

L'Chaim



When the young chasid heard that the Baal Shem Tov (the Besht) was going to spend the Sabbath in Posen, he was anxious to accompany his rebbe. Alexei, the driver readied the coach and they set out on the journey.

The Baal Shem Tov never travelled in an ordinary manner. While the driver sat napping, the horses were given free rein and ran at enormous speed. When the horses finally stopped, the carriage was standing in a grassy wooded area. The Baal Shem Tov took a flask and sent Alexei out to fill it with water from a spring.

He returned with the water and the Besht gave it to the chasid, cautioning him to make a blessing before drinking. As soon as he grasped the flask, he felt an intense thirst and just managed to say the blessing. Then the Besht and Alexei drank as well.

Everyone got back into the carriage. Once more, Alexei fell into a deep sleep. The unreined horses continued at their unnatural speed, coursing through the countryside.

"We are going so fast, but we don't seem to be reaching Posen," observed the chasid.

But the Besht was unconcerned, and replied, "We will be in Posen, G-d willing, at the proper time." They travelled throughout the night at the same enormous speed. When they stopped the next morning the Baal Shem Tov prayed at great length. Then they resumed the trip. The hours passed in rapid travel, but the chasid, who had travelled to Posen many times before, saw no familiar sites. Nevertheless, he restrained himself from questioning the Besht.

Finally, the horses drew to a stop outside a ruined shack and the Besht descended from the carriage. They entered the house and there on the floor lay a sick old man surrounded by his tattered, emaciated family. But when the old man saw the Besht, he rose to his feet and embraced him. The two spoke in hushed tones for some time. After the old man blessed the Baal Shem Tov they returned to the carriage and continued their journey.

Shabbat was descending when at last they reached the city of Posen. They alighted from the carriage on the Street of Students, a place known for violent anti-Jewish riots. Sure enough, as soon as word had spread that Jews had arrived they were surrounded by a vicious mob. The Besht traversed the crowd, unafraid, with the frightened young man at his heels.

They entered the house of a Jewish tailor, the only Jew tolerated by the locals because of his useful trade. The tailor greeted his guests joyfully, but with trepidation. "You have nothing to fear," the Besht assured him. Together with the assistant tailors, they formed a minyan, and began the Mincha service. But they were interrupted by the noise of a mob outside the door. The Besht opened the door and focused his blazing eyes on the hooligans. Terror-struck, they turned and fled.

When the story of this astonishing rabbi reached the ears of a certain university professor, he burned with curiosity. What kind of man could this be? He made his way to the tailor's house to observe the holy Besht. The following day he returned and sat, eyes riveted on the majestic figure of the rabbi. He listened intently to the Torah which was taught, and didn't move until Havdala was recited.

When they had eaten the Melave Malka meal, the Besht instructed the driver to bring the carriage and they departed, travelling again at a fabulous speed. In no time they arrived back in Brod. The young man was completely baffled. He got up the nerve to question the Besht. "I can't understand the point of this journey. Please allow me to ask you three questions: First, why did we stop in the grassy area? Second, who was the sick old man we visited? And third, why did we spend Shabbat with the tailor in Posen?"

The Besht replied: "I will answer two of your questions. The third you will decipher in due time. In the high grass there lay the bodies of two murdered Jews who had never received a proper burial. By reciting the blessings on the water, and praying the next morning we were able to elevate their souls. The sick old man was the greatest tzadik of our generation. He was destined to be Moshiach, but since our generation was not

prepared for him, he was to pass away that very night. As for the reason for going to Posen, you will find out later."

Many years passed and one Shabbat the chasid happened to be in Posen. He had occasion to visit the home of the rabbi there and spent a wonderful Shabbat there, absorbing the erudite Torah commentary of his host. Suddenly the young man was struck by something his host had said. "I heard these very same words from the Baal Shem Tov in the house of a tailor right here in Posen!"

"Are you the young man who accompanied the Besht?" asked the rabbi.

"I am."

"Don't you recognize me? I am the university professor who was present. The words of the Besht caused me to attach myself to Judaism."

