

L'Chaim



IT HAPPENED ONCE

When the tailor died at a ripe old age, his passing didn't attract any special attention. Yet his funeral was most unusual for an ordinary tailor, for the Chief Rabbi of Lemberg himself led the funeral procession all the way to the cemetery. And of course, as the Chief Rabbi led the procession all the Jews of the town joined in giving the final honors to the deceased. The result was a funeral the likes of which is normally reserved for great rabbis or tzadikim.

The Jews of Lemberg had no doubt that the tailor had been a person of extraordinary merit, and they waited anxiously to hear what a wonderful eulogy the Chief Rabbi would give at the funeral. They were not disappointed when the rabbi told them the following tale:

Many years before, the rabbi had spent Shabbat at a village inn. The innkeeper related a story about a Jewish jester who lived in the mansion of the local poretz, the landowner of all the surrounding area. This jester had once been a simple, but G-d-fearing Jew, who by profession was a tailor. On a number of occasions he had done work for the poretz, and as he was an entertaining man with a beautiful singing voice, and very funny, the poretz and his family became very fond of his company. They finally asked him to join their household in the capacity of a jester, which was common in those days. He accepted, and slowly began to neglect his Jewish observance, until he no longer conducted himself as a Jew at all. The innkeeper felt very sorry for this Jew, and both he and the rabbi expressed their deep wishes for his return to the fold.

That Friday afternoon, just before Shabbat a man came galloping up to the inn and requested to spend the Shabbat there. To their surprise the horseman was none other than the Jewish jester, who explained that he had come in order to gather material for his jokes and spoofs.

The innkeeper was afraid to refuse, and so agreed to have the jester as a guest. At the Shabbat table the rabbi spoke about the Torah portion and described how both Terach, Abraham's idol-worshipping father, and Ishmael, Abraham's unruly son, repented and were forgiven by G-d.

"Words that come from the heart penetrate the heart," is the saying, and the words of the rabbi affected the Jewish jester, who became more and more thoughtful as Shabbat progressed. By Saturday night the jester so deeply regretted his life, that he approached the rabbi, and asked how he could do penance. The rabbi told him to leave his position with the poretz and withdraw for a time into a life of prayer, meditation and fasting. He should maintain this regime until such time when he would receive a sign from heaven that his repentance was accepted.

The jester accepted this advice wholeheartedly. He went to Lemberg where he entered a large synagogue and made an arrangement with the caretaker. According to their deal he would be locked in a small room where he would spend the entire day in prayer. At night before locking up, the caretaker would release him so that he might eat a little and stretch out for the night on a bench. Only on Friday night in honor of the Shabbat would he leave the synagogue to spend the day more comfortably.

This routine continued for many weeks until one Friday night the caretaker forgot to release him. The heartbroken tailor was now sure that G-d had forsaken him, and he wept bitterly. Hungry and tired, he fell into a deep sleep and dreamt. In the dream an old man appeared to him, and told him, "I am Elijah the Prophet, and I came to tell you that your teshuva has been accepted. Fast no longer. Every night I will come and teach you Torah, Torah such as only the righteous merit to learn."

The tailor opened a small shop and made a modest living. Late one night the Chief Rabbi passed his home and saw a bright light coming from the window. But when he entered, he saw only the tailor working by the light of a small candle. This happened two more times, and each time the rabbi found only a small candle illuminating the

tailor's room.

The third time the rabbi pressed the tailor for an explanation, and was told all that had transpired since they had met at the village inn. The tailor also related that the prophet had told him that no inhabitant of the village would die as long as he lived.

The following day the rabbi instructed the local burial society to inform him every time there was a death in the city. True to the prophesy, each time there was a death, the deceased was not a resident, but someone who happened to be passing through. The rabbi concluded his strange tale, admonishing the townspeople that the power of teshuva is unlimited, and no matter what, G-d is always waiting for His children to return.

