



Once there lived a wealthy Jewish butcher in a town on the seaside. In his youth he had been quite poor, and had worked very hard to amass his wealth. Unfortunately, he had never had the opportunity to learn Torah, but he took great pleasure in praying and saying Psalms. He never forgot what it meant to be needy, and he constantly went out of his way to help his fellow Jews.

Every Friday afternoon before Shabbat he would distribute meat and money to all the poor families in the town. His good nature made him a favorite among not only the Jews, but also the gentiles of the town. His reputation even spread to the governor who favored him with an important appointment as the chief customs officer of the port. As such, he would collect taxes on imports and also collect a fee for his services. As one of the benefits of his job, he was also permitted to take any one item from amongst the goods. It was in the capacity of customs collector that he amassed an even greater for tune.

One day a ship arrived in port, and he went to inspect the goods on board. After he performed his duties, the captain approached him saying, "I have some especially good merchandise on board today. Something totally unique, but I am not at liberty to divulge to you the nature of this merchandise unless you want to buy it."

The butcher was very curious and asked what it was, but he always received the same reply: "I will tell you only if you agree to buy it." "How much do you want for it?" he inquired. "Ten thousand gold coins!" was the astonishing answer. "You expect me to make the purchase without knowing what I'm buying?" "That's the stipulation. I assure you, you won't be disappointed."

The butcher was all but hooked, but the captain was enjoying his power over the butcher. He was no longer satisfied with ten thousand; he raised the price to twenty thousand coins, and then forty thousand gold coins!

Finally the butcher agreed. "I will pay your price. Just show me the merchandise!"

"Only after you have brought all the money," the captain answered with a grin, and off went the butcher to fetch the treasure of coins.

Even as he went to collect the coins, the butcher was doubting his sanity. He returned and laid the money on the table. The captain turned on his heel and in a few minutes he returned with the "merchandise" -- Jewish men, women and children in tow -- bound hand and foot.

The evil captain couldn't restrain himself, and broke out into laughter: "Aren't you happy now? What a bargain you got yourself! If you hadn't bought them, they would have been food for sharks -- I certainly have no use for them!"

The butcher took the hapless people with him and left the ship as fast as his feet could carry him, lest the wicked captain have a change of heart. He kept thinking over and over again how G-d had inspired him to spend a fortune on unknown goods in order to save these Jews.

The butcher fed and clothed the former prisoners and treated them with the utmost kindness. One day he noticed a young girl from among them and thought, "This girl would be perfect for my son." The two young people agreed and preparations were made for the wedding.

On the eve of the great affair, the butcher circulated among the guests, offering a drink here, a dainty there, when he saw a young man sitting in a corner weeping. "What is wrong? Everyone is rejoicing, why are you so sad?" The poor boy replied, "The girl who is about to marry your son was betrothed to me before we were abducted by the pirates."

"Why did no one tell me?" the butcher asked. "We are all so grateful to you, that no one dared disturb your happiness," the boy responded.

The butcher thought for a while, and then called his son to him. After recounting the entire story to the groom, he asked, "What do you want to do about it?"

"There is no question. Let the couple be married today as they had planned so many months ago. I will not stand in their way."

And so it was, that the entire village celebrated the marriage that very day. The butcher not only made them the wedding, but furnished them with a house and furnishing and enough money to begin a new life.

The Sages said of this man that with his forty thousand gold coins he purchased a place in the World to Come equaled only to that of the greatest tzadikim.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the Weekly Torah Portion

Judges and officers shall you place at all your gates (Deut. 16:18)

It is explained in our holy books that these "gates" refer to the entrances to the "small city" (the human being in microcosm): the eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth.

When one places "judges and officers" at these "portals," i.e., when one utilizes them properly, the body is thereby transformed into a "G-dly city." This is especially appropriate to consider during the month of Elul (when this Torah portion is read), for it is a time when we take a full accounting of everything that has transpired in the "small city" -- thought, speech and deed -- during the previous year. (*The Rebbe*)

You shall be perfect with the L-rd your G-d (Deut. 18:13)

Just as it is important to safeguard one's physical health, a Jew must take steps to ensure that his soul is whole and that all his spiritual "limbs" are healthy. For just as there are 613 components in the human body -- 248 limbs and 365 sinews -- so too are there 613 parts of the Jewish soul whose state of perfection is dependent on observing the 613 commandments of the Torah. (*Likrat Shabbat*)

In many prayer books, the words "I hereby accept upon myself the positive commandment of 'And you shall love your fellow as yourself'" preface the prayers themselves. One reason for this is that because our prayers are offered instead of sacrifices (which have to be whole and unblemished), so too must the entire "body" of the Jewish people (each one of whom is considered a limb) be whole and complete, united with love for one another, before we approach our Creator. (The Rebbe)

You shall appoint a king over yourself (Deut. 17:15)

The inner intent of this commandment is to instill in the Jewish people a sense of nullification before G-d and acceptance of the yoke of heaven. For a Jewish king is completely nullified before G-d; submitting to his sovereignty contains an element of nullification before G-d as well. (*Derech Mitzvot*)



7:14 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
5 Elul / August 29
Torah Portion Shoftim
Ethics Ch 6
Shabbat ends 8:13 PM

L'Chaim

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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

At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he who is worthy of death be put to death, but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death," we read in this week's Torah portion, Shoftim.

But what happens if someone confesses to a capital crime? Is the Jewish court allowed to carry out a death sentence, according to the rule that "the admission of the plaintiff is worth 100 witnesses"?

Maimonides explains that this legal ruling applies only in monetary cases; when it comes to capital crimes, two witnesses are necessary to determine guilt.

