

L'Chaim



IT HAPPENED ONCE

In a small village in Poland there lived an unassuming and pious Jew named Meir. While he was by no means well-to-do, his family never wanted for their daily bread. Each day on his way home from the synagogue Meir passed through the farmers' market, buying produce and poultry which his wife sold from a small store attached to their house. The prices were always fair, and they earned a reputation for honesty.

Meir stood out from the other buyers at the market, for he would never haggle over prices. Meir had his one fair price, and that was that—he would never budge. Eventually the farmers came to respect him and would even seek him out when they had some special goods for sale, and he became known to everyone as "Honest Meir."

Meir had only one regret in life—his business took time away from his beloved Torah study. One day he decided that he would work only half as much, and spend the time saved learning Torah. His wife was worried by his decision, but he calmed her saying, "Don't you think that G-d can send us enough in those three days?" She wanted to reply that of course He could, but would He? But she stopped herself and decided to wait and see what would happen. As it turned out, their income was the same and her husband thrived on his Torah learning.

One day his wife came to Meir to discuss the marriage of their daughter, Mirele. "G-d has been good to us, and we must certainly be grateful, but our daughter isn't getting any younger, and the time has come for us to start saving for her dowry."

Meir looked at his wife and replied, "G-d has taken care of us so far. Trust in Him and stop worrying."

But his wife couldn't rest. "Meir, we aren't supposed to rely on miracles. Maybe you should go out and work like you used to."

Meir replied, "What you're saying may seem true, but don't forget my 'silent partner'—G-d. Haven't you seen with your own eyes that since I've spent extra time with my 'partner' we have lost nothing. I can not stop my Torah studies, especially now when we need Him even more." There was nothing more his wife could say except a heartfelt "Amen."

A short time later a peasant showed up at the marketplace with a large honeycomb encased in a block of wood. Several prospective buyers approached him, but he refused them, saying, "I will sell only to Honest Meir." And there he sat and waited until finally, late in the afternoon someone told him that Meir wouldn't be coming to market that day.

The peasant made his way to Meir's house where he was greeted by his wife. "My husband isn't at home now," she told him, but she asked him to wait while she ran to fetch her husband. Meir measured the honeycomb and lifted it; then he made his offer, "Judging by its size and weight, and even allowing for the wood, there should be a lot of honey in it." The two men agreed on a figure which seemed fair to both. The only problem was that Meir didn't have such a large sum. Meir's wife interrupted, saying: "I will try to borrow the money from some of our neighbors."

Meir served the peasant a cup of tea, and then he questioned the man: "Tell me, how did you come to have such a strange honeycomb?"

The peasant replied, "I was walking through the woods collecting fire-wood. When my cart was full, I got inside and fell asleep, but it seems that my mare wandered a bit, for when I awoke, I found myself in a different part of the woods, in front of a tree stump. Looking up, I noticed bees buzzing, and being something of a beekeeper myself, I hopped out of my cart and with a long thin twig I removed the queen bee from the hive. I tried to take out the honeycomb, but it was impossible to do so without breaking it. That's when I got the idea of sawing off the stump."

By the time the peasant had finished his tale, Meir's wife had returned with the money. Meir gave it to the happy peasant who went off feeling very pleased. Meir's wife

began to extract the honey. She pulled out two and then three heavily laden honeycombs and reached in with a deep ladle for more, when she found there was nothing there but a deep, empty hole. The poor woman was horrified. They were now in debt, and for nothing but a bit of honey and a piece of wood!

She screamed for her husband, who was equally shocked at the find. "What will we do now?" his wife wailed. Meir was also at a loss, but not willing to give up he said, "Go fetch your longest cooking spoon and maybe we can salvage something from the bottom."

Meir dipped the spoon into the wooden cavity, and lo and behold, the spoon was filled with a pile of golden coins and jewels! His wife almost fainted from the shock, but when she recovered she asked her husband, "Do you think G-d had the bees produce this treasure for us?"

