



Reb Mendel had just visited the Baal Shem Tov, and had stopped in the town of Zolochov. His visit was no accident, though, for he had been asked by the Baal Shem Tov to pass through the town and convey his warm regards to Reb Michel, the water carrier of the town. Reb Mendel was honored to perform this favor for the Besht, and was himself very anxious to meet this man who was most certainly one of the hidden saints and mystics--members of the Baal Shem Tov's circle of followers.

He entered the town and immediately stopped one of the residents and asked for directions to the home of Reb Michel. Following along the main road, he turned and turned again through the winding alleys until he had left the more prosperous looking streets, and found himself in the poorest section of the town. Here the houses were no more than toppling huts which barely could withstand the elements. Reb Mendel again inquired after the water carrier, and was directed to one shack which stood amongst this sad lot.

He approached the door and knocked, and a woman appeared at the door. Reb Mendel lost no time in relaying the message: "I have come to give regards to your husband from the Baal Shem Tov from whom I have just come."

A bright smile flashed across the woman's features, and she replied, "My husband is not at home right now, but I expect him to return shortly. If you wish, please come in and sit down." Reb Mendel carefully entered the dark recesses of the hut and located a shaky chair on which he lightly perched.

As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he was able to make out his surroundings. The shabbiness and poverty of the dwelling were all too apparent. The wooden walls were peeling and split and many of the window panes were cracked. The furniture was sparse and what there was was literally on its last leg. Small children, unaware of their ragged appearance, scurried happily about playing their games, occasionally casting a furtive smile at their guest.

He had no more time to study the room because in walked his host, Reb Michel, exclaiming with joy, "Sholom Aleichem! How happy I am to receive greetings from the Baal Shem Tov! My wife, you must prepare a festive meal in honor of our esteemed guest. Why, it's quite an occasion when we receive regards from the Tzadik."

His wife hurried to a corner of the room and prepared a modest repast while the two men chatted about the situation in the court of the Baal Shem Tov. Finally she reappeared with two small plates, each one bearing a small portion of fish and a slice of bread. Reb Mendel made the blessing on the bread and ate together with his host, and soon, the woman returned with steaming cups of tea. She offered Reb Mendel a sugar cube to sweeten the beverage, and he was about to slip it between his teeth, as was the custom, when he heard the children whispering: "Surely he will save some of the sugar for us. After all, it's bad manners to eat up everything. And won't that sugar be a great treat!"

Reb Mendel put down the sugar and sat without drinking, seemingly absorbed in his own thoughts. "What is wrong, my dear friend? Why don't you drink?" asked Reb Michel with great concern. "Forgive me, but I cannot help feeling great pity for you and your family. How difficult it must be to have to endure such terrible poverty," Reb Mendel replied.

"Before you reach that conclusion, please let me explain our situation to you using a parable. Once, there was a rich man who planned a wedding for his only daughter. It was to be the most sumptuous and elegant occasion which the town had seen in years. All of the townspeople were invited, and the town's paupers, especially, were counting the days until the great feast would be served. Finally the great day of celebration arrived, and the town's poor gathered in huge numbers to enjoy themselves at the celebration.

"Suddenly, just as the bride was being led to the chupa she collapsed in a faint. The panic-stricken family surrounded the girl and tried to bring her to. The town's doctors were summoned to help, but alas, no one could revive her. The shaken wedding guests

were at a loss for what to do and they began to leave in small groups. Only the paupers, who had anticipated the wedding with such longing sat down to partake of the feast. The tragedy of their host did not dampen their spirit, 'After all,' they said, 'the food is all prepared; why shouldn't we enjoy ourselves and eat it?' One of the paupers, though was a more sensitive soul, and he couldn't bring himself to even look at the food, so deeply did he identify with his host's pain."

"My wife and I, you see, are like the sensitive pauper in the story. And the wedding is meant to represent the Bais Hamikdash, the Holy Temple where the guests, that is, the Jewish people used to gather to rejoice with their host, the Holy One, Blessed Be He. We, the sensitive guest, are so anguished by G-d's tragedy, the destruction of the Holy Temple, that we cannot bring ourselves to enjoy the offerings of this world. So, my friend, we refrain from feasting at our host's table, knowing how much He is suffering because of the pain of His children in the long and bitter exile. In this world we make do with the minimum, but we are waiting to rejoice together with Him in the Eternal Holy Temple."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And they shall give--venatnu--every man, a ransom for his soul to G-d (Ex. 30:12)

The Hebrew word "venatnu" (they shall give), spelled vav, nun, tav, nun, vav, is read the same from left to right or right to left. This teaches us that when a person gives charity, he should not worry that he will suffer any lack, for the goodness he sows will be returned to him as in return.

