



The Roman Emperor Hadrian was a cruel and wicked man. It was under his oppressive regime that the Bar Kochba revolt broke out, which ultimately led to destruction of the city of Betar. However, Hadrian was not without a sense of humor, albeit a malicious one.

Once, during one of the Emperor's periodic visits to the Holy Land, he was strolling through an orchard in Tiberias when he came across an old man. The elderly Jew with the long white beard was obviously well on in years, yet he was busily planting saplings in the ground. "Ancient one!" the Roman Emperor called out to him sarcastically. "You must have slacked off in your youth, that you need to work so hard in your old age!"

"No, your Majesty," the Jew replied. "I worked plenty hard when I was younger, and I see no reason to stop now. G-d willing, I will continue as long as the L-rd will give me strength."

"But surely," Hadrian persisted in taunting him, "you can't expect to enjoy the fruits of your labor. Where will you be by the time these trees bear fruit?"

"Everything is in G-d's hands," the Jew answered. "We are all in G-d's hands, young and old alike. If G-d so wishes, I will be able to enjoy them."

"That is highly unlikely," the Emperor said. "Tell me, how old are you?"

"Today is my one hundredth birthday."

"And you still hope to eat the fruit of these saplings? Hah! Don't you realize that there is only a very slim chance that you will have the opportunity?"

"If G-d wants it to happen, it will happen. But even if it doesn't, my work is not in vain. In the same way my parents toiled on my behalf, my labor will benefit future generations."

"Then here's to your good health," the Emperor said in parting. "And if you're still alive when these fruits ripen, let me know."

"I will be happy to fulfill the Emperor's command," the Jew replied.

Years passed, and the young saplings grew into sturdy fig trees. Indeed, the old man lived to eat the juicy and delicious fruit, and continued to enjoy vigorous health. The time had come to fulfill his promise to the Emperor.

After some initial difficulties getting past the royal guard the old man was granted an audience, but the Emperor did not recognize him. "What do you want, old man?" he asked impatiently. "And what's that in your basket?"

The old Jew reminded him of their previous encounter, and the promise the Emperor had extracted from him. The basket, he explained, was full of succulent figs for his Majesty's pleasure. The Emperor was shocked. After all, the elderly Jew had already been ancient at the time of their last meeting! The Emperor ordered a golden chair to be brought for the old man to sit on. He instructed that the basket be filled with gold in exchange for the figs.

The Emperor's attendants were very surprised at the honor being paid the old Jew, until he related the story. "If the Creator saw fit to grant him such a long life," Hadrian admitted, "it must mean that he was worthy."

The old man returned home with much pomp and circumstance, and all his neighbors came out to greet him. When the wife of one of them saw the gold coins she became very jealous, and began to berate her husband. "You lazy good for nothing!" she scolded him. "Didn't you hear that the Emperor loves figs? This foolish old man brought only a small basket and it was filled with gold. Go to the Emperor and bring him an entire crate of figs! Surely he will fill it with priceless treasures." The husband agreed to make the trip. He arrived at the royal palace with his donkey struggling under the huge load.

The keepers of the gate didn't know what to do. A soldier was sent inside to inform the Emperor that a man had arrived with a whole case of figs, expecting to be paid handsomely.

The Emperor was furious. "Let the fool stand by the entrance of the palace," he ordered, "and he will be given a taste of his own figs. Whoever passes by must pick one up and

throw it in his face!"

The Emperor's decree was obeyed. The unfortunate man was made to stand like a statue until nightfall, when the "ammunition" was exhausted. He returned home, his face red and swollen from pain and embarrassment.

To top it all off, his wife then berated him for failing in his mission. To which the husband suggested that the next time she came up with a brilliant plan, she should be the one to actually implement it. "I wish you had been there to share my wealth," he added.

"Well, there's one thing you should be grateful for," the wife conceded. "At least they were dried figs and not fresh citrons!"

