

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

*from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion*

This week's Torah portion, Pekudei, enumerates all the details that pertain to the erection of the Tabernacle, a subject that has already been dealt with exhaustively in the previous chapters of the Torah. If the purpose of this week's portion is to teach us that all the work on the Tabernacle was carried out exactly as G-d had commanded, would it not have sufficed to say so in one sentence? Why go through the bother of listing every single detail all over again?

This question can also be asked about another section of the Torah. Each of the 12 leaders of the tribes of Israel brought offerings to the newly erected Sanctuary, and the Torah tells, in great detail, what these offerings entailed. All 12 offerings were identical. Why was it necessary to repeat the same words 12 times, rather than say that all of them brought the identical offerings?

The answer lies in the explanation that only externally did the 12 offerings resemble each other; spiritually, each offering had a different content and purpose. The Torah could not have said that each of the 12 leaders brought the identical offering, for in fact, they all differed from one another.

This explanation is true for this week's Torah portion as well: The Tabernacle which G-d commanded the Jews to build was in reality a different entity from the one which Moses erected. The Torah states, "These are the accounts of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of the testimony." This repetition of the word "tabernacle" alludes to the two sanctuaries implied by the text--the physical and the spiritual.

The physical Tabernacle was the one which G-d instructed Moses to erect. This tabernacle was built of various physical materials--silver, gold, acacia wood, etc. The second Tabernacle is the spiritual one which each of us must build, and the various building materials are spiritual entities which we must utilize to reach our goal.

Even though the spiritual Tabernacle G-d showed Moses on Mount Sinai was doubtless on a higher spiritual plane than the one built by the Children of Israel, it was precisely in the lowly, physical one where G-d's Presence dwelled.

It is easy to belittle the power of the individual to influence his surroundings, and make an impact on the world. How can one person make a difference and bring pleasure to His Creator, when we are so puny and insignificant? The Torah answers: it is precisely because we are in such a physical world that G-d desires our performance of mitzvot. It is up to us to imbue the world with G-dliness and turn it into a true dwelling place for the One Above.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Make Me a Place

By Rabbi Baruch Epstein

G-d is everywhere; who could keep Him out? The compelling question is where does G-d dwell; where can He express Himself without fear of judgement or scorn or that people will run away.

Answer: It's up to us. Like a true friend who wants you to be you and cherishes that about you, he makes you feel that his home is your home by surrounding it with things you like.

In one of Torah's most central passages, G-d says: "make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them". G-d's commands the Israelites to construct the Tabernacle in the wilderness, G-d is asking us to welcome Him in.

No one wants to be an intruder that everyone at the lunch table rolls their eyes and changes the conversation when they arrive, secretly waiting for him to go away.

Ok, so what makes G-d feel at home? How kind of you to ask, that's the first step, making Him the priority. Let's see what some of our greatest scholars teach us.

The key is in the sequence of when G-d asks for this special place and how its link with the horror of the Golden Calf recorded seven chapters later and that's our ticket to discovering how we make Hashem feel welcome here.

1. Rashi deviates from the scriptural order and places this command after the story of the Golden Calf.
2. Nachmanides sticks to the narrative sequence.

3. Zohar places the Golden Calf incident smack in between the commandment to create a Sanctuary.

Each perspective is pursuing the same goal; how best to welcome G-d in a world that is likely to be intimidated by His arrival.

Rashi: it's the penitent – when one violates and returns, they demonstrate their eagerness for G-d to be among them

Nachmanides: The tzaddik, the perfect one, who emerges from under his tallit to make the world outside the study hall welcoming of G-d, that makes G-d truly at home.

The Zohar: "even you, the (still) imperfect one;" you must make G-d feel at home. Don't make G-d wait until you have figured it all out; there is work to be done.

All three perspectives apply to our lives. We have moments when we are in perfect sync with G-d and holiness. Nachmanides warns us against savoring those moments in privacy and pushes us to change the world.

When we fall in the mud (or deliberately jump in), the Zohar reminds us we still have obligations to G-d, even before we have fixed our mistakes.

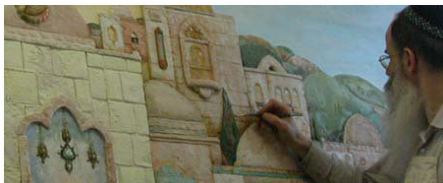
And when we express earnest remorse and fix what we have broken, Rashi tells us not to shy away from going back into the world, the scene of the crime, and this time to make it a home for G-d.

