

L'Chaim

Happy Purim!



Weekly Publication
for every Jewish Person

March 18, 2011 - 12 Adar II, 5771

1013: TZAV

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Living with the REBBE



In this week's Torah portion, Tzav, we read, "A perpetual fire shall always be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out." The fire on the altar of the Holy Temple burned continually. It was never extinguished, as explained in the Jerusalem Talmud: "Perpetual-even on Shabbat; perpetual-even when the Jews were in a state of ritual impurity."

Every aspect of the physical Temple and its service has a counterpart in the spiritual Holy Temple that exists in the heart of every Jew. Accordingly, the verse "A perpetual fire shall always be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" applies in both the spiritual as well as the literal sense.

The "altar" of the Jew's inner Sanctuary is his heart. And just as there were two altars in the Temple in Jerusalem, an inner and an outer one, so too is there an inner and an outer aspect to the Jew's heart.

The "perpetual fire" mentioned in the verse was lit on the outer altar of the Holy Temple. This fire, in spiritual terms, refers to a Jew's enthusiasm and ardor for serving G-d, his excitement when performing mitzvot and the joy with which he does them. This fire must be open and apparent and burn "perpetually," at all times. The Jewish heart must always be consumed with a fiery love for G-dliness and holiness.

On Shabbat we are commanded to refrain from working. It is forbidden to engage in any labor or involve ourselves in business affairs. Nonetheless, the fire on the altar of the Holy Temple continued to burn - "even on Shabbat." No matter how elevated a Jew feels on the Sabbath, no matter how intensely he experiences the holiness of the day, he must never assume that it is unnecessary to serve G-d with a fiery enthusiasm. His passion and fervor must not be permitted to die out, regardless of his level of spirituality.

The same principle applies to the opposite, if, G-d forbid, a Jew should feel himself estranged from G-d and His commandments, like the person in a state of spiritual uncleanness who was prohibited from entering the Holy Temple. A Jew must never fall into despair. He must never be discouraged by his low spiritual standing and surrender the "perpetual fire" in his heart. As we saw in the Holy Temple, even spiritual uncleanness is incapable of extinguishing its flames.

"Perpetual - even in a state of ritual impurity." A Jew who finds himself in a compromising spiritual condition must take special care to guard his Jewish spark, fanning its glowing embers till it erupts in a roaring conflagration that consumes his entire being. As the Magid of Mezeritch explained, doing so will ensure that "it shall not go out." The negative forces in his life will disappear automatically, extinguished by the holy flames and nullified into nothingness. ■

Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume I

What's the Joke?

Why didn't Esther receive Mordechai's e-mail, warning her about Haman's plan to kill the Jews? She had an Achash-virus.

How do you prevent your bagels from being stolen? Put lox on them.

OK, you can stop groaning. We're just getting into the spirit of Purim - a time for jesting, rejoicing, feasting, joking - and yes, even some puns.

But let's ask ourselves why. Why is Purim the holiday of being merry? (Do you know the old Purim song - "Oh, today we'll merry, merry be, and nosh some hamantashen?") After all, how is it different than any other Jewish holiday?

There are, of course, many deep spiritual meanings. For example, perhaps you've heard of the Rabbinic dictum that one is to rejoice on Purim until one does not know ("ad d'lo yada," in Hebrew) the difference between "Blessed is Mordechai" and "Cursed is Haman." One reason offered points out that numerically (according to the "gematria" of assigning a numerical value to each Hebrew letter) these phrases in Hebrew both equal 502.

This means that on Purim, we have to recognize that our Jewishness transcends our perceptions, it transcends our reason. If we act Jewish because Mordechai is blessed and Haman cursed, then living like a Jew depends on our calculations. But if we can't tell the difference, but we do "the Jewish thing" regardless of what makes sense, then that self-sacrifice can be the highest expression of our Jewishness.

From this we can also understand two other Purim concepts:

transformation and levity.

One of the themes of Purim is "turning things upside down." When reading the Megila of Esther, it becomes obvious that every scheme, every way it looks like the story is going to go, gets turned upside down: Haman plotted to hang Mordechai, Haman gets hanged. (That's just one example. Read the story - the "whole megila" - to find out others.)

Why is that a theme? Among other reasons, to teach us that what seems to be the case often isn't; it seemed the Jews were in big trouble - and on one level, we were. But on another, higher level - everything was the opposite.

