

L'Chaim



The Midrash records the following story: It is said that King Solomon owned a special carpet by means of which he travelled across the world and learned many wonderful things. This carpet was decorated with embroidered scenes of heaven and earth and on it he would travel to any corner of the world he desired.

On his travels the king -- who was bestowed with the knowledge of all the languages of the animals -- listened to the conversations of the birds and beasts and the whisperings of the plants, and learned many lessons from them.

Once, he heard an ant calling out to her fellows: "Run quickly! The soldiers of King Solomon are coming and soon they will trample you all!" Solomon's curiosity was provoked and he descended and addressed the ant: "Who are you, and why are you telling the others to flee from me?" The ant replied, "I am queen of the ants, and it is my responsibility to care for my subjects and see to their welfare."

The king was very moved by her reply, and he was about to address her again when she spoke up and said, "You are so much higher than I, I cannot speak with you. If you wish to converse with me, pick me up."

Solomon crouched down, picked her up, and asked: "Tell me, is there any ruler as great and powerful as I?" The queen ant replied, "King Solomon, don't think you have anything to boast about. You are not so great; why, even I am more important than you. Just look, you were sent here to lift me up!"

The king became very angry at the ant's effrontery and threw her down. "How dare you speak to me like that! I am the king!" The ant replied, "You may be king, but even so, you must remember you came from the dust and you will return to dust."

King Solomon took the words of the ant to heart. He could learn the lesson of humility even from the lowly ant. King Solomon also learned the lesson of humility on another occasion during his travels.

While flying on his special carpet, King Solomon looked down and saw a magnificent golden palace. He was very curious to investigate it, and so he caused the carpet to descend.

As he and his entourage approached the palace, the scent of the Garden of Eden filled their nostrils. Circling the palace, they searched and searched for the entrance, but it seemed impossible to discover. King Solomon summoned the king of the demons to assist him.

"Find out if there are any people inside," he commanded. The demon soon returned to report that there were no humans. The only creature in the entire environ of the palace was a great eagle who lived on the palace roof.

The king summoned the eagle, but he had no knowledge of a door. Finally, he summoned the oldest of all the eagles. This eagle, who was over a thousand years old, flew down and told King Solomon, "I do not know where the entrance is, but I heard from my father that there was a door many years ago which the winds have covered up completely."

King Solomon commanded the winds to uncover the hidden door, and immediately a ferocious windstorm began and uncovered a large gate. Over the gate these words were inscribed: "Let no man enter other than a prophet or a king."

The king was overcome with curiosity. He found a glass case which contained beautifully wrought keys, and with these keys he entered the palace.

King Solomon had never seen the likes of the grand hall in which he found himself. The walls shone with precious stones that turned the dimness into daylight. As he walked down the hall, he saw a silver lock on a large door. Opening it, he found a cave above with the inscription, "The king who lived in this palace was happy and lacked nothing, but he still died in his youth."

The cave contained fabulous treasures, and in the center of the room was a strange throne with the figure of a man seated upon it. When the king touched it, it moved and with a furious look shouted, "Come to me, all ye winds and spirits and demons.

Destroy this man who dares to disturb my peace."
All at once terrible shrieks filled the building and fearsome figures rushed toward the king. King Solomon cried out, "Stop! How dare you attack your king, Solomon, King of Israel? Are you not ashamed of your traitorous behavior?" The spirits fled in terror. Then, the statue fell from its throne. King Solomon saw a silver chain around its neck bearing the inscription, "I am Shadad ben Adad, ruler of the bravest, conqueror of the mightiest. Thousands bowed to me, and all kings trembled before me. But death, I could not defeat."

