



Long ago in the small village of Sassov there lived a Jewish wood-chopper, a man of deep and pure faith. No one knew his name, and so, he was known simply as "the villager."

All week he made his way into the forest and chopped wood which he sold in the town. During the week, he and his family lived frugally, eating just enough to sustain themselves. But for the Holy Shabbat, he joyfully bought challahs, candles, and other delicacies. Not only did the family enjoy the Shabbat treats, but despite their poverty, they always invited others to join them. At times they even went without food themselves so that their guests had enough to eat.

One Friday morning the villager stood with his bundles in the village square waiting for customers to buy his wood when a woman came and bought the whole lot for six silver coins. He was about to begin his customary Shabbat purchases when the tzadik Reb Moshe Leib of Sassov approached him with a request. There was a woman in the town who had recently been widowed. She was so overcome with grief that she lay in bed all day weeping, and so was completely unable to take care of her two young children. Her health was failing and the poor orphans were going hungry. Could he help? Now the villager was a good-hearted man. He immediately took two silver coins and handed them over to the tzadik. "Thank you so much, but could you perhaps give a bit more?" The wood-cutter reached into his pocket and handed over another two coins. Again, the tzadik, thanked him and asked for maybe a bit more for the family. "I'm sorry Rebbe, but I can't give any more. I have only two coins left. As it is I won't have enough money to buy wine and challa, but I must leave enough to buy candles to brighten our Shabbat."

Reb Moshe Leib was moved by the man's kindness and his love for the mitzva of Shabbat candles. He turned to the man and asked, "Do you have any valuable object in your house?" "No, Rebbe, I have nothing except an old cow."

"When you return home," said the Rebbe, "sell the cow, and with the money you make, buy the first thing that comes your way. I give you my blessing that G-d will grant you success."

The wood-cutter ran home happily, brimming with anticipation. But when he told his wife of the plan to sell the cow, she absolutely refused. "How can we sell the cow? Its milk is our main source of food. How do you imagine we'll live?" And with that the discussion ended.

When Shabbat was over the couple went to the barn to feed their cow. No sooner had they entered the barn when a carriage with two men pulled up. "Do you have a cow for sale?" they asked. The astonished Jew saw the words of the tzadik materializing before his eyes. His wife blurted out: "We'll sell only for a hundred rubles!" The men agreed to pay the absurd price. Now, it was clear that the blessing was having its effect.

The next morning the villager went to town with the hundred rubles intending to carry out the Rebbe's instructions. He noticed a group of landowners gathered for the auction of a choice estate. The man's simple faith was so great that he pushed himself into the crowd intent upon buying the estate regardless of the fact that he couldn't afford it.

The wealthy landowners looked at the poor Jew. What a nerve he had to try to bid against them! They would punish him for his chutzpa and at the same time help themselves. They agreed not to bid on the property at all. When the Jew's offer would be accepted, he would lose everything because there was no way that he could afford the complete payment. Their plan succeeded. The villager bought the estate, giving the one hundred rubles as a deposit, and returned home feeling very satisfied.

That night as the Jewish family slept, there was a loud knock at the door. They were shocked to see the village priest standing in the doorway. "I understand that you bought an estate today, and I would like to be your partner," the priest said. Having

