



IT HAPPENED ONCE

One time, at a *farbrengen* (gathering) where the Chasidim were sitting and drinking mead (a sweet honey wine that used to be very popular), a Chasid named Reb Moshe told the following story:

"Many years ago," he began, "while visiting Vienna, I sent my servant to a nearby Jewish inn to buy a bottle of mead. When he came back I discovered that it was the most delicious mead that I had ever tasted. In fact, it was so good that I immediately sent him back to buy some more. I gave him enough money for ten bottles, figuring that my family and I would enjoy it for a long time to come.

"But my servant came back empty-handed. I took out a few more coins from my pocket, but he shook his head. 'It isn't the money,' he told me. 'There just isn't any more to be had.'

"I decided to go see for myself. When I entered the inn, I saw a large crowd of people who had apparently just finished eating a festive meal. I approached the innkeeper and asked him to sell me some of his delicious honey wine.

"I'm sorry, but there isn't even a drop left of that particular type," he said. "Well, when do you expect to get more?" I persisted. "Quite frankly, never!" The innkeeper then told me the following:

Many years before he had been a mohel, a ritual circumciser. From the very beginning of his holy work he had set himself one cardinal rule: that he would never refuse a request to perform a *brit mila* (circumcision), no matter how difficult the circumstances.

One year on the day before Yom Kippur, a Jewish farmer had knocked on his door and asked him to circumcise his eight-day-old son. The farmer lived quite a distance away – six parasangs – and it was the day before Yom Kippur. Nonetheless, the mohel agreed to conduct the brit.

When they stepped outside the mohel realized that the farmer was too poor to have hired a carriage; neither was the mohel himself a man of means. There was no choice but to walk the whole distance. The farmer started out in the direction of his house, but he was walking so quickly that the mohel soon lagged behind. Eventually the farmer disappeared behind a bend in the road.

Hours later the mohel arrived in town and asked some neighbors where the family with the new baby lived. When he walked into the house he found the mother lying in bed with the infant. She was so weakened that she could barely respond. The father, however, was nowhere to be seen. For some reason he hadn't thought it important to attend his own son's brit.

The mohel now faced a serious problem: Who would serve as sandek to hold the baby during the ritual procedure? Time was of the essence; it was the eighth day of the infant's life, and he needed to be entered into the covenant of Abraham immediately. But without a sandek it would be very dangerous. Indeed, the mohel had never attempted such a thing before.

The mohel walked outside hoping to find someone on the street he could ask. For a long time he waited, but the street was deserted. Suddenly, he spotted an old beggar coming around the corner. "I'm in a big hurry," the man replied impatiently when the mohel asked for his assistance. "Today is Yom Kippur eve, and I can collect a whole ruble going door to door if I get to the city in time."

Desperate by then, the mohel promised to pay him a ruble if he would only serve as sandek. The beggar agreed, and the brit mila was conducted without incident. The mohel then left for the long walk back to the city.

After praying the afternoon service the mohel went home for the final meal before the fast, and was astonished to see the very same beggar waiting on his doorstep. He quickly paid him the ruble he had promised, but the beggar also demanded a drink of mead. The mohel was very tired by then and in no mood for entertaining. Nevertheless, but he invited him inside and poured the drink. But even that wasn't enough for the strange old man: he insisted that the mohel join him in a glass of mead, and that they wish each other a good and sweet new year.

With no alternative, the mohel complied.

"Tell me, is there any more of this wine left in the barrel?" the annoying stranger persisted. "Very little," the mohel answered, "only a few more drops." "There will always be mead in this barrel," the beggar then pronounced cryptically, "until the last blessing is recited at your youngest son's wedding celebration." The beggar then pointed to the mohel's son sleeping in his cradle.

