



The third Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, known as the "TzemaCh Tzede," often visited groups of "Cantonistim." These soldiers in the Czar's army were Jews of unusual self-sacrifice that had been snatched from their homes from the age of five years and up. They served in the Czar's army as part of a cruel plan to "persuade" them to leave Judaism. But overall, despite the years of tortures and brainwashing, most of them clung to their Jewish identity.

In one of the TzemaCh Tzede's visits to these brave soldiers, he told them, "One must sacrifice one's life rather than one's Judaism. Even if the Czar himself personally tells you to change your religion you must sacrifice yourself rather than obey him." These words, spoken from the soul, had a deep effect on one sailor by the name of Shimon Levin.

Shimon was an excellent and devoted soldier of the Czar. He loved his job and was one of the best, perhaps the very best, sailor in the Czar's royal navy to the point that he was called by his compatriots called him Semion Bodri (Shimon the brave).

He had been promoted to the rank of officer and served at the naval base in Svastopol on the Black sea. Then, one glorious day, the base received notice that the Czar was to personally make a visit.

It is hard for us to imagine the fear and awe that the very mention of the Czar's name inspired in every Russian citizen no less an actual personal visit by his Royal Highness! The very thought filled the sailors with trembling.

When the glorious day arrived the base had been scrubbed and polished for the visit and the sailors had a grand reception prepared. The band played, everyone was dressed in immaculate and pressed uniforms, even the decks of the ships gleamed. But the highlight of the day was something very special.

The commander of the base climbed to a platform, stood to his full height. The music stopped, everyone was silent, and he announced before the Czar that in honor of his royal Majesty, one of the officers would perform an act of unmatched skill and unequalled bravery. The commander swung his finger majestically up pointing to the highest ship mast in the harbor some twenty meters high.

Again the drums began to roll and suddenly stopped.

Shimon Levin, in full battle gear, stood at the foot of the mast, saluted and bowed to the Czar. Then, without hesitating, he climbed briskly up the mast, stood erect on its very point and, as the crowd gasped in amazement, jumped, arched his back and dived gracefully into the sea.

The crowd broke into applause as Shimon swam to shore, walked up to the Czar and bowed deeply. The Czar was ecstatic. "Who is this man!?" he asked excitedly. "His name is Semion Bodri," the commander proudly replied. The Czar called out "Semion Bodri! I want to reward you. We will have another celebration at this same time here tomorrow!"

The next day the scene was repeated, but this time there were tens of new officials that the Czar wanted to impress. The Czar was to the point. He stood proudly and announced "Semion Bodri, you are a true soldier, a credit to the Royal Navy, and a Jewel in the crown of Mother Russia. Because of your act of power and splendor that you demonstrated yesterday I hereby promote you to the rank of General! Congratulations!" The crowd broke into wild applause, the sailors began singing a patriotic song and the band played along.

But when it all ended Shimon just stood there without a smile on his face. "Your majesty" he replied. "I am truly grateful but according to the laws which your highness has made it is forbidden for me to accept." Silence reigned, only the wind could be heard whistling through the masts. "I am a Jew, your majesty and it is forbidden for a Jew to rise above the rank of petty officer."

The Czar was surprised and embarrassed. He had planned to brag before his generals and ministers and this Jew had made him look foolish.

"Then you will change your religion!" He announced angrily. "Do you hear me officer

Bodri?! You will change your religion and become a general! Now!"

"Your majesty!" answered Shimon. "With your majesty's permission, first I would like to repeat the feat that I performed yesterday for your royal highness."

Without waiting for an answer and before anyone knew what was happening, Shimon ran in the direction of the mast, swooped up his gear and, without stopping, put it on as he was running. Even more swiftly than yesterday he climbed to the peak, stood there proudly, and announced loudly, "Your majesty, 12 years I have been serving in the Russian navy and I love my service with all my soul. But know, my king, that above all I am a Jew. Through my entire service I have kept the Sabbath and never eaten forbidden foods. I will never leave the G-d of Israel. 'Shma Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hashem Echad!'"