King Solomon returned to Jerusalem filled with the memory of the palace which proved man's inadequacy and impotence. The king's trust in G-d was greater than ever, for he saw that G-d is the only true and eternal King.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

These are the accounts of the Tabernacle (Ex. 38:21)

Moses fully accounted for all the materials which went into crafting the Tabernacle. We can understand why he listed exactly how much gold, silver and gems were used; they are highly valuable. But why did he account precisely for the copper, which has so little comparative value? The copper was not a compulsory tax. The Torah recognizes that it is often those who give "freely" but less than they are truly able who demand the strictest accounting of every penny. For they are ever on the lookout for an excuse not to give any more. (Der Torah Kvaill)

The Tabernacle of the testimony (Ex. 38:21)


The Hebrew word for testimony--"eydut"--alludes to the "adiyim" ornaments or heavenly crowns, the Jewish people received when the Torah was given. When the Children of Israel sinned by making the Golden Calf, their crowns were taken back, and with them their extra measure of spirituality. When the Tabernacle was erected, G-d forgave them their sin and their crowns were returned to them. (Ohr HaTorah)

And Moses blessed them (Ex. 39:43)

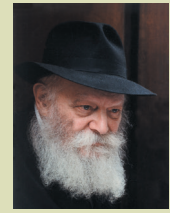
The fact that G-d's presence was visible when the Tabernacle was erected is not remarkable in itself, for whenever Jews gather together on Shabbat, on holidays, or to perform a mitzva as a congregation, a feeling of holiness and goodwill prevails. Moses' blessing to the Children of Israel was: "May it be G-d's will that His presence should rest on the work of your hands"--May Jews feel this closeness to G-d also during the week and while attending to their daily business concerns.

As stones of memorial to the Children of Israel (Ex. 39:7)

When Joseph was in Egypt and was tempted by Potifar's wife, the image of his father Jacob appeared to him, saying, "The names of all your brothers will one day be inscribed on the stones of the High Priest's breastplate. Do you want your name to be missing, if, G-d forbid, you commit this sin?" The 12 stones of the breastplate serve as a memorial for all of Israel. When a person reminds himself that all Jews were represented on it, he too will be ashamed and too embarrassed to commit any transgressions. (Meshech Chachma)



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Torah Portion Pekudei / Parshas Hachodesh
Blessing of the new month of Nissan
Shabbat ends 7:59 PM



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

"And he made the candlestick of pure gold," we read in this week's Torah portion, Vayakhel. "And six branches were coming out of its sides: three branches of the candlestick out of its one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side." Surprisingly, a widespread misconception exists concerning the menorah that stood in the Holy Temple.

This misconception, whose origin lies in non-Jewish sources, has unfortunately filtered down into Jewish circles, resulting in a faulty understanding of the genuine appearance of the menorah. In truth, the six side branches of the seven-branched candelabrum rose upward diagonally in a straight line from the center; they were not, as is commonly pictured, rounded in a bow-shape.

What makes this error even more regrettable is that it is derived from the famous Arch of Titus, may his name be blotted out forever.

The Roman emperor, seeking to memorialize his destruction of the Second Holy Temple and his pillage of the Temple's vessels, commissioned a work to secure his place in history. Its depiction of the menorah, however, is not an accurate representation of the one that was stolen from the Beit HaMikdash. Titus wished to improve upon the original and therefore "beautified" it by rounding out its branches.

The Hebrew word for "branch" -- "kaneh" -- alludes to the menorah's true shape, for its literal meaning is "a reed" -- a plant which grows at the water's edge in an unbending, straight line.

Both Maimonides and Rashi concur that the branches of the menorah were straight; Maimonides even drew a picture of the menorah so there would be no room for doubt.

It is of the utmost importance that this ancient forgery, which, unfortunately, has found its way into many synagogues and study halls, be corrected once and for all, and the true form of the holy menorah be accurately depicted.

Another interesting feature of the menorah was its "cups": "Three cups, shaped like almond blossoms, were on one branch, with a knob and a flower; and three cups, shaped like almond blossoms, were on the other...on the candlestick itself were four cups, shaped like almond blossoms, with its knobs and flowers" -- a total of 22 cups in all.

