



For being a Jew and wanting to live like one, Reb Asher Sossonkin was sentenced to ten years imprisonment in a Siberian labor camp. There, he and other "political" prisoners lived, cut off from the outside world, in the harshest conditions, together with prisoners who were fearsome criminals.

One day, Reb Asher was approached by another prisoner who asked him about his observance of Shabbat, which had become somewhat of a legend in the camp. This Jew also wanted to observe Shabbat. Reb Asher encouraged him, but with fear and trepidation, for disobedience to camp regulations was punished severely. The Jew, however, would not be discouraged. He began to staunchly observe the Shabbat using ruses which were sometimes successful, and often not.

Once, another Jew said to him, "You can't copy Sossonkin! Why, he doesn't even eat non-kosher food, but you eat anything!"

When he heard this unfamiliar idea, the Jew came to Reb Asher to find out what was this "kosher" food. Reb Asher explained to him that Jews eat only animals which are designated in the Torah as "kosher," and then, only when they are slaughtered in a prescribed manner. From then on, the Jew resolved to eat only kosher, too. To think that this scenario was being played out in the grim setting of a Communist labor camp, where a scrap of meat was a coveted delicacy, is almost unbelievable, and yet it happened.

How did this Jew find the strength of character to maintain his beliefs? He had served in the army and attained a high rank, but nevertheless, he was sentenced to 15 years at hard labor. Now, in the camp, he resolved to return to Judaism. After a day of ceaseless labor, he would come to Reb Asher to discuss Torah and to learn how to perform mitzvot. He longed to learn how to pray from a real prayer book, but alas there were none in the camp. Reb Asher transcribed the Hebrew prayers phonetically into Russian for the man and his joy was boundless. Thereafter, he recited the prayers with great happiness and devotion every day.

The friendship between the two men was a true blessing, giving them someone with whom to share their pain and even find a bit of joy in observing Torah together. When Chanuka approached, Reb Asher taught his friend the story of the festival. Reb Asher suggested that they find some discarded sardine cans in the kitchen, and try to construct some kind of menorah from them, but his friend wouldn't hear of it.

"How can we celebrate such a great festival using old cans? I have a friend who is a tinsmith and for a few rubles, I'm sure he'll make us a Chanuka menorah!"

Reb Asher was uneasy lest their plan become known, but seeing his friend's enthusiasm, he didn't have the heart to discourage him.

When Chanuka arrived, the shining tin menorah was completed. They set it up in a small room adjacent to their barracks and lit it each night, reciting the blessings in front of Jews and gentiles alike. All seemed to bask in its light and take courage from the Chanuka story which Reb Asher would tell every night.

But, unfortunately, every group has a troublemaker, and the peace of the Chanuka lights wasn't to last. On the fifth night, as they were about to light the menorah, a warden walked into the room to take roll. This was a departure from the usual schedule, for ordinarily, after ten at night, the prisoners were free to do as they wished. For some reason, on this night, they had to line up and be counted.

As the names were being called out, one of the prisoners whispered to Reb Asher that he had been informed on, and the roll call was just a pretense to arrest him. The rule against practicing religion in the camp was matched by an equally severe prohibition against lighting a fire anywhere in the camp buildings. All the buildings were constructed of wood, and it was feared that they could easily go up in flames.

"While he's reading the roll, run in and throw the candles in the snow. Then you can say you don't know anything about it," suggested the man to Reb Asher. But Reb Asher could not bear to do that to the holy lights which he had worked so hard to obtain and had lit with such sacrifice these five nights!

The roll call seemed to go on forever. When the warden came to Reb Asher's name, he counted the lights in the menorah and said, "Five?"

"Five!" Reb Asher replied in a loud voice. Then he continued calling out the rest of the names

as if nothing unusual had happened. The prisoners were shocked. Not only had Reb Asher lit a prohibited fire, but to compound the crime, it was a "religious" fire. No one could conceive how two obviously Jewish men had lit a menorah for five nights of Chanuka, and now, when they were discovered, nothing happened! This was truly a Chanuka miracle!

Reb Asher never understood that night. Who was that warden? Was he a fellow Jew who was drawn to the sight of a menorah? The Chanuka miracle remained a mystery to the end of Reb Asher's life.