Again he gracefully dived from the mast and plunging down into the blue sea. But this time he did not come up. Shimon the brave had conquered the Czar of Russia.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And now Israel, what does G-d your L-rd ask from you but to fear G-d your L-rd and to follow in all his ways to love him and serve him with all your heart and all your soul" (Deut. 10:12).

A person must fear the sin itself and not merely the punishment it incurs. The situation is analogous to a father who warns his son not to walk around barefoot. The father warns that if the child steps on a thorn, he will have to be brought to a doctor to remove it and the procedure will hurt. The son, because of his youth and limited intelligence, is not afraid of the thorn itself and the possibility that he might step on one; he is merely afraid of its removal. The father, however, really wishes him to avoid the thorn, and sees its removal as a positive remedy if he should so require it. So it is with our avoidance of transgression. Man wishes to avoid punishment, but G-d worries about the sin itself, and sees the punishment as a necessary atonement and correction. *(The Maggid of Mezeritch)*

The Talmud asks "Is then fear such a small matter?" and answers, "For Moses it is a small matter." Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Chabad Rebbe, asked, "The Torah speaks here to every Jew. How is this an answer for every one. The answer which is given is that every Jew, whoever he may be, contains a spark of Moses. This gives every Jew strength to attain fear of G-d easily" *((Tanya)*

Do not say to yourself, "It was my own strength and personal power that brought me all this prosperity. You must remember that it is G-d your L-rd who gives you the power to become prosperous. (8:17-18)

The Talmud states: "The difficulty with which a person sustains himself is like the Splitting of the Red Sea." Just as the Splitting of the Sea was an unforeseen miracle, so does a person's sustenance come to him from G-d in a hidden manner. *(The Seer of Lublin)*



7:35 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
21 Av / August 15
Torah Portion *Eikev*
Ethics Ch 4
Shabbat ends **8:35 pm**

L'Chaim

בס"ד

1886

21 Av, 5785

August 15, 2025

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

יוסף תור ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalms 124:8)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

In the Torah portion of Eikev, Moses recounts the passing of his brother Aaron immediately after recalling the breaking of the tablets containing the Ten Commandments. Our Sages tell us that the incidents are juxtaposed because "the demise of tzadikim (the righteous) is as difficult for G-d as the breaking of the tablets."

The parallel between the demise of the righteous and the breaking of the tablets is not only that they are both extremely difficult for G-d, but also that tzadikim and the tablets are analogous. How so?

With regard to the first tablets, the Torah states: "The tablets were the work of G-d; their text was written by G-d - engraved upon the tablets." The tablets thus had two distinct attributes: their very creation was a work of G-d; the text was engraved by G-d.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, "Moses looked at them and saw that the writing had disappeared. He said: 'How can I give the Jewish people the tablets, they are without substance? Rather, I will break them.'"

But even after the writing had disappeared, the tablets were still G-d's work. How could Moses refer to them as being "without substance"?

As indicated in the verse, the text of the tablets was engraved within the tablets themselves. As such, the text became an integral part of the tablets' substance, not something added as ink is added to paper. Hence, the engraving of the text had a profound impact on the actual tablets, the words becoming entirely one with them. In other words, the unity of the tablets and their text was so great that their true essence was displaced by the text engraved within them.

Therefore, once the "writing had disappeared" - although the tablets were still a work of G-d - they were "without substance," for the true entity was the actual text, with its soul and spirit.

These qualities of the tablets have a parallel within each Jew. Every Jew is a composite of body and soul. The Jew's body is similar to the tablets, which were a work of G-d, for even the body of a Jew possesses tremendous sanctity. The soul that was placed within the body is similar to the Divine writing engraved within the tablets. The unity of body and soul is thus similar to the unity of the writing and the tablets themselves.

As mentioned earlier, the tablets were important unto themselves - "the work of G-d" - even before the writing was engraved, for the tablets preceded the text. Still, once the Ten Commandments were engraved within them they were elevated to such an extent that their totality was the "Divine writing." So when the writing disappeared, they were considered to be "without substance."