"The blessing was fulfilled in its entirety," the innkeeper concluded his tale. "There is no explanation other than that the old man was Elijah the Prophet. With my seemingly endless supply of mead I opened this inn, and completely forgot about the rest of his prediction. That is, until today, when the barrel suddenly fell and broke into pieces as we were reciting the Grace After Meals at my youngest son's wedding. And that is why I am telling you that there will never be any more of this particular batch of mead..."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Go out of your land, out of your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you (Gen. 12:1)

By obeying G-d's command to go to the land of Israel, Abraham acquired it for himself and for his progeny forever. Even now, more than 3,300 years later, G-d's words convey an important message for us to apply in our daily lives, urging us to hasten the Messianic Era in which all Jews of all generations since the beginning of time will dwell in peace and prosperity in the greater land of Israel. (*The Rebbe, Lech Lecha, 1991*)

I will not take from a thread even to a shoelace (Gen. 14:23)

Rabba explained: In the merit of Abraham's refusal to accept these two things from the king of Sodom, the Jewish people merited an additional two mitzvot: the thread of blue (the mitzva of *tzitzit* – ritual fringes), and the strap of tefillin. (*Talmud, Sotah*)

But My covenant I will establish with Isaac (Gen. 17:21)

G-d informed Abraham that Isaac, and not Ishmael, would be the one with whom His covenant would be forged. Why? Ishmael is symbolic of nature; Isaac is symbolic of the Jew's supernatural connection to G-d. Ishmael was conceived and born according to natural law; Isaac's conception and birth were miraculous. Ishmael was circumcised at 13; Isaac at eight days, before any intellectual understanding of the mitzva could come into play. Every Jew, like his ancestor Isaac, is similarly connected to G-d by a bond that transcends time, place and natural limitations. (*The Rebbe*)



5:57 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
9 Cheshvan/Oct 15
Torah Portion Lech Lecha
Shabbat ends 6:55 PM

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Oct 15, 2021

L'Chaim

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

ניסד תור 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 this week's Torah portion, *Lech Lecha*, we read that G-d commanded Abraham that he and all his male descendants have a *brit mila* (circumcision). And so, at the age of 99, Abraham circumcised himself, thereby entering into a covenant with G-d. This is so significant, that even today, when a Jewish male has a brit, the blessing we say is "to enter him into the covenant of Abraham our father."

Interestingly, in the *Mishne Torah*, Maimonides explains that a brit is not done because of G-d's command to Abraham, but rather because of G-d's command to Moses at Sinai.

The same is true regarding all mitzvot (commandments) that our ancestors kept before the giving of the Torah. Our observance stems, not from the traditions we received from our forebears, but rather from them being commandments given to us by G-d at Mount Sinai.

If this is the case, why do we say, "to enter him into the covenant of Abraham our father"? Wouldn't it make more sense to say, "to enter him into the covenant with G-d?"

Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad, explains that the soul enters the body at the brit. When a baby is born, the soul is already present, just not yet fused with the physical body. The act of the brit on the physical body fuses the physical and the spiritual, the new soul with the body. (For a girl, the fusion happens at her naming. This is why the custom according to Jewish mysticism is to name a girl at the Torah at the first possible opportunity.)

This is also the purpose of every Jew, to make this world into a dwelling place for G-d's presence, by fusing physical existence with holiness. We do this by using physical objects and places, in their natural state, for mitzvot or to serve G-d.

Perhaps the answer can be found in the reason given for why we make such a big deal of Abraham's sacrifice at the binding of his son Isaac on the altar. Throughout our history, many have sacrificed themselves in a similar fashion and perhaps greater, without having had a direct command from G-d, as did Abraham. But he was the first, which breaks the ice for the rest.

So also, by having the first brit Abraham led the way and made it a little easier for later generations. But the analogy is not quite the same. A brit is done to a baby, who has no idea what Abraham did or didn't do. So the baby is in a way also a first. And that is the reason why we say the blessing, "to enter him into the covenant of Abraham." Because just like Abraham, everyone who has a brit, is as if he is the first.

We must see any painful situation as a mission from G-d, and we will find meaning, purpose and maybe even joy in them. May G-d send Moshiach and put an end to our pain. The time has come.

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

Collecting Leaves

Many folks from the East Coast to the Rocky Mountains will be going on nature walks, drives through the mountains, or strolls in parks over the next few weeks to enjoy the change of colors and scenery that autumn affords. Kids in particular enjoy collecting the fallen autumn leaves.

Sometimes it's for a school project (having to identify which leaves came from which trees?), an art project, or a personal project (trying to find leaves in as many different colors and shapes as possible?).