This shall they give, every one that passes among those who are numbered (Ex. 30:13)

The commentator Rashi explains: G-d showed Moses a coin of fire and said, "Like this shall they give," to teach us that when a person gives charity he should do it with fiery enthusiasm. (*Sefer HaDarush*)

The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel (Ex. 30:15)

"The rich shall not give more" is a mitzva that many wealthy people are very meticulous in keeping. In fact, it is rare to find one who has ever transgressed. (*Derashot El Ami*)

The above verse can also be interpreted to mean "the rich will not be increased, and the poor will not be lessened." The wealthy person must realize that he will not increase his fortune by being miserly. Similarly, a poor person will not become poorer if he gives to charity. (*Imrei Shefer*)

And Aaron called out and said, A feast unto the L-rd is tomorrow (Ex. 32:5)

How could Aaron, who was extremely righteous, have lied by referring to the making of the Golden Calf as "a feast unto the L-rd"? Actually, we see that his words were prophetic, as the day on which the Golden Calf was made (and the Tablets of the Law subsequently broken by Moses) was the 17th of Tamuz. Although in our times that date is observed by fasting, when Moshiach comes it will be transformed into "a time of joy and gladness, and a cheerful feast to the house of Judah" (*Zachariah 8:19*). (*Maayana Shel Torah*)

6:44 Candle Lighting Time
 NY Metro Area
14 Adar / March 14
 Torah Portion *Ki Tisa* / *Shushan Purim*
 Shabbat ends **7:43 pm**



L'Chaim

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The Weekly Publication
 for Every Jewish Person
 יוסף תורה השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
 "To You I lifted up my eyes, You Who dwell in heaven" (Psalm 123:1)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In the Haftorah which accompanies this week's Torah portion of *Ki Tisa* we read about Elijah the Prophet and his famous confrontation with the prophets of Baal. Elijah addressed the Jewish nation and said, "How long will you waver between the two? If G-d is truly G-d, then follow Him, and if it is Baal, then go after him."

Elijah told the Jewish People: your inability to choose between the two alternatives is the worst possible spiritual path, even worse than choosing outright idolatry.

How can anything be worse than idolatry--ascribing G-dly powers to an object? Is it not better to reach some sort of compromise, to maintain a belief in G-d, but to nevertheless incorporate some elements of paganism? Why did Elijah say that it is preferable, G-d forbid, to actually worship idols?

Maimonides wrote that the worship of idols arose from human error, from a faulty understanding of the natural world. When some people looked at the physical forces governing the world, they mistakenly believed that those forces themselves should be worshipped, not realizing that it is G-d who causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall.

When a person worships an idol, be it one made of stone, or the planets and stars in the sky, he thinks that by placating these objects he will receive more blessings in his life. This, then, is the difference between a true idolator and a Jew who straddles the fence, never making a clear choice between idolatry and worship of the One, true G-d.

An idol worshipper may one day arrive at the conclusion that idolatry is wrong and return wholeheartedly to G-d, after having admitted his error. But it is far more difficult for a person who is "straddling the fence" to realize the error of his ways and see that he is committing a sin. For his part, he thinks that he is still a good Jew, for he still maintains the outer semblance of Jewish observance.

An idolator, even one who believes in a false god, believes that his god is the source of all life. He seeks spiritual truth, albeit in the wrong direction. But one who professes to believe in G-d yet secretly pledges obedience to an idol seeks not truth, but convenience and comfort. He wants to benefit from both worlds, covering all possible bases.

A person who vacillates is also more detrimental to those around him. An idol worshipper is more easily avoided, and not likely to lead others astray, who could be deceived by outward appearances.

Elijah's message holds true for us today. It is far easier to avoid obvious pitfalls in spiritual matters than to stand on guard against finer, less conspicuous compromises. But it is these finer points which ultimately define our intellectual honesty and our faith.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Nature Of Miracles

By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

Haman wasn't the first villain in his family. He descended from Amalek, the first to advise Pharaoh to enslave the Jews and to wage war against them after the Exodus. Amalek's attack came at a time when all nations feared Israel, following the defeat of Egypt by God's miracles. After the Egyptians chased the Israelites to the Reed Sea and were drowned, Pharaoh returned to Egypt, spreading tales of Israel's powerful God.

Despite Egypt's defeat, Amalek could not tolerate Israel's rise. He rallied his forces to fight, knowing that defeating Israel would be impossible. Yet, his hatred fueled him. The battle wasn't dramatic because of the attack, but because of Moses' prayer. As Moses lifted his hands in prayer, the Israelites gained the upper hand. When he grew tired, Amalek gained strength. Moses' brother Aaron and nephew Chur supported his arms, ensuring Israel's victory.

