



IT HAPPENED ONCE

A number of chasidim were gathered with Rabbi Yitzhak Meir of Ger, partaking of the festive meal after a brit mila, when the rebbe asked a certain chasid to relate a story about Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev.

The chasid began: "One of the followers of the Berdichever Rebbe was a cattle dealer. And it happened that once when he had many heads of cattle to sell the market price dropped drastically. The chasid was worried about the heavy loss he would have to sustain, so he travelled to Berdichev to consult his Rebbe for advice in the matter and a blessing.

"When he arrived in the rebbe's presence, Levi Yitzhak asked him, 'Is there any particular mitzva with which you occupy yourself?'"

"Yes, replied the man, 'I am a mohel.' [one who performs ritual circumcisions]."

"And what do you do in the case that an infant bleeds heavily after the circumcision?" asked the Rebbe.

"The man described at length the medications and salves he applied, and then the Rebbe responded: 'I will give you a certain medicinal herb to use if you are ever, G-d forbid, in such a situation. If you apply this to the wound, it will stop bleeding immediately.' And the Rebbe handed him some herbs.

"But Rebbe," beseeched the chasid, "what shall I do about the cattle?"

"But the Rebbe only replied, 'I have already explained that if you encounter an infant who bleeds excessively, just apply the herbs and the bleeding will stop immediately.'"

"The chasid didn't repeat his question. He took his belongings and returned to his home."

At this juncture in the story Rabbi Yitzhak Meir interrupted the story with a comment: "From the behavior of this man we can tell that he was a true chasid, since he didn't persist in his questioning of the Rebbe, but simply assumed that the Rebbe's words contained the advice he sought, although he didn't as yet perceive the meaning in them."

The storyteller continued: "The chasid stopped at an inn on his way home, and in casual conversation found out that the innkeeper's infant son had not been circumcised. He was surprised and asked the reason for this. The innkeeper told him that his two previous sons had died as a result of excessive bleeding after circumcision. The chasid, remembering his Rebbe's words, asked the innkeeper, 'If I were to tell you that there existed a cure for this problem of bleeding, would you allow a brit to be performed on your son?'"

"If my son could be circumcised without the possibility of danger, I would be prepared to pay the mohel a sum of four hundred silver rubles."

"I have a very potent medication which will stop any bleeding. Allow me to perform the brit, and I will assume all responsibility. I will even give you four hundred silver rubles of my own, forfeit in the case of any problem, G-d forbid."

"The innkeeper agreed, on the stipulation that the mohel remain with them for a full month to watch the child, should any complications develop. The circumcision was performed, and in fact the child did bleed a great deal. But the mohel applied the herbs he had received and all went well; the bleeding stopped at once. A few days after the brit, news reached the inn that the price of cattle had risen considerably. The chasid-merchant was anxious to return home and sell his livestock, but the innkeeper was adamant about their agreement, and refused to allow him to leave. Several more days passed and word arrived that the price of cattle had gone even higher, and the chasid pleaded with his host to allow him to leave, as the baby was doing quite well. But the innkeeper was unmoved by his argument, and answered that a deal was a deal, and he must remain the full four weeks.

"After the entire month had passed the chasid left the inn. The grateful innkeeper

paid him the four hundred silver rubles he had promised and also returned the other four hundred he had held on bond. The cattle dealer was able to sell his cattle for a price far greater than he had ever imagined, making an enormous profit.

"When the time came for his customary visit to Berdichev he happily presented his Rebbe with four hundred silver rubles to be used charity, saying: 'Rebbe, this money rightfully belongs to you!'"

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Shemini

The Torah portion of Shemini begins with the most sublime and elevated service on the eighth day of preparation for the Tabernacle, and ends with the prohibition against eating crawling insects, something which goes against human nature. From this we learn that even one who stands on the highest level of spirituality and observance is not protected against spiritual downfall, G-d forbid, and must serve G-d with the same measure of acceptance of the yoke of heaven as others. (*Likutei Sichot*)

They brought what Moses commanded before the Tabernacle of Meeting, and all the congregation drew near and stood before G-d (Lev. 9:5)

According to the Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the commandment to love one's fellow Jew must be accepted before beginning to pray. Only when "the congregation drew near" to each other in love and unity, did the Jewish people "stand before G-d" in prayer and supplication. (*Chesed L'Avraham*)

G-d spoke to Aaron, saying: Wine or strong drink you shall not drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you go into the Sanctuary of Meeting (Lev 10:8,9)