Her husband turned to her, smiling, "Possibly, but I think there's a simpler explanation. Probably someone hid this treasure years ago and had to abandon it for some reason. Then the bee colony settled in the trees stump and built their hive on top of the treasure. Now, it seems that G-d must have decided there was no longer any reason to leave it hidden since we need the money to marry off our children and do other good things. So, you see, the peasant was rewarded for his labor, and we were even more richly rewarded for our faith and trust in G-d."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

And these are the ordinances which you shall set before them (Ex. 21:1)

This section of the Torah comes immediately after the Revelation on Mount Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments. Yet what is enumerated here are not lofty principles pertaining to the relationship between G-d and man; they are very concrete laws governing man's relationship with his fellow man.

We learn from this the lesson that "good manners are a prerequisite to Torah." Rabbi Mendel of Kotsk used to say: The same way that a book's preface informs the reader of the book's contents, a person's courtesy and manners indicate just how much Torah learning he has acquired.

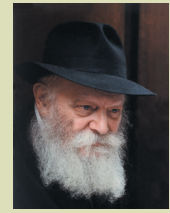
Six years shall he serve, and in the seventh he shall go free(21:2)

"Six years" symbolizes the six thousand years of the world's existence; "shall he serve" refers to our mission to learn Torah and perform mitzvot; "in the seventh" refers to the seventh millennium, when "he shall go free," when the Messianic Era shall reign on earth and G-dliness will no longer be hidden but revealed. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

For all manner of transgression...of which he can say, "this is it" (22:80)

Pride is the root of all transgression. The essence of sin is when a person says of himself—"this is it"—"I am the most important thing in the whole world!" (Rabbi Yisrael of Moditz)

5:05 Candle Lighting Time
NY Metro Area
30 Shevat / Feb 9
Torah Portion *Mishpatim*
Rosh Chodesh Adar I
Shabbat ends **6:06 pm**



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In last week's Torah portion, we learned about the Revelation on Mount Sinai. This week, in *Mishpatim*, the text begins by delineating some of the practical laws which the Torah contains. The first subject dealt with is a Hebrew servant. This pertains to a Jew who was sold into servitude by the courts in order to make restitution for stealing, or one who sells himself due to his great poverty.

At first glance, it seems odd that the Torah would begin with this subject first. After all, in the generation of Jews who left Egypt, there were no Hebrew servants! The Children of Israel had no poor people who had to sell themselves into slavery. And even if there were those who succumbed and actually stole something, they were all sufficiently wealthy to be able to pay back the rightful owner twice as prescribed by Torah law. Why then does the Torah choose precisely this subject to begin the portion dealing with practical commandments?

The section on the Hebrew servant, more than any other commandment, illustrates the effect the Revelation on Mount Sinai had on this world. With this mitzva, we see a direct cause and effect between the sin and its punishment. If a Hebrew slave does not desire to be freed after six years of servitude, his punishment is "and his master should bore his ear through with an awl."

The commentator Rashi explains that this ear, which heard the prohibition uttered on Mount Sinai against stealing and committed thievery anyway, deserves to be bored through. This ear, which heard G-d declare that the Jewish people are His servants alone—yet wants to remain a slave to a human master—deserves to be pierced.

In many instances of Torah law, we do not find such a direct cause and effect between a wrongdoing and its rectification. For example, the Torah promises that the reward for honoring one's parents is longevity, but we don't always perceive this connection. However, the penalty for a Hebrew slave who refuses to be set free is one instance in which the punishment is an obvious consequence of the actions.

When the Torah was given it enabled the spiritual and physical world to influence each other. Prior to that time, the spiritual and material realms each remained isolated and distinct. The Hebrew slave is an example to illustrate this innovation, for his spiritual defect found a physical expression, one which could be seen by all. Furthermore, Chasidic philosophy explains that the Hebrew bondsman also symbolizes man's obligation to subjugate his baser instincts and desires in the service of G-d. After the Revelation, the road to spirituality is paved by our properly utilizing physical reality in the service of holiness.

Our Mission To Israel Was Just Wow!

By Rabbi Uriel Vigler

I've lost track of how many times I've been to Israel, but the trip I just returned from was unlike any other. This visit was not a pleasure trip or a tourist opportunity. It was a mission with the goal to show solidarity and provide as much assistance as possible.

