



IT HAPPENED ONCE

The events of this story took place in Poland before the establishment of the great universities. In those times, various aristocrats supported private schools of science called academies.

In the province of Lithuania there were three such academies, each supported by different princes. One, located near Vilna, was owned by Prince Radziwill, another, near Vitebsk, was owned by Prince Sheksinski, and the third, located on the shores of the Dnieper, between Dobrovna and Liadi, was owned by Prince Decrit. In those days, the Polish people were not very accomplished in the sciences, and the actual instructors at these academies were imported from France.

On the property of Prince Sheksinski there was a big palace, and in its courtyard was a sundial. For two years the sundial had not functioned properly, and would not tell the correct time between the hours of two and five in the afternoon. The prince had already consulted many leading experts, scientists, and professors about this problem, but no one could figure it out. When the prince learned that there was a very wise Jew who was well known for his problem-solving, he sent for the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad Chasidut) to come to his property and help him discover the cause of the sundial's malfunction.

At first, the Alter Rebbe refused to go, heeding the advice of our Sages not to get involved in political matters, but after he was reassured that no precious time devoted to Torah learning would be wasted, he agreed, and traveled to the palace.

Even though the Alter Rebbe spoke Polish well, he preferred to speak Yiddish, and, so, his father-in-law served as translator. After examining the sundial several times during the problematic hours, he said, "It is brought down in the Talmud that the sun is directly overhead in the middle of the day, and that nothing can intercede between the sun and the earth during this time except for clouds. However, after noon, when the sun starts to go down, it is possible for various objects to interfere with the sun's rays. It is my opinion that there is a mountain to the south of us, at a distance of 12 to 15 parsat. It seems as if the trees growing on its peak have grown too tall and are obstructing the sun's rays between the hours of 2 and 5, preventing them from reaching the sundial. When the sun sinks little further, the trees are no longer in the way, and the sundial works properly after this time."

The prince was amazed at the Alter Rebbe's reasoning, and sent a special emissary to find the area described to see if indeed it was so.

Upon hearing this, the head of the prince's academy, a leading engineer by the name of Professor Marseilles, ridiculed the opinion of the Alter Rebbe. He laughingly said, "Those Jews imagine that all wisdom is contained in their Talmud. Zelig the doctor learns his medicine from it, Boruch the gardener learns how to prepare the soil for planting, and Zanvil the merchant learns how to cheat the landowners from this Talmud... Now, this character imagines that the sun's rays only reach the earth according to the Talmud!"

The Alter Rebbe replied to his criticism, saying: "Empirical evidence is the axe which fells those who are arrogant in their belief in science."

"Is that also a saying found in your Talmud?" asked the professor.

"No," answered the Alter Rebbe, "it is attributed to the great Galinus, who also had to suffer with those who were arrogant."

Word leaked out about the Alter Rebbe's diagnosis of the problem, and before the prince could find the exact spot, a group of troublemakers found the trees which were obstructing the light and chopped them down without telling anyone.

A few days later, when the grounds-keeper on the prince's estate reported that

the sundial was in perfect working order, the prince was very surprised, but it was simply thought that the clock had spontaneously fixed itself.

Eventually, the Alter Rebbe's father-in-law heard the rumor that the trees had been chopped down in secret, and he found those responsible and brought them before the prince, demanding that they tell him what they had done. Admitting their guilt, the truth of the Alter Rebbe's wisdom was confirmed, and his fame soon spread among the ranks of the scientific community in Poland.

L'Chaim

The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

יוסד תור ימי השלושים
Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"To You I lifted up my eyes, You Who dwell in heaven" (Psalm 123:1)

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

Four hundred shekels of silver, in negotiable currency (Gen. 23:16)

The Torah foresaw the future difficulties Jews would have defending their rights to their holy sites. The Torah therefore devotes much time detailing the transaction by which Abraham acquired the Cave of Machpela, and the exact sum he spent to purchase it. (*Drashot El-Ami*)

Who ruled over all that he had (Gen. 24:2)

These words refer to Abraham and indicate just how great a person he was. Though Abraham amassed wealth, he did not become like some other wealthy people for whom money becomes the only motivating factor in their lives. Abraham ruled over his possessions, and not the other way around. (*Klai Yakar*)

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field (Gen. 24:63)

Rashi explains that the word "meditate" means "to pray-as if pouring forth the contents of one's heart." If such is the case, why didn't the Torah explicitly state that Isaac went out to pray in the field?