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Pharaoh drew closer (hikriv)...they were very fearful, and the Children of Israel cried out (Ex. 14:10)

The Hebrew word "hikriv" is a transitive verb, implying that Pharaoh caused others to draw near rather than himself. The Midrash relates that this is because when Pharaoh pursued the fleeing Jews, it caused them to become closer to G-d. In fact, the entire exile in Egypt and the splitting of the Red Sea was only in preparation for the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai - the ultimate expression of closeness and attachment. (*Sefer HaMaamarim Shin-Tav*)

The reason the Children of Israel cried out (to G-d) was the fact that "they were fearful." It disturbed them greatly that they were afraid of the mortal Egyptians, rather than only of G-d. (*Ma'or VaShemesh*)

And Israel saw the great power which the L-rd had shown on the Egyptians...and they believed in G-d (Ex. 14:31)

The Hebrew word for faith, emuna, has a dual meaning. Etymologically, it is related to the word meaning to train or accustom oneself, and also to the word for power and strength. However, these two meanings are interrelated. In the merit of emuna, i.e., by virtue of the strength and certitude of the G-dly soul, a Jew is able to overcome the downward pull of the animal soul and ascend from one spiritual level to the next, till he merits the very highest revelations of G-dliness. Indeed, the Jewish people merited to sing the "Song of the Sea" solely because of their emuna. (*Sefer HaMaamarim* 5680)

Even though the Jewish people had witnessed many wonders and miracles firsthand they still needed to have faith in G-d. For faith is on a higher level than sight; indeed, it enables a person to see more than the physical eye can ever observe. (*Chidushei HaRim*)



4:58 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
12 Shevat/Feb 3
Torah Portion B'Shalach
Shabbat Shira
Shabbat ends 6:00 PM

L'Chaim

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Shevat 12, 5783
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The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"My help comes from G-d, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2) Year of Unity - Hakhel



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

The *Haftora* for the Torah portion of *Beshalach* is about Debora, the prophetess and judge. Debora summoned Barak to wage war against the enemies of the fledgling Jewish nation, the mighty Canaanite general Sisera and his army. General Barak insisted that Debora go with him to battle and she agreed. However, she told him that a woman would be credited with the victory.

The Jewish army went to war and destroyed the Canaanite army; only General Sisera escaped. Sisera ran to Heber the Kenite thinking that he would be safe (Heber had a peace treaty with the Canaanite king). Heber's wife Yael, however, knew the danger Sisera posed to the Jewish people. She hid him in her tent, giving him a false sense of security. While he slept, she killed him. As Debora had prophesied, Yael was credited with the victory.

Debora composed a song to commemorate the victory. It is this song that connects with B'Shalach. B'Shalach tells of the splitting of the sea, when we were finally free from the Egyptians, and the song we sang on that momentous occasion.

The Song by the Sea was sung by both the men and the women. but there was a difference between the way the men sang and the way the women sang. In addition to singing, as did the men, "all the women went out... with tambourines and danced." Why were the women more joyous than the men? And why did they have musical instruments with them?

"According to the pain, so is the reward." As well, according to the suffering, so is the joy that follows when the suffering ceases. All the Jewish people suffered in Egypt, but the women suffered more. Seeing their baby boys being thrown into the Nile affected the fathers, but affected the mothers more.

Now that they were finally free of Pharaoh, the joy was so great that not only did they sing, but they also danced and played their tambourines. And because the women's joy was greater, we read as the *Haftora* the Song of Debora, a woman.

The *Midrash* recalls that Debora would make the wicks for the Sanctuary in Shiloh. Her wicks would light up the Sanctuary, and from there the light would spread to the whole world.

This is a lesson for all Jewish women, to fill her own Sanctuary, her home, with the light of holiness from the Shabbat candles, which has a profound impact on her family. It is symbolic of the atmosphere that she sets in her home, making her home a dwelling place for G-d and His blessings.

When Debora acted as a judge, she would hold court under a date palm. Why? Because a date palm's fronds are high up on the tree, and while they give shade they do not create an atmosphere of seclusion. She did this out of modesty, not to be alone with men, as she judged and advised them.

Our Sages teach that every redemption that has come to the Jewish people has been in the merit of the righteous Jewish women of that generation. So too will it be with the future Redemption with the coming of Moshiach, may it happen 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.

Produce Potentials

The Torah teaches, "A person ("adam") is like a tree of the field." The use of the Hebrew word "adam" implies that the reference is to the Jewish people. Adam is related to the word "adameh" (I resemble), as in the phrase, "Adameh L'Elyon - I resemble the One Above."

The Torah describes the Land of Israel as "a land of wheat, barley, vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olives that produce oil and honey (dates)." (*Deut. 8:8*) Every Jew has seven spiritual potentials that parallel these seven species of produce. On Tu BeShevat, the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Shevat (this year Monday, February 6) these seven potentials are brought to the forefront. Let's take a few moments to briefly discuss these seven types of produce and how they connect with our lives as Jews:

Wheat: Our Sages described wheat as "food for humans," an allusion to that aspect of our existence that makes us human - the G-dly soul. Like actual food, our G-dly soul's mission must be assimilated into the totality of our being.

