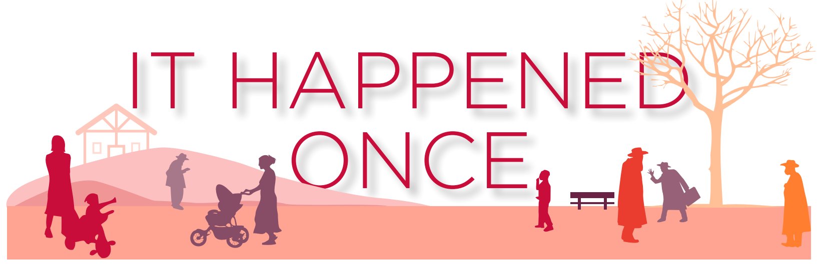


IT HAPPENED ONCE

As she closed the door after the departing guest, the woman found that she could barely stand. Her whole body trembled so much that she needed to lean on the wall. Several minutes passed until she was sure that she would not faint. Eventually she composed herself and sat down again at the table next to her husband, but her eyes were still wet.

“What’s the matter?” her husband asked, alarmed at her distress. “Oh, it’s nothing,” she replied. “I’m just feeling a bit dizzy.” But the husband could see that there was something wrong. “Tell me, is it that meal you just gave away to that beggar?” “No! G-d forbid that I would regret such a thing,” the wife answered, averting her eyes.

Just minutes before, the husband and wife had sat down to their noonday meal. The husband, a wealthy merchant, closed his business every day at noon and returned home for a sumptuous lunch. Prepared with love and care, his wife always tried to make his lunch break as pleasant as possible before he returned to work.

The couple had not been married long, and in truth, they did not know much about each other’s past. The husband hadn’t been born into a wealthy home, but he was a modest and kindly man. All the wife knew for sure was that her husband had once been a beggar, but the wheel of fortune had turned and he was now the proprietor of a successful business.

Yet despite his newfound riches the husband had continued to lead a simple life. Generous and giving, the memory of his own misfortune drove him to dispense charity liberally to anyone who asked for help.

The knock on the door that day had been nothing out of the ordinary. Poor people were always coming to ask for a handout, and those collecting money for a good cause knew they would be well received. But this time, the voice on the other side of the door had been especially pitiful.

“Have pity on a poor Jew,” the beggar had pleaded desperately. “It’s been days since I’ve had anything to eat. Please give me a crust of bread. I ask for nothing more.”

The sound of that tormented voice had immediately reminded the husband of his own past suffering, and his appetite had fled. Without hesitation he told his wife to invite the beggar in and give him his entire plate of food. The beggar had quickly devoured the meal, the whole time thanking and blessing his benefactors.

After the beggar had left, the husband was surprised to see how agitated his wife had become. But why was she so upset? He knew she was a generous soul, so it couldn’t be the food that he had given away.

In response to his gentle questioning the wife broke down. “I’m sorry,” she apologized, “but I was suddenly reminded of my former life in Cairo, Egypt, before I was married to you. Like you, my first husband was a very rich man, and I also used to cook for him the most delicious meals. He too would close his store and come home for lunch.

“G-d blessed my husband with great wealth, and his business dealings were very successful. Unfortunately, my husband had one bad character trait that ruined his life: he was extremely stingy. He was so unwilling to help the poor that he forbade me to give them food and drink if they came to the door. It bothered me very much, but I wanted to preserve peace in the home and obeyed his wishes.

“Eventually we earned a reputation for being miserly. Beggars would cross the street rather than knock on our door. It pained me greatly, but what could I do? I was trying to please my husband.

“One day at lunchtime there was a knock on the door. I can still see my husband, having just taken his first bite of bread. ‘Who’s there?’ he called out. ‘I am a poor Jew,’ was the answer. ‘Please help me. I haven’t eaten in many days, and I am about to expire from hunger.’

“But my husband had only gotten angry. ‘Go away!’ he shouted at the intruder who dared to interrupt his meal. ‘These impudent beggars won’t even let a person eat in peace...’ He then slammed the door in the poor man’s face. I burst into tears.

“From that day on my husband’s business began to falter. One loss followed another until all the money was gone. Even the house was lost to creditors, and we were left with nothing. At that point my husband insisted that we divorce, and we each went our separate ways.

“I never saw him again, but it was rumored that he had become a beggar. That is, until today...” the woman said. “Do you know who that poor man was who just left our house? It was my first husband...”

The husband’s eyes filled with tears. He too was moved to the depths of his soul. “As a matter of fact, my dear,” he replied, “I recognized him. And I myself was the beggar he turned away from the door that fateful day...”

