Forestburg, New York. Three years ago the camp moved from Camp Kunatah in the Ten Mile River Scout Reservation. Since Forestburg Scout Reservation doesn't have its own kosher kitchen, the food is brought in from another camp and reheated in our own kosher ovens.

Last summer I drove down from Montreal with three scouts and stayed as a kitchen manager, arranging food pick-ups and meals from the other camp. I slept in a tent for two weeks!

My first night in Forestburg I got lost. I rarely carry a flashlight when I'm camping or in the country. There's usually enough light from other sources - outdoor lights, the moon and stars.

Fortunately, I knew the name of our campsite. When two women (scout moms!) appeared with flashlights, they walked me back to my campsite.

There's no electricity at the campsites, but our troop does have gas lamps. There's also no internet connection, cell phone reception or pay phones in Forestburg.

For two weeks I didn't answer a phone, use email or internet. To make arrangements for food pick-ups, we had to hike to the top of the hill or drive out of camp.

Our group of troops is known as the "Shomer Shabbat [Sabbath observant] Contingent," although there are scouts from all levels of observance. The kids choose their own activities except for praying, which is a requirement.

Last summer was a Jamboree year, celebrating 100 years of scouting in the U.S. That meant that there were Jewish Scouts from all over the world - kids who proudly wear their scout uniforms with a kipa - camping with us.

One late afternoon, while the boys were praying Mincha (the afternoon service), I went to my tent to change into my uniform before dinner. No one was around but someone had left a sleeping bag, overnight bag and purse in my tent! Hmmm, I wasn't expecting visitors. I quickly tidied up the tent and went down to the dining room to try to find out who my guest was. It wasn't until after dinner that a woman approached me and asked me if she could leave her things in my tent and stay overnight.

I was delighted to have some female company so of course I said yes. I lent her a flashlight, an extra pillow and a foam mattress.

My guest and I chatted for a while before we went to sleep. She explained that one of the campers had gone home for his grandfather's funeral a few days before. She had offered to drive him back to camp so she could visit her son and see the camp.

"But," I asked her, "how could you just show up in a boys' camp with no plan? You couldn't call. You didn't know I was here with a big tent, extra mattress and pillow. There's no hotel..."

"That's exactly what I told my husband," she said. "I said 'I must be crazy for doing this.' But he said, 'Don't worry, there's always a Chabad House!'" ■

Moshiach Matters The Torah lists four animals that have only one of the two kosher signs and are therefore non-kosher - camel, hyrax, hare and pig. Each animal symbolizes one of the four nations which enslaved the Jews in exile. We are now in the last of these four exiles, corresponding to the pig - chazir in Hebrew. The word "chazir" means "return." After this fourth and final exile the glory of the Jewish people will "return" to the way it was intended. ■ *(Vayikra Raba)*

What's in a Name?

SHIFRA means "handsome or beautiful." In Exodus (1:15) it was the name of the Hebrew midwife who, together with her helper, Pua, saved many babies from death at the hands of the Egyptians. According to Rashi Shifra and Pua were Yocheved and Miriam, Moses' mother and sister.

SHALOM means "peace." A fourth century Jewish scholar was named Shalom. A variant spelling of the name is Sholom.

News

New Emissaries Rabbi Yisroel and Chany Haller recently moved to Umhlanga Rocks, South Africa. They will be running community programs and synagogue services for the many tourists who frequent the area. Rabbi Mendel and Leah Blecher have arrived in Woodland, Texas, near Houston to establish Chabad of The Woodlands, servicing the Jewish residents in Spring, Conroe, Tomball and the surrounding areas.

New Chabad House in Manali Construction on a new Chabad House in Manali, India, is well underway. Thousands of Israeli backpackers frequent the north Indian town each year. The new building will house a synagogue, kosher restaurant, visitors center, and a mikva. ■

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| Light Candles 6:25pm | Shabbat Ends 7:20pm | | |

It Once Happened

One of the great treasures of the old community of Bodenheim was a beautiful silver Torah pointer. There were many legends associated with the hand-shaped pointer, and according to tradition, it had been fashioned for a synagogue in Rome hundreds of years before.

In the 14th century, the story is told of when the silver hand was credited with saving the Jewish community from ruin. A young carpenter's assistant claimed that he had heard two Jews plotting to poison the wells of the region. The arrest of all the leading Jews of Alsace followed quickly. Although the Jews protested their innocence, they were not believed.

"How long will you keep up your lies when you meet the thumb screws and the Iron Maiden?" the police chief threatened. Jewish leaders paled at the mention of these tortures, but Rabbi Wolf of Strassburg declared, "Neither torture nor death can sway us from the truth, we are all innocent."

The Jews spent the entire wakeful night in prayer, and in the morning they were once again led before the police chief and the city council. "Are you ready to confess your guilt?" they demanded.