Our sages explain that Moses' raised arms didn't directly win the battle; they symbolized reliance on God. When the Israelites looked to God, they triumphed; when they relied on their own strength, they faltered. But why was this battle so different from other wars Moses led? Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter offered an answer: Amalek's goal was to prove that Israel's victories were due to natural events, not

divine miracles. To counter this, Moses made a visible display of praying, ensuring everyone knew that victory came through God's intervention, not natural forces.

Haman, a descendant of Amalek, attempted to annihilate the Jews again, but this time, salvation came through ordinary events, not miraculous ones. Why the difference in how God responded?

When God liberated Israel from Egypt, it was essential to establish His control over nature through miracles. By the time of Haman, Israel had witnessed so many miracles that no one doubted God's power. The question then became: Can God's will be fulfilled even when nature follows its natural course? Haman sought to prove that if God allowed nature to run its course, he could prevail against the Jews. But God's response was to stay hidden and let events unfold naturally, showing that even when nature is allowed to function as usual, it still aligns with God's will.

This subtle mastery over nature is more impressive than overt miracles. Purim, therefore, is a joyous celebration, showing that God's influence is present not only in dramatic miracles but also in the natural course of events. The world may seem independent of God's will, but Purim reveals that, beneath the surface, everything is guided by Him.

SLICE OF LIFE

The Sports Industry Power Player who Keeps the Faith - and The Clients

By Rabbi Baruch Epstein



Eli Lunzer on set with NBC sports in the super bowl media center

In the days before GPS, a lost tourist was driving aimlessly through Manhattan. Late and fearing he would miss the opening curtain, he asked a passerby, "Excuse me, how do I get to Carnegie Hall?" After a moment's pause, the grizzled New Yorker replied, "Practice, practice, practice."

When people ask Eli Lunzer, a sports & entertainment events producer and brand marketing agent, how he thrives in such a competitive business, his response is simple: "Commitment, commitment, commitment."

But what surprises most is that Eli's commitment isn't just about out-hustling his competitors. Far from it. His commitment lies in something deeper—

his devotion to Hashem, Shabbat, his family, his people, and Eretz Yisrael.

Raised in a family dedicated to Jewish causes both in his native New York and the Holy Land, Eli learned from his parents the importance of supporting his community. His childhood was filled with charity dinners and benefit concerts, where his passion for exceptional events and experiences began to take shape.

Through hard work, creativity, and a knack for networking, Eli has built a reputation for delivering unforgettable live experiences, innovative brand engagements, and top-tier brand collaborations across major celebrity and sporting events.—though never on Shabbat. For Eli, this means turning down opportunities that many would consider once-in-a-lifetime, including Michael Jordan's private birthday party and various Super Bowl related bashes. His stance is unwavering: if an event falls on Shabbat, it's simply not for him. Recently, while in San Francisco for All-Star Weekend, Eli mingled with LeBron James and other NBA stars at one of his events, but as the sun began to set on Friday, he politely wished everyone Shabbat Shalom and left early to honor the holy day.

Some may wonder about the challenges of antisemitism, especially in the wake of October 7th, when hatred toward Jews became more visible. Eli has experienced the opposite: support and empathy from those around him. He speaks with gratitude about the understanding and kindness he's received, especially from high-profile celebrities.

Eli's work ethic is undeniable. He

travels often, navigating airports and the egos of high-profile clients. But when he sits with his family to enjoy Shabbat, he knows exactly what is meaningful and impactful.

This year has brought additional challenges for Eli, as he mourns the passing of his beloved mother, Pam Lunzer. Wherever his travels take him, he makes a point of attending early morning minyanim and excusing himself for afternoon Mincha services to recite Kaddish in her honor. She was a true role model and guide for his growth.

So, what do his clients think of his strict Shabbat observance? In a 24/7 business, how does he compete when he's off the grid for an entire day, and celebrities accustomed to immediate responses can't reach him? To his surprise, many clients respect his commitment and integrity. They trust him more because he holds fast to his principles in an industry where people often compromise their values for the sake of success. In a world where 15 minutes of fame can be fleeting, a person of unwavering integrity stands out.

Eli's advice to young entrepreneurs is simple: "Know who you are, and people will be drawn to you. No celebrity has ever been disappointed by a kosher restaurant I've taken them to—in fact, many prefer it. If being a Torah observant Jew costs you a deal, then it wasn't meant to be. Getting angry only gives others power over you. Hashem is the ultimate and only Power."

"Trust that everything is in Hashem's hands," Eli concludes. "When you do that, it feels better than sitting courtside at the Garden any day of the week."

Mazal Tov! New Chabad Emissaries to Falmouth, MA



For close to 30 years, Chabad on Cape Cod, based in Hyannis, has served the entire cape. Now, Rabbi Mendel and Rochel Alperowitz, along with their children, have established a new Chabad center in Falmouth.