Now the chasid finally understood the purpose of the mysterious trip to Posen.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

It came to pass at the end of two full years.... (Gen. 41:1)

Joseph's confinement in prison was only physical but not spiritual. Even in jail he retained and guarded his spiritual heritage, the teachings absorbed from his father, and this light overcame the darkness of prison and filled him with hope. The prison-house of Joseph is an allusion to this world (especially during the exile), into which the souls of Israel are made to descend to become vested in finite bodies in order to observe Torah and mitzvot. Yet the very idea of confinement to the Jew is alien, because Jewish life is essentially unrestricted. The present era of restraints is only temporary, and is merely a step toward the ultimate goal which will be realized with Moshiach. (The Rebbe, *Shabbat Parshat Mikeitz*, 5751)

Joseph recognized his brothers, but they recognized him not (Gen. 42:8)

Joseph's brothers never expected that a man as involved in worldly affairs as the viceroy of Egypt could be their brother. In their world view, the only way to serve G-d properly was to divorce oneself from worldly matters and pursue a life of spiritual contemplation, much as they were able to do in their chosen profession of shepherding. Joseph, however, was on a higher level of spirituality, able to maintain his attachment to G-d even while involved in the day-to-day affairs of state. (Torah Ohr)

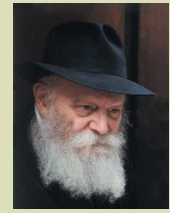
Your G-d, and the G-d of your fathers, has given you a treasure...and he brought Shimon out to them (Gen. 43:32)

This verse alludes to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, who would one day reveal the treasures hidden within the Torah in his holy book, the Zohar. (Ma'ayana Shel Torah)



4:12 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
3 Tevet/ Dec 15
Torah Portion Mikeitz
Shabbat ends 5:15 pm



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Miketz, contains an interesting exchange between Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and our Patriarch Jacob. When Joseph brought his elderly father to Pharaoh to introduce him, Pharaoh asked, "How old are you?" Jacob responded: "The years of my travails are 130. The days of the years of my life have been few and hard, and they have not reached those of my ancestors in their journeys."

What an odd answer to Pharaoh's question! Why did Jacob find it necessary to offer all this information, when Pharaoh had only asked him his age? Furthermore, how could he have described his years as being "few"? His lifetime was already longer than the 120 years allotted to mankind after the great Flood of Noah's generation. In fact, Pharaoh had only posed the question because of Jacob's ancient appearance.

In the literal sense, it could certainly be said that Jacob had not reached the years of his ancestors, for Abraham lived till the age of 175, and Isaac until 180. Relatively speaking, Jacob was still young. Yet according to the commentator Rashi, Jacob was speaking qualitatively about his life; in contrast to his forefathers, his years were short and his lifetime was difficult.

From this perspective, since Jacob's years were "hard," fraught as they were with difficulty, they were also "few," for they were not filled with the inner spiritual service he desired. Because his life was hard, Jacob did not reach the inner spiritual fulfillment with which Abraham and Isaac had endowed their years.

Of course, this lack of fulfillment is relative to the unique level which Jacob saw as his potential. Our Sages relate that Jacob's true desire was to live to his fullest capacity, in the perfect goodness and prosperity of the Era of the Redemption. Since this potential was not realized during his lifetime, Jacob considered his life as lacking.

Jacob felt it necessary to communicate this message, both to Pharaoh, and to his descendants. He wanted his children to know that even while they dwelt in "the finest place in the land of Egypt," and were being given "the fat of the land," they should be ever aware that their lives were not complete.

This is particularly relevant to us, the last generation of the exile and the first generation of the Redemption. We must feel that until the Redemption becomes manifest, our lives are lacking. This perception will lead to an increased desire and yearning for the Redemption, and also an increase in our performance of those activities which will bring Moshiach and usher in the Messianic Era.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The Secret of Jewish Survival

By Lazer Gurkov

Blaise Pascal, French theologian and philosopher, wrote at length about the marvel of Jewish survival. Powerful kings have tried to destroy them, yet the Jews survived whereas the nations of Greece, Italy, Athens and Rome have long perished. It is said that when King Louis XIV of France asked Pascal to give him proof of G-d's existence, he replied, "Why the Jews...."