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

SLICE OF LIFE

The Art of Faith

With Renowned Artist Michael Muchnik



I was born in Philadelphia, and as a young adult pursuing an art degree at the Rhode Island School of Design, I got caught up in the culture of the Sixties. It was not until I dropped out of school and got introduced to Chabad that things started to change for me. This happened in 1972 when I was twenty.

Over time, I enrolled in Tiferes Bacurim, the Chabad yeshiva in Morristown New Jersey. While there, an opportunity came up for me to have a private audience with the Rebbe. I recall being very anxious and not knowing what to expect once I crossed the threshold into the Rebbe's study. It is hard for me to describe what I felt because it seemed to me like a different reality. And I thought, "I have to take this spiritual feeling and somehow incorporate it into my art."

As I was standing near the entrance to the room, not sure what to do next, the Rebbe said, "Come closer." So I walked right up to the Rebbe's desk and handed him the letter I had written listing my questions, and I also put on his desk three small samples of my art because I wanted him to advise me what I should do with my artistic talent. I thought that perhaps I should become a scribe as I was good at Hebrew calligraphy, and I believed that if I were to be religious

this was probably a more suitable profession than becoming a painter.

But the Rebbe had another idea. He said that I should pursue my art talents and consider doing illuminated marriage contracts, ketubot, which have been the subject of Jewish art for many centuries. I asked him if I might also illustrate children's books and he gave me a blessing for that as well, as long as it didn't interfere with my study schedule at the yeshiva. By this point I was so excited that he was giving me the green light to express my talent, that I actually exclaimed Baruch Hashem (thank G-d) out loud three times.

When it came time for me to leave and I was backing out of the door, the Rebbe called me back and asked about the art samples I had forgotten on his desk, "Are these for me?"

"If you would like them..." I answered, somewhat flustered.

He picked up each one and then selected a small watercolor of a winter scene in Russia, depicting a little synagogue with a Star of David on top and a crescent moon in the background. When he said, "I'll keep this one," I was so happy.

Again I started to leave, but again the Rebbe called me back. "Is this an original?" he asked. I replied that it was, to which the Rebbe responded, "I can't keep an original, but when you make a print please send one to me."

Of course, I made a print and sent it to the Rebbe. And, thereafter, whenever I made limited edition prints of my work, I always sent one to the Rebbe.

Now, I did not expect it, but the Rebbe proved quite the art critic. Many times, I sent him the proofs before they were printed, and the Rebbe made detailed changes.

As my artwork became a bit better known, I was invited to exhibit it, and at one point I had shows in eight different Chabad Houses across California. I was very new at this and I badly miscalculated how much I would sell so that by the third stop I had sold almost everything. After a failed attempt to paint

new things, I had to borrow back the works I had already sold just to have something to show. By the end of the tour, I was a nervous wreck and I went home sick from the whole experience.

When I wrote to the Rebbe for advice on how to avoid such anxiety in the future, he responded that I should meditate on the concept of Divine Providence and that I should place on display at my exhibitions the following: a charity box, the Five Books of Moses, the Book of Psalms, and a prayer book. He also said that before every show, I should give to charity "eighteen times eighteen cents" (as the number eighteen symbolizes life).

I did just that, and the Rebbe's advice saved me many times. Often exhibitions – especially in international venues, where one has to deal with customs, taxes, import laws and corrupt officials – can be very stressful. Then there are exhibitions where hardly anybody shows up, or those where lots of people show up but nobody buys anything. But no matter what happens, meditating on Divine Providence and donating to charity even before making a profit helps to buttress my faith that G-d is watching and taking care of my livelihood. And that displaces a lot of the anxiety and fills me with more peace.

Michael Muchnik, is among the foremost Jewish artists of our day. His originals have been displayed at the Brooklyn Museum, the Goldman Arts Gallery in Washington, D.C., Yeshiva University Museum in New York, Dansforth Museum in Massachusetts, the Sydney Jewish Museum and the Sharei Tzedek Collection in Israel. Behrman House published a series of his original paintings for their gift edition of Pirkei Avos, "Sayings of The Fathers". He wrote and illustrated eight children's books and provided cover illustrations for numerous other books and magazines. His present focus is on developing bas-reliefs and murals.

Excerpts from an interview with Jewish Educational Media, My Encounter Project.