Do you remember one of those "nature/art projects" that many of us did as kids? You took leaves and put them under a sheet of paper. With the edge of a crayon you rubbed the paper over the leaf and were able to recognize not only the shape of the leaf but even its main stem and veins. You couldn't rub it too lightly or too firmly, though, or it wouldn't work.

Jewish life is like one big leaf collecting project if you consider that mitzvot are very much like leaves. They come in all different colors and shapes and sizes and textures. And, as Jewish teachings explain, just as no two faces are exactly the same neither are there two temperaments or opinions that are exactly the same.

Thus, individuals are attracted to different mitzvot. But, despite one's propensity for a certain shaped or colored leaf, if the teacher said you had to collect ten different leaves you had to collect TEN different leaves.

Similarly, though we might enjoy doing one mitzva over another mitzva, or five mitzvot rather than 13 mitzvot, when the Teacher says to collect 13, you gotta collect 13.

Similar to the way we execute the art project, we should be neither too firm nor too light in doing these mitzvot, but should follow the rules and tread the middle path; if we don't then the project won't work. It's not a punishment either, it just won't work.

Often people ask, "But isn't the main part of the mitzva the intent? After all, G-d desires the heart!"

Intent and sincerity are a major part of the mitzva but not the main thing. The actual doing of the mitzva, and doing it according to the rules, is the major part.

If you do it wrong, you won't get punished, it just won't come out right. Like the art project with the leaf which doesn't work if you rub too hard or too soft (or not at all), there won't be an image on the paper. And with the mitzva, if it's not done right there won't be an image on your soul, or on the environment, or on the world. That's not a punishment, it's simply a fact. Too little or too much, too light or too hard, too hot or too cold. If you don't do it right it just won't work.

But, there's always next time to try again.

Keep on collecting those leaves and those mitzvot. Enjoy them. Appreciate them. Have favorites that you especially treasure and look for at every opportunity. Eagerly anticipate the times of year when certain mitzvot are more readily available or easily discernible than at other times.

Take a stroll, or a walk or a drive through the glorious colors and scents and textures of mitzvot every single day of your life.

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ר' רפאל משה הכהן שפערלין ז"ל
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on the occasion of his Yahrzeit on the 11th of Mar-Cheshvon

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SLICE OF LIFE

Kotel Vignettes by Gutman Locks



Reading Psalms

I watched these two young boys sitting by the entrance to the Kotel reading Psalms. When they finished, I asked the bigger boy how old he was.

"Today is my birthday! I am nine years old!"
"Mazal tov. How nice! Hashem, bless you on your birthday."

"And you? How old are you?"
"I am seven and a half years old."

Nice thing to see... Two little Jewish boys celebrating a birthday by reading Psalms at the Kotel.

Crying At the Kotel

He's an American... here on a Birthright trip. First time for *tefillin*... he's 32 years old.

"Why were you crying so much?"
"I don't know. I was standing by the Kotel... talking to G-d like you told me... I was thinking about my family, and I just started to cry, and cry."

"Now you know what it's like to be a Jew."
He smiled, even though he was still crying. Sometimes our appreciation becomes so great it overwhelms us and brings us to tears.

His Father

The boy asked me if I remembered his father. His father is an American baal teshuva. He was in a cult for many years until he met an old Jewish woman who was a Holocaust survivor. She explained to him the difference between what the Torah says and what

the cult teaches, and she told him to go to Israel. Go look there.

This was some 25 years ago. He walked into the Kotel area not knowing what to expect... Guess what?

"Is your mother Jewish?"
"Yeah"
"Come put on tefillin..." and his life changed. He had never put on tefillin nor knew anything about proper Torah observance. He turned and he never looked back.

What is so wondrous about his story is not that I put tefillin on him for the first time in his life and moved him to do teshuva. What is so beautiful about this story is that old Jewish woman he met. She witnessed the murder of millions of Jews who were killed only because they were Jews. You might think that she would want to hide the fact that she was a Jew, or, G-d forbid, be angry with the Omnipotent One for allowing that to happen... But, no. She still knew the preciousness of being a Jew and did what she could to help another Jew from being lost.

Blessings

When I asked him what language he spoke, he answered in broken Hebrew, "My son speaks Hebrew, but I only speak Russian."