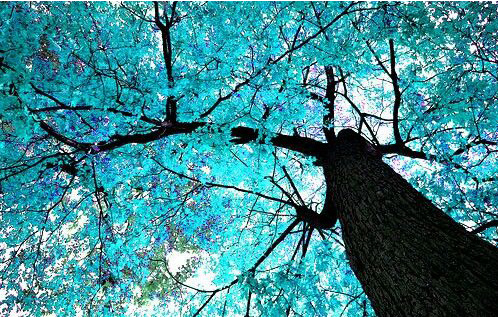
Barley: Barley is described as "food for animals." It refers to the elevation of the animal soul.

Grapes: Grapes are used to produce wine, which "gladdens G-d and people."

Figs: The Torah relates that figs were used to make the first garments worn by Adam and Eve. Later, G-d gave man "garments of leather" ("ohr" spelled with the

letter "ayin"), which Rabbi Meir in the Talmud refers to as "garments of light" (spelled with an "alef"). From this we learn that a Jew's service must involve spreading G-dly light.

Pomegranates: We must always remember that every Jew is "as filled with mitzvot (commandments and good deeds) as a pomegranate is filled with seeds."



Olives: Olives are bitter. A Jew's life should be characterized by sweetness, but in times of introspection he must come to a state of bitterness when evaluating his spiritual achievements. This should be bitterness that leads to action, not sadness that leads to despondency and inactivity.

Dates: Dates refer to the Torah's mystical dimensions, the study of which strengthens the inner dimensions of the Jewish soul.

Through developing our spiritual potential that relates to all these qualities, and spreading these concepts to others, we will merit to proceed to the Land of Israel with Moshiach, where we will "partake of its produce and be sated with its goodness."

SLICE OF LIFE

Two Sholoms by Rabbi Chaim Danzinger



Rabbi Danzinger with Nikita

In 2008 Rabbi Chaim and Kaila Danzinger sold everything and moved from Pasadena, California to Rostov-on-Don, Russia with their two young children. They made this radical move to revive Jewish life in a city that was decimated by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Over the past 14 years their mission has been to care for the material and spiritual needs of Rostov's 15,000 Jews. Rabbi Danzinger says that more than they inspire their community, their community inspires them. They run a day school, 150 year old historical synagogue, soup kitchen, a national special needs organization, camps and many other vital programs.

A story Rabbi Danzinger shared recently:

Nikita, a thirteen-year-old boy, came to our *shul* one day and asked, "Rabbi is it true that the *mohel* is here?"

"Yes."

He said, "Rabbi, I'd like to do my *bris mila* (circumcision) today."

I asked Nikita if his mother knew and he told me "Yes, she's on her way here."

It was already the afternoon and a *bris* must take place during daytime hours. I went to speak to the *mohel* and told him, "Reb Shaya, we need to hurry

up with the scheduled *bris* as there is someone else who also wants a *bris* today!"

During communist rule many commandments, and especially *bris mila* – at its correct time on the eighth day of a baby boy's life – became almost impossible to keep. Sadly, over time, these *mitzvot* (commandments) became forgotten altogether.

I saw that Nikita was scared, he was trembling. I asked him, "Are you sure you want to do this today?"

"Yes, I have to do this," Nikita said.

Nikita kept on saying, "I have to do this..." I didn't understand what he meant. After all, no one had forced Nikita to come today; I hadn't even informed him that the *mohel* was in town.

But Nikita "had" to do the *bris* and so Reb Shaya did it. Afterwards, I asked Nikita, "Why did you do your *bris* today? You were really scared..."

"I wasn't scared Rabbi, I was terrified!"

"So what brought you in today?" I asked Nikita.

And this is what Nikita explained:

The previous summer Nikita had gone to our overnight camp, as he had done for a few summers. In camp, the head counselor offered everyone, "Who wants to get an *aliya* (called up) to the Torah?"

"I said that I wanted an *aliya*," Nikita shared.

"It's going to cost you," the head counselor told him.

"But I don't have any money," said Nikita.

"Don't worry, it's not going to cost you any money. It will cost you a *mitzva*! If you take upon yourself a good *mitzva* we'll call you to the Torah, and we'll make a blessing for your mother, we'll make a blessing for your grandmother... You choose the *mitzva* that you will 'pay' with."