We started at Kfar Aza—a town on the Gaza border that was hit one of the hardest. As much as I'd heard about the brutality and devastation, it was nothing compared to being there in person and hearing about it from those who lived through it.

Our guide walked us through the attacks in horrifying detail, showing us exactly where the barbaric terrorists paraglided into Israel, where the fences were breached, how everything played out.

The homes in Kfar Aza have been left exactly as they were on October 7th—bloodied, burned, plundered, riddled with bullets. We could still smell the smoke.

We visited the site of the Nova music festival, which has become a makeshift memorial. We listened to the stories of the soldiers who were wounded there, saving as many lives as they could under heavy fire. We cried.

We went to Sderot, which has been hit by hundreds of missiles, and saw the police station that was completely overrun by terrorists on October 7. We heard first-hand accounts of those who witnessed the unbearable slaughter of our

people. We visited an airforce base where we witnessed a deeply emotional reunion between a soldier who was wounded in Gaza and the pilot who saved his life. It was impossible not to cry.

We went to the Western Wall, and prayed for our brave soldiers and for the return of the hostages.

The pain is endless, the suffering unfathomable.

But at the same time, I met so many other Jews, who had come specifically to show their solidarity and support, all there to say, "We are one people and we care deeply. We share your pain. We're here to help."

The message from this trip is: These are our brothers and sisters, putting their lives on the line for all of us. Their suffering is our suffering. Now we say to Hashem: "Look how united your children are! We are "Belev Echad"—with one heart! It's time to bring Moshiach and the Final Redemption. We have suffered enough."

We must do everything we can to make it happen. Light Shabbat candles, put on tefillin, reach out to another Jew ... surely we are at the tipping point where our mitzvah could truly be the one to launch us into the era of Moshiach and true peace.

Rabbi Uriel Vigler, together with his wife Shevy direct the Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side of Manhattan

Dedicated in honor of a dear friend of the Lubavitch Youth Organization
Mr. Sam Schwartz

SLICE OF LIFE

Fans, Players and the WWII General
By: Dovid Zaklikowski



The last trolley of the evening rolled by as a jolly young Shimshon Stock ushered a close acquaintance and his soon-to-be-Bar-Mitzvahed son into the synagogue at 770 Eastern Parkway. Inside "770," as Lubavitch headquarters is known, was the study and office of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who a few years earlier had accepted the leadership of this small Chassidic community.

At the time, the Rebbe had only a handful of representatives scattered across Israel, America, Europe and North Africa; but he was already relentlessly and tirelessly building a global network of communities.

Shimshon introduced his friend and his friend's son to the Rebbe, who greeted them with his comforting and warm handshake, requesting them to please take a seat.

The Rebbe briefly blessed the boy that he should grow to become a source of pride to the Jewish people and to his family. As they turned to leave, Rebbe surprised the three Americans with the question he addressed to the youngster: "Are you a baseball fan?"

The Bar-Mitzvah boy replied that he was. "Which team are you a fan of—the Yankees or the Dodgers?"

"The Dodgers", replied the boy.

"Does your father have the same feeling for the

Dodgers as you have?"

"No."

"Does he take you out to games?"

"Well, every once in a while my father takes me to a game. We were at a game a month ago."

"How was the game?"

"It was disappointing, the 13-year-old confessed. By the sixth inning, the Dodgers were losing nine-to-two, so we decided to leave."

"Did the players also leave the game when you left?"

"Rabbi, the players can't leave in the middle of the game!"

"Why not?" asked the Rebbe. "Explain to me how this works."

"There are players and fans", the baseball fan explained. "The fans can leave when they like—they're not part of the game and the game could, and does, continue after they leave. But the players need to stay and try to win until the game is over."

"That is the lesson I want to teach you in Judaism," said the Rebbe with a smile. "You can be either a fan or a player. Be a player."

Outside 770 father and son said goodbye to Shimshon, the three now sharing a new admiration of a pioneer in Jewish education.