Adapted from the Storyteller.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

And what the land is...where there are trees or not (Num. 13:20)

When the Canaanites living in the Land of Israel heard that the Jews had left Egypt and were on their way, they uprooted and destroyed all the fruit trees in the land so that the Jews would not benefit from them. This was one of the things the spies were sent to investigate. (Midrash Raba)

And G-d spoke to Moses saying: Send out some men to spy out the land of Canaan (Num. 13:1, 2)

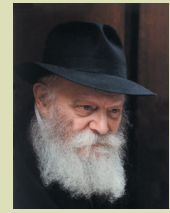
According to Rashi, "send out" means "send according to how you see fit." The Hebrew word for send--shelach--implies a sense of mission and purpose. Every Jew is entrusted with a Divine mission to transform his surroundings into a "Land of Israel," by bringing the light of Torah and mitzvot to even the most remote and isolated locations. This mission, moreover, must be accomplished "according to how we see fit." G-d has given man intelligence to be utilized to that end. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

That you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of G-d (Num. 15:39)

Why do we need a large tallit to pray if we can remember the commandments by looking at the tzitzit, the fringes which are already attached to our tallit katan, the four-cornered undergarment worn under the clothes? A tallit totally envelopes the individual and symbolizes that which cannot be understood or encompassed by the human mind. It reminds us that the 613 mitzvot of the Torah stem from a source far greater than mere human understanding. (Likutei Sichot)

That you shall not seek after your heart and after your eyes (Num. 15:39)

Why does heart come before eyes? Do not the eyes first see and then the heart desires that which is forbidden? Sometimes the process works in the other direction as well: an individual first gets an urge to sin and then looks around where he shouldn't to fulfill that urge. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In Parshas Shelach, we read about the report of the spies whom Moshe sent to explore the land of Israel. The Jews' response to their negative report was immediate: "Our wives and children will surely be taken captive by the strong people living there. Let us appoint a new leader and go back to Egypt." G-d, therefore, decreed that these Jews would not be allowed to enter Israel. But their children, the next generation, would.

Why is there such an emphasis on children, in both the complaint of the Jewish people and in G-d's response? Because children played a role of great significance, both in the inheritance of the Land and the mission with which the Jewish people are entrusted.

The sages comment, "A baby breaks into crumbs more than he manages to eat." This means that a young baby only utilizes a portion of the food he is given, and the rest lands up on the floor.

This saying can also be understood spiritually. Someone who possesses little wisdom is like a baby, and the food is like Torah. An 'adult,' who utilizes his time, devotes most of his life to doing mitzvot and fulfilling his life's mission. A 'child' wastes his time with foolish and extraneous matters, losing sight of his Divine purpose. Most of his spiritual sustenance, Torah, then ends up undigested and unassimilated, "crumbs on the floor."

This, in fact, was the claim made by the spies: "Why must we enter the Land of Israel and waste our precious time involving ourselves with physical matters? Here in the desert where all our physical needs are miraculously met, we can devote ourselves totally to learning Torah. For even if we will have time to learn once we enter the Land, most of our day will be wasted! It is far better to stay in the desert than to lower ourselves to that level!" they claimed.

To which G-d responded: "Your children...will be the ones to inherit." Even though the generation of Jews which left Egypt was on a very high spiritual level, devoting their lives to studying the Torah, it was precisely the children, those possessing little Torah knowledge, who would be allowed to enter the Land of Israel. The new generation would be required to pursue a different path, working hard to provide the physical necessities of life, while at the same time imbuing their surroundings with G-dliness and holiness. For this is what G-d really wants Jews to do. Our mission in life is to lead a normal, physical existence, while at the same time following the precepts of the Torah.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

We Have A Game To Win

By Rabbi Eli Friedman

The Torah tells us "You shall be holy" - let us understand the meaning of holiness.

Ever been to a baseball game? No? Well, let me tell you two interesting things about ballgames.

1. A ballgame features about 30,000 people gathered around 18 people playing ball, watching every move, every play, and hanging on to every moment.
2. Yet the players are professionals, and therefore, no matter how loudly you holler at them, taunt them, or critique their performance, they will utterly ignore you, most of the time. They are way too focused: they have a game to win.