The marvel of Jewish survival has led historians and philosophers of all stripes to wonder. Tolstoy, Churchill, Twain and Adams have all written with wonder about this phenomenon. Yet, whereas the believer is quick to credit G-d with our nation's survival, the rationalist will ask, is it not also a product of Jewish tenacity, and determination.

I submit that both are correct. The rationalist and the believer. Jewish survival is a product of both. When we resolve to serve G-d with devotion, G-d responds in kind and ensures our survival miraculously.

A brief review of Jewish history will illustrate this. Our ancestors were delivered miraculously from Egypt, the house of bondage. Yet, they wouldn't have been liberated if the Jewish women obeyed their husbands and stopped giving birth.

At the Reed Sea. G-d split the sea miraculously and the Jews passed through, but not before one Jew, Nachshon Ben Aminadav, plunged into the sea and risked his life to obey G-d's command.

In Persia, Jewish survival was in peril. Esther risked her life by entering the king's chambers unbidden and Mordechai staunchly refused to bow to Haman despite the king's explicit instructions. When Jews outdid themselves in loyalty to

G-d, G-d intervened and saved us.

In Israel, G-d saved our ancestors from oppression by the Syrian Greeks, who occupied our land. Yet, this salvation occurred only because the Maccabees, a brave band of five brothers and their father, stood up to the mighty Syrian Greek army and risked their lives to defend their faith.

The survival of the nation after the fall of the second Temple, was nothing short of miraculous, but not before one brave Jew, Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai, risked his life to ingratiate himself with Vespasian and negotiate a promise of protection.

The bandit Chmielniki led pogroms across Ukraine in 1648. Many Jews were massacred, yet there were miraculous stories of survival. One such story occurred to Rabbi Shabsi Cohen, who fled the Cossacks and survived. The astounding piece is that he penned his magnum opus Sifsei Kohen, a vast and incisive analysis of Jewish law under duress. That no Halachic analysis is possible today without consulting Rabbi Kohen's works is a testament to his brilliance and courage under fire..

There is no question that Israel's superior army is responsible for its safety and the Iron Dome caught most of the missiles headed its way, but who gave them the wisdom and who saved the nation from the missiles that slipped through the dome and nonetheless landed safely?

The answer is as obvious to us as it was to Pascal. It is G-d who saves the Jews. Let us resolve to stimulate more miracles by devoting ourselves to Him yet again. Let us resolve to observe a Mitzvah we haven't observed yet or strengthen one we are already observing.

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to continue to illuminate the darkness
and make the world a brighter place
with the light of Torah
Pearl and Yosef Chaim Ratz

SLICE OF LIFE

The Northernmost Chabad House in the World, With Rabbi Avi and Mushky Feldman, Chabad of Iceland

By: Chaya Chazan



After an amazing one and a half year shlichus opportunity in Berlin, we were back in New York, looking for the next step in our journey. We were hearing more and more about Iceland, and its need for more Yiddishkeit. Although Jews had lived there for more than 100 years, there's never been a rabbi or any kind of Jewish organization in the country.

Our first visit was during Chanukah 2017, when we got to meet some of the local Jews. We hosted a Chanukah event to introduce ourselves to the community. Soon afterwards, we decided to dedicate ourselves to this shlichus. Just before Shavuos 2018, we moved to Iceland.

The Icelandic Jewish community is small but diverse. There are Icelandic Jews from several generations back, and there are expats from many different countries. Even though the Jews of Iceland come from all different backgrounds, everyone enjoys Jewish events where we can celebrate what we have in common.

While kosher can be challenging, we're lucky to have some local kosher products,

as well as many imported products that have hechsherim. Iceland is famous for its delicious fish, which are easily accessible and very fresh. Kosher meat, chicken, wine, and all chalav yisrael products have to be imported by sea.