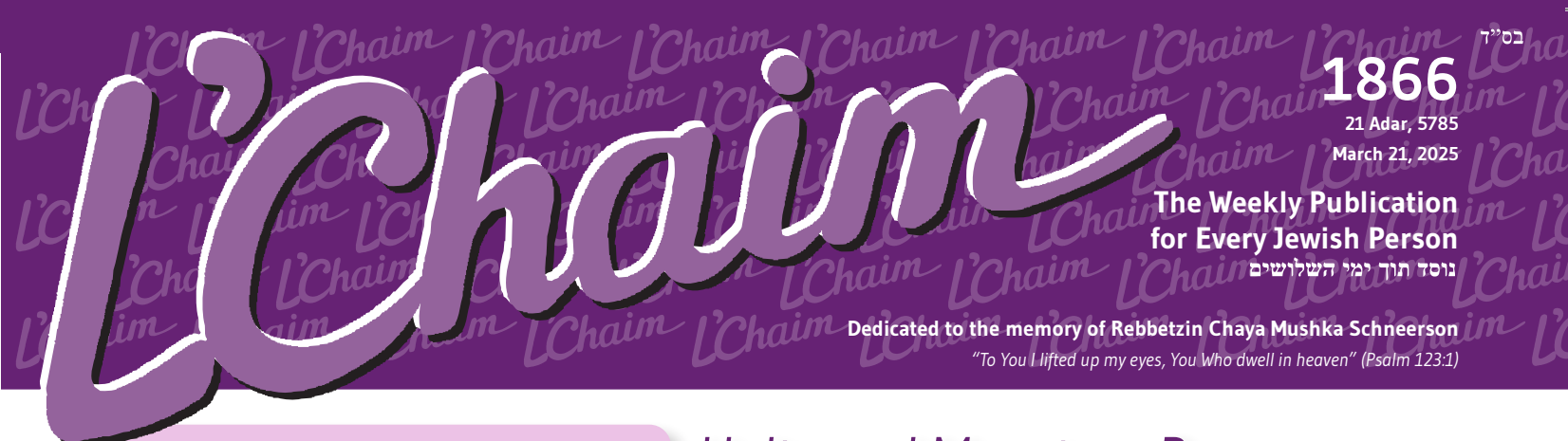
heard about the low price, he figured he could take advantage of the simple wood-cutter.

"I agree to the partnership if you will pay the total outstanding amount," answered the Jew. The priest eagerly accepted, handed him the money, and agreed to formalize the deal in a few days. When the day came to complete payment on the estate, the furious landowners couldn't believe their eyes as the Jew paid up the entire balance.

The villager set out to visit his newly acquired estate. Travelling down the road he saw a group of people crowded around an accident. "What happened?" he inquired.

"This priest was killed when his horses panicked and overturned the wagon," was the reply.

The Jew approached the accident site. It was his "partner" the priest. Now, the property belonged to him alone. The blessing of Reb Moshe Leib had been fulfilled, and in gratitude the villager distributed large amounts of charity to the poor throughout his long and prosperous life.



The Weekly Publication  
for Every Jewish Person  
נוסד תר"י 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

**And Moses gathered together all the Congregation of the Children of Israel and said to them: "These are the things which G-d has commanded that you should do" (Ex. 35:1)**

Every Jew approaches a mitzva with his own personal thoughts and intentions, according to his intellect and level of understanding. Yet the physical performance of the mitzva is carried out in the same manner by all. Moses was able to assemble all the Jews together in true unity because the performance of mitzvot is common to all Jews, no matter what their other differences may be. (Rebbe of Tshortkov)

**On the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day (Ex. 35:2)**

Rabbi Bunim once said: There is no other mitzva as all-encompassing as that of sukka. A person actually enters the mitzva with his whole body, his clothes, and even his shoes.

Rabbi Shlomo Leib of Lentashna responded: The mitzva of Shabbat is even greater. One need not lift a finger to bring it on; Shabbat arrives by itself. And, the holiness of Shabbat totally encompasses everyone and everything for more than 24 hours.

**All the wise-hearted among you shall come, and make all that G-d has commanded. (35:10)**

When a person decides to do a mitzva, it is preferable to do it immediately, as the opportunity presents itself, and not procrastinate. Doing a mitzva with diligence and alacrity prevents all kinds of obstacles from arising to prevent the performance of the mitzva at a later time. That is why the verse says, "All the wise-hearted among you shall come"--one who is truly wise--"shall come"--without delay. (HaDrash Vehaiyun)



### 6:51 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area  
21 Adar / March 21  
Torah Portion Vayakhel / Parshas Parah  
Shabbat ends 7:51 pm



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

For the past few weeks we have been reading those Torah portions dealing with the commandments and preparations necessary for the building of the Tabernacle. This week, in Vayakhel, we read about its actual erection.