In his drawings, Maimonides depicts these cups upside-down -- the bottom of the cup on top, the wider opening on the bottom! What are we to learn from the cups' unusual configuration?

The purpose of the menorah was to illuminate -- not only the inside of the Holy Temple, but the entire world.

This concept is also reflected in the fact that the windows of the Beit HaMikdash were constructed to be narrow on the inside yet wider on the outside of the structure, thereby channeling the light of the menorah outward, to the world at large.

Similarly, a cup that is upside-down represents the act of pouring out and providing sustenance, symbolic of the Jews' role as "light unto the nations."

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Insignificant Coat

During the three annual pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot), when the entire community of Israel would come to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the vessels of the Temple were exposed to contact with many individuals, including some who might not have been well-versed in the complex laws of ritual purity.

Thus, following each festival, all the vessels of the Temple were immersed in a mikveh to cleanse them of any possible contamination by a visitor who might have been ritually impure.

The law is that "wooden vessels that are used only in a fixed place are not susceptible to contamination." The two altars (the indoor "Golden Altar" and the outdoor "Copper Altar", which were used only in their fixed places, were made of wood and covered with gold or copper.

This is the meaning of the above-quoted law that the altars did not require immersion after the festivals "because they were coated": although a metal vessel could become impure under such circumstances, since the altars' metal was only a coating, it was buttel ("nullified") in relation to their wooden bodies and they were thus immune to contamination.

But Torah laws always have more than one meaning. The Torah, as the human being it comes to instruct and enlighten, consists of both a "body" and a "soul." Each law, story or message in Torah also has a deeper, spiritual import; each legal technicality also addresses the inner world of the human soul. The Sanctuary is more than a

physical edifice dedicated to the service of G-d; it is also the model after which man is to construct his own self and life as a "sanctuary" to house and express the divine.

G-d commanded that, "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I shall dwell within them"; as our sages point out, "The verse does not say 'I shall dwell within it' but 'I shall dwell within them,' meaning, within each and every one of them." Thus, the Torah describes in detail the various components and vessels of the Sanctuary, for they each correspond to another of the faculties and attributes that comprise the human being.

This is the deeper significance of the immunity of the Sanctuary's altars. The other vessels of the human "sanctuary," representing man's various intellectual and emotional faculties, may, at times, become tainted by negative influences. But the "altars" of the soul, her capacity for selfless devotion and sacrifice for her creator, are not susceptible to contamination.

True, this inner core of purity is not always visible or readily accessible. The glitter of material life, or, conversely, the despair of hardship and poverty, may obscure the soul's intrinsic commitment to her G-d.

But these encumbrances, be they of "copper" or "gold," are mere coatings on her altar. Coatings that are "nullified" in the face of the incorruptible well of sacrifice within.

Adapted from the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe by Yanki Tauber

In dedication on page
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Chana bas Mendel A"H
Mrs. Anita Adler OBM
Long Beach, New York

SLICE OF LIFE

Serving G-d and Country, Chabad Chaplains Bring Purim to the Troops

By Motti Wilhelm



Rabbi Yehoshua Rubin prepares to welcome in Shabbat aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier.

As Purim approached, Chabad emissaries worldwide prepared for the holiday's celebrations, and Rabbi Yehoshua Rubin is no exception. However, his congregation is unique—25 active-duty Navy officers stationed at Naval Air Station Lemoore in Northern California. Rubin serves as both a Chabad-Lubavitch emissary and an active-duty chaplain in the U.S. Navy, providing religious and educational support to Jewish military personnel, whether at sea or on shore. He recently returned from a deployment aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln in the Arabian Sea, where he led Jewish services and offered spiritual guidance.

"Serving as both a Chabad rabbi and a chaplain comes with unique challenges," Rubin says, "but they pale in comparison to the profound rewards. Every day, I have the privilege of connecting with Jewish service members who might otherwise not engage with their heritage."