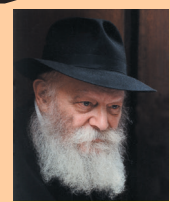
We are supposed to take a lesson for our general conduct from the way Isaac prayed. A person should not call attention to himself and publicly announce his fear of Heaven. Rather, we should conduct ourselves as Isaac did--quietly, and without fanfare. A passer-by would have thought that Isaac was only strolling in the field, when in reality he was composing the afternoon prayer. (*Leket Amarim*)

And Abraham was old, well on in days (Gen. 24:1)

In Hebrew, the phrase "well on in days" is "ba bayamim"--literally, "he had come with his days." Abraham's life was full, and he utilized every day to the fullest; he did not waste even one day.

A hint as to how we can achieve this ourselves is found in the letters of the word "bayamim"--"ba" and "yamim." "Ba" (spelled with a bait in Hebrew) means two. Abraham always had the image of two distinct days in his mind--the day of birth and the day of death. We must keep in mind why we are born and the fact that we will ultimately be accountable for our deeds after we die. (*Divrei Tzadikim*)

4:15 Candle Lighting Time
NY Metro Area
21 Cheshvan / November 22
Torah Portion *Chayei Sarah*
Shabbat ends 5:16 PM



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Chayei Sara, tells us about the mission upon which Abraham sent Eliezer his servant, and the oath he made Eliezer take beforehand. Enjoining him to find the proper wife for his son Isaac, Abraham tells Eliezer: "Put, I pray you, your hand under my thigh."

Customarily, when a person takes an oath, he must hold something holy upon which he swears. This is why Abraham told Eliezer to place his hand under his thigh, for Abraham had performed the mitzva of circumcision when he was ninety-nine years old.

Some perplexing questions arise from Abraham's behavior. According to our Sages, the patriarchs performed the mitzvot even before we received the Torah. Did Abraham, then, have nothing else upon which to ask Eliezer to swear, other than the mitzva of circumcision? And, if Abraham already followed the laws of the Torah, why did he wait until G-d personally commanded him to circumcise himself at such an advanced age?

Chasidic philosophy explains that there is a great difference between mitzvot performed before the Torah was given and after. Prior to the Revelation, mitzvot--even those performed by our ancestors--did not have the power to bring holiness into the world. Physical reality was unchanged by the performance of a mitzva, and the physical objects that were used remained in their former state. There was an unbridgeable gap between the spiritual and physical realms. The power to combine the spiritual and the physical was only given to the Jewish people after the Torah was revealed on Mount Sinai. Since that time, when a Jew performs a mitzva with a physical object, that object is elevated and becomes holy.

No matter how refined a person may be, he is limited in his ability to imbue the physical with G-dliness. But, since we do mitzvot with the power given to us by G-d and the strength that comes from His commandments the physical world is elevated by our actions.

The only mitzva Abraham performed as a direct command from G-d was circumcision. Thus, this mitzva carried the power of G-d's command. This explains why Abraham waited so long to circumcise himself. He wanted to perform the mitzva in such a manner that his body would acquire holiness. Because the circumcision was done in response to a direct command from G-d, Abraham was given the opportunity to make his flesh holy.

This mitzva, therefore, was the only one which Abraham could possibly ask Eliezer to swear on for any other physical article he had used in his life to perform mitzvot did not have the same holiness.

A History Mystery in Albany's Wallenberg Park

By Rabbi Mendel Rubin

In downtown Albany, across from the Federal Building and Park on North Pearl Street, and just down the street on Clinton Ave from the Palace Theater, and just across Broadway from the entrance to the Skyway linear park -- there's a small city park called "Wallenberg Park" dedicated in memory of the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg who saved many Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust and then disappeared without a trace after being arrested by the Russians.

