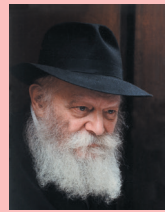


# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This Shabbat we read a special portion known as Shekalim.

In connection with the commandment of giving a half-shekel during the time of the Holy Temple for the public sacrifices, we find that the Torah explicitly commands that "the rich shall not give more...than a half-shekel."

On the surface, this is difficult to understand: All the offerings in the Holy Temple were required to be perfect and complete. Why then, in this instance, was it forbidden to give no more than a half-shekel? Also, since the donation required was only a half-shekel, why does the Torah tell us that an entire shekel is equivalent to twenty geira? Why doesn't it just tell us that a half-shekel is equal to ten geira?

In resolution: This command teaches us that a Jew cannot become a complete entity, a "holy shekel," unless he joins together with another Jew. Every Jew by himself is ten geira, a half-shekel. When, however, he joins together with another Jew, they comprise twenty geira, a complete entity.

That the portion of Vayakhel and Shekalim are read on the same Shabbat emphasizes the need for establishing unity within oneself, making it possible to then establish bonds of unity with other Jews.

A Jew's service begins with gathering together and synthesizing the various aspects of his own being, after which he joins together with the entire Jewish people. Only then can he gather together every element of the world and show how its entire existence is intended solely to carry out G-d's will.

This will lead to the ultimate process of ingathering, the ingathering of the dispersed Jewish people, when G-d will "sound the great shofar...and bring us together from the four corners of the earth to our land."

## Fern's Shabbat Candles

By Rabbi Mendel Rubin



Some years ago, our Chabad at UAlbany was involved in a national study of Jewish life on campus. A faculty member named Fern from the host university near Boston came to do interviews here and we spent quite some time preparing the data she needed.

They were trying to match up home and family demographics and affiliations with actual student observance on campus. But in our interview with this researcher, it kept coming up how we don't track that data as much. Students surprise us, souls are so interesting. Life has so many twists and turns, you never know who will end up being more involved and dedicated to Jewish life.

That "you never know" theme got her to tell this personal story. Turns out that Fern graduated UAlbany in the mid 1970's. During her senior year a young, bearded Rabbi had a table in the campus center where he offered to teach women the art of lighting Shabbos candles. (This was not long after the Rebbe began the Shabbat candle lighting campaign for Jewish women and girls).

All year she passed by and never stopped at the table. Was it college peer pressure, was it his beard, fear of the unknown? She doesn't remember. But towards the end

of her senior year, in one of her last weeks before graduation, she stopped by the table. The rabbi explained to her the meaning and significance of this mitzvah, and how to light the candles. She told us that she continues to light them to this day.

That young Rabbi was my father Rabbi Israel Rubin. My parents moved to Albany NY on the Rebbe's Shlichus in 1974, they founded the Shabbos House Chabad Student Center at SUNY Albany in 1976. But he and my mother Rochel were already tabling there on campus in 1975 with the Rebbe's Shabbos candle-lighting campaign. Whatever they might have thought of the many who passed their table, Fern is a proud and involved Jewish woman today, still lighting the candles each Friday.

Two takeaways:

Never underestimate the lasting power of one single, small choice. Going over to that table at the end of her senior year left her with something beautiful that lasts a lifetime.

My parents may have felt frustrated sitting there week after week with many deliberately avoiding the table. But it pays off, it's very much worth the effort.

*Hersh Goldberg-Polin is one of the hostages held in Gaza. His mother Rachel has been asking Jewish women and girls around the world to light Shabbat candles in the merit of her son and all the hostages. "If you will observe the Shabbat candles, I will show you the lights of Zion!" (Midrash Yalkut Shimoni Behaalotecha)*

# SLICE OF LIFE

## Purim in Moscow, 1946

By Miriam Paltiel Nevel



For decades, waiting long hours to receive a ration of bread was part of life in Soviet Russia.

The first Purim I remember began in sadness and ended in joy.

