

L'Chaim



Hillel ran a tavern, which he rented from the wealthy non-Jewish landowner. His customers, the local peasants, appreciated Hillel's service and honesty. Only one peasant showed open animosity toward the Jewish tavern keeper. Stefan, a coarse, foul-mouthed lout who was almost always drunk, resented the fact that Hillel, as he was known affectionately, refused to serve him more whiskey when he had had too much.

Stefan swore revenge on the Jew. And so, he decided to implicate Hillel in a crime. Stefan went to the government authorities and told them that Hillel was not collecting the proper tax on the whiskey he sold. To back up his accusation, he provided the names of several of his fellow Jew-hating peasants willing to swear that Hillel sold them "illegal" whiskey.

An investigation was launched. The false witnesses appeared and swore their false statements. The judge, an anti-Semite himself, took this opportunity to condemn all Jews for their thievery and trickiness, and imposed the harshest sentence possible on the hapless Hillel.

Hillel, of course, denied any wrong-doing. With tears in his eyes he claimed that he was the victim of a vicious plot. Many of his customers came and gave testimony as to Hillel's good character, and even the landowner himself spoke warmly of "his" Jew. The investigators saw that Hillel was indeed, not guilty, but what could they do? They couldn't simply ignore the sworn testimony of Stefan's friends. The case dragged on for almost a year, during which time Hillel became depressed and broken, staying in his home much of the time reciting Psalms.

Hillel's wife, Devorah Leah, watched as her husband grew more and more discouraged. Her father had been a chasid of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch. She requested her husband travel to Lubavitch to seek the advice and blessing of the Rebbe.

Hillel, however, did not come from a Chasidic family, and had never visited a Rebbe, and wasn't anxious to do so now. But, as the date of the trial drew nearer, he decided to listen to his wife and set off for Lubavitch.

In Lubavitch, Hillel saw many people waiting for days to see the Rebbe privately, so many that Hillel was discouraged and almost returned home. It was only after explaining the urgency of his situation to the Rebbe's secretary that he managed to get an appointment for the following day.

When he entered the Rebbe's room, Hillel suddenly felt at a loss for words. He began to weep as he poured out his heart to the Rebbe, explaining the terrible plot which had been instigated against him.

The Rebbe listened patiently, and then said, "Don't cry, Hillel. G-d will surely help you. Everything in the world, every single creature, was created for a particular purpose. Even mice sometimes benefit man. Go home, Hillel, and put your trust in G-d."

Hillel left the Rebbe encouraged, though he did not exactly understand the Rebbe's words. Hillel's wife was equally mystified, but she trusted that G-d would fulfill the blessing of the tzadik.

The day of the trial arrived, and Hillel and Devorah Leah traveled to the courthouse which was filled to overflowing with people eager to hear the verdict. Hillel sat on the defendant's bench, pale, reciting Psalms with such an intensity that he became oblivious to his surroundings.

The trial opened, and Stefan was brought in. He repeated all his false accusations but when he was questioned by the defense lawyer, he became confused and was caught in his own contradictory statements. He wasn't worried, though, since he was sure that the testimonies of the other witnesses would wrap up the case.

But when the names of the next witnesses were announced, there was a long silence. Not one of Stefan's gang members had shown up; it seemed that something had

happened to each one to prevent him from appearing.

Things were going well for Hillel, but the prosecutor wouldn't give up. He requested the original documentation, and so, the judge sent his clerk to bring the papers from storage. All present waited impatiently for the clerk to return, but when he did, he was empty-handed. He whispered something to the judge, who roared back, "Bring whatever there is!"

"But Judge," said the clerk, "There is nothing left. Mice have eaten up the whole file!"

"That's impossible," roared the judge. "Go and bring me the whole drawer." The clerk soon returned with a large, heavy drawer filled with shredded bits of paper.

And so it was that although every other document in the drawer was in perfect condition, only the file of Hillel had been completely destroyed by the mice.

Hillel, absorbed as he was in reciting Psalms, had no idea what had happened, and was surprised by the crowd of well-wishers and relatives who ran to him wishing a mazel tov. When he learned that the charges had been dropped, he thanked G-d for having saved him from this terrible plot. As they returned home, his wife filled in all the details of what had transpired in the courtroom, and only then did Hillel begin to understand the words of the Rebbe.