In honor of my wife,
Simcha Hercenberg
Dedicated by Yudi Hercenberg

to dedicate an issue call (718) 778 6000

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Tzafnat Panei’ach (Gen. 41:45)

As Rashi explains, Tzafnat means “hidden things,” and Panei’ach means “he reveals” - i.e., Joseph was able to explain things that were hidden. Why, then, didn’t Pharaoh call Joseph Panei’ach Tzafnat, which would have been more logical? To teach us that the real reason Joseph was able to interpret dreams was as a reward for concealing his righteousness. Because Joseph conducted himself in a humble and unassuming manner, “Tzafnat,” he merited the gift of “Panei’ach.” *(Sefat Emet)*

And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt (Gen. 41:45)

One of the reasons Pharaoh changed Joseph’s name was to make sure that it did not sound too Jewish. But despite Pharaoh’s attempt to “Egyptize” him, the verse concedes that he continued to be known as Joseph, and the name Tzafnat Panei’ach is never mentioned again... *(Yalkut David)*

And the name of the second he called Ephraim: for G-d has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction (Gen. 41:52)

With these words Joseph alluded to the very purpose of the exile - “the advantage of light that arises from the midst of darkness.” For it was precisely through the descent into Egypt that the Jewish people attained the greatest advantage - an ascent that would have been impossible if not for their sojourn in the “land of affliction.” *(Likutei Sichot)*

And Joseph was the governor of the land, and it was he who sold corn to all the people of the land (Gen. 42:6)

Unlike other rulers who appoint assistants to do their “dirty work,” Joseph did not relegate his responsibilities to others. He insisted on dealing with the people directly and distributing food to them. *(Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov)*

4:13 PM *Candle Lighting Time*
NY Metro Area
29 Kislev / December 19
Torah Portion *Mikeitz*
Shabbat ends **5:17 PM**

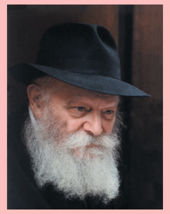
בס"ד

L'Chaim

1903
29 Kislev, 5786
December 19, 2025

The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person
נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
“Our help is in the name of the L-rd, Who made heaven and earth” (Psalms 124:8)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

The Torah portion of Mikeitz begins with a description of Pharaoh’s dream. In last week’s portion we also read about dreams: those of Joseph, and of Pharaoh’s butler and baker.

It was these dreams that ultimately led to the Jewish people’s exile in Egypt. Indeed, there is an intrinsic connection between dreaming and the concept of exile.

A dream is the product of the imagination. In a dream, logical contradictions make perfect sense. An elephant can pass easily through the eye of a needle.

In the same sense, the entire period of exile is only “imaginary.” It may appear to a person that he really loves G-d, but what he really loves best is himself, i.e., his own physical comfort. He may be so deluded by his wants and desires that he actually transgresses the will of G-d.

Nonetheless, every Jew possesses a G-dly soul that is always whole and intact. The good deeds a Jew does are eternal. The Torah he studies and the mitzvot he performs last forever. By contrast, the negative things a Jew does are only temporary. In the end, every Jew will return to G-d.

There are some people who claim that religious observance must follow an orderly sequence, from the “lesser” mitzvot to the more “major” ones. They say that if a person hasn’t reached a state of spiritual perfection, he cannot ascend to the next level. But this approach is entirely wrong. We aren’t living in an “orderly” and logical world; rather, the Jewish people is in exile, the entire period of which is likened to a dream.

In a dream, two opposites can co-exist peacefully. Thus because we are only “dreaming,” we must grab every opportunity that comes our way to do a mitzva.

In previous generations, very few people studied Chasidut, the inner, esoteric aspects of Torah. A person had to prepare himself for many years before he could even begin to approach it. In our generation, however, “it is a mitzva to reveal this wisdom.” Ever since Chasidut was revealed by the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe, the obligation to learn Chasidut falls on each and every Jew, in the same way that every Jew is obligated to study every other part of the Torah.

It is precisely now, at the very end of the exile, that we can “jump” to spiritual levels that in former times would have been beyond our reach. Regardless of our individual achievements, it is precisely this approach to Torah and mitzvot that will bring an end to the exile and bring redemption to the world.

Adapted from Vol. 1 of Likutei Sichot

Chanukah: Naturally in Love with G-d

By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

THE SPLIT

About a century and a half before the Common Era Israel was under occupation by Syrian Greeks, who sought to impose their culture on our people. The Jewish people split into two camps. There were those, who succumbed to the Greek overtures and assimilated and those who maintained allegiance to Torah Judaism. The Greeks treated Jewish Hellenists with friendship and granted them all kinds of freedoms. The Torah idealists, however, were persecuted by the Greeks and were forced to take refuge in the Judean Hills.