So though the stadium may be filled with people, 18 of them are totally disconnected from the other 30,000. They're in a hyper-focused dimension, oblivious to the noise around them. The players are in their zone and the 30,000 spectators are outside the zone.

In a sporty kind of way, the players are holy.

This is because at its essence, the word holy means separate, exclusive, transcending the environment. In that sense, ball players who are there but not really there are quite holy.

The spectators are left to cheer, to boo, to support, to oppose, to adore, to disparage, to love or to hate.

Until the end of the game, the players won't notice either way.

Planet Earth is a giant stadium, covering about 197 million square miles. In the center of the stadium, in a space that is 0.004% of the world's surface is the playing field. Israel.

Seven billion spectators are gathered in the stadium, riveted and unable to look away as the players do their thing. The players are a tiny group, .0214% of the world's population. The Jewish People.

The spectators can get rowdy. They cheer, they boo, they support, they oppose, they adore, they disparage, they love or they hate.

And lately, it's been a hostile crowd. But unlike at the ballgame, the players in this game seem to turn to respond to every insult and every epithet!

When the spectators holler their critique, telling the players to play it this way or that way, the players are listening and responding!

When fools are shouting about the players and their families and their appearances - the players are getting offended!

Sometimes, the players even huddle up together and whisper and shake their heads in dismay at the unfair heckling and jeering...

Folks! We have a game to win. We need to get our holy on.

Like a great coach prepping his team before a must-win game, G-d tells us, "Be holy. I am holy, you be holy too."

Focus. Block out the noise. Security is standing by You win the game.



8:13 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
22 Sivan / June 28
Torah Portion Shelach
Blessing of the new month of Tammuz
Ethics Ch 3
Shabbat ends 9:21 PM

לע"נ הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' מאיר יהודא ישראל ע"ה
בהרה"ג הרה"ח הרב מרדכי ע"ה
נאמן בית חיינו ומשב"ק
הארליג
נפטר כ"ט סיון, ה'תשפ"ג
תנ"צ' בה'
In loving memory of
Rabbi Meyer Yehuda Yisrael Harlig ע"ה

SLICE OF LIFE

Behind the Sacred Scrolls: A Glimpse into Jerusalem's Parchment Factory



Rabbi Tzvi Back Stretching the Hide

When reading from a Torah scroll, or when one gets the less-common opportunity to see the scrolls inside a pair of tefillin or a mezuzah case, it is not hard to see the skill and hard work that goes into forming the beautiful letters.

Written entirely by hand, and utilizing a unique and exquisite Hebrew script, each Torah showcases the meticulous labor of the scribe who spent many hours transcribing each word.

But even before the scribe sits down to write the first letter, there is an entire process that takes place. For the Torah, tefillin or mezuzah to be kosher, it must be written on a specially prepared parchment from a kosher animal. It is the same manner these sacred objects have been written from the time of Moses, who received the Torah from G-d Almighty over 3,300 years ago. Indeed, if one were to walk into a museum or synagogue that houses a millennia-old Torah or tefillin, they would find that they are strikingly similar to the Torah in his hometown synagogue, or the tefillin he donned that morning. One similarity is the parchment they are both written on.

The hide from the animal undergoes a labor-intensive process before it arrives in the hands

of the scribe. Over the course of several months, the hides undergo a lengthy sequence of cleaning, soaking, drying, stretching, scraping and buffing by skilled craftspeople. Every step requires the utmost care and technique passed down through generations. The end result is a flawless parchment surface suitable for permanently housing sacred Hebrew texts.

Yet this vital preliminary work is rarely glimpsed by the public. "Most people are oblivious to the journey the parchment took before the scribes started writing on it," says one veteran parchment maker. "They simply assume it begins as a blank slate."

From sourcing only the highest quality hides to stringently monitoring every chemical solution and environmental condition, the making of parchment is a dedicated craft in its own right.