Iceland is nicknamed the land of fire and ice. It's famous for its glaciers and natural hot springs. We use the closest one, a 90-minute drive and ten minute hike, as our mikvah. Baruch Hashem, we are now beginning construction of the first mikvah in Icelandic history.

We have four little girls and a son. One of our greatest priorities is to give our kids childhood and social life. Baruch Hashem, they are thriving and have many friends in the community. They also have a tremendous impact on the community. When they speak at the Shabbos table and share what they've been learning about the parsha, people love hearing them.

Our winter days can be very short. In December, we have only five hours of daylight. In the summer, we experience two months of "white nights," when the sun only dips below the horizon, but it doesn't get dark. This situation presents many halachic challenges, so, after consulting with a rav, we now feature a Halachic FAQ page on our website. In June, Shabbos ends at 1:30am!

Nowadays, public menorah lightings are almost ubiquitous, with 15,000 menorahs lit in public squares throughout the world every year. But in Reykjavik, such a thing was unheard of.

We sent a letter to the city asking permission to put up a public menorah, and waited eagerly for a response. Bureaucracy is usually very efficient in Iceland, since it's a small country, so we were concerned when we didn't receive any response. We feared it might be ignored altogether, but baruch Hashem, a few weeks later, we received approval. They granted us a space right on the main street of Reykjavik! We couldn't

have asked for a better location.

We had a meeting with city officials to plan the logistics, and they were all very courteous and helpful.

"I'm sure you were wondering about the delay in responding to your letter," the city clerk told us. "Honestly, when we received your letter, we were stumped. We'd never heard of such a thing, and had no idea what to do with it. We passed it to another office, but they didn't know what to say either! Your letter passed from department to department, until it finally made its way to the mayor's desk. He approved it immediately!"

That Chanukah, we hosted the first ever public menorah lighting in Iceland. It was heartwarming to see how well it was received by everyone, Jews and non-Jews alike.

The next year, the mayor attended the lighting himself. In his speech, he pledged there would always be a public menorah in Iceland.

The Jewish community took great pride in the mayor's words, and were very proud and amazed to see Chanukah celebrated openly on the streets!

When we first moved and started meeting members of the community, we asked for their input: how do you envision the future of the Jewish community? What would you like to see happen?

One repeated answer was a wish that Judaism would be recognized as an official religion. Seeing how important this recognition was, we made a concerted effort to bring it to fruition. It took two years, but the Chabad house was finally recognized as the official Jewish community of Iceland.

This governmental approval granted us the right to a Jewish cemetery, recognition of a chuppah as a valid marriage, and the ability to receive religious tax funds. Most importantly, it instilled a sense of pride and belonging in our community.

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The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Between Chanuka and Yud (10th of) Shevat

Eve of Rosh Chodesh Shevat, 5734 (1974)

I was pleased to receive your letter of January 10th, following the personal regards which I have received through mutual friends, as well as the reports about your involvement with Lubavitch and Chabad teachings, etc.

All of this is especially pertinent at this time in our Jewish calendar, the period between Chanuka and Yud (10th of) Shevat. Coming from Chanuka, the festival of Lights, which symbolizes the light of the Torah and mitzvot, we are reminded of the Chasidic emphasis on inspired joy and brightness which should permeate the life and activity of every Jew. Moreover, as in the case of light which is of immediate benefit not only to the one who lights it, but also to many others at the same time, so a Jew has to illuminate his personal life as well as his surroundings with the light of Torah and mitzvot. This is also emphasized by the special requirements that the Chanuka lights be seen outside, so as to illuminate those who might still be walking in darkness.

Similarly, Yud Shevat, the yahrzeit of

my father-in-law of saintly memory, brings to mind his dedicated efforts in the course of the last decade of his life in this country, to spread the principles and teachings of Chasidut to many who were "outside." Thus, many "outsiders" became "insiders," whose lives were brightly illuminated with the light, vitality and warmth of Chasidut, and who in turn became "shining lights" illuminating others.