General Walks in on Jewish Soldier

Shortly after World War II began, 18-year-old Mottel Chaiton was drafted into the Canadian army. During the next three years, he was stationed first in Halifax, Nova Scotia, then in Ottawa, Ontario.

Once the family heard he was sick and went to visit him. When they arrived at the army base and asked for Chaiton, the soldiers told them, "He is our rabbi," and proceeded to relate how he had earned the title.

On Sundays, the soldiers were required to attend church, and Mottel had asked that he and the other Jewish soldiers be excused, saying that he would arrange Jewish services for them.



When the clergyman objected that there was no Jewish chaplain, Mottel replied, "We don't need one. We can make our own."

From then on, Mottel organized Shabbat prayer whenever possible. He would lead the prayers and read from the Torah.

His brother Aaron Chaiton was the first boy in the family to attend a yeshiva when, in 1941, the Lubavitch Yeshiva opened in Montreal. At the age of 12, Aaron went to New York to study at 770 Eastern Parkway, Chabad Headquarters.

Mottel, who had then just begun his army service, requested leave to go to New York and help his younger brother get settled and purchase a pair of tefillin for him.

While there, Mottel had a private audience with Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson, the sixth Chabad Rebbe. He asked for a blessing that all his friends should remain safe and return unharmed from the war, and the Rebbe gave his blessing, adding that he should tell his friends not to do any unnecessary prohibited actions on the Shabbat, such as smoking and sewing.

Back at the base, Mottel was asked to be the assistant to the commanding officer, General Perterson. One of his duties was to wake the general each morning at a certain time, for which purpose he slept in a room close to the general's.

Mottel himself would wake up much earlier to put on tefillin and pray. Once, General Perterson woke up early, and, knocking on Mottel's door, strode into the room to find him in the middle of his prayers. Immediately, he turned and left without saying a word.

When he reported for duty that day at nine o'clock, the general asked him to come into his office and close the door behind him. Mottel walked in with a sinking heart, certain that he was about to be disciplined.

"Chaiton," the general said, "don't ever let me disturb your prayers again!"

"At that moment," Mottel said later, he saw what it says in the Talmud (Berachot 6a), "When the nations will see you with tefillin on your head, they will fear you."

Dovid Zaklikowski is an archivist, researcher and biographer; many of his books can be purchased at HasidicArchives.com or on Amazon. He can be reached at dovidzak@gmail.com

Who's Who

Aaron was the elder brother of Moshe and the first High Priest—Kohen Gadol—of the Jewish people. He was appointed by G-d to minister in the Sanctuary and to serve as a conduit for G-d's blessings to His people. At the age of eighty-three, he joined his brother in the great mission of freeing the Jews from Egypt. As Moshe was unable to speak properly, Aaron served as his spokesman before Pharaoh. Aaron was the epitome of love for his fellow Jew, exerting himself to reconcile disputes and always "pursuing peace." At his death, all the people mourned him deeply for thirty days.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

By the Grace of G-d

Rosh Chodesh
Menachem Av 5733
Brooklyn, NY

Mr. I. I. Stone
The Jacob Sapirstein Foundation
10500 American Road
Cleveland, Ohio

Greeting and Blessing:

After not hearing from you for some time—though I have been receiving indirect regards through mutual friends—I was pleased to receive your letter of July 25th. I hasten to reply, because of the obvious importance of the subject matter, which has to do with the problem of how best and most effectively to distribute funds from your Foundation to further Torah-true Jewish education, and you ask for advice and guidance on the matter. Permit me, therefore, first of all, to point out some of the pitfalls which have hampered such highly desired objectives on the part of similar foundations. The avoidance of these pitfalls is the first step in meeting the urgent needs.

It has often happened, unfortunately, in various areas of philanthropy, that before actual distribution of funds is commenced, a preliminary and lengthy research or study program is initiated. While this approach is generally motivated by a desire to distribute funds most effectively, and may be commendable theoretically, the net result has all too often been to delay actual distribution of funds urgently needed immediately, quite apart from the fact that substantial funds have been thus diverted from their main purpose...