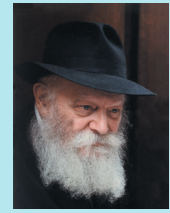
THOUGHTS THAT COUNT
on the weekly Torah portion

That my soul may bless you (Gen. 27:4)
Why did Isaac want to bless Esau instead of Jacob? Jacob was "a pure man, a dweller in tents (of Torah)," and even without a blessing he would stay away from evil. Esau, however, was very likely to fall into bad ways, and needed the assistance of his father's blessing. (Ohr HaTorah)

And you shall stay with him a short time ... until your brother's fury turns away ... until your brother's anger turns away (Gen. 27:44, 45)
Rebecca advised her son Jacob what to do: "Run away to my brother Laban and wait until your brother gets over his anger. How will you know when that time has arrived and he is no longer angry at you? When you yourself stop holding a grudge against him." Rebecca understood the reciprocity of human emotions: Love is reciprocated with love, and hatred elicits a like response in others. (Baal Hahaflaah)

And one people shall be stronger than the other (Gen. 25:23)
Rashi comments: When one rises, the other falls. Jacob and Esau symbolize the struggle between the G-dly soul and the animal soul, between a person's good and evil inclinations. When a Jew's G-dly soul is dominant and exerts itself, there is no need to combat the animal soul--it "falls" by itself. Light does not have to fight darkness to illuminate--as soon as it appears, the darkness vanishes. So too, does the light of holiness dispel all evil. (Sefer Hamaamarim)

4:12 Candle Lighting Time
NY Metro Area
28 Cheshvan / November 29
Torah Portion Toldot
Blessing of the new month of Kislev
Shabbat ends 5:14 PM



LIVING WITH THE REBBE
from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

The Torah portion, Toldot, begins by discussing the very different relationships Isaac and Rebecca had with their children, Jacob and Esau. Isaac loved Esau, whereas Rebecca loved Jacob. The difference is epitomized by Isaac's desire before his death to bless Esau. However, Jacob, aided by his mother, received the blessings.

The Midrash comments on the special relationship between Isaac and Esau which resulted in Isaac preferring Esau though knowing he was wicked. Years after Jacob had passed away, Esau wanted to disturb Jacob's grave. One of Jacob's grandchildren beheaded Esau before he could perform this desecration and Esau's head fell on the grave.

The Midrash highlights a special connection between Esau's "head" and the holiness of his father Isaac. The first two of our Patriarchs both had a wicked son in addition to a righteous one. Abraham had Ishmael, and Isaac had Esau. Ishmael eventually repented but Esau never did.

Our Sages termed Esau an apostate Jew, considering him an inheritor of Abraham's legacy. The Torah states, "an inheritance I gave to Esau." But Ishmael, though he repented, has the status of a non-Jew. He did not inherit from his father.

This dichotomy underscores the basic difference between Esau and Ishmael: The innermost essence of Ishmael was not a part of Abraham. The essence of Esau, however, was that of a Jew, a descendant of Abraham, and even though he never repented, he remained Jewish. His basic nature and roots were still connected to Isaac, and all he represented.

Esau's head falling onto Isaac's grave illustrates this point: Esau was not totally corrupt and evil. His "head"--his roots in the spiritual realm, were connected to Isaac and holiness. However, while his soul was in this world, connected to his body, he did not choose the right path and never repented.

Furthermore, although Esau's behavior was undesirable, he himself possessed many sparks of holiness which surfaced, generations later, in his descendants--among others, the great scholars Onkelos and Rabbi Meir. Isaac was able to discern Esau's holiness and potential through the layer of his physicality, and therefore loved him and wanted to bless him, wishing to help him uncover the true goodness within.

But Rebecca, Esau's mother, realized that this lofty goal was an impossibility. She understood that Esau was good only when his "head" was separated from his body--in this world he would always be uncivilized and savage.

We learn an important lesson from Isaac: If even the wicked Esau was considered a Jew and deserving of Isaac's love, we must always strive to look only at our fellow Jew's "head"--his positive traits, and love him for his essence.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Generations

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

Here in South Africa, there is a popular soap opera called "Generations." While the subject matter of this week's parshah is indeed rather dramatic, its significance goes way beyond the stuff that "soapies" are made of. It deals with the burning issue of Jewish continuity.