The observant camp eventually organized an army under the leadership of Judah the Maccabee. They miraculously defeated the larger Greek army. Returning to the Temple they found only one jar of unblemished olive oil with which to light the candelabra. There was enough oil for one night, but the candles would burn miraculously for eight days.

This miracle is the focus of our Chanukah celebration as we kindle lights for eight days. Our sages taught that the olive is a symbol for the Jew under oppression. Just as the olive produces its purest oil only when it is squeezed so do Jews elicit their purest dedication when they are squeezed. By performing a miracle with the oil G-d seemed to be sending a message that championed those who chose oppression over Hellenism and loyalty over freedom.

THE OLIVE AND THE OIL

King David’s wrote, “Your children are like planted olives around your table.” We understand the symbolism of olive oil as explained above, but what does the olive symbolize?

The olive is unique in that no other tree is grafted onto it because the hybrid produced by an olive and any other fruit is inferior to the pure olive. This is precisely like the Jew because though the Jew assimilates under conditions of prosperity, this is not the natural state of the Jew. Jews know that despite the glittering opportunities that the world offers, nothing compares to the dearest and highest values that are found in the Torah.

A LOVING EDUCATION

If the olive’s character is in the Jew’s nature why do we so often assimilate under conditions of freedom? It is because this nature is deeply embedded and must be nourished to be brought forth. How is this accomplished?

King David enlightens us with the end of his statement, “Your children are like planted olives around your table.” When our children are raised around our table, they will be olive branches. If they know that there is always a place for them at our table and a home for them in our hearts, if they discern the love, dedication and passion for G-d that permeates our very beings they will not be swayed by what’s beyond Judaism. Despite the temptations, they will remain true to their inborn nature, committed to their faith and dedicated to their tradition.

SLICE OF LIFE

After Losing His Wife, Rabbi Advances Her Dream With Baltimore Children's Center

By Mendel Scheiner / Chabad.org

In 2022, Miriam Fink married Rabbi Mendel Mintz. By 2024, the couple had finalized their plans to start a Chabad center in Maryland.

There is a belief in Jewish thought, echoed throughout the Talmud, Chumash, Zohar and Chassidic teachings: G-d does not give a soul a burden it cannot carry.

For Rabbi Mendel and Miriam Mintz, this was not a distant ideal. It was a way of life, lived every single day.

"I have never identified with my challenges," reflects Rabbi Mendel Mintz, a well-known Chabad-Lubavitch activist. "My wheelchair is my biggest enabler. I'm blessed to live in a time when the world is so adaptable that I don't typically notice it as a struggle."

In Miriam Fink, he found a kindred spirit.

Miriam was a passionate special education teacher, dedicating her life to helping children reach their full potential. Armed with a master's degree in special education, she spent a decade teaching at Baltimore's Talmudical Academy, where she was known for her boundless care and commitment. "She would do anything for her boys; her students were her children," recalls her colleague and friend, Rivky Danzinger.

Because of her own physical challenges, having been born with dwarfism, Miriam brought an extraordinary empathy to her work. She could reach students in the places they struggled most, showing them, by example, that obstacles do not define a person.

"The most important lesson Mrs. Mintz taught our boys—and our whole family—wasn't academic," shared Loni Goldman, a parent of one of Miriam's students. "It was her attitude toward life: No matter what came her way, she wore a smile. She showed that you can succeed even when it's hard and that you should always believe in yourself.

"Just like she needed a stool to reach things, she knew she could be that support for others," Mendel explains. "She adapted to her own challenges and wanted every child to see that he could, too."

In 2022, Mendel and Miriam married. "It was the happiest day of my life," says Mintz. "I had found my other half. My soul was complete."

Though Miriam was not raised in the world of Chassidut, she and Mendel would often stay up late, studying together, delving into Chassidic philosophy and discourse. Over time, Miriam's passion for Chabad and its teachings blossomed. "She chose it," says Mintz. "It became so much a part of her that sometimes she'd be more excited about it than I was."

Inspired to share her newfound warmth and light, Mendel's lifelong dream to become an emissary of the Rebbe, became her own. In 2024, the Mintzes were appointed to serve the growing Jewish communities of Glen Burnie and Pasadena, Md., eager to make a difference together.

Amid their communal work, the couple also yearned to build a family. They pursued IVF treatments, determined to spare their children the genetic challenges they themselves faced. But in the midst of a routine procedure, tragedy struck. On 4 Av, 5784 (Aug. 8, 2024), just weeks into preparations to launch their new Chabad center, unexpected complications claimed Miriam's life. She was only 30 years old.