Adapted from Kfar Chabad Magazine

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And Joseph was brought down to Egypt (Gen. 39:1)

"He reigned over them," the Midrash relates, explaining that the word "brought down" is linguistically related to the word "reign." As proof of this, the Midrash cites a verse about Moshiach, "And he shall reign from sea to sea." What is the connection between Joseph's descent into the cesspool of ancient Egypt, and the rule of Moshiach? The Jewish history of exile actually began when Joseph was brought down to Egypt, and, as the prototype of all other exiles to follow, its true purpose was the elevation and ascent of the Jewish people which would follow its suffering. The objective of our present exile is likewise the coming of Moshiach and the Redemption. (*The Rebbe*)

He asked the officers of Pharaoh...Why do you look so sad today? (Gen. 40:7)

While in prison, Joseph was assigned the task of managing the daily affairs of the prison. Wasn't inquiring after every sad and depressed prisoner beyond the call of duty? And wasn't it natural that these former high-ranking members of the royal staff would be saddened to find themselves reduced to such a sorry state? Joseph truly believed that every person should always be joyous, simply because he was created by G-d – the essence of goodness. When Joseph saw his unhappy fellow prisoners he wanted to help them. Joseph's one small action brought about his own release from prison, his appointment as second in command over all of Egypt, and saved the entire world during the years of famine that followed. (*Likutei Sichot*)

And the vine had three branches (Gen. 40:10)

As explained in the Midrash, the "vine" is an allusion to the Jewish people, as it states in Psalms (80:9): "You have brought a vine from Egypt." In the same way that wine is described as "bringing joy to G-d and man," so too does every single Jew possess this quality of "wine": an innate love for G-d, inherited from his ancestors, that enables him to rejoice in the L-rd. (*Torah Ohr*)



4:13 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
22 Kislev/Nov 26
Torah Portion Vayeishev
Blessing of the new month Tevet
Shabbat ends 5:15 PM

בס"ד
1699
22 Kislev, 5782
Nov 26, 2021

L'Chaim

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

ניסד תוד ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"...I have called out to the L-rd and He answered me" (Psalm 120:1)

LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

In the Haftora for our portion of *Vayeishev*, the prophet Amos delivers G-d's words of rebuke to the ten northern tribes, the kingdom of Israel. He chastises them for the corruption of those in power over the common folk and for not listening to the prophets.

The Haftora speaks of the sale of a righteous person for silver and a poor man for a pair of shoes. This connects with the sale of Joseph as a slave to Egypt, spoken about in our portion. The Haftora continues with the truth of prophecy, and that it is directly from G-d, alluding to Joseph's dreams and his ability to interpret dreams, which was clearly prophecy from G-d. And finally, the Haftora mentions the exodus from Egypt, which was the end of an exile, that began with Joseph being sold to Egypt.

The Haftora contains a number of rhetorical statements, that demonstrate that the consequences, are a direct result of our actions. These verses have alternative meanings, I will touch on a few.

"Do two walk together, without it being arranged?" The word for a brotherly gathering in Hebrew is "hitvadut." It comes from the word *noadu* (arranged) in this verse. The idea is that when two or more Jews come together in unity, it is very powerful, especially to strengthen each other in matters of Torah and mitzvot (commandments), and connecting with G-d. This verse is also telling us, that when we meet another Jew, we shouldn't think that the meeting was "by chance." Rather G-d arranged for you to meet and therefore, you must use the opportunity to help each other, study something from each other, or see what you can do together to help another.

"Does a lion roar in the forest, if he has no prey?" The lion's roar, represents the greatest expression of its strength. On a spiritual level, this refers to when we are as strong as a lion and we overcome our evil inclination, which then becomes our prey. The excitement felt inside is amazing, because G-d has so much pleasure and pride in us, causing His light shine on and in us.

"If a shofar is sounded in a city, can the inhabitants fail to be terrified?" The simple meaning of this verse is, that a shofar was sounded when enemies were converging on a city, which was terrifying. Alternatively, this refers to sounding the shofar in the month of Elul. That the sound of the shofar reaches the core of every Jew, even those that seem distant and cold to Judaism are affected by the sound of the shofar. In this verse, no reference is made of the one blowing, because no matter who is doing the blowing, the sound that enters us is from G-d. This is the reason why it is so effective.

May we all hear G-d sounding The Great Shofar of Freedom, announcing that Moshiach is here, very soon!

