

L'Chaim



Many, many years ago in southern Russia two families joined in the joyous celebration of the marriage of their children, Eliezer and Devorah. The moon shone down upon tables richly set with brimming platters of festive foods. People conversed happily, their gazes turning periodically to the joyous couple, and music filled the night air.

Suddenly, screams pierced the night, and dreaded words filled the air, "Cossacks, Cossacks are coming!" Pandemonium erupted and panic-stricken people ran in every direction looking for shelter from the murderous horde. But alas, men, women and children were mercilessly cut down in the quick, bloody foray. Throughout the town, Jews were robbed and murdered, captured and enslaved by the Cossack band.

When quiet finally descended upon the devastated village the young bride, Devorah, was still alive. She had no memory of her miraculous escape, but now, faced with an uncertain future, she set out for the Holy Land to the home of an uncle, her only surviving relative. Sympathetic Jews along the route helped her, and at long last she arrived in Israel where she was taken into the family and began to recover from her traumatic experiences. Since the fate of her husband was unknown she was unable to remarry, and the poor girl went to the Western Wall every day to pray that the Almighty restore her husband to her.

One day the streets of Jerusalem buzzed with excitement. Trumpets blared and crowds gathered to welcome a handsome young king who, mounted on a beautiful steed, rode through the narrow streets followed by his retainers.

Suddenly, Devorah, who had come to witness the great event with her cousins, fainted. When they brought her home their mother scolded them for taking her out on such a hot day. But Devorah, who had regained consciousness, looked up at her aunt and said, "Oh no, it wasn't the heat that caused me to faint. I saw my husband! The young king, he is my lost husband!"

The family looked at her in astonishment. Poor Devorah was suffering delusions, no doubt as a result of all she had been through. When her uncle returned that night they told him about Devorah's encounter with the visiting king. He felt great pity for his unfortunate niece and decided to take her to a well-known tzadik to ask for a blessing for her health.

To his surprise, the tzadik advised him to take Devorah's words seriously. Since the uncle had been appointed member of the delegation which was to greet the king, the tzadik advised him to take advantage of that fortuitous situation. "Let me give you an idea," said the tzadik, "In the course of your reception for the king, engage him in a game of chess. You will play very well, but then you will make a mistake. When he asks to explain this obviously foolish move, you will tell him that you are troubled by a personal problem. And when he inquires what it is, you will mention the name 'Devorah'. By his reaction, you will know his identity."

Just as the tzadik said, the chess game was played, the "mistake" was made, and when her uncle mentioned Devorah's name, the young king leapt up, scattering the chess pieces. "Where is she?" he exclaimed; "Did she remarry?"

The uncle recounted the entire story of Devorah's survival and passage to the Holy Land. He told how she recognized her husband and stuck to her convictions despite everyone's disbelief. The king was very moved by the account, and begged her uncle to tell her of his own difficult and trying experiences since the night of their wedding. He had been sold into slavery, had worked on a pirate ship, and then finally, shipwrecked on an island, been chosen king of the inhabitants. He had never, however, forgotten her. "Please, tell Devorah that I am prepared to

do as she wishes. If she will have me back, I am prepared to renounce my crown and resume our life together. But, if not, I am willing to give her a divorce here and now. It is hers to choose."

The uncle returned home with the astoundingly good news that Devorah had, indeed, found her husband. There was no question in Devorah's mind; her prayers had been answered, her husband had been returned to her. The young couple was reunited in great happiness. The young man formulated a plan. After transferring stewardship of his little kingdom into capable hands, he would return quietly to Jerusalem, where he and Devorah would set up their home. This is exactly what they did. Most of the inhabitants of the city never knew the real story of Devorah and her husband.

Adapted from The Storyteller.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

From the cover (itself) shall you make the cherubim (Ex. 25:19)

The cherubim were made with the faces of small children, one a boy and one a girl. From this we learn that providing the proper Jewish education for even our tiny children is a basic principle necessary for our keeping the Torah. (Rabbi Yosef Ber of Brisk)

Within and without shall you overlay it (Ex. 25:11)

A true Torah scholar is one whose "inside" matches his "outside." Merely learning the lofty principles contained in the Torah is not enough --its lessons must also be internalized.