And that's also why Purim is a holiday of merriment and joking. For laughter, jesting - these also transform, "turn things upside down," defy reason.

So while there should be joy at every celebration, every Jewish holiday - indeed, we should be joyous at all times, for "joy breaks all barriers" and joy generates the energy to act, with strength, involvement and dedication - on Purim joy goes beyond itself. (Hence the Rabbinic saying, when Adar - the month of Purim - begins, joy increases.

So the jesting and joking and merriment and laughter on Purim has the same purpose as laughter at all times - to take us out of ourselves, to turn things upside down, to reach a stage of connection to G-d that transcends all aspects of our existence, except the very joy of being Jewish, which is the very essence.

So this Purim - celebrate! Enjoy! Go beyond yourself and turn things upside down! And tell a few jokes. ■

**MEZUZAH
DID YOU
KNOW???**

The Art of Mezuzah – The Pen

The pen used for mezuzahs or tefillin is generally a quill from a kosher bird, a goose or a turkey. The point is carefully cut so that by turning the pen and varying the pressure, the scribe can write thick as well as very thin lines with one stroke. ■

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Sunday we celebrate Purim, commemorating the time when the Jews were delivered from Haman's terrible decree. Once Haman's plot to destroy the Jews became known, Mordechai sent a messenger to Queen Esther, asking her to go to the King on behalf of her people.

Esther hesitated; anyone who approached the king without being summoned and did not meet with his favor forfeited his life. When Esther relayed this message to Mordechai, the Megila tells us he responded:

"Think not of yourself... For if you hold your peace at this time, then the deliverance will come to the Jews from another place... And who knows whether you came to the kingdom for just such a time as this."

Esther understood Mordechai's message. As a tzadik and the leader of the Jewish people of that generation, Mordechai knew, through Divine inspiration, that the Jewish people would be delivered. Their deliverance was certain; it would come from somewhere. The only question was who would help actualize this Divinely inspired promise?

Esther capitulated and asked Mordechai to tell the Jews to fast and pray for three days so she should be successful in her mission of finding favor in the king's eyes and finally saving the Jewish people. That is what happened and the Jews were ultimately delivered.

Every generation has its Mordechai - a tzadik and great leader. The Mordechai of our generation, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, stated that the time of the Redemption has arrived. The Rebbe said that to prepare ourselves for the Redemption we should learn about Moshiach and the Redemption. Now, as then, the Rebbe's message was that the deliverance is coming, the Redemption will take place, it's happening.

The only question is, Who will be prepared and help others prepare?"

The responsibility lies with each of us. We must do everything possible to spread the Rebbe's message of the imminence of the Redemption and the importance of learning about it. Then we will surely merit the total fulfillment of one of the last verses of the Megila that, "there was light and joy, gladness and honor," so may it be with us. ■

The Rebbe Writes

Free translation

In proximity to Purim, 5736 (1976)
To Jewish Students, G-d bless you all

Greeting and Blessing:

At this time, in proximity of Purim, you have surely given much thought to the story of Purim, as related in the Megillah (the Book of Esther). This is just a reminder about the special significance of this festival for Jewish children and youths in all parts of the world.

The Megillah relates how the wicked Haman rose to power and planned to destroy all the Jews, young and old, infants and women, that lived in all the lands of King Ahasuerus. It also tells how things turned out eventually, with Haman being hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordechai, the decree abolished, the complete change of the situation from one extreme to the other, which made these days into days of joy and festivity.

Our Sages of blessed memory relate the details of how it happened:

Mordechai and Esther, who knew what was happening, called upon all the Jews to fast and pray and return to G-d, to His Torah and His Mitzvos (commandments). And after Mordechai gathered thousands upon thousands of Jewish children and taught them Torah, and inspired their hearts with love of G-d and love of the Torah to the point of Mesiras Nefesh (supreme self-sacrifice) - then G-d annulled the decree and made Esther's efforts successful, so that "For the Jews there was light, joy, gladness, and honor."

Thus, the Miracle of Purim mainly came about through the merit of the Jewish children and youths!

One of the reasons why the Torah tells us these details is to let everybody know, and everywhere and at all times (for the Torah is eternal), how great is the power of Jewish children who walk in the way of the Torah and Mitzvos to influence the fate of our people everywhere.