Before the Tabernacle was built, Moses called together all of the Children of Israel and commanded them to keep the Sabbath. "Six days shall work be done, and on the seventh you shall have a holy day. A Sabbath of rest to G-d."

The Talmud explains that the juxtaposition of Shabbat and the building of the Tabernacle teaches us which types of work we must avoid in order to keep the Sabbath. These are the 39 categories of labor which are prohibited on Shabbat, and from which are derived all other activities which may not be pursued on the holy day.

Nothing in the Torah occurs coincidentally. The fact that the Torah chooses the building of the Tabernacle to teach us which labors are prohibited on Shabbat shows that there is a connection between these two subjects. Furthermore, the relationship between Shabbat and the building of the Tabernacle has another, deeper dimension. Every one of the 39 types of labor involved in building the Sanctuary is the prototype of the labors we perform during the six days of the week. And, because everything in the physical world reflects its spiritual source, all our physical labor is the building of the Tabernacle. All the work which we perform has the potential to be elevated and turned into holiness.

But not only is the Tabernacle the source for the work in our lives, it also serves as our lives' goals as well. Every task we perform during our daily routine should be utilized to bring holiness into the world, the same function which the original Tabernacle served.

The Torah states: "Six days shall you work." Our Sages explain that this is a positive commandment, not merely the granting of permission. Man is compelled to toil to earn his daily bread. We see that the prayers and Torah readings prescribed for weekdays are shorter than those read on Shabbat and holidays, to enable a person to go out into the world to perform his daily tasks. It is through one's physical labor that he molds and shapes the world into a "sanctuary" for G-d.

How do we elevate our daily, mundane tasks? "In all your ways shall you know Him," explains the Torah. All of our activities, no matter how seemingly trivial, must be performed with the proper thoughts in mind. When we eat, drink, sleep and go about our business according to Torah law, we are cognizant of our Creator and transform our lives into sanctuaries to G-d.

The basic difference between the Tabernacle and our own physical world is that the Tabernacle was an actual manifestation of G-dliness, whereas the physical world is still in a state of potential. Man's task is to transform that potential into actual realization, by living according to the dictum, "In all your ways shall you know Him."

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## Unity and Monetary Purpose

By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

In Fiddler on the Roof, a memorable moment arises when Perchick declares, "Money is the world's curse," and Tevye responds, "May the Lord smite me with it." Money is often a source of friction in human relationships. Many marital disputes and court cases revolve around financial matters. Yet, it can also be a source of inspiration. Warren Buffet's 2006 donation of eighty-five billion dollars to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation inspired global philanthropy. Philanthropy begets philanthropy—generosity inspires others to give.

Money itself is neither a curse nor a blessing; our attitude toward it shapes the outcome. When we view money merely as a means to fulfill our desires, it fuels greed. This greed is amplified when we see others hoarding wealth. But when money is used for spreading happiness, goodwill, and charity, it inspires us to overcome greed and contribute to the common good.

This principle explains why Moses gathered the people before building the Tabernacle. After the powerful experience at Sinai, where the nation unified with a single purpose, Moses wanted to recreate that unity in the Tabernacle. Moses recognized that the greatest barrier to unity is money, and thus, addressed this issue before begin-

ning the fundraising campaign for the Tabernacle.

Before announcing the campaign, Moses shared the law, "You shall not kindle a fire in all your dwellings on Shabbat." While seemingly unrelated to the Tabernacle, this law is deeply connected to unity. Fire is a metaphor for passion. On Shabbat, our passion should not be directed toward material comforts or the beauty of our homes. This lesson must extend throughout the week: money is not just a means to satisfy our needs and desires but a tool to promote holiness and goodwill.

