

L'Chaim

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נסד תר"י מי 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 this week's Torah portion, *Ki Tisa*, we read about the *Kiyor*, the Laver, which was a large copper receptacle that held water. It had a stand, also made of copper. It had several spigots, from which the *Kohanim*, the priests, would wash their hands and feet, before doing the Temple service.

What was unique about the *Kiyor* was not so much what it was, or how it was used, but rather where the copper, of which it was made, came from.

In next week's portion, the commentator Rashi explains the above question. The women gathered at Moses's tent with the copper mirrors they used to beautify themselves, intending to donate them. Moses was uncomfortable accepting these mirrors, because, seemingly, they were used for the evil inclination's bidding. G-d told Moses to accept them, "for they are most precious to me of all." Because of these mirrors, the women established great numbers in Egypt. When their husbands would be exhausted, laboring under Egyptian bondage, they would go out and greet them with food and drink. They would feed them, and entice them with words, they would hold the mirror in a way that both her and her husband could be seen together, she would say "I am prettier than you." In this manner she would awaken his urge to be with her...

It is with these mirrors that the *Kiyor* was made, for the *Kiyor* is to bring peace between husband and wife...

How important is the relationship of a couple to G-d? How is it that an instrument of vanity is most precious to Him?

In *Song of Songs*, King Solomon compares our relationship with G-d, to the relationship of a husband and wife. This relationship with G-d is the foundation on which our purpose and mission as the Jewish people is established. Every mitzvah, every prayer and every part of Torah we learn, comes down to this relationship – being one with G-d.

The microcosm of this relationship is that of a husband and wife. This relationship is so central to Judaism, that the mirrors that brought husband and wife together as one, are not only special, but most precious of all. It is so important that no service could be done in the Temple before washing hands using water from the *Kiyor*, which was made from these mirrors. The *Kiyor* was placed between the altar and the Holies, the center of all of the action in the Temple. It was seen and served as a reminder of the importance of the husband and wife relationship.

The *Kiyor*, made of these mirrors and placed centrally in the Temple, is a reminder that marriage and marital harmony is central to Judaism, it is the foundation of Jewish life, and it is not just special, to G-d it is most precious of all.

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.

Baby Steps

Have you ever watched a baby as she works toward upward mobility? At just a few months old, she's squirming around inch by inch. Months later, she's raising herself onto her hands and knees, rocking back and forth as she gets used to the new position and height. But her arms and legs aren't very strong and she plops down every once in a while, bumping her little nose or chin. But, don't worry, she'll be up again soon to try it again.

Months pass. Tentatively, she pulls herself up to a standing position using furniture and other objects as leverage. Even more cautiously she lets go for a few seconds and smiles, as if saying, "Look, no hands!" Oops, there she goes, plopping down once more, only to stand up again a few minutes later and repeat the whole exercise.

Soon she'll be cruising along the furniture. Weeks later she'll be taking a step, unaided, from one piece of furniture to the next.

When she's much more confident, she'll try two and three steps, each time plopping down. But she'll get back up again. Then six or seven steps before plopping down. Then ten wobbly steps, then plop.

A baby's approach to learning a new skill, such as walking, is the approach Judaism demands of us when learning a new *mitzva*-skill, whether a *mitzva* between oneself and G-d or the interpersonal *mitzvot* (commandments) between one person and another.

In general, we seek out experiences which enhance personal growth when

there is a feeling of dissatisfaction with our present state. This is a good sign, for it indicates vitality and an urge to rise and improve oneself.

Unlike babies, however, many of us stop trying or slack off if we "fall," i.e., the attempt was not met with immediate success.

Today, when so much of our lives are measured in nanoseconds, we half expect to be able to eradicate a bad habit or master a new mitzva instantly. And when that doesn't happen, despondency or inertia can set in.