There are many monuments and plaques and dedications to Raoul Wallenberg in many cities around the world. He is one of the most recognized righteous gentiles of the Holocaust.

The dedication of Wallenberg Park in Albany took place in mid-1980's under the Albany Mayor Thomas Whalen administration.

A woman from Holland reached out to a local historian to find out more about two other plaques placed alongside the Wallenberg stone in the center of the park.

Two other men, aside for Raoul Wallenberg, both righteous gentiles, are also recognized with plaques in the same park in downtown Albany, one across the other.

These two men worked tirelessly to save thousands of lives by issuing transit/exit visas that enabled Jewish refugees to flee the Holocaust and spend the war years in Shanghai China.

This woman from Holland is most

interested to find out who placed the Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara & Dutch diplomat Jan Zwartendijk plaques right across from each other in Wallenberg Park in 1997?

This may be the only place in the world (as far as she knows) where both are recognized together! The Albany historian she contacted then contacted me.

Let me explain some of the background to these two men, the Japanese and the Dutch diplomats, and why it is so personally significant to both my wife Raizy and I, and that this dual recognition happen to be in Albany NY!!

Sugihara is better known for the thousands of transit visas he issued to Jews escaping the Holocaust, most of whom spent the war years in Shanghai, saving their lives (including my paternal grandfather R' Moshe Rubin, and Raizy's maternal grandfather R' Shmuel Tzvi Fuchs, among thousands of others) but much less is known about Jan Zwartendijk the Dutch diplomat in the same Kovno/Kanaus who started the whole exit visa process and secured the island of Curacao as a fictional but legal end point to the visa's travel.

Interesting as to who locally knew of all this and invested all the effort to make this public recognition happen??

That's what the Holland woman wants to know, and now so do we!

Hope to find out more about this! Stay tuned for more on this local history mystery!

Dedicated in honor of a dear friend of the
Lubavitch Youth Organization
Mr. Joseph Cooper

SLICE OF LIFE

My Grandmother's Candlesticks

By Diane Abrams



As the summer of 1970 approached, the end of the Vietnam War was in sight. The years of marches, legal battles, demonstrations, letter writing, and political activism were behind me. Although there was relief that the war was ending and my work was gratifying, there was an empty place in my heart. An anxiety I couldn't explain. The community that had seemed so solid was splintering into thousands of pieces.

My friend Flo Kennedy received an invitation from friends in California to use their apartment for a few weeks, and she invited me to join her. I was more than ready for a change of scenery. Another friend of ours, Ginny, also came West for a few days. The apartment in San Francisco had a view of the Golden Gate Bridge directly out of the living room window.

Before I made the trip out West, someone mentioned to me that they knew a couple who had joined a farming commune. It was one of a number of experimental communities that had sprouted in Mendocino County north of San Francisco during the '60s. His description of vineyards growing on the hills reaching down to the Pacific Ocean made Mendocino sound like one of the truly

beautiful places in this country. Curious to see the commune for myself, I asked Ginny if she would be interested in going there with me. We headed north and arrived at four in the afternoon, having heard that visitors were always welcome for dinner. This commune was touted as an avant-garde spiritual outpost with members having decided to live simply, without the hypocrisy and materialism of bourgeois society. As we drove onto the grounds, we were impressed by the teepees and hexagonal igloo-type structures. We saw young people working the earth.

Ginny and I entered the communal dining room and were delighted by the aroma of freshly baked bread ready and waiting. It was time for the communal farmers to be called to dinner. One of the members ceremoniously took out a ram's horn and blew loud blasts to call the rest of the group to the dining room. In response, people began filing into the dining room, and I experienced a jolt to my memory. The last time I had seen or heard the blowing of a ram's horn was in a synagogue, on Yom Kippur. Though I had drifted away from Jewish life, I still appreciated the solemnity of that holy day when people are called to engage in introspection, take stock of their lives, and return to G-d.