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

Light!

It's almost Chanuka, the holiday of miracles, the festival of light.

Light!

Can you hear the word being shouted, from deep within. Light! But shouting does not dispel darkness. Only light dispels darkness.

Light!

"A little physical light banishes a great deal of darkness," teaches Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidism (Tanya, ch. 12)

That must be the answer to banishing the darkness. A little light!

So it's not enough to shout "Light!" when surrounded by darkness. We must do. We must make light. We must be light. How can this be done? "For a *mitzva* (commandment) is a candle, and Torah study is light." (Proverbs 6:23)

In the mystical teachings of the Zohar it states, "The head of the academy in the palace of Moshiach said, 'Whoever does not transform darkness to light and bitterness to sweetness, may not enter here.'"

This is our job, our mission, our task. To transform darkness to light. Because the mere presence of light forces darkness to retreat.

That a mitzva is a candle, bringing spiritual light into the world and banishing all kinds of evil and darkness, is surely true.

In addition, Chasidic teachings explain that the mitzvot connected with actual physical light have the ability to bring more spiritual light

into the world than other mitzvot, i.e., banish more evil and darkness.

So on this upcoming Festival of Lights, when we have the opportunity to kindle physical candles in our Chanuka menorahs (from the first candle on the evening of Sunday, November 28 through the eighth candle on the evening of Sunday, December 5) let's all make sure that we light the menorah.

But let's not leave it at that. For, truly, a little light dispels much darkness. So let's all try to make sure that a Jewish neighbor, friend, acquaintance, colleague, relative, who had not planned (or had forgotten, or didn't know how) to light the Chanuka menorah does so this year.

Light serves as the symbol of the good and the beautiful, of all that is positive.

This Chanuka let us light, encourage others to light, remind our friends to light, help our neighbors and colleagues and strangers to light. And together, we can make this world a much brighter place than any of us could have ever imagined.

Dedicated in honor of a dear friend of the Lubavitch Youth Organization

Mr. Samuel I Schwartz

to dedicate an issue call (718) 778-6000

SLICE OF LIFE

Reaching the Soul

by Rabbi Nochum Goldshmid



Many years ago, the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Israel launched a program for Chabad Chasidim to visit families at home during the holidays to encourage people in various *mitzvot* (commandments). I was happy to facilitate this program in Netanya, Israel, where my wife and I are the Rebbe's emissaries. My wife and I coordinated the volunteers and also visited many homes ourselves.

One evening during Chanuka of 2013, my children and I were walking around our neighborhood visiting new families. We knocked on the door of the Chashai family home and were invited in. I explained the purpose of our visit and after lighting the menorah we discussed the contemporary lessons of the story of Chanuka.

Of course, what would be a discussion of Chanuka without speaking of the miracles that happened, "in those days, at this time."

We continued talking and then, after a bit Mrs. Chashai turned to me and asked, "Rabbi, is it possible to experience miracles today?"

We continued talking and then, a short while later, Mrs. Chashai turned to me and asked, "Rabbi, is it possible to experience miracles today?"

"Definitely!" I responded, and I told her that I was aware of countless Jews who had experienced miracles in their own personal lives."

Mrs. Chashai pointed to her friend, Mrs. Meshulam, who was visiting at the time. "She and her husband have been married for many years and have tried to have children with no success."

"We tried everything," Mrs. Meshulam continued. "The best doctors and all the treatments. We are desperate."

She explained to me how over the years she and her husband had tried all different types of doctors and many different treatments, but nothing had worked. Now she was also getting older and it seemed like the chances to have a child of their own were running out. "What can be done?" she asked. "Can you please pray for us?"

I wrote down her name and her husband's name and assured her that I would see to it that their request be brought to the Ohel – the Rebbe's resting place.

Upon returning home later that night, I called the Ohel. The phone was answered by one of the volunteers who was manning the "information desk" in the hall outside of the Ohel. I requested that he write a note describing our visit with the Chashai family and the request for a blessing for children for the Meshulam family. I also filled out the report for the home visitation program and concluded "we anticipate miracles."

Five months later, in preparation for the Shavuot holiday, I touched base with my new acquaintances, the Chashais, to schedule a home visit. When I called, David Chashai exclaimed excitedly, "Rabbi! We are waiting for you! Come at your earliest convenience!"