"Nothing can prepare you for this. It was a complete shock," says Mintz.

After the funeral, Mintz returned to their apartment. The silence was deafening.

"I never viewed myself as an inspiration, not until Miriam passed," he admits. "I was privileged to have her in my life; every day was a blessing. Being able to work through the pain and move forward, to not let it overcome me—that's been the inspiration."

EMBODIMENT OF HER LIFE'S WORK

In recounting his next steps, Mintz shares a story. In 1956, the Israeli village of Kfar Chabad—home to survivors of the Holocaust and Stalin's persecution—was rocked by a terrorist attack; five children and one rabbinical student were murdered in cold blood. The village's residents were broken, some wondered if they should leave altogether. Yet the Rebbe's response was consistently one of resolve and resilience: Consolation for the devastating losses would come only through continued growth, in the form of building, in the form of expanding the village's educational activities, and sinking their roots into the grown ever deeper, both material and spiritual. Through this, they would find consolation and strength.

For Mintz, this became a guiding light. "I knew I had to do something," he says. "Something in the field of education, to continue her legacy onward."

The Torah teaches that when a soul departs, it is our sacred duty to continue the mission it can no longer accomplish on its own. For Miriam, that mission was clear: that no child should be left behind, and every child should receive the love, attention and support they need to thrive.

To honor his beloved wife, Mintz is building a living tribute to all she stood for. "Creating this building will really be an embodiment of what she lived for," he says. "A true testimony that she lived a full life."

The 14,000-square-foot facility, named Miriam's Library and Learning Center, will serve Baltimore's 100,000-strong Jewish community as an educational hub, extracurricular center and library. It will offer a place where students can receive special education support, enjoy after-school programs or simply find a quiet space to do homework.

"Miriam's Library is going to be a place to commemorate a special person's legacy," says Goldman. "The library will give students a place to receive academic help, relax and grow. It's going to add so much to the community."

Reflecting Miriam's love of Chassidut, the space will be home to a Heichal Baal Shem Tov center, a dedicated space to spread the light of Chassidic teachings, just as Miriam dreamed of doing herself at the Chabad center she was planning to build.

"What she tragically couldn't do in her lifetime, we will build as a lasting and enduring legacy to her amazing life and merit for her neshama [soul]," says Mintz. "I can't think of a more appropriate tribute to her incredible and enduring legacy than Miriam's Library and Learning Center."

A crowdfunding campaign has been launched to help build Miriam's Library and Learning Center. To donate please visit, www.charidy.com/miriam

etc.

Newly Expanded Chabad House Opens at UChicago

On Family Weekend this fall, the University of Chicago's Jewish students had something to celebrate — the grand opening of an expanded Chabad House, marking a new chapter for Jewish life on campus.

"We bought our current building back in 2010," explained Rabbi Yossi Brackman, who, together with his wife Baila, established Chabad at UChicago in 2002. "It serves its purpose well, but over time, we realized more space was needed."

The expansion, completed this year, transforms the Chabad House into a spacious multipurpose center. The $4 million project includes additions such as a large event space that seats 150 students, a recreation room, a mikvah, a library, and meeting rooms.

Customs

What is the significance of the Ner Tamid - the Eternal Light - found in many synagogues?

The Ner Tamid is symbolic of the western-most light of seven-branched menora used during Temple times. This light constantly remained lit, though the other lights were cleaned and relit, their wicks and oil changed, every day. The western light (and today the Ner Tamid) was a reminder of G-d's everlasting presence.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Chanukah, 5733 [1972]

Greeting and Blessing:

I duly received your letter of Nov. 28 from Jerusalem, and may G-d grant that all the matters about which you write should get ever brighter, in keeping with the spirit of the Chanukah Lights increasing in number and brightness from day to day.

As has been often said before, all matters of Torah are an inexhaustible source of lessons and inspiration for our daily life, especially when they take the form of practical Mitzvoth, since the Torah and Mitzvoth are Infinite, being derived from the Infinite (En Sof). I mention this here apropos of the Mitzvah of Ner [lights of] Chanukah, specifically in relation to one particular aspect which, at first, appears quite puzzling.

I am referring to the fact that although Chanukah recalls many miracles and wonders, the main event for which Chanukah was instituted was the miracle with the cruse of oil, the one and only that was found in the Beth Hamikdosh [Holy Temple], that was intact and undefiled by the enemy, which was then kindled and which lasted for eight days, until new, pure and holy oil could be prepared.