Our sages taught that gold was created for the Tabernacle. While we may keep extra gold for ourselves, its primary purpose is to serve the Divine cause. Money should not be used simply for personal gain but for a higher purpose. Fire also symbolizes anger and divisiveness. When we see money as a means to spread holiness, it no longer breeds conflict. Instead of fighting over our share, we work together to use money for the common good.

Once the people internalized this truth, they gave generously to the Tabernacle. The fundraising was so successful that donors were eventually asked to stop contributing! They had learned that money's true purpose is not for hoarding but for uniting people and advancing a divine cause.



# SLICE OF LIFE

Mother of Released Hostage: 'It Was the Merit of the Prayers'



Sasha Troufanov was released from Hamas captivity on Shabbat. On Sunday, he took the first opportunity to lay tefillin for the first time and thank G-d for his release on Sunday.

On Shabbat morning—Saturday, Feb. 15—Alexander ("Sasha") Troufanov was released by Hamas after spending 498 days held captive by Palestinian terrorists. He was released together with Sagui Dekel-Chen and Iair Horn, all three of them having been kidnapped on Oct. 7.

Reunited with his family, it didn't take long for Troufanov to thank G-d for his new-found freedom. On Sunday morning, Troufanov donned tefillin and prayed with the assistance of Rabbi Berel Lazar, the chief rabbi of Russia. This was the first time that Troufanov had ever wrapped tefillin, marking his bar mitzvah.

Since her own release from Hamas captivity in November 2023, Troufanov's mother, Elena, has been in regular contact with Lazar for strength, resolve, spiritual guidance and help to secure her son's release.

The tefillin was part of a larger gift from the Jewish community of Russia—Troufanov's birthplace—that also included a bag with his name printed in both Hebrew and Russian, a siddur prayer book and a Chitas. Lazar presented the package to Troufanov at the Sheba Medical Center, where the former hostages are recovering. Lazar then helped him lay the tefillin and recite the Shema prayer.

Troufanov's mother expressed her deepest

gratitude to the global Jewish community that came together in prayer for her son's release.

"I know that the prayers of everyone, all those who prayed in the merit of Sasha; they were what protected him. I know this with certainty. Because there [in Gaza] he had moments that were very difficult," she said. "He had moments there where he was really close to being killed. But G-d protected him."

## A FAMILY TORN APART

Born in Rostov, Russia, in 1995 to Vitaly and Elena Troufanov, Sasha moved to Israel with his family when he was 3 years old. They quickly settled in Kibbutz Nir Oz. Sasha studied electrical engineering at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and later moved to central Israel to work for Amazon on its web-services team.

On the weekend of Oct. 7, Sasha and his partner, 29-year-old Sapir Cohen, were visiting his parents at the kibbutz. Nir Oz was among the first communities targeted when Palestinian terrorists launched their attack that morning.

Despite a brave defense, the kibbutz's security team was overwhelmed with many either killed or captured. For hours, Hamas and affiliated Palestinian terrorists moved through the community, killing residents, taking hostages and burning homes. A quarter of Nir Oz's population was murdered, kidnapped or severely wounded. Among those killed was 50-year-old Vitaly Troufanov. Taken hostage were Elena, 50; her mother, Irena Tati, 78; Sasha and Sapir.

## ONE BIG JEWISH FAMILY

While the Troufanovs left Russia in the late 1990s, Elena's mother, Irena Tati, continued living in Rostov for years, forming a close relationship with Rabbi Chaim and Kaila Danzinger, Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries who lead the Jewish Community of Rostov.

"Irena was in synagogue every single week, came to my wife's women's classes every week and was a very active member of the community," said Rabbi Danzinger. About a year before Oct. 7 Irena relocated to Israel to live closer to her children, settling near them in Kibbutz Nir Oz.

Immediately following the terror attack, the Danzingers realized their close friend Irena lived in one of the most heavily impacted towns and tried calling her, but her phone was off. "We weren't sure if she was kidnapped, or G-d forbid she had been killed," recalled the rabbi. About

a week later they learned that she, together with her family, had been kidnapped.