That is why we say in Psalms (45:14), "All the glory of the king's daughter is within." The splendor and glory of the Torah is the internal purity it leads to. (Kiflayyim L'Toshiya)

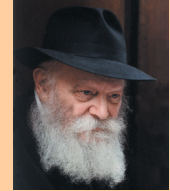
The menorah shall be made (Ex. 25:31)

Rashi explains that the words "shall be made" are passive, indicating that the menorah would be made by itself, and not by Moses, who was in the midst of receiving instructions from G-d how to fashion all the other utensils to be used in the Sanctuary. Rashi states that Moses did not fully understand how the menorah was to be formed, so G-d told him to throw the gold into the fire, and He would make the menorah Himself.

Why was Moses so perplexed by the menorah, but not by any other command even more complex?

Our Sages said that the purpose of the menorah was to serve as a testimony to all who saw it that the Divine Presence rested among the Jewish People. Moses, for his part, had difficulty understanding how it was possible for one small menorah to light up the entire physical world.

G-d answered him: You are right--this is beyond the power of mere flesh and blood. Therefore, throw the gold into the fire and I Myself will make the menorah. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

Until the Revelation on Mount Sinai and the giving of the Torah, the Jewish people's principal connection to G-d was through Moses. G-d would speak to Moses, who would then pass on the commandment to the rest of the Jewish people. This week's Torah portion, Teruma, begins a new chapter in our worship of G-d and opens up a new means of communication: G-d asks the Children of Israel to build Him a Sanctuary, a special place where they will pray, offer sacrifices, and witness miracles and manifestations of G-dliness.

Why did G-d require a special place to dwell? Does He not already exist everywhere? Why would G-d, Who is not limited in any sense, want to cause His Presence to rest on a particular, limited, physical site?

To answer these questions, let us employ an easily understood analogy taken from a natural phenomenon: When a high, brick wall falls down, the bricks from the highest part of the wall fall the farthest away. Those bricks that formed the lowest section of the wall remain very close to their original place. This principle applies as well to the spiritual realm--"The higher the spiritual source, the lower will be its manifestation in the corporeal world."

As a further illustration we see that the better a person's understanding and grasp of a subject, the more he is able to explain the subject, however complex, to another--even to one with limited intelligence.

Similarly, G-d's desire to dwell in a specific location does not point to His limitation, but is rather a manifestation of His infinite nature. It is precisely because G-d is without measure and omnipresent that He was able to dwell in a sanctuary made of wood and stone.

There were also different degrees of holiness present in the Tabernacle, which traveled together with the Jews through the wilderness, and the Holy Temple, which was later erected in Jerusalem as a permanent dwelling. The Tabernacle was built mostly of material from the vegetable and animal kingdoms--wood and animal products; the Temple was built almost entirely of stone, taken from the realm of the inanimate, the lowest of all. The Holy Temple had the highest manifestation of G-dliness, from the highest spiritual source, and this was reflected in the fact that it was made of the lowliest building materials.

"And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst." Today, because we have no Holy Temple, every Jew serves as a sanctuary to G-d. Just as the Children of Israel elevated their physical possessions by using them to build the Tabernacle and later the Temple, every Jew must now utilize his possessions in bringing the peace and light of Torah into the world. When we do this, and conduct even the most mundane aspects of our lives "for the sake of Heaven," we ourselves are sanctified and transformed into a sanctuary to G-d, and become active partners in imbuing the world with holiness.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Shalom Aleichem

By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

"Shalom Aleichem," peace unto you, is the classic Jewish greeting. It is simple, meaningful, and beautiful. The response, however, is curious. Instead of replying with "Shalom Aleichem," we say "Aleichem Shalom," unto you peace. Why the reversal? Some might jokingly suggest it's because Jews enjoy being contrarian, but the real reason is much deeper and more meaningful, which we will explore here.

G-d's revelation at Mount Sinai was meant to be temporary, lasting only as long as the delivery of the Ten Commandments. After that, G-d wanted to dwell permanently among His people, instructing them to build a Tabernacle. One might think that the permanent presence of G-d in the Tabernacle would have had a more profound impact than the brief revelation at Sinai. Yet, paradoxically, the people were in a more G-dly state at Sinai than in the Tabernacle.