So Nikita said "My counselor always tells me it's important to do a *bris* and to have a Jewish name. My *mitzva* pledge will be that I will do a *bris*. And I will do it within three years." Why three years? Because he was terrified, Nikita shared. "I didn't want to do the *bris* while I was terrified but I figured three years would give me enough time to calm down."

Everyone was happy. But then the head counselor said, "Wait, we have a problem. I live in Moscow. After camp is over, I'm going to go back to Moscow. After camp is over, how are we going to know that you are going to do your *mitzva* pledge? You need a guarantor."

So Nikita looked at his counselor Sholom. Sholom was a local boy. He was 18 years old. He himself had come back to the fold. He started keeping kosher, keeping Shabbat, living a Jewish way of life. And he brought his parents along with him. Sholom was an amazing boy, he was like a child to me...

Nikita looked at his counselor Sholom and said, "This counselor of mine, Sholom will be my guarantor."

When the head counselor heard that, he was satisfied, and he called Nikita up to the Torah.

And then Nikita looked at me and asked, "And now do you understand why I did the *bris* today?"

I knew why... Because Sholom, this amazing young man, had been killed in a tragic car accident a few weeks earlier.

Nikita looked at me. "I couldn't wait three years. I wanted to wait three years. If not for my counselor passing away in such a tragic way I would have waited to the last day possible of the third year because I was so scared to do this *bris*. But I know that Sholom's *neshama* (soul) is waiting for me. I know that Sholom is waiting for me. He's calling me out and reminding me to do the *bris*. That's why the second I heard that the *mohel* had come to town, I said 'I'm going to come here and I'm going to do this *mitzva* for Sholom.'"

I couldn't say anything, because I was crying...

I looked at this boy Nikita, 13 years old, his family is not observant, he didn't know anything about Judaism or Jewish life until he started coming to our camp. And he was willing to have such tremendous self-sacrifice and do something he feared so much, so that his counselor's *neshama* should have an *aliya*

When it came time for the naming ceremony, I asked Nikita, "What Jewish name do you want?"

Nikita looked at me and asked, "What do you think? I want the name Sholom!"

Nikita took his counselor's name on that special day, his counselor who was with him and inspired him in camp.

Today Nikita, Sholom, is 17 years old. This past summer he was a counselor in our camp. This past summer he was influencing other children so that they would also learn what it means to be Jews like their grandparents, their great-parents.

To learn more about the Danzinger's work in Rostov visit www.JewishRostov.com.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

1st of Shevat

Greeting and Blessing!

..Apropos of our last personal conversation concerning the question of good and evil, namely that G-d who is essentially good created a universe which is likewise good in essence, but that it is the purpose of man to bring forth the latent forces of good both within him and in the world that surrounds him, from the potential into the factual.

For this purpose man was given reason and intellect, so that he by his powers of understanding and deduction he can see, even in the most ordinary things in life, a lesson and moral encouragement in his duties and conduct both with regard to his Creator and to his fellow man.

Take for example the tree – an example I choose here because of the New Year for Trees which we marked last Wednesday. What can be more common and usual a sight than an ordinary tree? There seems at first glance, nothing in it to arouse in us any special meditation. Yet we Jews have a New Year for Trees (on the 15th of Shevat), and besides the appertaining reasons for such an occasion, we can, if we stop to ponder, learn quite a few useful lessons from it.

Let me just point out one: Most of the plants, and especially trees, consist of several component parts which are classified into three main groups: the root, the axis or main shaft (which bears the branches and leaves) and the fruit (the shell, the fruit and seed).

These three main parts have their own functions. The root is the means of obtaining the nourishing substances necessary to the plant's life from the earth. It also provides a firm entrenchment for the plant against the wind. It is by far the most important life-giving agent of the plant, though the leaves also contribute towards

the living plasma of the plant by obtaining from the air and from the sun rays essential substances for the plant's existence.

The stem provides the main body of the tree, and clearly marks the growth and development of the tree.

But the tree obtains perfection only upon producing fruit, for in it lies the seed for the procreation of its kind, generation after generation.

Now, man is likened to a tree (*Deut. 20:19*). This likeness is particularly marked in the spiritual sense:

The root is his faith which links the Jew with his origin and which constantly obtains for him his spiritual nourishment.

The stem – the Torah and *Mitzvot* [commandments]; these must grow even as the age of a tree increases its stem and branches.