At the 'Klaf Back' parchment factory in the village of Beit Chilkia, just outside Jerusalem, that journey is on full display.

Founded 40 years ago by Rabbi Tzvi Back, now 74, the factory is one of just a handful in Israel producing parchment for religious purposes. "We have been honored with visits from great Torah sages and Chasidic rebbes, who have hailed our factory as the most meticulous of its kind," Back says with pride.

For parchment production, cow hides are preferred for their thinness and smooth writing surface ideal for ink absorption. The hides are generally imported from the United States or Australia, with a special preference for "shalil" - the delicate skin of a calf found in the womb of a slaughtered cow.

Once the hides arrive at the factory after careful frozen transport, an intricate multi-month process begins to transform the raw materials into pristine parchment pages.

The hides are thoroughly cleaned, then soaked in special solutions to prepare the fibrous material. After months of precise temperature and humidity-controlled drying, the stiff hides are re-moistened and stretched taut from all sides. Another drying phase follows to lock in the new shape and dimensions.

Finally, the parchment undergoes a laborious scraping and buffing process to remove any remaining hair follicles and render the surface

silky smooth for the scribes' pens. "It is all done with the specific intent for the sake of the mitzvah of writing a Torah scroll," Back says.

The largest single parchment piece his factory has produced measured over 1.7 meters (5.6 feet) - requiring the exceptionally large hide of an adult cow.

Most of the labor is still done by hand, including the precise mixing of the chemical baths and manually turning large drums that agitate the hides using an ancient gear system.

"We are fortunate that our generation has access to technologies that allow us to elevate the quality and consistency of parchment to new levels," Back notes. "But we must still maintain the reverence and human touch of our ancestors."

PRESERVING SACRED PURPOSE

While parchment has myriad secular and artistic uses, from diplomas to calligraphy, Back is adamant that his factory exists solely for the production of religious items. He recalls turning down an inquiry from the British royal family around 15 years ago to purchase a significant quantity.

"They had no budget constraints, but I politely refused," Back states. "We produce our parchment exclusively for holy purposes, certainly not for uses we cannot verify as spiritually appropriate."

As housing prices and other costs of living have risen dramatically in Israel, so too has the price of parchment - a factor sofers (scribes) must consider but still just a fraction of their chief expense: the sacred labor of inking every letter.

With admiration for his parchment artisans of past generations but confidence in modern quality control techniques, Back marvels at the enduring blend of ancient tradition and ingenuity in his craft.

"Our processes remain true to the authentic ways of our ancestors, with the same natural elements," he says. "But our generation has been blessed with technology and wisdom allowing us to elevate parchment to levels of quality and spiritual beauty far beyond what was possible before."

Translated from *Sichat Hashavua*

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

WHAT IS MY PURPOSE IN LIFE?

By the Grace of G-d
17 Menachem Av, 5737 [August 1, 1977]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter and will remember you in prayer for the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good.

On the basis of your writing it is surely unnecessary to emphasize to you at length the need to make additional efforts in matters of Torah and Mitzvos, especially as I see that in certain matters you have already made important strides. Needless to say that there is always room for advancement in all matters of goodness and holiness, Torah and Mitzvos, which are infinite, being derived from and connected with the infinite. And every additional effort in this direction also brings additional Divine blessings.

I would like to point out that in taking upon oneself an additional effort in Torah and Mitzvos, it should be bli-

neder.

With general reference to your request for guidance as to how to fulfill your purpose in life, particularly in light of the Chasidic teachings which you cite in your letter, the general guideline has already been given in the Mishnah: "I have been created to serve my Maker" - such service being the study of Torah and fulfillment of its Mitzvos; or, in the words of the Tanya (which amounts to the same thing): "to make for Him, blessed be He, an abode in the lower world," as explained there and in Chasidic discourses at great length.