"We have nothing to confess," replied Rabbi Wolf. "Please allow us to prove our innocence. Perhaps if we can question our accuser, we might be able to discover the truth."

When the young apprentice was brought in, he described how he hitched a ride with two Jewish merchants and overheard the men speaking in hushed tones. "One Jew said to the other, 'We must see that the convention does something about the poison that has been spreading throughout our well of life-giving water in the province of Alsace.'"

"Aha!" exclaimed the police chief. "That surely proves the guilt of these Jews! They are killing our children and animals with their poison!"

In spite of the terrible tension of the moment, Rabbi Wolf smiled. With great relief in his voice, he addressed the assembled: "I am sure that I can explain everything to your satisfaction. The purpose of our meeting at Bodenheim was to save our youth from ignorance and from neglecting their religious duties. In our Biblical language we call the Torah 'the well of living water.' Those who distort or falsify our religion are referred to as 'poisoning the wells of our water,' since the Jewish people can live only if this, our spiritual fountain, is kept pure. When the 2 merchants were discussing the meeting at Bodenheim, they weren't speaking of poisoning the wells of Alsace, G-d forbid, but the wells of our Jewish faith."

"How absurd! Do you imagine that you can fool us with such a ridiculous explanation? You had better come up with a better story. If not, we know how to draw the truth out of you!"

Rabbi Wolf was now confident that he could prove their innocence. "Your Honor, there is a book entitled The Well of Life, which has been translated into Latin. One of your priests can easily verify the truth of our words in this book, where he will find this figure of speech employed."

"What do you say, gentlemen?" the police chief asked. One of the nobles, Bodo of Bodenheim, had a particular grudge against Jews, since he owed a huge sum to Jewish money-lenders. This was a perfect chance for revenge.

"I don't see why a passage in some book proves their innocence. Even if this expression is used, it still doesn't negate the possibility that these Jews really planned to poison our wells. This is no proof! I propose that we search the homes of all the Jews. Let's confiscate all their valuables as collateral and imprison their leaders until the truth is found."

Bodo knew the Jews hadn't planned to poison the wells, and he knew he wouldn't find any evidence of a plot. Nevertheless, he would find a way to produce the proof he needed.

It was past midnight when a masked figure climbed into a window of the Bodenheim synagogue. Ulrich, Bodo's servant, carried a bag of poison. Ulrich had faced danger so long, he had forgotten the sensation of fear. Yet, as he walked toward the Holy Ark, guided by the few rays of pale moonlight, he felt shivers across his skin. He approached the Holy Ark, pulled the heavy velvet curtain aside and, holding the bag of poison in his teeth, forced the doors apart. Panting with the effort, he inhaled some of the deadly powder.

The caretaker was awakened by a blood-curdling scream coming from the synagogue. There, writhing on the floor was Ulrich, unable to speak, the bag of poison still clenched in his teeth. He was gesturing to the huge shadow of a hand, a finger pointing directly at him. The caretaker saw that it was a reflection of the silver Torah pointer.

The following morning a crowd gathered in the synagogue where Ulrich lay quiet now, with the poison still between his teeth. He pointed his finger in silent accusation at Bodo. The nobleman knew the game was up.

His confession was sufficient to free the Jews of Bodenheim. After this incident, the silver hand became the most treasured possession of the community, and its story was retold from generation to generation. ■

And the swine, though its hoof is parted and is cloven footed, yet it does not chew the cud; it is unclean to you (Lev. 11:7)

Why do the verses describing non-kosher animals begin with what would seemingly make them kosher, rather than what distinguishes them as unclean? Moreover, the Torah cites their signs of purity as the reason for their not being kosher! The answer is that these "kosher" signs actually add to their spiritual impurity; one must be especially careful precisely because of them. For the most dangerous trait of all is hypocrisy, when impurity tries to pass itself off as purity. (Kli Yakar)

**And it came to pass on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel (Lev. 9:1)**

Every day, Aaron, his sons, and the elders came to learn Torah from Moses without having to be called. Why, on this day, did Moses have to call them? Proverbs states, "The heart knows the bitterness of the soul." The Talmud explains that a person may have a premonition about something without being consciously aware of it. Aaron and the elders felt, in their hearts, that on that day - the eighth day of the consecration of the Tabernacle - a terrible calamity would befall the Jewish nation. Indeed, later that day, Aaron's two sons were killed. Moses therefore found it necessary to seek them out and urge them to come. (Rabbi Shlomo Kluger)



All that goes on its belly (Lev 11:42) Comments Rashi, "This is a snake." A person who is haughty and acts condescendingly toward others should consider what happened to the snake in the Garden of Eden: Before it was cursed it walked upright like a human being; after it behaved arrogantly toward its Creator, it was humbled and made to creep through the dust... (Maayana Shel Torah)