It was 1946, and World War II had finally come to an end. My family was back from Siberia, where we had spent most of the war years (our mother had passed away). Now, in our one-room Moscow home, my two brothers and I were sitting on the floor playing chess. That is, my oldest brother was trying to coax me, or perhaps I should say coerce me, into playing chess with him, when the door opened and in walked a tall, uniformed soldier. It was our uncle Itche Mordche, returning from war.

His wife, who was my mother's sister Rivka, and their baby had been murdered by the Nazis in their hometown. And now Itche Mordche had returned from war and wanted to find out what he could about his family, whom he had left behind when he went away to fight three years ago.

Our uncle asked us when our father would be home. My older brother told the visitor that Papa would come home after work.

Then the soldier began to examine some spoons and a plate that were on the table in the middle of the room. The plate was caked with the days-old remnants of something that used to be food.

He proceeded to search anywhere else where there might have been food. There was none.

The soldier left.

We didn't expect the visitor to return, but sometime that afternoon the door opened, and there was Itche Mordche again. And this time, nestled in his hands was the biggest loaf of black pumpernickel that my brothers and I could remember seeing.

"Happy Purim!" the soldier boomed, dropping the black loaf on the table. He took off his green military jacket, and ceremoniously pushed up his sleeves. Then he picked up the bread knife that was on the table, and proclaiming, "Shalach monos, a freilichen Purim!" our guest began to work on the pumpernickel, splitting it into chunks, while three hungry pairs of eyes stared at the knife in their uncle's hand as it moved up and down and side to side on the black loaf.

(The next day, after Itche Mordche had left, my brothers and I speculated about how our uncle had procured the bread. My oldest sibling, who in my eyes was an expert on practically everything, came up with this scenario: When Itche Mordche left us earlier that day, he went to the bread store, which was mobbed with people eager to buy bread. Using his strong fighting elbows, the soldier delivered a left jab, then a straight right, then a front punch, and all the while he kept muttering loudly over and over again, "Daetee, daetee, golodniyae daetee." ["Children, children, hungry children."] And so the line at the bread store had split in front of our uncle, and he crossed all the way to the head of the bread line.)

After handing each one of us our meal, our uncle went to the kitchen to wash his hands. He whispered a blessing over the bread. Undoubtedly, he was thankful to G-d for allowing him to acquire this bread, which was drawn out of G-d's good earth in time of hunger. Then he sat down at the table. And all four of us ate our first Purim meal, leaving a sizeable portion of bread for later, when we would have a second meal with our father.

After we finished eating, while waiting for Papa to come home, our uncle and my older brother played chess together happily. And I was glad not to be forced to move the chess pieces at my brother's commands.



The author as a child in Russia.

When the chess game was finished, Aunt Rivka's husband sat silently, waiting to talk to Father, who could give him information about his wife and his baby.

Father came home. After they greeted each other, and ate a Purim meal consisting of more

black pumpernickel, Father and Uncle sat on chairs facing each other, talking. Deep sighs punctuated their almost whispered words about mass graves and the date of Aunt Rivka and her baby's yahrtzeit. Tears, bright like tiny crystals, glistened in the tall soldier's eyes.

The next day Uncle Itche Mordche left Moscow. That year he succeeded in joining many chassidic Russian Jews who escaped the Soviet Union. Once out of the Soviet Union, our uncle made his way to England, where he remarried and began a new family and a new life. I never saw him again.

My father, brothers and I left Russia as well. After several years of wandering through Europe, we came to America.

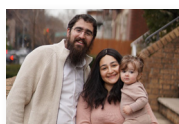
Decades later, in my American home one Purim. The reading of the Megillah; the sound of graggers; the clamor of children, toddlers and adults; the delicious homemade sesame candy, hamantaschen and hot chocolate all mixed together to create the happy atmosphere that celebrates the Jewish people's victory over evil.