So too with the Jew. Although his body was created independently of his soul, once the soul is vested in the body, it becomes truly one with the body. The essential aspect of the soul becomes the essential character of the body as well. Thus we say that "the life of the tzadik is not physical life, but spiritual life - belief, awe and love [of G-d]."

This then is the similarity between the demise of tzadikim and the breaking of the tablets. With the introduction of an even higher spiritual element - the soul, the Divine writing - both entities undergo a profound change, with spirituality becoming their entire essence.

From *The Chassidic Dimension*, based on *Likutei Sichot*, Vol. 14

Don't Be Afraid to Visit Your Broken Places

By Rabbi Yosef Y. Jacobson

BROKEN

Following the making of the Golden Calf, Moses smashed the stone tablets, engraved with the Ten Commandments by G-d. After a period of repentance, G-d gave the people a second chance. Moses hewed a new set of tablets, which G-d again engraved with the Ten Commandments, and Moses gave them to the people. This story raises several profound questions.

First, why did Moses have to break the tablets at all? Why not hide them or return them to G-d? Second, the rabbis teach that the Jews placed the broken fragments of the first tablets in the Ark, in the Tabernacle, alongside the second whole tablets. Why would they place these fragments—a constant reminder of their failure—in the most sacred place? Third, the Torah concludes its tribute to Moses by alluding to this very episode. The closing verses of Deuteronomy recount Moses's greatness and then highlight a specific deed: "that mighty hand... which Moses did before the eyes of all Israel," which Rashi explains as breaking the tablets. Why does the Torah choose this tragic and devastating event to capture the zenith of Moses' life?

IN THE FRAGMENTS

The answers lie in a deeper understanding of Moses's actions. He didn't break the tablets out

of anger. Instead, the act was the beginning of the healing process. Initially, the Jews could find G-d in the spiritual wholesomeness of the tablets. But after their failure, Moses taught them that hope wasn't lost. They could now find G-d in the shattered pieces of their broken dream.

This act conveyed one of Judaism's greatest messages: truth can be found not just in spiritual perfection, but also in the broken pieces of the human psyche. The broken tablets, like a broken heart, still contain the light of G-d. This is why the sages teach that both the whole and the broken tablets were kept in the Holy of Holies. This teaches us that from the broken pieces of life, we can create holiness.

G-d affirmed Moses's decision, with the sages saying G-d told him, "Thank you for breaking them." We hope for wholeness, but when we encounter brokenness, we shouldn't run from it. We should embrace it, bringing our broken pieces into our own "holy of holies." As the observation of one of the Rebbe's states, "there is nothing more whole than a broken heart."

The Torah culminates its tribute to Moses with this episode because his greatest achievement was teaching humanity how to turn our brokenness into holiness. His life's ultimate lesson is that light and joy can be found even in the fragments of sacredness.

SLICE OF LIFE

The Rebbe's Tefillin Saved My Life in a Korean Foxhole



MR. SHELLEY (SHOLOM) BAER

When I was drafted into the US Army in 1959, I went to see the Rebbe for a blessing. The Rebbe's blessings don't expire, so I didn't think there was a need for another one after I got orders to ship out to Korea.

So, imagine my surprise when I went to bid goodbye to my mother and she said, "Sholom, we got a call from Chabad Headquarters. The Rebbe wants to see you."

Of course, I went right away. The Rebbe greeted me with a big smile and opened with, "I hear you're going overseas. To Korea, no?"

When I confirmed that this was the case, he summoned his secretary, who came in carrying a tefillin bag. "Sholom, I'm sending you with these tefillin," the Rebbe said.

Now, I owned a perfectly good pair of tefillin from my Bar Mitzvah, but the Rebbe didn't explain. He merely said, "I want you to promise me that you are going to put these on every day and say the Shema."

Because I was confused, I failed to reply, which caused the Rebbe to prompt, "I didn't hear your promise!" So, I finally did promise to do what he requested. The Rebbe then said, "I want to prepare you that it will be hard over there. Very hard. And, if for any reason you are unable to put on these tefillin, you must still say the Shema."

Not understanding any of it, but trusting the Rebbe, I set off. The flight to Korea started in California with stops in Hawaii, Wake Island, and Japan before arriving at the final destination.