CHABAD FOR THE MILITARY

Chabad has been providing religious services to the U.S. military since the 1940s. After arriving in the U.S. from war-torn Europe, the Sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, began spreading Judaism across America

and established a division within Chabad's educational arm, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, to meet the needs of Jewish servicemen. The Rebbe's successor, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, continued to emphasize the importance of supporting Jewish servicemen.

In a 1981 message, the Rebbe wrote: "To care and provide for Jews in special circumstances, such as military service, to enable them to celebrate Purim fully."

This mission led to the founding of the Aleph Institute in 1981, offering spiritual support to Jews in the military and in prisons. In recent years, a growing number of Chabad rabbis have become active-duty chaplains, offering spiritual support from within the military.

Rabbi Chaim Roome, stationed in Okinawa, Japan, serves Jewish personnel across the island's military bases. "Military personnel are constantly redeployed, so my congregation is always changing," says Roome. "But there are always 150 to 200 Jewish servicemen and civilians on the island at any given time."

Roome and his wife, Meira, face unique challenges, particularly in educating their children, as there are no Jewish schools on the island. Their children attend Chabad's Shluchim Online School, although the time difference makes it difficult. Despite this, they are motivated by the knowledge that they're supporting Jewish service members.

"About two months ago, I returned from a month-long training course in the States. I was exhausted from the journey, and my wife was drained after managing everything alone with the kids for the entire month." The couple briefly considered skipping hosting Shabbat meals that week to rest and recover.

"Then I got a two-line text from one of our Jewish Marines: 'Rabbi, are you hosting Shabbos? I need Jewish.'"

"That was all the reminder we needed. This is why we're here—for the Jew who 'needs Jewish.'"

This Purim, Roome traveled across Okinawa to reach every Jew, hosting Megillah readings and celebrations at central locations. "Some can't come due to duty or lack of transportation," he explains. "We're do our best to reach everyone. There's no other Purim event they can attend."

REACHING OUT IN LEMOORE

In California, Rabbi Rubin celebrated Purim with his small congregation in Lemoore. Despite the smaller numbers, Rubin emphasizes, "It doesn't matter that our congregation is small. That's why we're here—to ensure that not a single Jew is left behind." Most of the servicemen on base have no visible connection to Judaism, so Rubin reached out with private Megillah readings and a festive Purim celebration.

SUPPORTING VETERANS

Even after military service ends, Chabad continues to support Jewish veterans. Rabbi Chesky Tenenbaum directs the Jewish Uniformed Service Association Chabad (JUSA), which serves the spiritual needs of veterans, law enforcement, the Secret Service, and first responders. Tenenbaum also serves as a chaplain in the Maryland State Guard, where he made history as the first member allowed to keep a beard for religious reasons.

"Veterans form a close-knit group and naturally connect with others who understand their unique challenges," Tenenbaum says. As both a rabbi to veterans and a chaplain, he helps them reconnect with their Judaism.

Ahead of Purim, Tenenbaum teamed up with Dan Berkovitz, a Marine Corps veteran, to bring holiday cheer to Jewish veterans across Maryland. Berkovitz, who served in Kuwait and Iraq, reconnected with his Jewish heritage through Tenenbaum and now helps others strengthen their connection to Judaism.

Together, they packed mishloach manot—gift packages for Jewish veterans. "For many veterans, especially those in assisted living, these packages are a reminder that we remember and cherish them," Tenenbaum says.

A LIFELONG COMMITMENT

Chabad chaplains remain committed to supporting Jewish service members throughout their military careers and beyond. During his recent deployment, Rubin led Rosh Hashanah prayers, built possibly the first-ever sukkah on an aircraft carrier (which went viral), and hosted Shabbat meals and classes. For six months, he alternated between frozen meals and MREs, relying on supplies flown in for religious needs.