A further point, which is also mentioned in your letter, is the prevalent policy of foundations not to touch the principal at any time, but to make distributions from income only. This policy, too, may be commendable in normal times, but in times of emergency such as now exists, I believe that a more flexible policy is clearly called for. Obviously, however substantial the income may be, it is only a fraction of the actual reserve; and where there is a case of "life-saving," some of the reserves should also

be brought into play.

I repeat, I fully appreciate that both guiding principles mentioned above, with which I take issue, and unquestionably businesslike and well-intentioned. But they are sound only in normal times.

The reality of the situation is, however, that we live in abnormal times, and the abnormality of the situation has two facets, one negative and one positive.

On the negative side, we see to our deep sorrow and dismay how a large and growing segment of our Jewish youth is utterly confused and alienated to such an extent that it is being written off in some quarters as a lost cause, G-d forbid. Such a view is, of course, quite at variance with the Torah view, unequivocally expressed by our Sages of the Mishnah: "All Jews have a share in the World to Come, as it is written, 'but all your people are righteous... the work of My Hands.'" In other words, the eternal destiny of each and every Jew is assured by G-d Himself, regardless of the present state in which the individual may be.

Fortunately, just as Divine Providence is in evidence in everything, it is evidenced also in the fact the negative side of the situation is compensated by the positive side of it. It is, that never before has there been a greater, more eager and honest desire on the part of our younger generation to search for the truth, a desired matched by a determination and readiness to accept challenge and re-order the daily life accordingly—so long as they are convinced that they have found the truth.

The combination of the said two factors, the negative and the positive, makes it even more compelling to render the needed help immediately, without delay and in the maximum measure. There are numerous borderline cases, where it is a matter of touch or go, where every minute is of the essence: Reach out to them—and you save them; let go—and they may drift away beyond reach...

The above may seem a lengthy preface to my answer to your letter, but not too lengthy considering the vital import of the subject.

If you have in mind some kind of agency or program involving contingent investigative or coordinative functions—then I have already expressed my view on it above. I rather hope, however, that you would consider, instead, beginning at once with direct allocations to Torah-true institutions and chinuch organizations which meet the qualifications you have set before you. I would also suggest, moreover, that in the next few years at any rate, some funds from the capital should augment the distribution from the income.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Elijah the Prophet is the harbinger of the Redemption. His functions will include: to rectify Israel's behavior, causing them to return to G-d with repentance; to proclaim the imminent coming of Moshiach; to restore

the sacred objects from the Holy of Holies of the first Temple, and later hidden before its destruction; and to be involved with the resurrection of the dead. The essential task of Elijah will be to resolve legal disputes and to establish peace in the world, as it says, "He will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers."

(From *Mashiach* by Rabbi J. I. Schochet).

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Statutes, contains many precepts essential for living harmoniously with others. One of these statutes is "Keep yourself far from a lie."

An interesting anecdote relating to the mitzva of not lying is told about a wealthy chasid from Janowitz. In the course of introspection during the bedtime prayers, the chasid decided that whenever he said anything that resembled a lie he would donate 25 rubles to charity.

The chasid mentioned this undertaking to his children's private tutor.

"Then lie!" advised the tutor. "You will be providing money for needy Jews."

We do not know whether the tutor gave this advice in jest or earnestly. But we do know that when this very same tutor—himself a chasid—visited Reb Shmuel, the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe reprimanded him for his advice.

In the Mishna, our Sages tell us, "A mitzva brings about a mitzva and a transgression brings about a transgression." According to one commentator, this teaching can be rephrased and shortened to read, "A mitzva brings about a mitzva and a transgression." How can this be possible?

At times we might do things which we know are not right. But we think that the "end justifies the means": If the store stays open on Shabbat, more money can be given to charity; if it is too far to walk to shul on Shabbat and we drive, well, at least we're going to shul. We begin to convince ourselves that what we're doing is actually a mitzva that will bring about another mitzva. But actually, it is a "mitzva" that brings a transgression.

The Torah in general, and this week's Torah portion in particular, is very clear about what are mitzvot and what are transgressions. And never does a mitzva come from a transgression.

May we only fill our lives with deeds that are truly mitzvot, bringing more and more mitzvot after them.

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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