I was sitting quietly amid the roar, and let my thoughts wander. In my mind's eye, here was Uncle Itche Mordche rolling up his sleeves one at a time and booming, "Happy Purim! May all the Hamans have a downfall, and we should have warmth, happiness and great celebrations all together!" In my mind's eye, a circle of children would mill around Itche Mordche, and he would dance with the children and make l'chaims in fine Purim spirit.

Miriam Paltiel Nevel (1935-2022) was a blend. She navigated between now and then.

Her books, *Zaide*, and *Why I Didn't Die When Comrade Stalin Died*, are available on Amazon.

## New Shluchim to Massachusetts



Rabbi Sruly and Devora Leah Brook, along with their daughter Dusia are establishing a permanent Chabad presence in Wakefield, Ma. and its surrounding towns. Conveniently located just north of Boston, Wakefield has seen the massive infusion of youth and families over the last few years.

Establishing a permanent presence in the area was a long time coming, said Rabbi Yossi Lipsker, director of Chabad of the North Shore. It was turning into a destination for many young families looking to settle down and plant roots in an area that was both affordable, yet still overloaded with charm, communal warmth, and natural beauty.

The inspiration to accelerate the opening of the 7th North Shore Chabad Center, in the aftermath of October 7th, was an immense Am Yisroel Chai—esque, motivational factor."

Rabbi Sruly and his family are dynamic, energetic and motivated, and their excitement for Judaism, and spreading its positive messages are just what Wakefield needs and it comes at the perfect time.

## A Call To Action

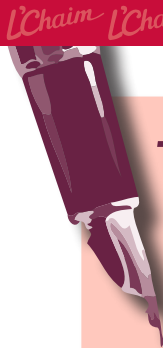
### Give Even More

The month of Adar containing Purim and the mitzva of giving gifts to the poor, stresses charity, as does the special Torah portion, called Shekalim, which is read this Shabbat.

Every individual must therefore add in charity. This applies in the physical sense, through the giving of money, food and drink. It also applies in the spiritual sense, through helping another person, giving advice, learning with him, etc.

(The Rebbe, 25 Shevat, 5751-1991)





# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

1 Shvat, 5718 [1958]

Greetings and Blessings!

Just now I received your letter in which you write of your present condition.

You have no doubt heard the teaching of the Rebbe Maharash [Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch], the grandfather of my revered father-in-law, the [Previous] Rebbe: "People say that if you can't make your way from below, you should climb over the top - but I hold that right from the outset you should leap over the top."

Now, this approach applies to the present subject. At first sight it would appear that manifest joy should wait until one's health improves in actual fact. However, in the spirit of the above teaching, it could be suggested that rejoicing over this improvement should be advanced ahead of time, even though the improvement is not yet manifest.

Indeed, this itself will hasten the process. As has been repeatedly cited in the name of the [earlier] Rebbes of Chabad, "Think positively, and things will be positive." And how much more does this assurance apply when one translates positive thoughts into joyful words and joyful actions. This is especially relevant to yourself, whose literary skills equip you to influence many people in this direction - and the reward of those who gladden people's hearts is well known (Taanis 22a).

[...] With blessings for good news,



3 Menachem Av, 5714 [1954]

Greetings and Blessings!

This letter is a response to the undated letter in which you write that though you are pleased that you moved to [...], at the moment your salary does not quite suffice to meet your needs, and this is affecting your mood.

This is most surprising. After having palpably witnessed G-d's kindness toward you, do you really not have enough faith in His absolutely certain ability to guide you with His acts of loving-kindness in the future, too, and to free you from your straits? And even if, for reasons not understood by us, this is delayed, it is only the Creator of the universe, Who knows the future and Who knows what is truly good, that is able to decide in what manner - the manner that is best for a man and his household - He should bring them to their true happiness both materially and spiritually.

If the above applies even with regard to people whose present situation is less positive than it was previously, and also less positive by comparison with their environment and their acquaintances, how much more obviously does it apply with regard to people whose situation has improved from what it was. And in these difficult months, your situation is certainly better than that of quite a number of people around you, who nevertheless are not despairing, G-d forbid.