These are the generations of Isaac, son of Abraham, begins this week's Torah reading. We learn of the birth of Jacob and Esau, how they go their different ways and how, rather circuitously, Isaac bestows the all-important blessings on Jacob.

The commentaries explain that this was not merely a blessing but the symbolic handing over of the Jewish legacy to the next generation. Isaac was passing the baton of destiny on to Jacob.

Some time back, a man for whom I had great respect came to see me to discuss certain issues. This was a gentleman who had reached the apex of his profession, a highly intelligent and sensitive human being--and amongst other things, he said he had a confession to make. Now we rabbis have no experience at taking confessions--we refer people directly to G-d for that sort of thing. But this man voluntarily wanted to share his most personal disappointment in life with me and I was profoundly flattered to have been found deserving of his trust.

This was his story. He came home from the wedding of his eldest daughter and, inexplicably, found himself crying. His wife said, "Why are you crying? You should be bubbling with joy." He answered, "I'm crying because I

have just given away a daughter I don't know to a man I don't know."

It had suddenly struck him with the force of a ton of bricks that he'd spent years and years building up his business, but he had neglected his family. And suddenly the daughter he didn't really know was leaving the family home forever.

Thank G-d, this man resolved to rectify the situation, but his story made a deep impression on me.

It is not only from a family point of view but also from a Jewish faith perspective that we need to know our children well. We tend to mistakenly assume that whatever positive feelings of faith, morals and yiddishkeit we imbibed as children from our parents will somehow automatically be transmitted to our own children. Wrong! It does not happen genetically. It takes lots of hard work and years of personal guidance by dedicated parents.

The influences on our kids' lives today are dramatic and powerful. If we don't transmit a healthy value system to the next generation, the vacuum will very likely be filled with other willing teachers.

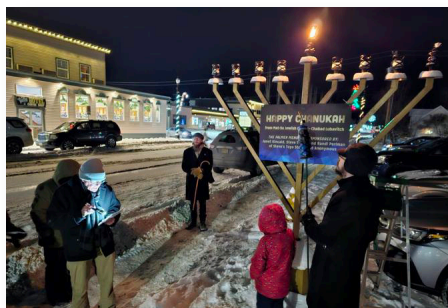
The good news is that our kids actually do want our guidance. As autonomous as they may appear, they actually crave direction in life. And what they learn at home will make a far more lasting impression than what they pick up elsewhere.

Don't wait until after the wedding. Jewish continuity and future generations depend on it. G-d bless you with success and lots of yiddishe nachas.

In celebration and in honor of
Yonaty Friedman ינתאי
Wishing you a Happy Birthday
לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות
May you continue to be a source of Nachas to the Rebbe
You are an inspiration to all of us!
Dedicated by her family

SLICE OF LIFE

Finding Fred After 80 Years



CHABAD OF MAT-SU VALLEY, ALASKA

In a short Friday afternoon in December of 2019, Rabbi Mendy Greenberg pops into the Veterans and Pioneers Home of Palmer, Alaska. When he stops at the front desk to see if there are any Jewish residents, he's told no, but there is someone with a Jewish background.

"After getting his permission, I walk into Fred Mane's room. The 90-year-old looks at me, and says, 'I switched teams already. My mother and father were Jewish, but I'm Catholic.'"

Fred was born into a religious family in Wachenheim, Germany in 1929. He recalls his mother's two sets of dishes, sitting with his father in the men's section of the synagogue, and a week-long holiday with no bread. After Kristallnacht, he was sent with his sister on a train to France, and by a series of miracles, the two caught a

boat to America in 1941. A year later, he had a bar mitzvah in New York, his last Jewish connection.

Fred never saw his parents again: they were killed in a concentration camp soon after their children escaped. As a teen, Fred joined the army, later marrying a Catholic woman from Minnesota and relocating to Alaska. He's been here ever since.

"You remind people of things they don't want to think about," Fred gumbled to the rabbi after finishing his tale. Greenberg was not deterred. On Chanukah, he brought his young kids, a menorah and a tray of latkes for an impromptu Chanukah party. When he offered to help Fred put on tefillin, the nonagenarian emotionally declared, "my parents would be so happy to see me."