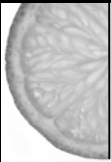
Unfortunately, there still are many "Hamans" in various parts of the world who want to carry out the intention of that wicked Haman. But we are one people, though scattered and spread among the nations; yet our laws are different from those of any other people, ours being the law of our Torah and its Mitzvos, which is our life and the length of our days, that gives us the ability and strength to triumph over all our enemies.

Each and every Jewish boy and girl, wherever they are, who learn Torah and do Mitzvos, add strength and power to all Jews everywhere - including, especially, in those countries where our enemies do not permit to teach Torah to Jewish children and youths, and to fulfill the Mitzvos. How fortunate you are that you are not in such a plight, G-d forbid, and that you can learn Torah diligently and fulfill the Mitzvos to perfection, and it only depends on yourselves and your will!

Dear children: Learn more Torah and increase your efforts in doing Mitzvos, and G-d's blessing will be with you and all your near and dear members of your family, may they prosper.

And in your Zechus (merit), all our people will benefit and will achieve, in the words of the Megillah: "For the Jews there was light, joy, gladness and honor" - so be it for us and for all Jews."

With love and with blessing for a Joyous Purim, ■



SLICE OF LIFE

Purim on the Porch

by Yehudis Cohen

It's Purim. And I send one of my children to the home of Shimshon and Martha Stock to bring over a check, a donation to Chevras Simchas Shabbos V'Yomtov (CSSY). I want my children to experience first-hand the special Purim mitzva (commandment) of matanot l'evyonim - charitable gifts to the poor. CSSY was established to help needy families in our very own neighborhood of Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Inevitably, my child comes back grinning sheepishly: "Shimshon was on the porch. I dropped the check in the big bucket and he said, 'Tell your mother I love her.'"

Now it's before Passover. And we have the mitzva of "maot chitim" to fulfill. It is customary in Jewish communities to collect money to distribute to needy families for Passover expenses. This time I go with one of my children to Shimshon's and Martha's house. (Just "by coincidence," though nothing is by chance, the Stock's address on Montgomery Street - 593 - is the gematria, or numerical equivalent, of maot chitim.) Shimshon is sitting at the kitchen table putting checks into envelopes. I prod my child to give him the check and then I say, "Shimshon, tell him what you do with this money."

With his strong Brooklyn accent and gnarled voice, Shimshon tells my child, "You see this envelope here. This is for a family that used to be very wealthy but they have fallen on hard times. Most people don't even know that they don't have money anymore. I have to give them more money than I give to the people who don't know what it's like to have fine food and fine clothes. But I'm going to put the money from your check into this other envelope. This envelope is for a family who has a son your age. He is going to have a much happier Passover because his mother and father won't be so worried about how they are going to pay their bills once they get this envelope."

Similar scenes repeat themselves each year,

especially before the holidays when we are expected to help those who have less with their expenses. I send my children, as part of the holiday preparations, to bring a donation to the Stock home.

Last year on Purim, as usual, I wrote a check to CSSY. In the memo, I had written, "For a speedy recovery for Shimshon Hakohen ben Feiga and Matel bas Chana Fruma" as both Shimshon and his wife were ailing. Before my son took the check over, I rewrote the memo, "For an elevation of the soul of Shimshon Hakohen...." Shimshon had passed away earlier that day, and his dear wife Martha passed away 3 weeks later.

Purim is a "happening" day in Crown Heights each year. Cars with lively Jewish music blasting away triple-park to deliver shalach manot (food gifts to friends, one of the special Purim mitzvot). Seemingly somber Chasidim show their true colors as they dress up in all kinds of funny hats or in full costume. Children run up and down the streets and in and out of houses delivering shalach manot to friends, neighbors and teachers. Delicious aromas waft out of windows as special Purim meals are being prepared. Beggars and charity collectors line the streets, especially near 770 Eastern Parkway (Lubavitch World Headquarters) as they know that everyone is walking around with pockets full of coins to give tzedaka to anyone who puts out his hand.

Amidst all the hubbub and noise and merrymaking, I know that Shimshon and Martha will be sorely missed this year in Crown Heights and beyond. The Stocks were real people who were passionate about helping members of their community in very practical, down-to-earth ways. And so, I ask their daughter Faige Moskovits to tell me a little about Purim in her parents' home.