For more information please visit www.muchnikarts.com

Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom Makes Inaugural Visit to Cyprus



Chief Rabbi's Mirvis and Raskin, in conversation with President Nikos Christodoulides of Cyprus

Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, has made his inaugural visit to Cyprus, marking a significant historical milestone, at the invitation of Chief Rabbi Arie Zeev Raskin of Cyprus. During his stay, he was given a tour of the Jewish Community of Cyprus establishments, including a visit to the Jewish school in Larnaca.

Later, in collaboration with the Chief Rabbi of Cyprus, he laid the foundation stone at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the forthcoming King David School building. In the afternoon, Chief Rabbi Mirvis delivered an address to the community at the grand synagogue, followed by a Rabbinical Conference gathering Rabbis from across Cyprus.

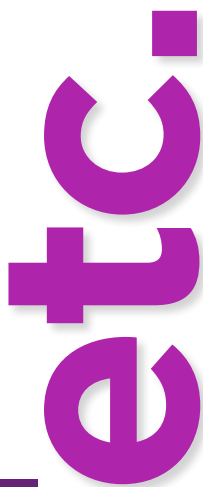
The visit culminated with both Chief Rabbis attending an event commemorating 75 years since the closure of detention camps in Cyprus. Post-event, the Rabbis engaged in discussions with the President Nikos Christodoulides, the Speaker of the House, Ms Annita Demetriou and other governmental figures. Chief Rabbi Mirvis articulated the community's imperative needs, and underscored the importance of fortifying the office and institutions of the Chief Rabbi of Cyprus.

A Call To Action

BUILT-IN CHARITY

To help establish a Jewish home as a charitable home, one in which its inhabitants are imbued with kindness and compassion, one should make charity "built-in." This can be done by affixing a charity box (pushka) to a wall of the home, preferably the kitchen, and putting tzedaka into it regularly.

The Rebbe explained, "The charity box should be affixed to the wall or cabinet of the kitchen. In this way, the pushka literally becomes a structural part of the home, making the act of kindness a foundation of the home. The pushka should be highly visible so that when friends and neighbors visit, they will notice it and perhaps adopt this practice as well. It is appropriate that the contents of the pushka be used to provide meals for poor people or to be donated to any needy institution.





The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

By the Grace of G-d
7 Adar 5731
Brooklyn, NY

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter of Rosh Chodesh Adar, containing the good news that things are progressing satisfactorily. I trust you received my acknowledgment of your previous correspondence.

May G-d grant the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good, especially that you should go from strength to strength, as you write.

In reply to the two points which you raise in your letter:

Regarding Chassidus, it is not correct to say that it is a "supplementary aid" to the proper fulfillment of the mitzvah, for it is that element which permeates the fulfillment of all the mitzvot.

For example, it is possible to fulfill a mitzvah without any kavanah [inspiration] whatever, it is possible to fulfill a mitzvah with the general kavanah of fulfilling G-d's command; and it is possible to fulfill a mitzvah with inspiration, enthusiasm and joy, as a deep-felt experience pervading one's entire being...

By way of illustration: when taking challah, one can be permeated with a great, joyous feeling of dedicating the first part of the dough, even before partaking from it, to kedushah [holiness], although in our time it cannot be given to a kohen [priest], and must therefore be burned.

At the same time, as explained in Chassidus (in Sha'ar Hayichud v'ha'Emunah), on the subject of the continuous renewal of Creation, one can realize that G-dliness is the actual reality of all things, except that it was G-d's will that the spiritual should be hidden in a material frame.

But the Jew, by the capacity of his intellect, kavanah and knowledge, can reveal the spiritual through the predominance of form over matter, the spiritual over the material, the soul over the body, until he can see with the eyes of his intellect how the material is being constantly brought into existence as in the Six Days of Creation. Permeated with

this knowledge, he realizes that the first of everything should be dedicated to G-d, and only then can he partake of all the things which G-d has given him.

In the light of the above, one can appreciate that Chassidus is not something supplementary, but the very soul of the mitzvah, or, as you also mention it, it creates a new dimension in the fulfillment of every mitzvah.

In the above, there is also a reply to those who claim that Chassidus looks askance on, or rejects, other Jews, chas veshalom [Heaven forbid]. This is not so, for basically the Jew who fulfills a mitzvah even without any kavanah, and even without knowing the original source of the commandment in the Torah, is nevertheless fulfilling the mitzvah, and has to make a bracha [blessing] and so forth.

Similarly, the woman who does not know the posuk [verse] in the Torah which speaks of challah, and knows nothing of the deeper significance of the mitzvah, etc., is also fulfilling the mitzvah. On the other hand, it is indeed a very great pity if one does not try to learn and understand the deeper aspects of the mitzvah. For very often even a minor detail in a mitzvah has profound significance and implication, and even in a small piece of dough taken as challah, there can be hidden a profound world outlook.