After he finished with tefillin, I had him put his right hand on his son's head and then repeat the priestly blessing word for word in Hebrew. When he finished, I told him to pray out loud for all the things he wanted for his son. He had a good long list. Fathers love to do this. When he finished, I asked him my loaded question. Why it's loaded is that I already know the answer. I only ask it to get them to express even more love for their children. I asked: "Is he a good son to you?" and he warmly hugged the boy and said, "The best."

Five minutes after he left, he came back with two more children. He had such a good time blessing his older son he wanted to bless his younger children too. Apparently, he felt how important it is to give our children blessings.

I had him bless them, and again he loved expressing his love for his children. The kids like it, but the fathers like it even more. They love asking Hashem to give good things to their children. For many of them, it is the first time they ever thought to do it.

What's the point of all this? Why did Hashem give us His Torah? Not just that we should obey Him as all fathers want their children to do, but that we

should know that He loves giving us His blessings.

Feelings

He knew how to put on the tallis and tefillin by himself. He read the Shema and was about to take off the tefillin when I reminded him that fulfilling a commandment, especially at the Kotel, creates a special opportunity... "Talk to Hashem in your heart. Tell Him all the things you want... speak to Him for a minute or two."

It took him maybe three minutes to read the Shema. He spent at least ten minutes talking to Hashem. When he finished, I asked him what was the difference between reading the Shema and talking to Hashem in his heart. He said, "Feelings."

When we do a mitzvah, it is not complete unless we direct our hearts to Heaven. The easiest way to direct our hearts to Heaven is to think about Hashem, and the easiest way to think about Hashem is to talk to Him. This brings to mind Who we are standing in front of... It brings liveliness into the mitzvah. Directing our hearts to Heaven makes our mitzvahs feel Heavenly.

Sometimes They Listen

He walked in heading for the Kotel with a small note in his hand. I called out for him to come put on tefillin.

He said, "No!" and shook his head strongly. I said, "You are going to put a note between the stones of the Kotel asking Hashem to do something for you. Don't you think that it would be better for you, if before you ask Him to do something for you, that you do what He asked you to do?"

He stopped, thought for a moment, and then turned and walked over to have me help him put on tefillin.

He is an 18-year-old Israeli. The only other time he ever put on tefillin was at his Bar Mitzvah five years ago. It was here at the Kotel.

He read the Shema and then while still wearing tefillin he went to the Kotel to pray for his family and to put his note between the stones.

Will he put them on again? Maybe. Maybe, before he asks Hashem for something, he will think about what I said. "If you are going to ask Hashem to do something for you, don't you think it would be a good idea for you to first do what He asked you to do?"

Gutman Locks is well-known at the Western Wall for over two decades. He is the author of several books, musical tapes and many educational videos. See more of his writings at www.thereisone.com

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

7th of Cheshvan, 5737 [1976]

To All Participants in the Celebration Dinner of the Lubavitch Foundation in Glasgow, Scotland

...As has often been emphasized, the education of young children is very much like the cultivation of a tender seedling, where even a slight change at an early stage can have a decisive effect when the seedling matures into a fruit-bearing tree. How much more so when the change is a basic one and a durable one. In the case of young children, the proper care, or lack of it, especially in the present day and age, is, of course, of vital consequence which cannot be overemphasized.

We are witness to two phenomena which are apparently contradictory, yet both contribute to the favorable climate for the advancement of Torah education.

On the one hand we have seen an appalling alienation of recent years of many of our Jewish youth from their spiritual heritage, and even from any affinity to their Jewish people, which in some extreme cases, has led them to self-hate, and to joining forces with the enemies of our people.

On the other hand, there is a genuine search and a soulful desire among many other of our youth for the truth and for a sense of belonging. In this determination, they are ready to face challenges and hardships, to the extent of sacrificing careers and the pursuit of material goods.

Given the right direction and help, these young people readily dedicate them-

selves to Torah with a total commitment which is nourished by their realization of having found at last true inner peace and self-fulfillment.

In light of the above, every effort in behalf of Torah education is assured of success, especially when it is made with a sense of dedication and, to use the well-known expression of our Sages, with "words coming from the heart" which are certain to penetrate the heart and be effective.