But the fruit, which more than anything else justifies the existence of the tree – is the good deeds of man, those *Mitzvot* which benefit others as well as self, and which have within them the seed that produce similar good deeds.

To sum up, the roots of the Jew and his very link with the origin of his life lie in his true faith in G-d and in all the fundamental principles of our religion. Unless the roots are firm, and firmly embodied in the soil, the tree despite its trunk and branches and leaves, will not withstand the strong wind. The development and advancement and in fact the entire stature of the Jew can be seen through his good deeds, in the practice of the Torah and *Mitzvot*. Finally, his perfection comes through the fruit, by benefiting others, and helping to perpetuate our great national heritage. "Before the sin of the *Etz Hadaas* [Tree of Knowledge which Adam and Eve ate from in the Garden of Eden] all trees were fruit bearing, and in the future all trees will bear fruit," and as our sages told us: The first command in the Torah is that of procreation – a Jew must, must see that there be another Jew.

And this is the meaning of "He who benefits the many, the virtue of many is credited to him" which I quote in my last letter to you, for this is the highest form of virtue.

With kindest personal regards,

Very sincerely yours,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

"G-d led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although it was near" (*Ex. 13:17*)

The path taken by the Jews throughout history, whether in the direction of the Land of Israel or toward the Final Redemption, was never smooth. Whenever our ultimate goal appeared at hand, the next second it seems to move further away. Yet when we have nearly despaired of reaching our destination, suddenly we see that it is indeed within reach (*TNidchei Yisrael*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This coming Shabbat is called Shabbat Shira, "the Sabbath of Song." It is the Shabbat on which we read the Torah portion of B'shalach, which describes the splitting of the Red Sea and the song of praise to G-d sung by the men (led by Moshe), and the song of praise sung by the women (led by Miriam).

Our Sages explain that the Jewish people are destined to sing ten songs. Nine songs have already been sung by the Jewish people as a whole; in the Era of the Redemption, we will sing the tenth song, "a new song."

The first nine songs are referred to as "shira," the feminine form of the word "song," while the "new song" of the Era of the Redemption is referred to as "shir," the masculine form of the word.

All the previous songs refer to the efforts of the Jewish people (the feminine dimension) to ascend to a higher spiritual level and to elevate their environment. In contrast, the song of the Era of the Redemption will be a song of revelation from Above (the masculine dimension).

According to the commentary *Me'am Lo'ez*, there is another difference between the nine songs sung in exile and the tenth song of the Redemption.

In the past, no one sang a song until after the miracle had occurred. The song was never sung in advance, even when a miracle was anticipated.

In the Messianic Era, however, people will sing because of a future miracle; it is therefore called a "new song" – an entirely new concept. Our faith will be so strong that we will sing even before the miracle occurs.

As the Rebbe said on Shabbat Shira, "Soon we will merit the singing of the 'new song,' the song of Redemption, a song of unity and oneness."

Indeed, a foretaste of the happiness and joy which will accompany that song can be experienced at present. The confidence that the Redemption is an immediate reality should produce joy and happiness.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקה

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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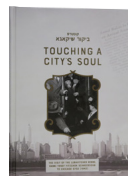
Words Of The Living G-D

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad Chasidism, brings the deepest secrets of Jewish mysticism down to earth so they could be understood by the average person. But most of these teachings, Such as *Torah Or*, are written in scholarly Hebrew. Master teacher Yitzchok Wagshul has translated *Torah Or* and explains it in friendly, articulate English for scholar and layman alike.



Touching A City's Soul

In 1942 the Previous Rebbe visited Chicago for the second time. He rallied American Jews to a reawakening of pride in their heritage. So pivotal to the revival of Jewish life in the city was the Previous Rebbe's visit that a book was printed in Hebrew and Yiddish at the behest of the community. That book, containing the Chasidic discourses, talks and personal diaries of people at that time, has been translated into English in *Touching a City's Soul*. Published by *Sichos in English*.



Hakhel – Unite

Hakhel is "gather the people, the men and the women and the children." If each category had been said separately, it would have indicated a state of division and argument; and such a state cannot produce anything that is "good." But the verse indicates that there is no division or argument, for they are all one congregation. Of course, this gathering must be done according to the Torah, as in the time of the Holy Temple when the "men were below" and the "women above." Only then is it a true "gathering," and only then will there truly be no divisions. (*The Rebbe*) Find out more at hakhelnation.com