Most certainly, therefore, neither you nor your wife ought to be dispirited or saddened, G-d forbid. We have seen it proved in practice that the greater a man's trust, and the more he looks toward his future with joy, the faster do these things materialize on a practical level.

I hope that you will soon gladden me with good news concerning all of the above, both in relation to yourself and in relation to your wife.

With blessings,

of Jews from all over the world, who are returning to the Holy Land. The current number of Jews ascending to the Land of Israel is incomparably greater than that of previous generations."

(From a talk of the Rebbe, *Shabbat Vayakhel*, 5752-1992)

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In this week's 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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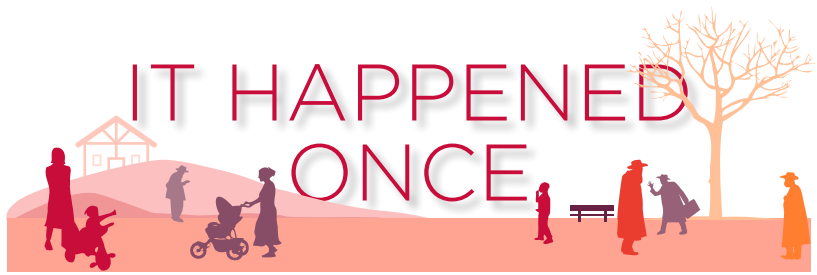
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## MOSHIACH MATTERS

We see in recent years how the verse "Moshe gathered... the Jews" is occurring literally -- the ingathering of the exiles



# IT HAPPENED ONCE

The Jewish community of Frankfurt was in mourning for their beloved Chief Rabbi. The rabbi had no heir, but he hadn't left his flock entirely without recourse. A few days before he died he had called the Jewish leaders together and instructed them on finding a replacement. The potential candidate would have to pass a test consisting of three complicated and difficult questions, involving very deep Torah concepts. "Whoever answers these questions," the rabbi had stipulated, "should be appointed the Rabbi of Frankfurt."

The search began after the funeral. A delegation was chosen of three of the most distinguished leaders of the community, and they set out to find their candidate. As a major Jewish center, Frankfurt required a very special personage; only a scholar with the highest level of piety and erudition would do.

The first city the delegation arrived at was Cracow, which boasted many Torah scholars. Surely it wouldn't be too difficult to find someone there who could answer the three questions.

On the day they arrived they learned that a great celebration would be taking place later that evening. The son of one of the wealthiest Jews in Cracow was becoming Bar Mitzva, and the entire community was invited. The members of the delegation from Frankfurt were also invited to attend.

In the middle of the festivities the Bar Mitzva boy stood up to deliver a speech, as is customary. The hall fell silent as everyone listened attentively.

The boy's sermon was very deep, revealing an unusual mastership of Torah knowledge and proficiency. It was, in short, the most impressive Bar Mitzva speech that anyone had ever heard. The boy began by postulating three difficult problems; when the members of the delegation realized that they were the same three questions the rabbi had raised, they looked at one another in amazement. They could hardly believe it when the boy proceeded to answer them skillfully one by one.

All of the guests were impressed, but the members of the delegation could barely contain their excitement. Clearly, the hand of G-d had steered them in the right direction. All they had to do was find the tutor who had prepared the boy for his Bar Mitzva; whoever he was, it was obvious that he must serve as the next Rabbi of Frankfurt. They thanked G-d for having led them to a suitable candidate so quickly.

Indeed, it wasn't difficult to locate the boy's teacher. As they learned from the boy's father, his name was Reb Yosef Shmuel the Teacher.

They found Reb Yosef Shmuel in a corner of the study hall surrounded by little boys. The teacher was dressed simply and rather poorly, but they didn't hesitate to approach him.