When we stopped in Hawaii for refueling, I decided to stand up and stretch. It proved a momentous decision because just then a colonel I had never seen before came forward, declaring that he had to get on that plane, which meant one of us had to stay behind.

Since I was already standing, I was picked. I was not at all happy because this meant I'd be stuck on the tarmac waiting for hours for the next plane.

When I eventually arrived and tried to find out how I could rejoin my outfit, I learned that the plane I was supposed to be on was missing. I was in shock, but I realized that from my group, I was probably the only one who was still alive.

I was reassigned to a different group — a bunch of Southerners who didn't like Jews and they made sure to tell me that, particularly the sergeant.

Now, come morning, I had to put on tefillin like I promised. It didn't go over well with them, and the sergeant made a point of assigning me the worst jobs. He even tried to prevent me from attending a religious retreat to which I was entitled.

In order to make that retreat, I had to hitch a ride on a two-man plane, which stalled out in mid-air. The pilot was doing his best to restart the engine and just before we hit the ground, the engine caught and we were saved.

I had the Tefillin with me because I took them wherever I went, fearing what might happen to them. Truth be told though; I had stopped putting them on due to the harassment by the sergeant. Whenever he saw me with them, he would go off his rocker. I realized what the Rebbe meant when he said that it was going to become very hard. Meanwhile, I did what I could — I just said the Shema.

Then I got a letter from my mother. She wrote, "My dear son Sholom. I just received word from Chabad that the Rebbe said you are not keeping your promise." I broke out into a cold sweat: How did he know?!

I realized that I had to transfer to a different unit, but the only option available was

Camp Essayons, which was home to combat engineers who went behind enemy lines to blow up missile sites, bridges and land mines. It was dangerous but, as far as I was concerned, it was better than suffering in my current unit.

After seven months with the combat engineers — just when I thought my tour of duty had ended — President John F. Kennedy extended the service of all troops overseas because of the Cuban Missile Crisis. And this time my unit was sent to the 38th parallel, which demarcates the border between North Korea and South Korea — the most dangerous place you could be in that part of the world.

It was winter, it was very cold, and our foxhole turned into a mudhole. Meanwhile, heavy artillery kept coming at us from North Korea.

We all thought this was the end. The last thing I was thinking of was tefillin — I was covered with mud, how could I possibly put them on?

But one of the soldiers somehow associated these tefillin with G-d's protection. He started yelling at me, "We need G-d! Put on those funny boxes and pray!" He shouted, "Either you pray or I will shoot you!" I put them on and looking up to the heavens, said the Shema — "Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One."

All of a sudden, the bombing stopped. I had no idea what happened — I felt I was in a twilight zone. Before long, I was allowed to return home.

In 1967, before the Six Day War, I thought about volunteering for the IDF, but the Rebbe said that I didn't have to go that far: "Just put on your tefillin and tell all your friends to do the same." At that time, the Rebbe started his tefillin campaign to get the message out that putting on tefillin brings down Divine protection. It is also allows a person to get close to G-d.

I can attest to just how true this is. There is no doubt in my mind that the Rebbe's tefillin saved my life many times, and because of the Divine protection they afforded me, I am here to tell the story and to encourage every Jew to put on tefillin, even if it's for the first and only time.

Before retiring, Mr. Shelly Baer owned and operated the Golden Hands Construction company in North Hollywood, California.

He was interviewed by JEM'S My Encounter Series in January 2019.

ETHICS CHAPTER FOUR

He would also say: Do not judge on your own, for there is none qualified to judge alone, only the One. And do not say, "You must accept my view," for this is their [the majority's] right, not yours.

Rabbi Jonathan would say: Whoever fulfills the Torah in poverty, will ultimately fulfill it in wealth; and whoever neglects the Torah in wealth, will ultimately neglect it in poverty.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

3rd of Shevat, 5719 (1959)

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter of January 2nd, in which you ask my opinion on several points concerning conditions on a cemetery, such as the kind of memorials, flowers on the grave, etc. You ask if these points are in violation of Jewish law.