A little voice inside says, "Why bother, you'll fall back into your old routine anyway," or "You'll fall flat on your face trying and everyone will see." The little voice will use every means to prevent us from carrying out our good intentions of self-improvement and advancing in Jewish observance. An otherwise highly successful person can be paralyzed by that little voice, certain that he will fail miserably and that others will note his failure.

The misleading voice should be ignored. For, as Chasidism explains, the attempt itself is invaluable and esteemed by G-d. Only people who never try never make mistakes or fall short.

The next time we have the opportunity to learn something new or are presented with an obstacle that needs to be overcome, we should remind ourselves to take "baby steps." It's not just a matter of going slowly. More importantly, it means getting back up even when we plop down or fall flat on our face.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Continued from previous issue, from a letter dated 26 Nisan, 5724 (1964)

Although the context of the debate has changed, the issues raised are similar to the discussion of the "Moment of Silence."

... To oppose non-denominational prayer "on Constitutional grounds" is, in my opinion, altogether a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the problem.

Rather, the issue is whether a non-denominational prayer wherewith to inaugurate the school day is, or is not, in the best interests of the children. If the answer is "yes," then obviously it should be made Constitutional, for there can be no difference of opinion as to the fact that the Constitution has been created to serve the people, not vice versa.

It may be pertinent to add here that the approach that the Constitution of the United States must not be touched or amended under any circumstances is in itself a flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Constitution, which has its own built-in machinery for future amendments that may be required in the public interest; machinery which has been used in the past to incorporate into the Constitution a number of amendments.

It is argued that the principle of separation of Church and State is the only safeguard for freedom of religion, equal rights for minorities, etc.

Without going into the question whether there actually exists a strict separation between State and Church in this country (for there are undeniable facts to the contrary, e.g. the institution of Chaplaincy in the armed forces; the opening of Congress with a prayer; the motto "In G-d we trust" on American currency, the emphasis on Divine Providence in the Declaration of Independence; etc., etc.), I submit that the validity of the argument is contingent upon the question who is behind this principle, and how is it to be interpreted and applied?

Suffice it to cite an illustration from two rep-

resentative States now in existence, in one of which the said principle is in full operational force, while in the other it is not.

In the first, as the daily press reports, there is a calculated war on religion and religious practices, with the suppression of all religious freedom, etc. Incidentally (and perhaps it is relevant to our discussion), it all started there with a ban on religious instruction to young children.

In other countries, for example England, there is no separation of Church and State, yet you find there complete religious freedom for all religious denominations.

Some argue further that the principle of separation of State and Church must be maintained at all costs, in order to prevent a resurgence of religious persecution so prevalent in the Middle Ages, when an established state-religion denied equal, or any, rights to other religions, etc.

The fallacy of this argument should be quite obvious.

By way of illustration:

Suppose a person was ill at one time and doctors prescribed certain medication and treatment. Suppose that years later the same person became ill again, but with an entirely different, in fact quite contrary, malady. Would it be reasonable to recommend the same medication and treatment as formerly?

In Medieval times the world suffered from an "excess" of religious zeal and intolerance.

In our day the world is suffering from an excessive indifference to religion, or even from a growing materialism and atheism.

Even where religion is practiced, it often lacks depth and inspiration. (The subject is too painful to discuss in detail.) Thus, if separation of Church and State was necessary, it is not at all the answer to the problems of our contemporary youth...

P.S. The vehement opposition to any kind of prayer and to the mention of G-d's Name in the public schools, which, in my opinion, is unjustified and ill-conceived, and which has placed the proponents of this view in league with the atheistic and anti-religious elements in this country, has inevitably called forth a correspondingly strong counter reaction. I am convinced that had there been taken a more practical position in the first place, it would have been acceptable to everybody (except a few fanatical anti-religionists.)