What is puzzling about it is that the oil was not required for human consumption, nor for the consumption of the Mizbe'ach (Altar) but for fuel in the Menorah to be burnt in the process of giving light. It would seem, at first glance, of no consequence, insofar as the light is concerned, whether or not the oil had been touched and defiled, for, surely, the quality and intensity of the light could hardly be affected by the touch?

Yet, when the Talmud defined the essence of the Chanukah festival, the Sages declared that the crucial aspect was the miracle with the oil. Not that they belittled or ignored the great miracles on the battlefields, when G-d delivered the "mighty" and "many" into the hands of the "weak" and "few", for those miracles are also emphasized in the prayer of V'al Hanissim ["For all these miracles"]. Nevertheless, it was the miracle of being able to light the Menorah with pure, holy oil, without any touch of uncleanliness, which gave rise to the Festival of Lights.

The obvious lesson is that in the realm of the spirit, of Torah and Mitzvoth, as symbolized by the Chanukah Lights, there must be absolute purity and holiness. It is not for the human mind to reason why, and what difference does it make, etc.

Much more could be said on the subject, but it will suffice to lend further weight to our conversation during your visit here, when the point was made how most vital it is that the right person should head the institution which Divine Providence has privileged you to establish in the Holy Land and even holier City of Jerusalem, as a center for the dissemination of Yiddish-keit [Judaism] in its purity. The purity and holiness of the oil must be ensured.

To carry the analogy further, it is the purpose of the central Beth Hamikdosh to illuminate and bring holiness and purity into the individual Beth Hamikdosh - i.e. every Jewish home and every Jewish person, which is also the obligation of every Jew towards his fellow Jew, in accordance of the Mitzvah of "v'ohavto Ire'acho komoicho" ["love your fellow Jew as yourself"]. But special precautions are necessary that the Beth Hamikdosh itself should be illuminated with the purest, sanctified oil, so that even the Kohen Godol [high priest], if he should happen to be impure, could not enter the Beth Hamikdosh, much less kindle the Menorah.

May G-d grant you Hatzlocho [success] in establishing the said institution in fullest accord with G-d's will, in the spirit outlined above, truly reflecting the spirit of the Chanukah lights, lighting ever more candles and increasing their glow from day to day.

With prayerful wishes for the utmost Hatzlocho in all above, and

With blessing,

P.S. The enclosed copy of my general Chanukah message has an obvious bearing on some of the points touched above.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Era of the Redemption is described as "the Day which is entirely Shabbat, and rest for life everlasting." Similarly, Shabbat is described as "a microcosm of the World to Come." And indeed we see a fusion of material existence and spirituality on the Sabbath. We are commanded to celebrate it with physical pleasure, yet the prevailing mood of the day is spiritual. Our Sages state that a Torah scholar is called "Shabbat." This implies that he extends the fusion of materiality and spirituality experienced on Shabbat into the ordinary weekdays, living his life in constant connection to G-dliness.

(The Rebbe, 7 Tevet, 5752)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'chaim Publication.

From the Archives

We're approaching the "home stretch" of Chanuka.

On Friday, we kindle the six Chanuka lights and then the Shabbat candles. When Shabbat ends, we say the "Havdala" prayer separating Shabbat from the days of the week. Afterwards we light the seventh candle of the Chanuka menora for this year.

But what if there are people who have not yet lit the Chanuka menora this holiday? Is there a point to seeking these people out and helping assure that they will at least light the seventh and eighth candles even though perhaps they didn't light the first, second, third.... and sixth?

The Rebbe established a Chanuka Campaign. As part of this campaign, Chanuka kits are distributed, replete with candles, a menora, an educational brochure and even a dreidle and Chanuka "gelt." Even on the final night of Chanuka, even when that final night of Chanuka occurred on Saturday night, the Rebbe encouraged everyone to reach out to yet another Jew to assure that more and more light would be brought into the world to eradicate the darkness that exists.

"It is important to continue working on the Chanuka campaign to encourage Jews to light Chanukah candles. Even though many people worked very hard in all the previous seven days, and only the eighth day remains, it is necessary to intensify the efforts. The eighth day is called "Zot Chanuka" ("This is Chanuka"). It includes all the seven preceding days. We must go out and find an estranged Jew who does not know about the holiday of Chanuka, its laws, and its customs. We must teach him about the holiday. Then since "the heart of a Jew is awake," he will also light Chanuka candles."

So, before Shabbat, or after Shabbat, find a fellow Jew who has not yet lit the menora this Chanuka. Encourage him to "seize the moment" in the last moments of Chanuka and to make the world a far-brighter and far better place!

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA

לזכרון חי'ה 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.

Published by
Lubavitch Youth Organization
1408 President St, Brooklyn, NY, 11213
phone 718 778 6000

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