Generally speaking, the points you describe in your letter do not violate Jewish law in the strict sense of the word. However, it is possible that you did not mention all the facts and particulars which might affect the law on these points. I suggest that before you make any final decision, you consult with a local Orthodox Rabbi, who perhaps knows the property in question, or can ascertain all the necessary and pertinent details.

What I meant by saying that the points enumerated in your letter do not, generally speaking, violate the letter of the Jewish law, is that it is necessary in such case; to consider also the spirit of the law, which is no less Important in this case, and perhaps even more important.

This is to say that the general view of our Jewish religion in regard to monuments for the dead is that the true and essential monument is to give to their souls true spiritual gratification by extra deeds connected with our Torah and Mitzvot [commandments]. For, inasmuch as we all believe in the eternity of the soul, and its passing from this world which is called "the world of illusion," to a higher world which is called "the world of truth," every good deed, in accordance with the Torah and Mitzvot, which is done in connection with their memory and with the intention of affording them spiritual pleasure is the

best way through which those who are left behind can commemorate the souls of their near and dear ones.

In view of the above, it is clear that although it is a good thing to have a tombstone or similar monument on a grave, and also to keep the grave in good condition, etc., one must bear in mind that that as a commemoration these are, after all, superficial symbols, the real significance of which comes to fruition only through profound and inner expressions of attachment, as mentioned above. In other words, physical monuments can only be secondary to spiritual monuments. Therefore, if there was a question of choice as to spending the money on physical monuments of bronze or stone, or applying the extra funds towards sacred causes of Torah and Mitzvot, and the like, there can be no question as to where the priority belongs. Hence, even if beautifying the grave with flowers, and the like, is not necessarily a violation of the strict letter of the Jewish law, it would be in conflict with the deeper Jewish outlook of the soul, which prefers spiritual deeds rather than flowers.

By way of contrast, it is well to mention here, what the non-Jewish outlook is, as expressed in the gigantic pyramids and similar monuments of the ancient Egyptian and other non-Jewish kings. Although these monuments have survived for thousands of year, they can only bring to us a message of inhumanity, in that hundreds of thousands of lives and inestimable material were spent on what is really useless. Compare it with the way the passing, in distinguish, of the great King Hezekiah has been commemorated, as our Sages relate, when a Yeshiva was founded in his memory. It is surely unnecessary to elaborate further.

Needless to say, you do not impose on me when asking me such questions. I hope to hear good news from you, especially about your fruitful activities in all matters of Torah and Mitzvot, which I hope will grow and expand, as growth is the sign of life.

With blessing,

era, ikvasa demishicha, the time when Moshiach's approaching footsteps can be heard. When we observe the Torah and its commandments in this time, G-d will keep the promises mentioned in the Torah and bring the Redemption.

(Keeping Touch, by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger)

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

The first and second paragraphs after the recitation of Shema Yisrael in our daily prayers are from last week's and our present Torah portion (Eikev) respectively. Both paragraphs enjoin us to serve G-d devotedly, and command us to observe the mitzvot of tefilin, mezuzah, and teaching Torah to children.

Where do these paragraphs differ, then? The first paragraph is written in the singular tense, it is addressed to the individual. The second paragraph is written in the plural and is addressed to the community. In addition, the second paragraph also includes mention of the reward and punishment for keeping the above-mentioned and other mitzvot.

Our commentators also explain that because of the wording of the commandment to teach our children, we understand that one refers to a teacher's obligation toward his students while the other refers to a parent's obligation.

Concerning the mitzva of giving our children a proper Jewish education, the lesson from this and last week's portion is clear. Both the individual and the community is obligated to fulfill this mitzva. Parent and teachers both share the responsibility. We can do it for altruistic reasons. We can ensure a proper Jewish education for fear of punishment - "modern day" punishments might include assimilation, drugs, cults or intermarriage. Or we might be involved in Jewish education because of the reward - nachas from children, being honored at a dinner, etc. Whatever the reason, whoever the person, wherever the community, a proper Jewish education for every Jewish child must be our number one priority.

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.



Published by
Lubavitch Youth Organization
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phone 718 778 6000

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