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In this week's Torah portion Moses asked to see G-d's full glory. G-d answered, "No human can see Me and still live!" But in Psalms (17:15) King David said he will be able to see G-

- "I will see Your face with righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your image upon the awakening." How could this be? The answer is that until the Redemption comes, people can not see G-d and still live. But later, when the dead come back to life, we will see G-d, so to speak. We will see G-d with our eyes and we will say, "This is our G-d" (Isaiah 52:8. 25.9). (Midrash Tehilim 17:13)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

As mentioned previously, this year is a leap year in the Jewish calendar. Thus, there are two months of Adar this year, known as Adar Rishon (the first Adar) and Adar Sheini (the second Adar). All special dates that occurred in a "regular" year that did not have an extra Adar are celebrated in Adar Sheini.

Our Sages teach, "With the beginning of Adar, rejoicing is increased." Every day we are enjoined to serve G-d with joy. But when the month of Adar begins, we are told to increase that joy.

In a leap year such as our current year, for two entire months we are expected to behave in a more joyful manner for, just as we read in the Megilla on Purim, "the month was changed for them from sorrow to joy."

What was so special about the joy of Purim that we should be expected to be joyful for an entire month? By way of analogy, light always seems brighter when it comes after darkness. In a room full of light, the flame of one candle seems insignificant. But, in a pitch-black room, even the light from one small candle can help to illuminate the entire room. Imagine, then, the impact of a spotlight in a lightless room.

Joy is similar to light. The sorrow, fear and mourning of the Jews when they thought that Haman would be able to carry out his evil plan was immense. They were in a state of total darkness. The joy that they experienced when Haman's plan was foiled was phenomenal. But is was all the more incredible for having been preceded by such darkness.

On the holiday of Purim, we recite the blessing "Sheh-asah nissim – Who has performed miracles for us." In this season of miracles, may we experience the ultimate miracle, which will be to us like the brightest spot-light in Jewish history, the arrival of Moshiach, NOW!

Shmuel Beilman

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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IT HAPPENED ONCE

In a small village in Poland there lived an unassuming and pious Jew named Meir. While he was by no means well-to-do, his family never wanted for their daily bread. Each day on his way home from the synagogue Meir passed through the farmers' market, buying produce and poultry which his wife sold from a small store attached to their house. The prices were always fair, and they earned a reputation for honesty.

Meir stood out from the other buyers at the market, for he would never haggle over prices. Meir had his one fair price, and that was that—he would never budge. Eventually the farmers came to respect him and would even seek him out when they had some special goods for sale, and he became known to everyone as “Honest Meir.”

Meir had only one regret in life—his business took time away from his beloved Torah study. One day he decided that he would work only half as much, and spend the time saved learning Torah. His wife was worried by his decision, but he calmed her saying, “Don’t you think that G-d can send us enough in those three days?” She wanted to reply that of course He could, but would He? But she stopped herself and decided to wait and see what would happen. As it turned out, their income was the same and her husband thrived on his Torah learning.

One day his wife came to Meir to discuss the marriage of their daughter, Mirele. “G-d has been good to us, and we must certainly be grateful, but our daughter isn’t getting any younger, and the time has come for us to start saving for her dowry.”

Meir looked at his wife and replied, “G-d has taken care of us so far. Trust in Him and stop worrying.”

But his wife couldn’t rest. “Meir, we aren’t supposed to rely on miracles. Maybe you should go out and work like you used to.”

Meir replied, “What you’re saying may seem true, but don’t forget my ‘silent partner’—G-d. Haven’t you seen with your own eyes that since I’ve spent extra time with my ‘partner’ we have lost nothing. I can not stop my Torah studies, especially now when we need Him even more.” There was nothing more his wife could say except a heartfelt “Amen.”

A short time later a peasant showed up at the marketplace with a large honeycomb encased in a block of wood. Several prospective buyers approached him, but he refused them, saying, “I will sell only to Honest Meir.” And there he sat and waited until finally, late in the afternoon someone told him that Meir wouldn’t be coming to market that day.