It is very helpful, indeed necessary, as our Saintly Rebbes have urged, and this is also based on the teaching of our Sages in the Mishnah, to have a companion with whom to discuss matters of Yiddishkeit from time to time. The text in the particular Mishnah is "acquire for yourself a companion," which immediately follows the words "make (appoint) unto yourself a teacher." Thus, in regard to a companion the emphasis is on acquisition, implying "at a cost" whatever form such "expense" may require. Of course, such companionship is not binding, and if the companion turns out to be not after one's heart, a more suitable one can be acquired.

With blessing for Hatzlocho in all above,

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

The third chapter of Pirkei Avot. In this chapter we read, "Rabbi Elazar of Bartota said, 'Give Him what is His, for you and all that is yours is His.'"

Rabbi Elazar is telling us here that we should remember that everything we have comes from G-d. This thought should be uppermost in our minds, especially in the realm of giving charity.

The Rebbe offers a beautiful commentary on Rabbi Elazar's teaching and explains that reflecting the true owner of the money should come only after the charity is given. Of course, when one gives charity, it has to be done in accordance with Jewish law; it must be one's own money, not money acquired in a dishonest manner. But the fact that it is ultimately G-d's money should not be considered until charity has already been disbursed. Why is this?

When a poor person stands in front of you, you must give him the charity immediately. For, it is possible that the person is in dire straits, and if you wait until you have considered and contemplated the mitzva--in all its implications, ramifications, laws and stipulations--the poor person could, G-d forbid, starve to death! Therefore, the consideration that everything truly belongs to Him, to G-d, should come only after you have given the poor individual what he requires.

"For you and what is yours is His"--a person should not object, "It's true that everything is His, but I should also get a pat on the back, since I am giving this charity of my own free will." Rabbi Elazar reminds us that not only does everything that we have belong to Him, but we, too, belong to Him.

Shmuel Butman

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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A recent Bar Mitzvah celebration held in Odessa, Ukraine, highlighted the dedicated service that Chabad Shluchim are providing



A special Bar Mitzvah celebration was recently held in Odessa, Ukraine. The Bar Mitzvah boy hails from Almaty, Kazakhstan, where he was cared for by the Shluchim Rabbi Elchanan and Leah Cohen. At the age of 6, he was sent to Chabad's Mishpacha orphanage in Odessa, under the care of Rabbi Avraham and Chaya Wolff.

Now, at the age of 13, a special Bar Mitzvah was made for him. The boy washed his hands and cut a large challah, distributing a piece to all participants. The event began with the reading of the Rebbe's letter to Bar Mitzvah boys. The Bar Mitzvah boy then recited the discourse (maamar) "Isa b'medrash tillim" which speaks about the virtue of the mitzvah of Tefillin.

The Shluchim, Rabbi Mendy and Mushka Wolff, invested great thought in caring for every detail. "This special celebration is another step in the development of Jewish life in Odessa, a city that has endured many missiles and shelling for over two years," concluded Mr. Igor Shtehin, Chairman of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Southern Ukraine.

Ethics of the Fathers: Chapter Three

In the third chapter of Pirkei Avot we read, Akavia the son of Mahalalel would say: Reflect upon three things and you will not come to the hands of transgression. Know from where you came, where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give a judgement and accounting.

Rabbi Chanina the son of Dosa would say: One whose fear of sin takes precedence to his wisdom, his wisdom endures. But one whose wisdom takes precedence to his fear of sin, his wisdom does not endure

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Rashi explains that Jacob was pained that he had to leave the promised land and descend to Egypt. And yet, G-d does not address the pain. Instead, He tells him not to fear. "G-d said to Jacob: Do not fear descending to Egypt..." (Genesis 46:3)

Apparently, unlike the fear, the discomfort needed to remain. The same is true for us. The pain is real. The fear is

not. The pain is real, because we are not in our true place. Nothing is in its true place. It is called exile. Exile of the soul.

The fear is not real—there is nothing to fear. Because no matter where we are, G-d is there with us. For He is everywhere. The only thing we have to fear is that we may no longer feel the pain. That we may imagine that this is our place after all. For it is that pain of knowing we are in the wrong place that lifts us higher, beyond this place.

(Likkutei Sichot, vol. 30, p. 234.)