At Sinai, the Israelites were unified "as one person with one heart." But when they constructed the Tabernacle, G-d said, "They should make me a tabernacle, and I will dwell in them." G-d's words implied plurality--each person is separate from the other. Unity reflects G-dliness, while separateness indicates ego. When we are united, we transcend our individuality and connect to a shared soul, as we are all one with G-d.

At Sinai, the people felt G-dly and united, while in the Tabernacle, their individualities stood out. Why? The difference lies in the dynamic. At Sinai, G-d descended from above, unfiltered and overwhelming.

The people surrendered their individuality in the face of His singularity. But in the Tabernacle, G-d said, "Build it for Me." The people constructed it, and while G-d's presence was permanent, it was a more muted experience. The people could still feel themselves--their separateness.

Both experiences are necessary. Sinai gave us the authentic truth of G-d's presence, perfect and untainted. The Tabernacle, however, allowed the people to internalize that truth on their own level. Sinai was a top-down experience; the Tabernacle was bottom-up, where the people actively shaped their connection with G-d.

But even in the process of building the Tabernacle, we must be careful. We must follow G-d's instructions to the letter, or we risk building a sanctuary for ourselves, not for G-d. Just as a person following a fitness plan must stick to the regimen to succeed, so too must we adhere to G-d's specifications. If we alter the recipe--whether for soup or for spirituality--the result will fall short of the goal.

Now we can understand why we respond to "Shalom Aleichem" with "Aleichem Shalom." Shalom is one of G-d's names. When we say "Shalom Aleichem," we invoke G-d's name at the beginning, suggesting a top-down, Sinai-like dynamic--G-d imposes peace upon us. When we respond with "Aleichem Shalom," we proclaim that we not only accept G-d's peace but are prepared to embrace it fully, adopting it in our own lives. In this way, we both acknowledge the peace G-d offers and make it our own, as He wants it to be. We take it as it is, and learn to want it too.

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Dear friends of the L'Chaim Publication
Mr. Victor Braha

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SLICE OF LIFE

The Soot-Stained Wall of Remembrance



R' Yechiel Ofner, a Hasidic artist from Kfar Chabad, Israel

In the aftermath of tragedy, art can serve as a powerful medium for healing and remembrance. For Yechiel Ofner, a 50-year-old Hasidic artist from Kfar Chabad, this truth became startlingly clear on a somber day in a kibbutz near Gaza.

Ofner's journey to that moment began far from the conflict zone, in the ultra-Orthodox enclave of Bnei Brak. From an early age, he was drawn to the world of art, finding inspiration in the rich traditions of Jewish life and Hasidic culture.

"For decades, I've been painting scenes from the old Jewish shtetl and contemporary Hasidic life," Ofner explains, his eyes lighting up as he speaks about his art. But Ofner's talents extend far beyond the canvas. In his day job, he serves as a special education teacher and is studying psychodrama therapy.

However, it's Ofner's role in the IDF's Casualty Identification Unit that would bring him face-to-face with the harsh realities of conflict. For over twenty years, he has served in this capacity, a role that requires both emotional strength and a keen eye for detail.

On Simchat Torah, a day usually filled with

joy and celebration, Ofner's world was turned upside down. "I was staying with my family in Ashkelon," he recalls, his voice growing somber. "In the early morning hours, we heard sirens. The shelter door suddenly burst open after two missiles hit the building where we were staying. The entire building shook, and the floor above was severely damaged."

Soon after this harrowing experience, Ofner was called to duty. He headed to the area he was summoned to, unaware of the full extent of the unfolding tragedy. "I couldn't have imagined the magnitude of the event," he says, shaking his head.

Days of grueling work followed, as Ofner and his colleagues worked tirelessly to bring closure to families affected by the attacks. It was during this time that Ofner found himself in the Zack family home in Kibbutz Kisufim, a site of unimaginable tragedy where parents and a child had been massacred.

Surrounded by the evidence of violence and loss, Ofner felt compelled to act. "Amidst the smells and thoughts," he remembers, his voice barely above a whisper, "I suddenly started drawing with my ten fingers on the sooty wall."