When all of the diners were present, everyone stood, linked hands, and chanted, "Ohmm." Once again, I was reminded of a tradition I'd grown up with — expressing gratitude prior to the beginning of a meal. The freshly baked bread stirred up the memory of my grandmother's special Sabbath challahs that she baked for her family each week. These avant-garde people, I told myself, had sure developed a precise set of rituals for themselves.

As soon as I finished my fruit plate, I told Ginny I wanted to leave. Back in the car, I found myself mulling over what we had seen. I was not inspired by that hodgepodge of different traditions. Suddenly and clearly, I understood that rituals play a key role in transmitting a way of life as well as important

values to future generations. Seeing the people at the commune trying to latch onto other people's traditions in such a seemingly haphazard and desperate manner seemed shallow and pathetic. People cannot do without rituals, I realized, and if they reject their own, or didn't have a set of meaningful rituals handed down to them, they would try to create their own. But I did have a family that handed down rituals and a way of life to me.

When I returned to Manhattan after that summer in California, in September 1971, I searched through the boxes stored in my parents' garage and retrieved my grandmother's two silver candlesticks, which she had left me upon her death. I tracked down photographs of my four great-grandfathers, put them in frames, and set them up on my desk. Although I had traveled far from my early connection to family tradition, the solid Jewish education I had received and the traditional home where I was raised made moving in this direction feel natural to me.

Friday afternoons, I would check the time for sunset — the onset of Sabbath and the time for candle lighting. Watching the sky as the sun began to set, a feeling of peacefulness would slowly descend upon me.

Diane Schuler Abrams is an attorney who taught the first Women and the Law course in 1969 at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and then at New York University Law School. An activist at the forefront of the fight for women's rights in the 1970s, she has written about women's rights and also about issues related to the Jewish community. After reading an article that she published about her grandmother in 1974, the Rebbe requested that she write more about her grandmother. Diane is now completing an intergenerational memoir titled My Grandmother's Candlesticks: Feminism and Judaism.

This article appeared in the Fall 2021 issue of the Lubavitch International magazine.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

THE JOB OF AN ACCOUNTANT

By the Grace of G-d
9th of Sivan, 5739 [June 4, 1979]
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. [...]
Manchester, Eng.

Greeting and Blessing:

Inasmuch as everything is by Divine Providence, and I note from your stationery that you are a chartered accountant, I want to call your attention to the well known teaching of our Sages, based on the principle of "Know Him in all your ways." In light of this, I trust that you are utilizing your professional contacts with Jews to encourage them in the matter of Cheshbon Tzedek [honest introspection], which every Jew is expected to make from time to time, in order to ensure that his everyday life and conduct is fully in keeping with the Torah and Mitzvoth [Divine commands].

There is the well known saying of the Baal Shem Tov [the founder of Chassidism] that everything in a Jew's life is instructive as to how to serve G-d. Thus, there is a special and basic instruction that one can derive from accountancy, namely, that where there is a discrepancy even of only a penny, it indicates a basic error in the bookkeeping, as though it involved a very substantial amount, which is not the case in ordinary business transactions, where a discrepancy of a penny would be of no consequence. This helps to understand better the imperative, "Be careful with a small Mitzvo [precept] as with a stringent one." At first glance it is difficult to understand how one can compare a small Mitzvo with a stringent one, especially as the Torah itself terms one small and the other stringent. But in the light of the above, if one truly makes a Cheshbon Tzedek, one must realize that all Mitzvoth come from the same Source, and each one of them "sanctifies us with His commandments." Therefore, a transgression of even a "small" Mitzvo is

basically as deplorable as transgressing a stringent one. There is surely no need to elaborate to you any further.

I trust you had a joyous and inspiring Yom Tov of Mattan Torah [holiday of Shavuot], and may the inspiration be with you and yours throughout the year.