When I arrived at their home, I was surprised to see Mrs. Meshulam and her husband there as well. They excitedly shared the good news that they just discovered that they are expecting a child!

On Chanuka of that year (30 Kislev, 2014) while we were participating in the "Menora Parade" of cars driving throughout the streets of Netanya (as Lubavitcher Chasidim organize in hundreds of cities throughout the world) my phone rang. It was David Chashai. "Mazel tov! Einat Meshulam gave birth to a healthy baby boy!"

I was overjoyed with the news and assured him I would participate in the brit the next week.

When I got home that night, I leafed through my reports from the previous Chanuka and when I reached the report of the visit at the Chashai home,

I started to shake. The date of that special visit was 30 Kislev!

This story has a continuation. Following this open miracle, my then-nine-year-old son innocently asked me why G-d does such miracles for others and not for us. We had been blessed with two children but our nine-year-old son was the youngest.

The following year my wife traveled to New York for the International Conference of (Women) Emissaries of the Rebbe. She intended to go to the Ohel and pray for another child.

She arrived in New York on Thursday morning and from the airport went straight to the Ohel. Pouring out her heart to the Rebbe, she remained there for a long time praying for the child we wanted so very much.

That evening there was a gathering for the emissaries. Rabbi Dovid Meir Drukman, chief rabbi of Kiryat Mochkin, spoke at the gathering that night.

At one point he shared a story about a classmate of his, Reb Nochum Cohen, who did not have children for a while after his marriage. One year he came with his wife Rivka to New York for Tishrei and in a private audience with the Rebbe, she begged the Rebbe to intercede on her behalf and bless her with children.

The Rebbe said to her that she will merit to have sons and daughters, "Sons who will be *pirchei kehunah* (young Priests) in the Holy Temple." Needless to say they merited to raise a beautiful family of children.

"Nu?" Rabbi Drukman concluded, "Is there anyone here from the Cohen family?"

My wife is the daughter of Reb Nochum and Rivka Cohen but she was embarrassed to stand up and identify herself. When my wife shared this episode with me I was very excited.

"Wow!" I said to her. "That morning you were at the Ohel and asked the Rebbe for a blessing for children, and that night you heard the story of how your parents were blessed by the Rebbe to have children!"

We were certain that this was the Rebbe's way of communicating to us that we would merit to have another child and indeed within the year, on 14 Kislev, 2016 our son Levi Yitzchok was born.

Reprinted from *Derher.org* issues 60 and 98.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5736 [1976]

... I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming event taking place in the middle of this month of Kislev, which is highlighted by the Festival of Chanukah. This makes the occasion particularly timely and auspicious.

Chanukah commemorates the miraculous victory of our people over the forces of darkness and assimilation that had threatened to extinguish the light of the Torah and *Mitzvot* [commandments]. It also reminds us that this victory was achieved through the efforts of a few, but totally dedicated Jews, and that the victory was celebrated by kindling lights in the Sanctuary in Jerusalem with pure, undefiled oil, which gave us the meaningful *Mitzvah* of the Chanukah Lights.

Of the Chanukah Lights our Sages of blessed memory declared: "These lights shall endure and shine forever." Unlike the seven-branched Menorah, the lighting of which had to be discontinued when the Sanctuary was destroyed nearly 2,000 years ago, the lighting of the eight-branched Chanukah lamp, which was inaugurated some 200 years prior to the Destruction, continued uninterrupted ever since, not only in the Holy Land but also in the Diaspora, and not only in the Sanctuary, but in every Jewish home.

What are some of the eternal messages of these eternal lights of Chanukah?

One basic truth is that the destiny of the Jewish people is not determined by material and physical criteria, but by its spiritual strength derived from one G-d-given Torah and *Mitzvot*.

The victory of the greatly outnumbered and physically disadvantaged Jews over the many and mighty forces of the enemy clearly demonstrated that it is our spiritual strength that

really counts – even in areas where physical superiority is usually decisive.

A further lesson is that Jewish strength begins at home.

A Jewish home is an abode for the Divine Presence, very much as the *Beth HaMikdash* [Holy Temple] in Jerusalem was in a collective sense. Both are included in the Divine command, "Make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell within each one of you."

This, too, is reflected in the Chanukah Lights, for they must be lit in every Jewish home.