Chabad of Falmouth will serve as a welcoming spiritual home for the Jewish community on Upper Cape Cod, where hundreds of Jews reside year-round, with numbers substantially increasing during the summer months, as tourists, vacationers and second-home owners flock to the area.

The Alperowitzes have already begun offering meaningful and engaging Jewish programming. These activities provide valuable opportunities for both permanent residents and seasonal visitors to deepen their connection to Jewish traditions while building lasting friendships with the coastal community.

Jewish History

Mordechai was a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin and a member of the Sanhedrin. In the year 434 b.c.e. he was exiled to Babylonia together with the leadership of the Jewish people by King Nebuchadnezzar. Mordechai was instrumental in saving the Jews from annihilation through his influence with Queen Esther who had been his ward. After Haman's downfall Mordechai was elevated to a position of high status in the Persian court, serving as the chief advisor to the king.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

JEWISH SPIRIT IS NOT ABSTRACT

From a letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

With the approach of Purim, I take this opportunity of extending to you prayerful wishes for a joyous and inspiring Purim, and to send you this timely message in lieu of Mishloach Manot.

One of the most inspiring lessons of Purim is the extraordinary courage of Mordechai Hayehudi [the "Jew"], who "would not kneel nor bow down," despite the physical vulnerability of our people being "spread and scattered among the nations"—a tiny minority against an overwhelming majority. Yet it is this uncompromising stance that brought triumph over all adversaries, so that "for the Jews there was light, joy, gladness, and honor." And the awesome respect of their erstwhile detractors.

The teachings of our Torah (Torah meaning "instruction"), like the Torah itself, are eternal, including the lessons of Purim; particularly since we are still "spread and scattered among the nations," including our brethren in the Holy Land, for they, too, are surrounded and besieged by numerically overwhelming hostile nations. But Purim teaches us that the strength of our Jewish people, as of every Jew individually, is in our G-d-given capacity of "not kneeling nor bowing down" to any force that is contrary to our Jewish essence, which is rooted in the Torah and mitzvot. Indeed, yielding to any influence that is alien to our Jewish spirit and way of life, far from winning goodwill and respect, must necessarily bring forth contempt, be it overt or covert. For, what is one to think of a cringing Jew who is willing to compromise his true Jewish identity and noble traditions going back to the time when the world was steeped in barbarism.

Needless to say, the true Jewish spirit, as exemplified by Mordechai and Esther, must not remain in the abstract, but must be translated into concrete behavior in one's daily life, in keeping with the basic principle of our Torah that "action is the essential thing."

Certainly this is to be expected of young people, who are generally blessed with a greater sense of urgency and doing. Especially young couples who start out on their own, establishing a home on the foundations of the Torah and mitzvot, to raise a family in the true tradition, and make it a binyan adei-ad [an everlasting edifice] in the fullest sense.

And here, of course, a great deal depends on the akeret habayit [the foundation of the home, i.e., the woman], in whose hands G-d has entrusted the major responsibilities for the character and actual conduct of the home, such as kashrut, Shabbat observance, taharat hamishpacha [laws of purity of Jewish family life], raising the children, and so forth. This in no way diminishes the husband's full share of responsibility in this G-d-blessed partnership, and they must consistently encourage each other to upgrade all things of goodness and holiness, Torah and mitzvot; but there is no getting away from the fact that the wife and mother bears the noble calling of "the foundation of the home."

It is also self-evident that together with the G-d-given task comes the G-d-given capacity to carry it out to perfection. Thus it is basically a matter of one's own will and determination.

It should be noted, in conclusion, that there is no greater emphasis on the historic role of the Jewish life than in the events that brought about the Miracle of Purim, as related in the Megila—which is named not after Mordechai, nor Mordechai and Esther jointly, but solely after Esther-Megilat Esther!

Wishing you, in the midst of all our people, in the words of the Megila, "Light, joy, gladness, and honor," in the fullest sense of these terms, including their inner meaning, "Light—this is Torah," etc.

the dictates of rationalization, for mortal reasoning can mislead a person. Rather, we should observe the Torah and its commandments out of simple and unquestioning faith in G-d.

(Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber of Lubavitch)

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In this era, the generation of the "footsteps of Moshiach," it is essential that one not follow

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

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

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

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

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

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

Every generation has its Mordechai—a tzadik and great leader who is the physical embodiment of G-dliness in this world. The Mordechai of our generation stated nearly two years ago the Divinely inspired words, "The time of your Redemption has arrived." The Rebbe said that to prepare ourselves for the Redemption we should learn about Moshiach and the Redemption. Now, as then, the Rebbe's message was that the deliverance is coming, the Redemption will take place, it's happening.

The only questions are, "Who will help actualize this Divinely inspired promise? Who will be prepared and help others prepare?"

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

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA

לזכרון חיה י מושקה

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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