The image that emerged was simple yet powerful: two soldiers protecting a child. "Although this drawing didn't come true, and sadly the soldiers didn't manage to save the victims, it was something that burst out of me in those moments," Ofner explains.

This spontaneous act of artistry would soon take on a life of its own. Days later, when Tomer Zack, the daughter of the murdered couple, visited her parents' home, she discovered Ofner's drawing. Moved by this unexpected artwork, she sought out the artist behind it.

"They decided to preserve the drawing and display it for future generations," Ofner says, still surprised by the turn of events. The Israel Museum and Yad Ben-Zvi Institute recognized the significance of Ofner's impromptu artwork, bringing in experts to

advise on preservation techniques. Just before the house was demolished, the wall bearing Ofner's drawing was carefully removed and transferred for preservation.

The Zack family invited Ofner to witness the wall's removal, leading to a touching moment of connection. "A family member, a senior officer, said to me: 'You're wearing a kippah and beard, and I'm not religious. Look at the beauty of the people of Israel.' He hugged me and was very moved by the encounter. It was important to him that we keep in touch," Ofner recounts.

For Ofner, this experience has reinforced his belief in the power of art to heal and unite. "It taught me the amazing power of one small action," he reflects. "It can be a deed or a kind word. One can never know what worlds can change as a result of one good action."

This wasn't the first time Ofner had seen the power of art to bridge divides. He shares another meaningful experience: "Not long ago, I participated in the 96th birthday of the renowned Israeli artist Yaacov Agam. I painted him, trying to imitate his unique creative style. As I entered the event, I told him I had a surprise for him. He was so moved that he decided on the spot to paint on my white shirt in front of everyone, and at the end, he signed his name."

As he looks to the future, Ofner sees his role as an artist taking on new meaning. "Especially at this time, every good action we take in loving our fellow Jews and in Jewish unity is of immeasurable importance," he says, his voice filled with conviction.

Through his art, whether on canvas, a soot-stained wall, or even a white shirt, Yechiel Ofner continues to bridge worlds – between past and present, between tragedy and hope, between individuals and community. His story serves as a powerful reminder of the role that art can play in times of crisis, offering solace, unity, and a path towards healing.

From *Sichat Hashavua*

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

By the Grace of G-d
12th of Adar, 5721 [February 28, 1961]
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I regret that because of pressure of duties, there was an unavoidable delay in my reply to your letter, which was supplemented orally by your husband when he visited me.

With regard to the question of moving to a new home, generally speaking, the attitude should be an unhurried one, not to rush into anything. When the proper opportunity presents itself, you should consider it on its merits, and if you like the proposition, you should go ahead with it. As for the date, whether it should be before the month of May or after May, you should leave this to Divine Providence, for the deciding factor should be the proposition itself.

You write that in the past you were able to do several things at the same time, but now it appears to you that you have to do one thing at a time. In general, it is not a reflection [of anything negative about you, that you need to limit yourself] to do one thing at a time, and as for the frame of mind, etc., the best thing is to dwell as little as possible on this, for things will straighten themselves out...

With regard to your question relating to your social activities, etc., such activities should also be in moderation, to fit the circumstances. For every Jew, whether man or woman, is duty-bound to practise the commandment of Ahavas Yisroel [love of your fellow Jew], especially in the light of the teachings of Chassidus [Chassidism]. On the other hand, such activities should not be conducted in a way that would conflict with other commitments, nor in a way that might put a strain on one's health, since taking care of one's health is also a Divine commandment.

Needless to say, in connection with the

above, it is impossible to make rigid rules as to exactly how much time to devote to one thing and how much to another. But generally things fall in line and in their proper place, and there is usually a workable margin and flexibility for adjustment.

With only a couple of days before Purim, the auspicious festival of joy, may G-d grant that it bring you and yours an increased measure of joy and happiness, materially and spiritually.

Hoping to hear good news from you, and wishing you and yours a happy and inspiring Purim,

With blessing,

By the Grace of G-d
Between Purim Koton And Purim Godol,
5736 [February - March, 1976]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. & Mrs. Mordechai Shoel Landow

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence, and may G-d grant that you should have good news to report in all matters about which you wrote.