The time and location of the Chanukah Lights are also significant:

The lights are kindled "when the sun sets" – when "darkness" falls outside it is high time to light up our homes with the sacred Chanuka Lights, symbolizing the eternal light of Torah and *Mitzvot*. While the location – to be visible also outside – further indicates that the Torah and *Mitzvot* not be confined within the walls of the home, but must shine forth also outside.

Yet another important lesson must be mentioned here, namely, that however satisfactory the observance of Torah and *Mitzvot* may be on one day, a Jew is expected to do better the next day, and still better the day after. There is always room for improvement in matters of goodness and holiness, which are infinite, being derived from The Infinite.

This, too, is underscored by the Chanukah Lights. For, although all that is required to fulfill the *Mitzvah* of candle-lighting on the first night of Chanukah is to light one candle, yet the next night of Chanukah it is required to light two candles, and when another day passes even the higher standard of the previous day is no longer adequate, and an additional light is called for, and so on, to increase the light from day to day.

The above-mentioned practical lessons which are so basic to Chanukah as to the Jewish way in general, are also the basic principles that pervade all Lubavitch activities to spread the light of Torah-Judaism, particularly through Chinuch, Torah-education.

With esteem and blessings for *hatzlocho* [success] and good tidings,

G-d. The moon's appearance keeps changing; it continually waxes and wanes. The moon thus symbolizes *ba'alei teshuva* (penitents), who "slipped" and strayed and then returned and regained their spiritual stature. The royal house of David, the very source of Moshiach, is precisely from Peretz (the moon), because Moshiach will bring even *tzadikim* to do teshuva, to return to their Divine source. (*Likutei Sichot* vol. 30)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

The *mitzva* of lighting the Chanuka menorah contains special comprehensive instructions for our daily life and conduct.

In this vein, a thought for each night of Chanuka: Judaism teaches that the main thing is the deed. Thus, the actual lighting of the Chanuka menorah comes immediately after sunset, as soon as the holiday has commenced.

The Chanuka lights, which are placed at the entrance of the home, outside, remind us that every one of our actions must contribute light to the world.

The candle contributes physical light, but, in the words of the Chanuka prayer "HaNeirot Halalu" – these lights are holy. Thus, we contribute spiritual light to the world by performing *mitzvot*.

The first blessing we say, "Who has sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Chanuka light," should be the guiding principle in our lives – to fulfill G-d's commandments.

The second blessing, "Who wrought miracles for our forefathers in those days at this season," should also guide us in that if we find it difficult, in the natural order of things, to do a *mitzva*, we should not feel discouraged, for G-d performed miracles for our ancestors and performs miracles for us.

A third blessing (said only the first time one lights the menorah), "Who has kept us alive and sustained us and enabled us to reach this season," encourages us to fulfill the *mitzvat* with joy and thanksgiving to G-d.

After the Chanuka menorah lighting, the evening service containing the "Al HaNissim" prayer is recited.

This prayer emphasizes that although we are "weak" and "few" we are a holy nation; G-d not only performs miracles for us but "miracles, deliverance, mighty acts, salvations, wonders... a great salvation and deliverance."

"Al HaNissim" also teaches that although we have to do what we can in the natural way, we must also have absolute trust in G-d, for success is from G-d.

May we merit, this very Chanuka, to rededicate the Holy Temple, with Moshiach himself lighting the menorah there.

Shmuel Beilman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA

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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Be part of the Chanuka celebrations at the World's Largest Menora at Fifth Ave. and 59th St. in New York City. The Menora will be lit all the nights of Chanuka. On Sunday, November 28 – Thursday, December 2 and Sunday December 5 at 5:30 p.m. On Friday, December 3 at 3:45 p.m. Saturday night after Shabbat at 8:30 p.m. For more info call Lubavitch Youth Organization at (718) 778- 6000. For menora lightings near you call your local Chabad-Lubavitch



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TODAY IS...

23 Kislev

The three days before Shabbat are a preparation for Shabbat. The Zohar says about Shabbat that "from it are all days blessed." "All days" refers to the six days of the week on which G-d conferred a general blessing – "G-d will bless you in all you do." The blessing of Shabbat is for the days preceding it and the days following it. The preparations for Shabbat begin Wednesday, and are announced by the brief *l'chu n'ran'na* of three verses.