With blessing,
M. Schneerson

YOU CAN ALWAYS IMPROVE

By the Grace of G-d
4th of Cheshvan, 5736 [October 9, 1975]
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

In addition to what we spoke personally before your departure, this is to confirm also in writing the letter which you left for me in the office prior to it. At the same time, I wish to take this opportunity to emphasize to you again the need to make additional efforts in the study of the Torah, both in quantity and quality, the kind of study that leads to action, namely the observance of the Mitzvoth with Hiddur. And there is always room for improvement in all matters of Torah and Mitzvoth, which are infinite, being derived from the Infinite. It is for this reason that our Sages tell us, "Encourage the energetic." For however energetic and meticulous one is in all matters of Torah and Mitzvoth, there is always room for a higher level.

With regard to the various options relating to Parnosso, about which you write, it is difficult to give specific advice from a distance inasmuch as such matters vary and change from time to time and from place to place, and any advice can become outdated before it is received. Therefore, the thing to do is to consult with local friends who are familiar with the local situation and circumstances. And may G-d, whose benevolent Providence extends to each and every one individually, lead you in the way that is truly good for you.

I will remember you and the others mentioned in your letter in prayer, when visiting the holy resting place of my father-in-law of saintly memory.

May G-d grant that you should have good news to report in all above.

With blessing,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

During the Era of the Redemption, physical delights will be "as freely available as dust." Although they will be accessible--and we will partake of them for the sake of our

health and physical welfare--we will consider them like "dust," i.e., as being utterly worthless. Though we will live in an era of material prosperity, our attention will not be focused on it. Rather, "the occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d."

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

The Torah portion is Chayei Sara--the Life of Sara. Generally, the name of the Torah portion is taken from the first few words of that portion, and it reveals much about the content of the portion.

This week's portion, however, at first glance seems to be different. It speaks of Sara's death and Abraham's purchase of a proper burial spot for her. It also discusses that Abraham sent his trusted disciple Eliezer on the mission of finding a wife for Isaac, and the subsequent marriage of Isaac to Rebecca. Why, then, is this portion, which deals not one iota with Sara's life here on earth, called the Life of Sara?

To this question the Rebbe brings the most exquisite answer. When speaking about life, life in its truest sense, and certainly the life of the first Matriarch of our people, we speak not of the transitory life of this world. We are, rather, indicating eternal life.

When a child continues in the righteous ways of his parents, the spiritual influence of the parents continues and endures forever, as the Talmud teaches: "As long as the offspring are alive, he is alive." As long as the offspring continue in the path of their parents, the parents are alive.

Since Isaac and his wife Rebecca followed in the footsteps of Sara, Sara truly remained "alive" in the most accurate sense.

May we all merit to have our children follow in the path of our righteous Matriarch Sara, thus assuring eternal life for ourselves and for them.

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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Soldier's Tefillin Miraculously Survives Hezbollah Missile Fire



The following was shared by a soldier fighting in Lebanon:

With gratitude to Hashem, my brothers and I are back in Israel from the battlefield in southern Lebanon. I would like to share with you all a great miracle that happened this past Erev Shabbos. Our mission was complete, and as we were waiting

to start our journey back to Israel, the Hummer with all our bags was hit by an anti-tank missile. Baruch Hashem, everyone is okay; however, at that moment, I saw all of our gear go up in flames before my very eyes.

Back on base, we were told that very few items were saved from the Hummer. Thinking, "What are the odds?" I went to check. To my surprise, I found my bag. To my amazement and a great miracle from Hashem, the tallis came out without a scratch, and my tefillin only needs to be checked—the scrolls might need to find a new home. These are things that cannot be explained and are truly the work of the almighty. Tefillin is just as important as our rifles. Hashem gives us the strength to carry our rifles into battle. There is no other way—they are our shield and our protection.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask one thing from my brothers and sisters: bli neder, try to take upon yourselves to wrap tefillin and light Shabbos candles to give us, the soldiers, the will to keep fighting and to strengthen the love and protection from above. Shavua Tov. Am Yisrael Chai!

CUSTOMS

Why are three steps taken backward and forward before the silent Amida prayer?

We take three steps backward to make sure that the four cubits around us are unoccupied. We take three steps forward for numerous reasons, among them: when a servant approaches a king, he does so with short, hesitant steps to display respect; when the priest was ready to mount the altar with the sacrifice it was necessary for him to take three steps to do so.