That's when Danzinger contacted Rabbi Lazar to let him know that three Russian citizens—Irena, Elena and Sasha—were being held captive in Gaza, and Lazar began immediately advocating on the family's behalf in Moscow.

When Kaila Danzinger celebrated her 40th birthday in Rostov later that winter, instead of a big birthday bash she organized a women's evening of song and prayer in the merit of the safe return of the hostages. In an allusion to the tambourine of Miriam the Prophetess, the women decorated tambourines that evening, making three extra ones—for Irena, Elena and Sapir.

The very next day, on Nov. 29, 2023, Elena and Irena were released by Hamas. Sapir was released the next day on Nov. 30 as part of a week-long cease fire.

But Sasha remained behind.

In the months that followed, the Troufanov family campaigned nonstop for Sasha's release, creating various social-media pages sharing details of his life and updating the public on his status. They also prayed. Irena had been keeping Shabbat since her days in Rostov, but now Elena joined her in celebrating the holy day each and every week, and calling on all Jewish women and girls to fill the world with light by kindling the Shabbat candles.

During this period the family also received a dollar bill from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, provided by Rabbi Yosef Wolvovskiy of Chabad Jewish Center in Glastonbury, Conn.

Throughout Sasha's captivity in Gaza, the terrorist released several "proof-of-life" videos featuring him, part of the group's continued acts of psychological terror. Two days before his release, a final video was shared of him being led down the beach on a fishing trip, as a final sadistic act capping off nearly 500 days in captivity.

"I thank G-d, the Creator of the world, I am really thankful that He released my son," Elena said. "I am so thankful to Him [G-d], and I know that it was all from the merit of the prayers of all of us. All of Am Yisrael. All those who prayed in the merit of Sasha."

But Elena isn't done praying:

"We continue to pray until the last hostage ... all must return."

# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

## MEETING HALFWAY

From a letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

It is significant that the "Evening with Lubavitch" is taking place on Rosh Chodesh Adar. In olden days, when the Beit Hamikdash [Holy Temple] was in existence, the first day of Adar was noted for the "Shekalim Call" which went out on that day, whereupon every Jew contributed a half-shekel to the Sanctuary chest which provided the public sacrifices on behalf of all the Jewish people.

The saintly Rebbe, the "Tzemach Tzedek" (so named after his monumental Jewish legal work), in discussing the mitzva of Machtzit HaShekel (the half-shekel in one of his renowned Chasidic-philosophical works, offers some insights into this mitzva which requires no more and no less than half a shekel. It indicates, he explains, that when a Jew makes a contribution toward a sacred cause, it is immediately matched by a similar benevolence from G-d to him, in accordance with the principle that human initiative acts like an impulse which calls forth a corresponding impulse from on High. The two together, constitute the complete Shekel haKodesh ("holy shekel").

Moreover, though human endeavor must be voluntary and spontaneous, the assurance has been given that where there is a resolute intention, the person receives aid from On High to carry it to fruition in the fullest measure.

To be sure, the physical Sanctuary in Jerusalem was destroyed and the sacrificial service interrupted. Nevertheless, in a spiritual sense, the Sanctuary and all that was connected

with it have never ceased; they exist in our daily experience and practice of Torah teachings and mitzvot. This is one of the aspects of our infinite Torah which is in no way subject to the limitations of time and place.

The mitzva of the Half Shekel teaches us, among other things, that human effort, provided it is sincere and resolute, is "met half way" by divine Grace. Thus, though the goal may, at first glance, seem too ambitious or even beyond reach, we are not limited to our own human resources, since our initial effort evokes a reciprocal "impulse" from On High which assures the attainment of even the "unattainable."

The mitzva of the Half-Shekel was originally related to the Beit Hamikdash, where simple material objects were transformed into things of holiness, through dedication and sacrifice. Such is the unlimited power which the Creator vested in the Jew by means of the Torah and mitzvot originating in the En Sof (Infinite). Every Jew has the power to transform small and ordinary things of nature into values and categories which transcend Nature—through living his daily life in accordance with the will and command of G-d. In this way the Jew fulfills his purpose in life and the ultimate destiny of Creation, namely, to make an abode for the Holy One here on earth, in fulfillment of the Divine command, "let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8).