"My parents got loads, hundreds and hundreds, of shalach manot. As soon as the shalach manot would come in, they would divide them. There was a big box for the fruit, another big box for the chocolates, another one for the cookies and wafers and a fourth box for the raisins; in the 'olden days' all shalach manot had boxes of raisins! My parents tried to make sure that everything they received was given away.

"My father would stand on the porch of the house throughout the whole Purim collecting matanot l'evyonim that people brought over and dropped in the bucket. He used to make the children giggle when he would tell them to go back and tell their mothers, 'Tell your mother I love her!' He would put on one of his crazy hats - my father would do anything for a laugh - and just stand there with a huge box marked 'CSSY' collecting dollars, coins, checks. What he collected on Purim was a big portion of what he gave out for Passover. My mother would always say, 'The Aibishter (G-d) will help,' and He always did!

"After Purim, before Passover, my father used to go to the schools in the neighborhood. He would go into the classrooms and speak to the children about the importance of giving money for maot chitim. He would collect pennies and nickels and dimes from the children and they felt so good that they were part of doing this important mitzva."

Faige tells me that people still put donations, as well as names and addresses of families who need help, under her parents' door even though no one lives there anymore. In Faige's words, "The good that my parents did is still happening, and even more." She and her siblings have taken over the responsibility of CSSY and of helping hundreds of families on a regular basis. "People still know the address," Faige explains. "And even though my father won't be there, his bucket marked 'CSSY' will be on the porch this Purim, as always."

So, if you happen to be in the neighborhood on Purim, visit Shimshon's and Martha's porch. Drop some money into the bucket, make a blessing on some cake, and say "L'Chaim" for an elevation of the souls of Shimshon and Martha to an even brighter place in "Gan Eden" than where they certainly already are. ■

Customs

What are the customs of Purim?


There are five special mitzvot of Purim:

1. We listen to the reading of the Scroll of Esther (Megila) in the evening and during the day.
2. We send gifts of food-at least two kinds of ready-to-eat foods-to at least one friend on Purim day.
3. We give charity to at least two needy individuals on Purim day.
4. We eat a festive meal during the day - kreplach and hamentashen are traditional Purim foods.
5. We add the special Al HaNissim prayer ("Concerning the Miracles") to our prayers.

Moshiach Matters

Our Sages relate the holiday of Purim with the Jews' maintaining in actual deed the Torah which they accepted at Mount Sinai. On a basic level, each person should realize that no matter how complete his service was until now, he must make an increase. This will lead to the ultimate elevation of the Jewish people. Haman and his entire household will be obliterated; the remembrance of Amalek will be wiped out entirely and all the seventy nations will assist in the ingathering of the exiles of the Jewish people who will proceed to the Third Holy Temple. ■

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 13 Adar 5752 - 1991)

Important Times – Scottsdale, AZ March 18 – 25 <i>Shacharis</i> 7:00am Sunday 8:00am Monday/Thursday 6:45am <i>Minchah/Maariv</i> 6:15pm Shabbos 6:10pm <i>Shabbat</i> <u>Chassidus Club 8:15am</u> <u>Kabbalah of Cholent 9:05am</u> <u>Shacharis 9:30am</u> Light Candles 6:19pm Shabbat Ends 7:15pm	Brought to you by: Chabad-Lubavitch in Cyberspace www.chabad.org Copyright © 2010 Lubavitch Youth Organization www.lchaimweekly.org	Re-printed by: Chabad of Scottsdale (480) 998-1410 chabadofscottsdale.org  The Jewish Learning Center of Scottsdale 480.443.5362
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It Once Happened

The charges against Mendel arrived in an official-looking envelope from the Rumanian government. A former friend who had a grudge against him had falsely accused him of absconding from Rumania with government funds, and although he now lived in Russia, they were pursuing their claim against him in a local court. Mendel was in serious trouble and not at all sure of how to exonerate himself.

He decided to present his whole story to the famous tzadik (righteous person), Aryeh Leib, the Shpoler Zeide, and see what advice the Rebbe could give him. After having listened to Mendel describe the problem at length, the tzadik said: "Don't worry about the trial. Just be sure to have the proceedings postponed until the day of Purim. And as for a lawyer, don't worry about that either, because I'll send a very good one to plead your defense."