Especially as we are now in the auspicious days between Purim Koton and Purim Godol, the festive days of the two Mazeldike months of Adar of this Jewish Leap Year, the highlight of which is, in the words of the Megillah, "For the Jews there was light, joy, gladness and honor." As our Sages explain these words, they have in addition to their plain meaning also the inner meaning of "Light - this is Torah... Honor - this is Tefillin," Tefillin being symbolic of all the Mitzvoth. May this be so also in your case.

Included is, of course, also the Mitzvo of V'Ohavto L'Reacho Komocho, the great principle of our Torah, which makes it the duty and privilege of every Jew to spread the light of the Torah and Mitzvoth in his surroundings. And while all this is a must for its own sake, this is also the way to receive G-d's blessings in all needs, materially and spiritually.

Wishing you and yours a truly happy, joyous and inspiring Purim,

With blessing,

redeemer. Moshiach the descendant of Joseph of the tribe of Ephraim (also referred to as Moshiach ben Ephraim) will come first, before the final redeemer, and later will serve as his viceroy. The cooperation between Moshiach ben David and Moshiach ben Yosef signifies the total unity of Israel, removing the historical rivalries between the tribes of Judah and Joseph.

(From *Moshiach* by Rabbi J. I. Schochet)

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

In the verse, "They shall make Me a sanctuary and I shall dwell within them." A grammatical question immediately becomes apparent. If the Jews are commanded to make a sanctuary, why does G-d say He will dwell within "them" and not within "it"? Within them, as explained by Chasidic literature, means within every Jew. For, within the soul of every Jew is a place devoted and dedicated to G-dliness.

On the above point, the previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, explained: The site of the sanctuary remains sacred, even in times of exile and desolation. The Midrash says that the Divine Presence never departs from the Western Wall. The destruction of the Temple is limited to its building alone. This is true, too, of the personal sanctuary within every Jew. For, the foundation of every Jew is whole. Every form of spiritual desolation found in the Jewish people is only in those aspects of a person analogous to the part of the building above the foundation. The foundation of the individual sanctuary, however, remains in its holy state.

Expanding on this idea, the Rebbe has spoken on numerous occasions about the need to turn our homes into mini-sanctuaries. This is accomplished by turning our homes into sanctuaries for Torah study, charity, and prayer. In addition, we would do well to fill the house with true Jewish furnishings—Jewish books and a charity box attached to a wall so that it becomes part of the actual structure.

Each member of the family, including children of all ages, can also participate by making their own rooms into mini-sanctuaries. Torah study, prayer, and charity can all be practiced in the individual mini-sanctuary, as well as other mitzvoth.

Within every Jew, within each Jewish home, is that spark of G-dliness which, though it might be dormant, remains totally indestructible. It is the sanctuary that G-d commanded us to make in this week's Torah portion. May we all merit to beautify and enhance our own personal sanctuary.

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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CUSTOMS

If we have a rabbinical question, how many rabbis should we consult?

If we have consulted a rabbi and he has forbidden a certain matter in question, we are not permitted to consult another rabbi about the same question, unless we first advise him of the decision of the first rabbi.

(Kitzur Shulchan Aruch)

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Jewish tradition speaks of Moshiach ben David and Moshiach ben Yosef. The term "Moshiach" unqualified always refers to Moshiach the descendant of David of the tribe of Judah. He is the actual final



New Mesivta in Hungary Will Be First Yeshiva Since the Holocaust



Rabbi Shlomo Köves, one of the Rebbe's shlichim to Hungary and the rov of the Association of Torah-Observant Communities in Hungary, met with Hungarian Minister of Education Bálázs Hankó for an update on the rapid growth of Jewish communities in the country and the ever-expanding educational institutions.

During the meeting, Rabbi Köves shared exciting news: for the first time since the Holocaust—80 years ago—a new Mesivta is set to open in a massive campus strategically located on the main route between Hungary and Vienna. The yeshiva will serve the children of shlichim from across the region.

In the course of the meeting, the minister also shared a major development: Hungary's prestigious Milton Friedman University, which operates under the Jewish community led by Rabbi Köves, will now be offering BA and MA degrees in Jewish studies. This initiative acknowledges the widespread demand for structured academic programs in Jewish studies, an area where university-level offerings remain scarce both in Europe and the United States.