Greenberg visited regularly for the next few months before Covid-19 hit. Then he delivered matzah on Passover and blew the shofar on Rosh Hashanah (from a distance).

"He was raised like me," muses Greenberg. "I have never met a Jew in Palmer who was raised like me."

Greenberg has been a resident of Alaska since he was a baby, when his parents moved to Anchorage as the Lubavitcher Rebbe's emissaries. When he got married, he and his wife moved to Palmer in the Mat-Su Valley. The couple has been here for five years and estimates that 1,000 neighbors are Jewish. The Valley is the fastest-growing area in Alaska and a popular

tourist destination.

It can snow here from the autumn festival of Sukkot straight through Passover in the spring. During the months of July and August, Shabbat begins at 11:30 pm on Friday evening. It doesn't end until 2:00 on Sunday morning. These quirks make Jewish life interesting; but, insists Greenberg, "nothing stops here because of the weather." Chabad of the Mat-Su Valley is the first and only Jewish experience available.

Rabbi Greenberg hosts menorah lightings in the two main towns of the Valley, Wasilla and Palmer. When the Wasilla menorah lost a couple bulbs one year, the mayor's office fielded numerous concerned calls from worried (non-Jewish) citizens. When the menorah was once delayed for two days for technical reasons, residents called city hall to question and complain about its absence.

A year after meeting Fred, Greenberg again brought a menorah to the Pioneers Home. This time, due to Covid-19 restrictions, he lit it outside Fred's window in the raging wind, singing Chanukah songs well into the night. "I realized that Fred arrived in America in 1941 around the same time the Rebbe did, having also escaped the Nazis. It took eight decades for me to find him, but the Rebbe's vision of reaching every Jewish soul is being fulfilled. Even in Palmer."

This article appeared in the Lubavitch International Magazine – Summer 2021 issue.



Rabbi Mendy Greenberg, director of the Mat-Su Jewish Center in Palmer, made history as the youngest Rabbi ever to deliver the daily opening prayer in the United States Senate.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

THE REBBE WRITES

Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5736 [1976]

I just received your telegram about your daughter's marriage taking place today.

I hope and trust that the Bride and Bridegroom have made a firm resolution to establish their home on the foundations of the Torah and Mitzvos, which will also bring them an additional measure of Divine blessings for a truly happy future.

I extend to you and to Mrs. -, as well as to the newlyweds, prayerful wishes of Mazal Tov, and may you and your wife have true Nachas from each and all your children, in good health, good Parnosso [livelihood] and a happy frame of mind.

With the blessing of Mazal Tov, Mazal Tov,

... A Jewish marriage is called Binyan Adei Ad - an "everlasting edifice." In order that the edifice of marriage should indeed be strong and lasting, everything connected with the wedding, as well as with the establishment of the couple's home, should be in full compliance with the instructions of Torah. For our Torah is called Toras Chaim, the Torah of Life; it is the source of everlasting life in the Hereafter, as well as the true guide to life on earth.

The analogy of a marriage to an "everlasting edifice" is not merely a figure of speech, but contains also an important idea and moral. In the case of any structure, the first and

most important step is to ensure the quality and durability of the foundation. Without such a foundation all the efforts put into the walls, roof, decorations and so on, would be of no avail. This is even more true of the structure of marriage; if its foundation should be unstable, what tragedy could result! This is why a Jewish marriage must, first of all, be based on the rock-solid foundation of the Torah and Mitzvos; then follows the blessing of the joy and happiness of the beloved couple for the rest of their lives.

In every matter concerning the observance of Torah we follow the principle that "all Jews are responsible for one another." Not only are we to practice the Mitzvos ourselves, but we should also interest and assist others in their observance. In view of this it is clear that there is a standing obligation upon everyone to help a bride and groom establish an "everlasting edifice."