Our Sages explain the difference thus:

A person's soul is not his property; it does not belong to him at all, but is only entrusted to him by G-d for safekeeping. For this reason it is not only forbidden to kill (oneself or others) but it is forbidden to cause harm or injury to the body, as well. An admission of guilt is therefore meaningless because it involves something which is not subject to ownership.

Wealth, on the other hand, is actually "owned" by the individual (as much as anything created by G-d, the Master of the world, can said to be "owned" by a human being). The testimony of the person involved may therefore be accepted as the determining factor.

This distinction is also reflected in the various blessings established by our Sages, appropriately called "benedictions of enjoyment."

We recite a blessing before eating or drinking, but not before enjoying our money. That is because the soul, which derives its pleasure and sustenance from the divine sparks in the food or drink we ingest, is not our own; we must therefore recite a blessing before we partake of G-d's goodness. However, we do not need to obtain G-d's permission before we spend our money. (Of course, G-d wants us to utilize our wealth for doing mitzvot, giving charity, etc.)

In truth, every single Jew is a "witness," for his observance of Torah and mitzvot attests to the existence of the Creator. The function of a witness, in both the limited and broader sense, is to uncover something which is hidden. G-d has placed the Jewish people in a physical world ("olam," from the word meaning hidden or concealed) to testify to His absolute sovereignty, and show through their actions how "everything came into being with His word."

When this will take place, the above type of testimony will not be necessary, for we will have entered the Messianic era and G-dliness will be self-evident: "The glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh will see that the mouth of G-d has spoken." May it happen immediately.

Adapted from talks of the Rebbe.

A Jewish Approach to Peaceful Sleep

Sleep deprivation has become a pervasive challenge in modern life. Whether we remain awake to manage financial obligations, advance our professional knowledge, or simply because we cannot put down an engaging book, the morning alarm invariably sounds before we have achieved adequate rest.

Even when we do get to sleep at a reasonable hour, numerous factors conspire against quality sleep: unexpected phone calls, crying infants, municipal services operating at inconvenient hours, or teenagers who have yet to return home. These disruptions are all too familiar to anyone seeking restorative rest.

Sleep researchers will rattle off the pros and cons of valerian, melatonin, exercise, hot baths, warm milk, or a solid meal. They'll also tell you that the older you get (particularly over 30), the more likely you are to complain about your sleep. Quality sleep remains frustratingly elusive for many.

While contemporary sleep science focuses primarily on physiological and behavioral approaches, Jewish tradition offers complementary wisdom for achieving peaceful, restorative rest.

The first step toward a good night's sleep is to perform a mitzvah. Actually, the final mitzvah of the day is to recite the "Shema Before Retiring." Many prayer books also contain a short but powerful paragraph in which we extend forgiveness to those who may have wronged us during the day while seeking divine assistance to avoid repeating our own mistakes. When recited with sincerity, this practice can significantly enhance sleep quality by releasing the emotional

burden of daily conflicts.

Perhaps this is why King David, the composer of the Psalms, wrote (4:9): "In peace, at one with all, I will lie down and sleep, for You, O L-rd, will make me dwell alone and in security." When we are truly at one with all, achieving genuine peace with others and releasing the day's accumulated stress, this creates optimal conditions for both falling asleep and remaining asleep.

Studying Torah during the day and at night is also beneficial for better sleep. Proverbs (3:24) teaches us that through wisdom and understanding, "When you lie down, you shall not be afraid; indeed, you shall lie down, and your sleep shall be sweet."

This idea is reinforced a few chapters later in Proverbs (6:20-22), where we are advised to "keep your father's commandment, and forsake not the Torah of your mother," for "when you sleep, it shall keep you."

These verses suggest that engaging in mitzvot and Torah study provides us with spiritual protection, creating a sense of security that facilitates deeper rest.

When we take these Jewish teachings to heart and integrate these practices with our nightly routine, we create conditions for truly restorative sleep. In this manner, we will surely awaken refreshed and ready to tackle another day.

Ultimately, our increase in Torah study and mitzvot will hasten the dawning of the great day and era of the Messianic Redemption, when all those who are asleep—including those who "sleep in the dust"—will awaken and be revived, may it happen now.

This philosophy of perspective transcends his artwork, extending to his view of Israel's current challenges. "The people of Israel are going through a difficult time, and there are people who currently see only darkness. But let's step back a bit, look at the good days we've had, and try to see the whole picture, and then we'll discover that the dark and the light together create a complete image."

Wanting to express his gratitude to Rabbi

From Sichat Hashavua

Rabbi Meir would say: Whoever studies Torah for Torah's sake alone, merits many things; not only that, but [the creation of] the entire world is worthwhile for him alone. He is called friend, beloved, lover of G-d, lover of humanity, rejoicer of G-d, rejoicer of humanity.

The Rebbe Writes

In light of the above, I am confident that all friends of Bais Chana will -- in the spirit of Elul -- make a special effort on behalf of this most worthy educational institution, where Jewish daughters are educated and inspired to be worthy of our Jewish Mothers -- Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah, the Founders of the House of Israel, and will proudly fulfill their preeminent role of Akeret HaBayit -- the Foundation of the Jewish home: a home permeated with love of G-d and filled to overflowing with Torah, prayer, and mitzvot, to illuminate also its environs.

May G-d bless you with hatzlacha to carry out your good resolutions, in good health and with gladness of heart, and may He bless you and all your near and dear ones with a kesiva vachasima tova.

MOSHIACH
MATTERS

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 11:2) explains that Moshiach will reveal himself

and then hide himself, whereupon, before he is definitely recognized, "Whoever believes in him and follows him will be content to eat the root of the broom and leaves of plants."

“A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Shmuel Belman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA
לזכרון חי'ה י מושקא

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