



There was once a Jew named Shmuel who lived in a small European town. A scholar of Torah and upright of character, he was also clever and competent. When the governor of the district heard about his abilities he appointed him his business manager, and grew to trust him implicitly.

Along with his other responsibilities Shmuel was entrusted with the keys to the treasury. The governor had no compunctions about this, as he knew he could rely on the honest Jew. Shmuel, for his part, proved to be more than worthy of the governor's trust. He exercised his duties faithfully.

The governor's assistant business manager, however, was a vicious anti-Semite. Shmuel's success, and the esteem in which he was held, were almost too much for him to bear. His greatest desire was for the governor to get rid of the Jew and appoint him in his stead.

Then one day, it seemed as if his fantasy was about to be fulfilled...

The governor had just returned from an extended trip, and was throwing a party for his friends to celebrate his return. Before leaving, the governor had appointed Shmuel in charge of his household.

In the middle of the festivities, during which the wine flowed like water, the governor decided to impress his guests by showing off his wealth. One his most priceless possessions was an extremely large and rare diamond, whose value was beyond estimation. The governor had never displayed it in public, but the party seemed like the perfect opportunity to do so.

Shmuel, as manager of the estate, was asked to retrieve the jewel from the treasury. A few minutes later he returned holding a tiny golden box, encrusted with precious gems and diamonds. Everyone gathered around the governor to see this special sight.

With an extravagant gesture the governor opened the box, but was stunned to find it was empty! The diamond had evidently been stolen.

After the initial shock had worn off, all of the guests began to look at Shmuel with suspicion. Everyone knew him as an honest fellow, but what other explanation could there be? Who else had access to the treasury?

The governor turned to Shmuel and said delicately, "For many years you have worked for me faithfully. But sometimes, a person may give in to temptation. If you return the diamond, I give you my word that nothing bad will happen to you."

"G-d forbid!" Shmuel cried as his face paled. Pain and disgrace were visible in his eyes. "In my whole life I've never touched anything that didn't belong to me, and I certainly didn't take your diamond."

The crowd was silent. The Jewish manager's words sounded sincere, but unfortunately, all the evidence pointed to his guilt.

Then Shmuel had an idea. "If you give me a chance to prove myself," he said, "I will show you who the real thief is."

After asking the assembled guests to remain in the hall, Shmuel rushed off to his house. He returned, clutching a black rooster under his arm.

Everyone's curiosity was aroused by the odd spectacle. "Esteemed guests," Shmuel announced in a loud voice, "this rooster is not your ordinary, run of the mill bird. In fact, it has a special ability to detect thieves! When an honest man touches this rooster, it does not react. But if a thief dares to pet it, it immediately ruffles its feathers and crows at the top of its lungs. Pay attention - it will now reveal the person who stole the governor's diamond."

Shmuel chose five guests at random and asked them to pet the wonderful bird. The guests did as they were asked, but the rooster remained silent.

A wave of laughter rippled through the hall. What an impudent Jew! It wasn't bad enough that he had stolen the diamond; now he was making fun of them as well!

Shmuel, however, appeared unconcerned. "Wait! The test is not yet over," he called out. The five men who had petted the bird were then asked to raise the hand that had touched it. Five hands shot up in the air. Four palms were as black as coal, but the fifth - the one that belonged to the assistant manager - was white.

"Here's your thief!" Shmuel announced, pointing to the assistant manager. "He is responsible for the robbery." Everyone stared at the man, who was trembling with the fright of discovery. Without a word in self-defense, the assistant manager then admitted to stealing the diamond.

When the governor asked Shmuel to reveal the rooster's secret, he burst out laughing. "There really isn't anything special about this rooster," the Jew explained. "The only thing I did was to rub soot into its feathers before I brought it here. I figured that an innocent person wouldn't hesitate to pet it, whereas the guilty party would only make believe he was touching it. And indeed, my assumption was correct..."

After apologizing profusely the governor gave Shmuel a warm hug, and announced that he was giving him a promotion. And the assistant manager was thrown into jail, where he remained for the rest of his life.



The earth was corrupt before G-d, and the earth was filled with violence. (Gen. 6:11)

People are mistaken to think that without belief in G-d they will still perform the mitzvot that are between one person and another (i.e. charity, hospitality, not stealing, etc.). For, when the world becomes "corrupt before G-d" - when people throw off the yoke of belief and sin toward G-d - the outcome will be "and the earth was filled with violence." (*Or HaTorah*)

G-d said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them" (Gen. 6:13)

Noah lived before the giving of the Torah. Accordingly, he was not strictly obligated to feel a responsibility toward his fellow man. Nonetheless, because he didn't pray for mercy or try to convince his generation to repent, the Flood is known as "the waters of Noah." We, however, live after the Torah was given, when all Jews have become guarantors for one another. How much more so is it therefore necessary that we help others! (*Likutei Sichot*)

A window shall you make for the ark (Gen. 6:16)

The Hebrew word for "ark" is "tayva," which also has the meaning of "word." A Jew's job is to make a "window," as it were, for the words he utters in prayer or in the study of Torah, and to let them illuminate, as the sun shines at midday. (*The Baal Shem Tov*)



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יוסף תורה השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Jerusalem has mountains around it, and the L-rd is around His people from now and to eternity" (Psalms 125:2)

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Noach, tells of the great flood, the powerful waters that submerged the world for 40 days and night.