"As long as there is one Jewish person in the military, we will be there for them—on land, on ship, or in the air," Rubin says. "This was the Rebbe's vision, and it continues to inspire us."

From www.Chabad.org

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

HIGHER EDUCATION

From a letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Jews have always been "a minority among the nations," even in the best of times. At the same time "their laws differ from those of any other people," and they differ not only in regard to special occasions, or special aspects of life, but they differ in every aspect of the daily life. For the Jew, the Torah and mitzvot are the guide to daily happiness, and this is the simple life and the source of life and true meaning of "Torat Chaim"—the Law of Life, and the definition of the mitzvot as the essence of Jewish life, "whereby Jews live."

It is clear that being in the minority, Jews must have special reinforcements from childhood on, in order to be able to hold their own in the face of overwhelming odds.

If it was difficult enough to live as a Jew in countries where Jews were persecuted or confined to ghettos, there was one redeeming factor at least, namely that under those circumstances Jewish adherence and loyalty to the Torah and mitzvot were not put to the test. An individual Jew could sever his ties with his people, but that involved a sudden and complete break; it was therefore rare and extreme. But in the free countries, and under the present economic and social conditions, there are no outside barriers separating Jew from gentile; the road to assimilation is wide open, and the danger is all the greater since the process is a gradual one. No sudden break with tradition is entailed, but a gradual deviation, step after small step, leads in that direction. There is a parable for this, about the boy who strayed from the road and later found himself in the midst of the woods. He got there by making a small false step off the road, which led to another, and yet another.

The conditions and environment in a country such as this call, therefore, for an even greater spiritual reinforcement of the Jewish boy and girl than ever before and elsewhere. This reinforcement must be of such strength and duration that the Jewish child will always be conscious of the fact that no matter what the environment is, he is the bearer of the sacred tradition of the Divine Torah and mitzvot and belongs to a people that is holy and different. For this, it is essential that right from the earliest childhood to adolescence the Jewish child should receive the fullest possible Jewish education, throughout his formative years.

Hence, when a Jewish boy completes his compulsory education, it is an absolute must that for a couple of years, at least, he dedicate himself

to the exclusive study of the Torah and sacred subjects, in a most conducive atmosphere of a yeshiva, without distraction of secular studies.

This would have been my opinion even if college entailed no more than the distraction of secular studies. Actually there is much more involved. Theoretically a college and its faculty should not try to impose any particular views, much less a way of life, on the students. Actually however, the student cannot help being impressed, on the conscious and subconscious level, by the views, and outlook and way of life of his professors. These, as well as the whole atmosphere of a college, are unfortunately, not compatible with the Jewish way of life, and frequently if not always quite contradictory to it. This is so even in colleges which are theological, or having so-called religious studies. Needless to say, the whole atmosphere of college is in violent conflict with the Shulchan Aruch way of life, whereby the Jew is totally committed—in every detail and aspect of his personal daily life—to the Torah and mitzvot and the service of G-d.

In other words, the Jewish boy (or girl) entering college, yet desiring to retain the Jewish way of life in accordance with the Torah, finds himself tossed about in the raging waves of conflict between two contradictory worlds. He is at a further disadvantage in finding himself in the minority camp, since those sharing his views and convictions are few on the college campus, while the forces pulling in the opposite direction are overwhelming; forces he must confront at every turn—among the student body, faculty members, text books, newspapers and periodicals. It is very doubtful whether even an adult and mature person who is subjected to such "shock treatment" day after day, would not be shaken.

I can speak from experience and personal knowledge, having attended various colleges and seen the painful inner upheavals of Jewish students, and having for many years been the confidant of Jewish students who are otherwise reluctant or shamed to open their hearts. I can therefore state with the fullest measure of conviction and responsibility that he who sends his child to college during the formative years subjects him to shock and profound conflicts and trials and invites quite unforeseen consequences.