Indeed, this has been our invariable experience, which has been most gratifying and rewarding in all countries and cities where Lubavitch has been engaged in all phases of Jewish education, and not least in your city of Glasgow.

The education of young children is very much like the cultivation of a tender seedling, where even a slight change at an early stage can have a decisive effect when the seedling matures into a fruit-bearing tree.

With the consistent and devoted cooperation of all friends of Torah education; with personal identity with this cause in the realization that, as our Sages defend it, our Jewish people are one body, one organism; and stimulated by past achievements – your efforts will be rewarded beyond expectation. This will also be a source of Divine blessings – in every respect, materially and spiritually – for each and all of you, your families and the community at large.

Wishing you much *Hatzlocho* [success],

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha, describes G-d's promise of the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. It also describes Abraham's travels through the land whereby he acquired it for his descendants forever. Abraham's traversing of the land was not a necessary prerequisite for his taking possession of it as G-d's promise itself sufficed to transfer ownership of the Holy Land to Abraham.

It has been mentioned numerous times that the Rebbe's statements regarding the Holy Land, and his staunch position not to give back even one inch of land to the Arabs, has nothing to do with Biblical promises nor Messianic visions.

Rather, the Rebbe has made these statements and taken this position because of "Pikuach Nefesh" – the imminent danger to life – of Jews in the Holy Land.

Unfortunately, the Rebbe's stand has been shown to be absolutely true. And yet, of course, there are spiritual as well as mundane lessons to be learned from this week's Torah portion. There are spiritual implications, the Rebbe explains, of G-d's promise to the Jewish people via Abraham:

"There is a particular relevance to G-d's promise in the present age, the era immediately preceding Moshiach's coming. For G-d promised Abraham the lands of the ten nations, including not only the land of the seven Canaanite nations conquered by the Jews after the exodus from Egypt, but also the lands of the Keini, the Kenizi, and the Kadmoni people. G-d promised – and thus gave – the Jewish people all these ten lands at the same time. Nevertheless, in the present era, we were granted only the lands of seven nations and the fulfillment of this promise in its full sense will not be until the Era of the Redemption..."

"In the Era of the Redemption, by contrast, not only all the Jews of that generation but also all the Jews of all previous generations who will arise in the Resurrection, will live there."

With the situation as it is now in Israel, the only solution is that G-d fulfill His promise and give possession of the entire Holy Land to the Jewish people under the leadership of Moshiach. May we merit this now.

Shmuel Beilman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקה

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 Center

A new 25,000 square ft. Children's Cultural and Educational Center opened in Siberia, in the city of Tomsk, Russia. The new Children's Center is located next to the city's Choral Synagogue which recently celebrated its 120 year anniversary. The Center will house a preschool and elementary school. Regular classes will be supplemented by clubs including IT, robotics, chess, drama and music courses.

And So Is Hashem

Designed with the very youngest audience in mind, "And So Is Hashem" is about a young boy and girl who actively seek opportunities to make others happy... their parents and grandparents, their neighbors and friends. "And So Is Hashem" shares a powerful message and belongs in every home, daycare, and school setting. By Aura Dweck, illustrated by Gillian Flint. A new release from Hachai Publishing.



TODAY IS...

12 Cheshvan

One of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's early teachings, then called short sayings:

Sh'ma Yisrael (Listen, Israel) – a Jew senses that

Havayah Elokeinu (G-d is our G-d) – our strength and life is beyond nature, and

Havayah Echad (G-d is one) – Havayah is One.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In this week's portion, Abraham built three altars. The first was in Shechem, in gratitude for the tidings that he would have children and that they would be given the Land of Israel. The second one he built near Ai, as an intercession for his descendants. The third he built

in Hebron, for the actual possession of the Land of Israel. The *Midrash* notes that he built it in Hebron because that is where all the elders of Israel entered into a covenant with King David and anointed him King over Israel. In this context, the three altars allude to three stages in the worship of G-d and three corresponding eras in Jewish history: the times of the first and second Beit Hamikdash, and the time of the third Beit Hamikdash that will be with the coming of Moshiach. (Living with Moshiach, J. Immanuel Schochet)