Mendel felt the burden being lifted from his shoulders. "Rebbe, how much will I have to pay for this lawyer," he asked with some trepidation. "And, how will I recognize him?"

"There is an orphaned girl whom I'm trying to marry off, and I need three hundred rubles for the dowry. If you give me money for this great mitzva (commandment), I'll send the lawyer at my own expense. You will recognize him because he will be wearing a white hat and red gloves."

Of course, Mendel was more than happy to comply. He handed the money to the tzadik and returned home to arrange for his case to be heard on Purim. He was successful in his endeavors.

As for his part, the Shpoler Zeide had a very unique method of influencing the official government sphere. On Purim, he had been known to gather a group of his intimates for a special kind of Purim-spiel or play. This "jest," however, was not meant in humor, but was a serious cabalistic means of affecting the outcome of dangerous legal dilemmas. In the course of the Purim-spiel the case at hand would be enacted by the tzadik and his company, and a positive verdict would be handed down.

On the day of Mendel's court appearance the Shpoler Zeide had his associates dress up as judges and various court officials. One man was instructed to blacken his face in order to act the part of the Rumanian prosecutor, two others were appointed judges, and the local rabbi was the chief justice. The Shpoler Zeide himself acted the part of the defense attorney, covering up his shtreimel with a white cloth and donning red gloves. The cast was completed with one man taking the part of the informer and another the part of Mendel, the accused.

The Purim-trial began with the reading of the accusation by the Rumanian prosecutor, but whenever he tried to speak the other members of the court laughed at his attempts. Next, the accuser gave testimony. Finally, the Shpoler Zeide rose to deliver his case for the defendant. His case was stated in a manner which left no doubt as to the innocence of the accused. In his argument he proved that the entire charge was false, and that even if it had been valid, the Rumanian government would have had no legal claim to the money in question. When he finished speaking the judges handed down their verdict: Mendel was acquitted.

Then the Shpoler Zeide and all the other Purim-spielers adjointed to the dining room where they enjoyed the festive Purim meal. Later that night the tzadik received a telegram from Mendel relating the good news and saying that he was on his way to Shpola.

Upon his arrival he went immediately to the Rebbe and related all the details of the trial. What a spectacular delivery the defense attorney made! What erudite arguments, why, the courtroom was spellbound! The chasidim listened with increasing wonder lighting their eyes. The details of the case were amazingly familiar to them. The events of the courtroom mirrored the "script" of the tzadik's Purim play!

"Well, Mendel," inquired the tzadik, "so you liked the lawyer I sent?"

"Rebbe, that's what I'm saying. He was wonderful, everyone agreed!"

"Know, then, that he was no human being, but an angel sent down from heaven, created as a result of the tzedaka money (charity) you gave for the poor orphan. If you have the merit, you may see him again when you are tried at the Great Tribunal on High, for he will be your attorney when you are called to give an account of your life on this earth." ■

And any earthen vessel in which it may have been boiled shall be broken (Lev. 6:21)

Thoughts that Count

An earthen vessel that has been used to cook non-kosher food and absorbed its flavor cannot be made kosher; it must be shattered.

Similarly, the heart of a person who has become accustomed to sin must be "broken" before he can become pure.

(Kli Yakar)



And the flesh of the sacrifice of his thanksgiving-peace-offering shall be eaten the same day that it is offered

(Leviticus 7:15) Why is eating this type of sacrifice limited to only one day? asks Rabbi Avraham Mordechai of Gur. Because it is brought to thank G-d for a miracle He has wrought on our behalf; indeed, G-d performs new miracles every day...

(Ma'ayanot HaNetzach)



This is the law of the burnt-offering...which the L-rd commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that He commanded the Children of Israel to offer their sacrifices (Leviticus 7:37-8)

From this verse Maimonides concludes that the proper time for bringing sacrifices is during the day and not at night. Nonetheless, he continues, it is permissible to burn any portions of the animal that were not consumed during the daytime throughout the night. Similarly, the Jew's mission in life is to "sacrifice" his animal soul his lust and desire for physical pleasures and transform it into holiness. Optimally, this type of service is to be done "in the daytime" when the Jew's connection to G-d is fully revealed, illuminating and sustaining him body and soul. Nonetheless, if our sins have caused us to enter a state of spiritual "night," our service of G-d must continue, for this in itself will dispel the darkness and transform it into light.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Bechukotai, 5749)