It is to the realization of this destiny of the individual Jew and of the Jewish people as a whole, that Lubavitch activities all over the world are dedicated.

I take this opportunity to extend prayerful wishes to each and every participant in the "Evening With Lubavitch." May it be a source of lasting inspiration to you all, and an abiding influence towards the experience of a fuller, nobler, and, indeed, holier daily life, where the material "half-shekel" is balanced by its heavenly counterpart "in the scale of holiness" (b'shekel hakodesh), ensuring a harmonious and truly happy life, materially and spiritually.

ultimate Ingathering of the Exiles which will take place with the Final Redemption. Although the Redemption is not yet manifest, the awareness of its imminence should inspire joy.

(Adapted by Sichos in English from a talk of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

# 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 this weeks Torah portion, Vayakhel, we read, "The seventh day will be holy for you as a Sabbath of Sabbaths to G-d."

These words follow immediately after the discussion about all the different types of work--39 categories in all--necessary for the construction of the Tabernacle. And it is these 39 categories of work which we are prohibited from performing on Shabbat.

The question is asked, why is there a connection between the work of the Tabernacle and the forbidden work on Shabbat?

The 39 categories of work are connected to the general needs of a person--food, clothing and shelter. The "job" during the week is to separate and refine the divine essence found within everything we come in contact with. However, one of the types of work that we are forbidden to perform on Shabbat is that of "separating." So, on Shabbat, we bring to an even higher spiritual level that which we already elevated during the six weekdays.

But, if this is so, why are we allowed to eat on Shabbat? This same question was asked by the third Chabad Rebbe of his grandfather, Rabbi Shneur Zalman--the first Chabad Rebbe.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman answered as follows: Food that we are permitted to eat--kosher food--is, at its source, a mixture of good and bad. During the six weekdays the good and bad are mixed and our job is to separate the two of them. But, on Shabbat, this is not necessary. For, on the eve of Shabbat the good is automatically separated from the bad so that the food that we eat on Shabbat is only good. Therefore, no separation is necessary. The intention of eating on Shabbat, then, is to elevate the good to an even higher level.

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.

Published by Lubavitch Youth Organization 1408 President St., Brooklyn, NY, 11213 phone 718 778 6000

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## Jewish Teens Fill Times Square with Jewish Pride



7,000 Jewish teens from 60 countries filled Times Square on Saturday night, singing, dancing, and declaring their Jewish pride in the most public square on earth. After a year of challenges, they didn't gather to explain who they are. They came to live it—out loud and together.

They came from across the globe—some from communities shaken by war, others from countries grappling with rising antisemitism, and still others from regions recovering from natural disasters like wildfires and hurricanes. Together, they came to live their Judaism—proudly, unapologetically, and in full view of the world.

"Shvuah Tov, CTeen!" The words rang out from the stage, declared by Rabbi Mendy Kotlarsky, Chairman of CTeen International, cutting through the neon glow and weekend crowds. Thousands of teens answered back, launching a night that brought Jewish life into full view at the heart of New York City.

## CUSTOMS

Are there prayers to be said or customs to be observed during pregnancy?

There are numerous prayers for various stages of pregnancy and labor/delivery, some of which are said by the husband and others by the wife. (The book, A Joyful Mother of Children, Feldheim Publishers, has many of them in Hebrew and English.) Some customs to ensure an easy delivery are: to pray for an easy delivery; to bite off the tip of an etrog after Sukkot; to eat the special meal Saturday night in honor of the departure of Shabbat (Melave Malka); and to bake challa for Shabbat.

# MOSHIACH MATTERS

The mass exodus of our Russian brethren to the Holy Land should make us ever more conscious of the imminence of the