"We'd like to speak to you about an urgent matter," they said, but Reb Yosef Shmuel was busy. "Not now," he replied. "I am an employee, and it wouldn't be right to shirk my duties." Reb Yosef Shmuel resumed his teaching.

If anything, the teacher's answer made the members of the delegation even more hopeful. This was obviously a man of ethics, G-d-fearing and devoted to his job. They agreed to speak with him later that day.

When they came back they got quickly to the point. They told him about the passing of their rabbi, and the three questions he had established as a test for his successor. "So now you're going to be our rabbi!" they concluded.

They were shocked, however, when Reb Yosef Shmuel declined their offer most adamantly. He wasn't looking for honor or glory, he explained, and he already had a job as a teacher from which he derived great satisfaction. Politely but firmly he turned them down. All their pleas fell on deaf ears. They begged and implored the teacher, and even promised him an impressive salary, but to no avail. Reb Yosef Shmuel could not be budged.

לעילוי נשמת  
 הרה"ח הור"ח א"א התמים נר"נ  
 עוסק בצ"צ רב פעלים וכו'  
 גבאי בית הכנסת ובית המדרש ליובאוויטש שבליובאוויטש  
 ר' משה פינחס הכהן ב"ר אברהם מרדכי הכהן ז"ל  
 כ"ץ  
 Dedicated in memory of  
 Rabbi Moshe Pinchas Hakohen Katz OBM

The members of the delegation prepared to leave Cracow, dejected and forlorn. Who knew if they would be able to find another qualified candidate? They had just left the outskirts of the city when their carriage broke down, and for several hours they had no choice but to sit by the side of the road until it was repaired. All of a sudden a messenger caught up with them; he had come directly from Reb Yosef Shmuel on a special mission.

The messenger revealed that the teacher had suddenly taken ill, and seemingly overnight had arrived at death's door. Indeed, the doctor who was summoned asserted that he had no more than a few days left to live. When Reb Yosef Shmuel heard this pronouncement he cried out, "Master of the Universe! If You really want me to serve as Rabbi of Frankfurt, I'll do it!"

No sooner had he uttered these words than the mysterious illness began to dissipate. A messenger was immediately dispatched to intercept the delegation from Frankfurt and inform them of his decision.

The joy of the Jewish community of Frankfurt knew no bounds. Divine Providence had clearly demonstrated that Reb Yosef Shmuel was meant to be their leader, and he was formally appointed Chief Rabbi of the city a short time later. And everyone marveled at the prophetic vision of their previous Chief Rabbi, who had provided his flock with such a worthy successor.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

**These are the things that the L-rd has commanded you to do (Ex. 35:1)**

Why is the plural "things" used, when what followed was only one commandment, the mitzva to keep Shabbat? These "things" refers to the 39 categories of creative work that are forbidden on Shabbat. During the week, a Jew's service consists of elevating and refining the material world by engaging in these tasks. On Shabbat, his service is to refrain from them, thereby completing the process of elevation. The mitzva of Shabbat thus contains all of the Torah's mitzvot within it, the underlying purpose of which is to elevate the physical realm and make it spiritual.

(Ohr HaTorah)  
**You shall not kindle any fire throughout your habitations (Ex. 35:3)**

The main reason we observe Shabbat is in remembrance of the Six Days of Creation. As fire was not created until after the first Shabbat ended, the Torah specifically singles it out - lest anyone think it isn't included in the 39 prohibited labors. (Rabbi Yonatan Eibenschutz)

**They came, the men with the women, whoever was generous of heart, and every man who waved a wave offering of gold unto G-d (Ex. 35:22)**

The Jews were so eager to make donations to the Sanctuary that they didn't stop to calculate the amount of gold they were contributing. Rather, they "waved it about" and gave with an open hand, like a rich benefactor who disburses his charity liberally. (Be'er Mayim Chaim)



### 5:38 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area  
 28 Adar I / March 8  
 Torah Portion Vayakhel  
 Parshat Shekalim  
 Blessing of the new month of Adar II  
 Shabbat ends 6:37 pm