In view of all the above, it is my definite and considered opinion that all Jewish children, upon completing their compulsory secular education, should devote at least several years to the exclusive study of the Torah, without the interference of other studies, not even training for a trade, in order to obtain the maximum insurance against all risks and dangers that their future life may hold, when they attain adulthood and settle down to a family life.

Another point which is often the subject of misconception—the importance attached to a college degree from the economic point of view. Statistics show that the majority of college graduates eventually establish themselves in occupations and businesses not directly connected with their courses of study in college. The moral is obvious.

as a feast. To echo this analogy, the table has already been set, everything has been served, and we are sitting at the table together with Moshiaich. All we need to do is open our eyes.

(Adapted by Sichos in English from a talk of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

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

This Shabbat we bless the new month of Nissan. Our Sages declared, "In Nissan, our people were redeemed, and in Nissan, they will be redeemed in the future." Further, Nissan is referred to in the Midrash as the Chodesh HaGeula, the month of redemption.

The traveling Sanctuary which the Jews built and carried with them throughout their forty years of wandering in the desert was dedicated in the month of Nissan. This Sanctuary was the predecessor of the Holy Temple.

Our Sages explain that, just as the Sanctuary was dedicated in Nissan, similarly, in the Messianic age, the third Holy Temple will be dedicated on the first day of the month of Nissan.

As we all know, the Jews were taken out of Egypt amidst a multitude of miracles and wonders: They witnessed the Egyptians experiencing the Ten Plagues; they crossed the Red Sea; they were provided with food, water and protection in the barren, dangerous desert.

G-d has promised us that the miracles of the Ultimate Redemption will echo those of the Redemption from Egypt, as is written in prophecies of Micha, "As in the days of your exodus from Egypt, I will show you wonders."

The Hebrew word for miracle is "nes." The Talmud explains that a word which has the Hebrew letter "nun" twice, as does our upcoming month -- Nissan -- is an allusion to wonders of a truly miraculous nature.

In a talk at which time the Rebbe mentioned all of these above points, he emphasized the importance of charity. He explained that we are now in the thirty-day period before the holiday of Passover, when we are already supposed to have begun Passover preparations. This surely includes making sure that those less fortunate than ourselves have their Passover needs provided for them.

The Rebbe went on to say that through giving charity, especially before we are approached, we can hasten the miraculous Redemption, which we hope and pray will commence even before the beginning of the month of Nissan, and certainly by the first of Nissan.

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 CALL TO ACTION

ACQUIRE A LETTER IN A TORAH SCROLL

The very last commandment in the Torah is for one to write a Torah scroll for him/herself. The Rebbe highlighted this mitzva when he established the Sefer Torah Campaign 44 years ago whereby Jews the world over would, for a nominal fee, "purchase" letters in a Torah scroll, thereby connecting with millions of Jews around the world.

To date, millions of Jewish men, women and children have participated in this mitzva.

To purchase a letter for children in the special Children's Sefer Torah please visit: www.kidstora.org / To purchase a letter for adults please visit: www.sefertora.org.il

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Our Sages have described the Redemption

Jewish Soldiers Arrive from Battlefield to Purim Celebrations in Kyiv



This year's Purim celebrations in Kyiv's Jewish community took place under the shadow of ceasefire negotiations between Ukraine and Russia mediated by the United States. Against this backdrop, one of the most moving sights was the arrival of a group of Jewish soldiers who received special leave from the front to participate in the Purim events.

At the city's main synagogue – Beit Menachem JCC – headed by the city's Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Yonatan Markovitch, hundreds of community members gathered for the Megillah reading. Alongside city residents, the soldiers in their uniforms stood out, having arrived directly from the battlefield.

At the same time, volunteers from the community visited the homes of elderly and sick individuals who could not participate in the events, distributing mishloach manos. Special activities were dedicated to soldiers who remained at the front, to whom mishloach manot and gift packages were sent.