The peasant made his way to Meir’s house where he was greeted by his wife. “My husband isn’t at home now,” she told him, but she asked him to wait while she ran to fetch her husband. Meir measured the honeycomb and lifted it; then he made his offer, “Judging by its size and weight, and even allowing for the wood, there should be a lot of honey in it.” The two men agreed on a figure which seemed fair to both. The only problem was that Meir didn’t have such a large sum. Meir’s wife interrupted, saying: “I will try to borrow the money from some of our neighbors.”

Meir served the peasant a cup of tea, and then he questioned the man: “Tell me, how did you come to have such a strange honeycomb?”

The peasant replied, “I was walking through the woods collecting fire-wood. When my cart was full, I got inside and fell asleep, but it seems that my mare wandered a bit, for when I awoke, I found myself in a different part of the woods, in front of a tree stump. Looking up, I noticed bees buzzing, and being something of a beekeeper myself, I hopped out of my cart and with a long thin twig I removed the queen bee from the hive. I tried to take out the honeycomb, but it was impossible to do so without breaking it. That’s when I got the idea of sawing off the stump.”

By the time the peasant had finished his tale, Meir’s wife had returned with the money. Meir gave it to the happy peasant who went off feeling very pleased. Meir’s wife began to extract the honey. She pulled out two and then three heavily laden honeycombs and reached in with a deep ladle for more, when she found there was nothing there but a deep, empty hole. The poor woman was horrified. They were now in debt, and for nothing but a bit of honey and a piece of wood!

She screamed for her husband, who was equally shocked at the find. “What will we do now?” his wife wailed. Meir was also at a loss, but not willing to give up he said, “Go fetch your longest cooking spoon and maybe we can salvage something from the bottom.”

Meir dipped the spoon into the wooden cavity, and lo and behold, the spoon was filled with golden coins and jewels! His wife almost fainted from the shock, but when she recovered she asked her husband, “Do you think G-d had the bees produce this treasure for us?”

Her husband turned to her, smiling, “Possibly, but I think there’s a simpler explanation. Probably someone hid this treasure years ago and had to abandon it for some reason. Then the bee colony settled in the trees stump and built their hive on top of the treasure. Now, it seems that G-d must have decided there was no longer any reason to leave it hidden since we need the money to marry off our children and do other good things. So, you see, the peasant was rewarded for his labor, and we were even more richly rewarded for our faith and trust in G-d.”

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

When you take a census...every man shall give G-d an atonement for his soul...This they shall give...a half-shekel. (Exod. 30:12-13)
 Moses could not understand how money can accomplish forgiveness for the soul. G-d showed Moses a fiery coin which weighed a half-shekel, and He explained that a coin by itself cannot atone for a grave sin. However, if one gives with warmth and enthusiasm that comes from the fiery core of the Jewish soul, then a coin can truly become the cause of forgiveness. *(Likutei Sichot)*

And you shall make a basin of copper... and they shall wash their hands and their feet (Ex 30:18, 21)
 Today, when prayer takes the place of the priests’ service in the Holy Temple, we wash our hands before praying. Yet unlike the priests of old, Maimonides concludes that also the face (in addition to the feet, if they warrant it) must be washed prior to praying. The hands and feet enable a person to act, but the face and head contain the person’s higher faculties – the intellect, sight and hearing, and the ability to speak. When the Holy Temple was in existence and Jews enjoyed a more direct relationship with G-d, only the outer extremities needed purification. However, during the exile, a Jew’s most sublime gifts are often abused, applied towards matters unworthy of their attention, making their purification before prayer also necessary. *(The Rebbe)*

And the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath (Ex. 31:16)
 The holiness of Shabbat exists independently of the Jew; all he is enjoined to do is guard it. Yet at the same time, the Jew is commanded to observe Shabbat by his own actions, adding to its inherent holiness with his preparation and service. *(Sefer Hamaamarim Tav Shin)*

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