With regard to your other question, whether when talking to a person who knows nothing about Torah and mitzvot, one should bring in Chassidus too, or only discuss the immediate matters – it is self-understood that if the person is capable of grasping the matter in the Chassidic way, there is the mitzvah of v'ahavta l'reacha komocha [loving your fellow Jew as yourself], to share a good thing with another person to the fullest extent.

This is what is meant by the verse "Instruct the lad according to his way," as explained at length by the Moreh Nevuchim [Guide of the Perplexed], the true "guide" of all generations, namely the Rambam, in his introduction to his commentary on Mishnayot. For, just as it is necessary to teach a child gradually, in accordance with his grasp and capacity, so it is necessary to teach adults who are "children" insofar as knowledge and understanding is concerned.

Wishing you a happy and inspiring Purim,

With blessing,

[signature]

P.S. I trust that you have seen my talk to Jewish women on the subject of challah. No doubt it is available in the library of the Seminary.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Our Sages teach: "Moshiach will come only when the mind is otherwise occupied."

In truth, this is the highest form of expecting

Moshiach. We must await Moshiach regardless of our understanding of the benefit we will derive from his coming. We must cast aside all thought of material or spiritual gain, focusing on only one thing: With the coming of Moshiach, the Divine intent of creation -- that G-d will have an abode in this world -- will be fulfilled. (*The Rebbe*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

The total triumph of the Jewish people over the evil Haman, which we celebrate on Purim, transforms the entire month -- not just the day of Purim -- into a day of joy and happiness.

Why is the Purim victory so amazing, more so than, say, the miracle of Chanuka, that it has the power to actually transform the entire month?

Haman (may his name be erased) was a descendant of Amalek, the infamous nation that had the chutzpa to attack the Jewish people after their miraculous exodus from Egypt.

All of the nations of the world trembled at the thought of battling with the Jewish nation, except for Amalek. The Torah explains that Amalek "met" the Jewish nation during its journey. But our commentators explain that the Hebrew word for "met" -- "karcha" can also mean "made you cold."

Amalek, in his insidious way, wanted to "cool off" the Jewish people from their fiery faith in G-d and Moses after all the miracles and Divine revelations they had merited.

The very name "Amalek" has the same numerical value as the Hebrew word "safek" meaning "doubt." Amalek's main goal was not to win a military victory over the Jews, but to pierce their perfect faith and strong belief by bringing in "doubts."

So you see, when, generations later, the Jews at the time of Purim were victorious over Haman the Amalekite, the ultimate victory was not over the man but over all that he stood for -- coldness, doubt, skepticism, and the like.

Thus, the entire month of Adar is permeated with the joy and happiness of the Purim holiday, because the stakes were so terribly high.

May we all be victorious over our personal Amaleks this Purim until we merit the ultimate victory over Amalek at the time of the Redemption.

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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IT HAPPENED ONCE

The city of Brod was renowned for its Torah scholars, the most famous of whom was the sage Rabbi Moshe Leib. Like many of his colleagues at the time, he was wary of the new Chasidic movement that was then making inroads.

The sexton of Rabbi Moshe Leib's synagogue had a daughter who had been suffering for some time from a mysterious digestive disorder. When the sexton heard about the Chasidic Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk, he decided to go to him to ask for a blessing for his daughter. The Rebbe gave him some food his wife had prepared, and instructed him to feed it to the girl. As soon as she tasted it her pains went away.

The sexton was filled with wonder and appreciation. He was so impressed by what had happened that he decided to share the good news with Rabbi Moshe Leib. He urged him to go to Rabbi Elimelech to see for himself.

At first Rabbi Moshe Leib was adamantly opposed to the plan, considering it a waste of time that could be better utilized studying Torah. "And besides," he countered, "you know I don't really believe in these newfangled wonder workers..."

But the sexton was persistent. "On the contrary," he said. "You, as a rabbi, have an obligation to check him out for yourself. If you determine that Rabbi Elimelech isn't a true tzadik (righteous person), you can persuade people not to go to him. But if you find that he really is a holy man, you will have succeeded in dispelling a lot of false notions."

In the end Rabbi Moshe Leib consented and traveled to Lizhensk. The whole way there he thought about what he would say to the Chasidic master, and composed various questions to test his scholarship and piety.