We should show them how and why to maintain a kosher kitchen in their new home. We should introduce them to the beauty of Shabbos, and show them how the laws and regulations of Taharas HaMishpacha ("family purity," involving immersion in a Mikva, etc.) bring sanctity to marital relations. Let no one think it is a matter of the young couple's own personal life, in which no one has a right to interfere. Such a viewpoint is totally unjustified. Surely when one sees someone bent on harming herself or himself and their children or - worse still - about to do something which might lead to self-destruction, G-d forbid, no one would consider it "interference" or "encroachment" to try and prevent that person from harming himself. Similarly, when there is an opportunity to help someone with a lasting benefit, it is surely an elementary duty to do so - especially where the benefit is a truly everlasting one.

it appears that this phrase includes gentiles as well. We will ultimately witness the fulfillment of the prophecy (Zephaniah 3:9), that "I will make the people pure of speech so that they will all call upon the Name of G-d," and even non-Jews will be devoted solely to seeking "the knowledge of G-d."

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In the Era of the Redemption, according to Maimonides, "the occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d." From the expression "the entire world"

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

One of the most basic concepts associated with Shabbat is pleasure, or "oneg Shabbat." "Oneg Shabbat" is so important that Jewish law addresses it at length. In fact, it is this element of pleasure that most succinctly expresses the essence of Shabbat.

But what is pleasure? One person will enjoy fine food, while another derives pleasure from music or the arts. Every individual is different, and the sources of personal happiness are extremely varied.

According to Chasidic philosophy, pleasure is derived from the expression of the soul. When the soul is able to express its individuality freely and without impediment, the result is pleasure. A coarser soul will be delighted by food and wine; a more rarified one will seek spiritual or intellectual gratification. Thus not only does the particular kind of pleasure an individual pursues tell us a lot about him, it defines his essence.

The perception of pleasure is also connected to the act of completion. The artist feels fulfilled only when the painting is finished, when he can step back and admire his handiwork.

These two elements - the expression of the soul and the pleasure that results from a sense of completion - come together on Shabbat.

During the Six Days of Creation, G-d "stepped out of character," as it were, and condensed His infinite light to create the world. As the aspect of creation does not express G-d's essence, the pleasure it brought Him was limited. Only on Shabbat, when "the heavens and the earth and all their hosts were completed," did G-d "sit back" and enjoy His handiwork.

Ever since, the cycle is repeated each week. On Shabbat, all of creation experiences a spiritual elevation, expressing its true essence. That is why it is so important to engage in activities on Shabbat that express our true essence: praying, studying Torah, etc. For the essence of the Jew is his G-dly soul, for which genuine pleasure can only be derived from holiness.

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.

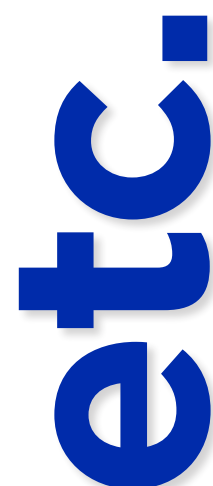


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New Torah Dedicated at Clube Hebraica Chabad in S. Paulo, Brazil



The Chabad House of Clube Hebraica in São Paulo, Brazil, celebrated a historic Hachnassat Sefer Torah recently, marking the dedication of a second Torah scroll donated to the Chabad House. This special event was made possible by the generous donation from the Epstein - Dorembus families, further strengthening the connection between the Jewish community and their spiritual heritage.

Clube Hebraica, the largest Jewish Community Center (JCC) in the world with over 20,000 members, was filled with joy and celebration as the new Sefer Torah was welcomed with music, dancing, and heartfelt gratitude. Under the leadership of Rabbi Berale Schildkraut and Rebbetzin Mussy Schildkraut (née Alpern), Chabad da Casa offers a wide range of activities, including daily minyanim, Torah classes for women and men, bar mitzvah lessons, and festive celebrations for all Jewish holidays. In addition to these ongoing activities, Chabad da Casa is also known for its dynamic holiday celebrations. Their Sukkot dinner, which quickly sold out, is another example of how the Chabad House run by the Schildkrauts is making the Jewish life thrive in Clube Hebraica.

Customs

Why do we light a special candle on the yartzeit (anniversary of the passing) of a relative?

The basis for this custom is the verses from Proverbs, "The soul of a man is the lamp of G-d" and "For the commandment is a lamp and the law is light." Just as a flame always rises upward in an attempt to return to its source, so, too, does the Jewish soul attempt to reconnect with G-d through the performance of mitzvot. And ultimately when the soul leaves the body it does return to its Divine source.