In Song of Songs we read, "Many waters cannot extinguish the love and rivers cannot flood it." This is talking about the deep, essential love we have for G-d.

What are these "many waters," that fail to extinguish the inner love? And what are these "rivers," that fail to flood it?

One explanation is that "many waters" refers to the typical hardships that we incur making a living. The rivers are when these worries and pressures don't let up, like the strong current of a river.

While these worries and hardships are constant, they can't extinguish the hidden love found in the depths of our souls.

Why not?

Our souls, before they entered this world, were in a pristine holy state. What gain is there for the soul to come down here and be involved in this mundane and sometimes troublesome place?

The struggles we contend with help us attain the purpose of our descent into this world. And when we realize that, we start looking at our struggles differently, we begin to see them in a positive light.

Knowing this, you realize, that being that the "many waters" are here for our benefit, they could never extinguish the love we have for G-d, because that is the opposite of their purpose.

By coming down to this world, the soul fulfills G-d's will, which causes a great elevation in the soul.

Prior to its descent into the world, the soul is righteous. By descending into this turbulent world and doing G-d's will, it attains the status of a Baal Teshuva (returnee to G-d). The Talmud says that "in the place where a Baal Teshuva stands, even a complete Tzadik cannot stand," because through his struggle he attains a level of holiness far greater than that of a Tzadik, so great that the Tzadik isn't even able to stand there.

With this in mind, we start to take our struggles in stride. We begin to see them as the path to our goals and not as the enemy. It is the struggles that make us stronger and refine us. It is the struggles that bring us closer to Hashem. He put us here specifically to contend with this world and this world is a world of struggles. But when you understand that it is all from Hashem and it is all purposeful, it is no more a struggle. You will embrace it with joy and with a spring in your step, knowing that on the other side of this struggle is the goal you were created to achieve.

The story of the flood is read right after the holidays because the holidays are like heaven, as we celebrate with G-d and enjoy the holiness of the time. With the holidays behind us, we reenter the world of chaos. It is now that we need a reminder that the turbulent waters of making a living and dealing with the challenges of life are there to help us accomplish our purpose.

May our efforts to do G-d's will be successful, and may we usher in the coming of Moshiach now!

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

Rosh Hashanah at Our Chabad Was Epic!

By Rabbi Uriel Vigler

Whenever someone gets an aliyah on Rosh Hashanah in our shul, I ask them to make a commitment for the coming year. It can be financial, a mitzvah, or something personal. There's no checklist; it just needs to be meaningful to that person.

One person—let's call him Yankel—has made a commitment every year for at least the 20 years I've known him. This year, I was curious what he would come up with.

"I'm going to say Modeh Ani every morning," he declared.

Amazing! Think about how conditioned we are to reach for our phones the moment we wake up—to check texts, emails, meetings, and pictures. But here's Yankel saying, "No. I'm going to pause as soon as I open my eyes and say twelve simple but important words: 'Modeh ani lefanecha...' I thank You, living and enduring King, for returning my soul to me. Great is Your faithfulness."

Thank You, G-d, for giving me another day.

It takes less than 30 seconds, but it sets the tone for the entire day.

Then another guy—let's call him Jack—came up for an aliyah.

I knew Jack had a difficult year and was incredibly busy. So I thought, let me not ask for too much.

"Jack, I want you to make one commitment. Just one. And ideally, do it before Yom Kippur."

"What is it?"

"Put on Tefillin one time. Just once! Any day between now and Yom Kippur."

He agreed.

Two days later, Jack emailed me: "Rabbi, remember I made a commitment on Rosh Hashanah to put on Tefillin? I did it! And I loved it so much that I'm going to do it every morning."

Wait. What?

He continued: "And I'm also going to say Modeh Ani every morning."

A huge smile broke across my face.

The guy I asked to do one mitzvah once had decided to do two every morning! And so far, he's been doing it.

Now I'm trying to push it one step further: "Jack, why don't you come to our daily minyan?" Maybe he will, maybe he won't. But he's already come out a winner with two huge new mitzvahs.

It's easy to think we have to completely change our lives to make meaningful change. But that can feel so overwhelming that we don't take any steps at all.

The key is to just start. With one thing. Anything.

One small mitzvah can open the door to the next one, and the next. Suddenly, without even planning it, your morning—and then your whole day—can look different.

So where to start?

Take 30 seconds in the morning to thank G-d for another day. Say Modeh Ani. Remember who you are and Who gave you another day.

It may set you up for a more intentional day.

But it may also lead to a spiritual climb you never imagined!

Rabbi Vigler codirects Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side in New York City with his wife Shevi.

The Rebbe Writes

MOSHIACH MATTERS

“A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Shmuel Beilman ”

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA
לזכרון חי'ה י מושקא

What's in a Name

Shem was one of three sons of Noah and Naama born to them before the Great Flood. Shem and his brother Yafet were blessed by Noah after they took care of him in a modest and dignified manner. Shem became a prophet and lived 600 years, serving G-d as a priest. In the time of Abraham, a ninth generation direct-descendant from Shem, Shem was known as Malkitzedek, the "Just King." He lived to see his eleventh generation descendant-Jacob. Together with his great-grandson Eber, he taught and spread faith in G-d and in His commands in a school which was known as the Academy of Shem and Eber.