Rabbi Moshe Leib arrived in Lizhensk on a Friday afternoon. He was surprised when he saw that Rabbi Elimelech lived in a tiny little house - not the grand mansion that he had imagined. His surprise grew when he realized that Rabbi Elimelech himself was standing on the threshold, waiting for him. The tzadik extended his hand in greeting.

"Come in, come in," he said to him warmly. "I've heard so much about you. They say that you're one of the most distinguished Torah scholars in all of Brod." Rabbi Moshe Leib felt a surge of pride.

"Therefore," Rabbi Elimelech continued, "I'd like to tell you an interesting story." Rabbi Moshe Leib's face fell, but the tzadik didn't seem to notice.

"There was once a brave warrior who did battle with a ferocious lion and succeeded in slaying it. To commemorate his heroic deed, he skinned the animal and filled its hide with straw. He then placed the stuffed lion in front of his house so that everyone would know how strong and courageous he was.

"When the rumor spread that there was a lion guarding his door, all the animals of the forest came to see for themselves. They stood at a distance, too fearful to approach. But there was once a clever fox who quickly perceived that the lion wasn't moving. He crept closer, and with one paw swiped at the beast. When he saw that it wasn't alive, he tore the skin apart and the straw fell out. All the animals laughed and returned to the forest."

Rabbi Moshe Leib looked at the tzadik, not comprehending his meaning. Why had he made the long trip from Brod to Lizhensk? To hear animal stories? He couldn't believe that Rabbi Elimelech had nothing more important to do on a Friday afternoon than tell tales. He was about to say good-bye and return to his inn when the tzadik continued.

"No, don't leave just yet. I have another story to tell you.

"There was once a very poor man who had never in his life owned a new set of clothes. One day his luck changed, and he came into a large inheritance. The first thing he did was to summon a tailor and commission a fine new garment as befits a nobleman. The tailor measured the man from head to toe, and a few days later returned for the first fitting.

"The man put on the half-completed suit as the tailor rearranged the pins and basting stitches and made little markings with chalk. Ignorant of the way a custom garment is made, the man assumed the tailor was mocking him and threw him out of the house,

despite his protestations."

That was the end of the story. Rabbi Moshe Leib, completely confused, went back to the inn to prepare for Shabbat.

Then it hit him: Perhaps the tzadik was talking about him with his strange tales? Maybe he was trying to tell him that he was only a "stuffed lion"? And like the poor man with the new set of clothes, could it be that he was only posturing as a nobleman? His whole life would have to be reconsidered...

That evening in the synagogue Rabbi Moshe Leib studied the tzadik in an entirely different way. He became an ardent disciple of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, and later a Chasidic master himself in the city of Sasov.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

These are the accounts of the Tabernacle (Ex. 38:21)
 Moses fully accounted for all the materials which went into crafting the Tabernacle. We can understand why he listed exactly how much gold, silver and gems were used; they are highly valuable. But why did he account precisely for the copper, which has so little comparative value? The copper was not a compulsory tax. The Torah recognizes that it is often those who give "freely" but less than they are truly able who demand the strictest accounting of every penny. For they are ever on the lookout for an excuse not to give any more. (*Der Torah Kvall*)

The Tabernacle of the testimony (Ex. 38:21)
 The Hebrew word for testimony--"eydut"--alludes to the "adiyim" ornaments or heavenly crowns, the Jewish people received when the Torah was given. When the Children of Israel sinned by making the Golden Calf, their crowns were taken back, and with them their extra measure of spirituality. When the Tabernacle was erected, G-d forgave them their sin and their crowns were returned to them. (*Ohr HaTorah*)

And Moses blessed them (Ex. 39:43)
 The fact that G-d's presence was visible when the Tabernacle was erected is not remarkable in itself, for whenever Jews gather together on Shabbat, on holidays, or to perform a mitzva as a congregation, a feeling of holiness and goodwill prevails. Moses' blessing to the Children of Israel was: "May it be G-d's will that His presence should rest on the work of your hands"--May Jews feel this closeness to G-d also during the week and while attending to their daily business concerns.

As stones of memorial to the Children of Israel (Ex. 39:7)
 When Joseph was in Egypt and was tempted by Potifar's wife, the image of his father Jacob appeared to him, saying, "The names of all your brothers will one day be inscribed on the stones of the High Priest's breastplate. Do you want your name to be missing, if, G-d forbid, you commit this sin?" The 12 stones of the breastplate serve as a memorial for all of Israel. When a person reminds himself that all Jews were represented on it, he too will be ashamed and too embarrassed to commit any transgressions. (*Meshech Chachma*)



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