Your joining this ever-growing Chasidic family which has found a new meaning in life and, with it, peace and happiness, has a special significance in that you are a Kohen, and also in that Divine Providence has given you a gift of song and melody. For this is a medium that directly communicates with the heart and the inner aspects of the soul, unlike prose which speaks to the intellect and only then can probe deeper. Through the medium of song and melody one can touch directly upon the heartstrings of the listener and inspire his inner soul which is the reason why song and melody have such a prominent part in Chasidut in general, and in Chabad in particular.

In the light of the above, I extend to you both my prayerful wishes to utilize to the full the capacities and opportunities which G-d has given you in the above-mentioned direction, and to do this in the Chabad way--with complete trust in G-d and with inspiration, and may G-d bless you with success to go from strength to strength in all the above, in good health and with gladness of heart.

and knowledge, for they are susceptible to being misguided by their intellect to the point that their end may be a bitter one.

"The essential thing in these times of the "footsteps of Moshiach" is not to follow intellect and reason, but to fulfill Torah and mitzvot wholeheartedly, with simple faith in the G-d of Israel.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Rebbe Rashab, Rabbi Shalom Dovber, said:

"Even the greatest minds must lay aside their intellect and not be ruled by reason

A Call To Action

TZEDAKA BOX

Have a tzedaka box ("pushka") in every room in your home and even in your office. By having one in your place of business, the Rebbe explains, one "involves G-d as an active partner in one's business and enhances his potential to distribute G-d's blessing to others."

Any container can be used as a tzedaka box; one can also make decorating suitable containers for one's home and place of business into a family project.

Mayanot Institute students tie Tzitzit for IDF soldiers, finding personal fulfillment in the process



As Jewish men across Israel answered the call to serve in the Israel Defense Forces, they also sought ways to protect themselves spiritually. For a growing number of soldiers, that meant the Mitzvah of tzitzit, a shirt with fringes made of eight strings that hang down on four sides of the garment. However, as the fringes, which are tied in a specific fashion, are hand-knotted, tzitzit cannot be mass produced. To help ease the need, students at Chabad-Lubavitch's Mayanot Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, took time away from their educational programs to help tie tzitzit for IDF soldiers.

As the students worked "they really understood the intricacies and importance of the process," said Rabbi Kasriel Shemtov, the school's executive director. "Many of our students come from secular Jewish backgrounds, and might have themselves been unfamiliar with the importance of wearing tzitzit," he explained. "They came to help fortify, and they came out fortified themselves."

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Previously, we have briefly discussed some of the positive signs heralding the Messianic Era.

In more detail, the Zohar states that in the 600th year of the 6th millennium "the gates of sublime wisdom will open and the wellsprings of lower wisdom will burst forth to prepare the world to enter the seventh millennium."

The year mentioned in the Zohar corresponds to 5600 since creation or 1839 in the secular calendar. In fact, we see that there have been numerous scientific, medical and technological discoveries since then. This was the opening of the wellsprings of wisdom below.

The opening of the gates of wisdom above is evidenced by a manifestation and propagation of the mystical teachings of the Torah. The opening of these two gates is supposed to go hand-in-hand so that all of the advances and discoveries in science, medicine, etc., will--with the proper insight and understanding through the advances in the spreading of Torah knowledge--be used for positive and humane purposes. When they are not used in tandem, we wind up with catastrophic events like those which occurred in the previous generation.

In our days, the opening of these gates is further facilitating a unification of the material with the spiritual as witnessed by the fact that so much of modern technology is being used to spread Judaism, i.e., the internet, Jewish radio programs, cable TV shows, publications, social media, and via intercontinental live interactive meetings.

Some years back, during a Chanuka Live satellite program, the Rebbe stated, "In this matter, not only does this satellite link communicate spiritual truth: it expresses it in itself. For satellite communication, like every other creation brought into being by G-d, exists for a purpose. As our Sages declare, "Whatever the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world, He created solely for His glory." In this instance, G-d revealed the wisdom for this and other technological advances that unite different parts of the world so that we could better appreciate the oneness that pervades all existence.

Shmuel Beilman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA
לזכרון חיה'י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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