The service in the Holy Temple was performed according to a certain schedule whereby each individual kohen knew in advance when he was due to serve. The kohen was forbidden to imbibe either wine or liquor just prior to this time so that his mind would be clear when he performed the holy service. This applies today as well, for we eagerly anticipate the re-establishment of the Holy Temple at any moment, at which time the kohanim will be required to commence their service immediately. According to Jewish law, intoxication may be dissipated in one of two ways – either by going to sleep, or by waiting for a period of 18-24 minutes to elapse. This proves that Moshiach may arrive and the Holy Temple may be rebuilt in less than 24 minutes! (*Peninei Hegeulah*)



6:55 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
22 Adar II/March 25
 Torah Portion Shemini
 Parshat Para
 Blessing of the new month Nissan
 Shabbat ends 7:55 PM

L'Chaim

1716

22 Adar II, 5782
 Mar 25, 2022

The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

נסד תוד ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"... I have called out to the L-rd and He answered me" (Psalm 120:1)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion is called *Shemini*, the "Eighth," which refers to the day after the seven days of training the *Kohanim* (priests) underwent before the inauguration of the Sanctuary in the desert. Until the eighth day, G-d's presence did not fill the Sanctuary, the G-dly fire didn't descend onto the altar.

On the eighth day, following the seven days of their inauguration, Aaron and his sons begin to officiate as Kohanim; a fire came forth, consumed the offerings on the altar, and the Divine presence dwelled in the Sanctuary.

The portion continues by describing the "strange fire before G-d, which He commanded them not" that was brought by Aaron's sons and the sons' subsequent deaths. We also read of the identifying features or kosher animals and fish, and a list of kosher birds and insects. Lastly, there are laws of ritual purity, including the purifying power of a mikva and wellspring.

Back to the concept of eighth, the name of our portion: What is it about the "eighth" that makes all the difference?

In nature we find seven to be common. You have seven days of the week, seven years to our agricultural cycle. Kabbala teaches that there are seven building blocks of creation, which is six emotional attributes and the seventh, malchut, which amplifies these attributes, and they are directly connected to the six days of the week, and Shabbat.

We also find that music has seven notes - A through G. We even are told that King David had a harp that had seven strings.

All these sevens are meant to bring to the "Eighth."

What is the "Eighth?"

The "Eighth" is our true essence, it is our ability to transcend nature and connect with the part of ourselves that is above nature, our neshama, our soul. The neshama is a part of G-d, and when we rise above nature we feel our essential bond with Him.

The seven days of training, brought them to the Eighth day, on which G-d's presence reentered the Jewish community. This is because we once again found our way above our physical selves and revealed our oneness with G-d.

We work all week for Shabbat and if we utilize Shabbat correctly it will bring us to the next level.

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

The Power of One

by Rabbi Uriel Vigler

I filled up my car with gas this week, and the numbers just kept rising. It used to cost \$40, but now I watched it climb to \$50, then \$60, only coming to a stop in the \$70 range.

Wow. I'd better get used to walking more!

Wherever in the world you live, the war in Ukraine has affected you in some way. If you're American, you're feeling it at the gas pump and the grocery store. Your stocks may have risen or fallen dramatically, but definitely not stayed stable.

Ukrainians, like my cousin Rabbi Shneur Vigler, are most affected by the war. He and his wife had been living in Odessa for close to 20 years. It was their home; where they raised their family. And then, in a moment, he had to make the decision to escape, fleeing across the border, traveling for days by boat, car, and foot.

Russians, too, are affected by the war. As are residents of any of the border towns close to Ukraine who have had a sudden massive influx of refugees. Add to that the fear that the war may spread to other countries and ignite World War Three ... no one is untouched by this volatile situation.

It is clear we are living in the era right before the coming of Moshiach. The *Talmud* tells us that right before the Final Redemption there will be significant wars between nations. I have no doubt that what is happening between Russia and Ukraine right now is a sign of his imminent arrival.

In the last recorded talk that the Lubavitcher Rebbe gave, exactly 30 years to the day from the start of the

war in Ukraine, he spoke about the falling of the Iron Curtain, and how miraculous it was that it happened without bloodshed. The fact that Jews were allowed to immigrate to Israel freely was a taste of the times of Moshiach. The Rebbe continued, and said that even if there is a country or two where Jews are forced to flee, it doesn't change the overall ability for Jews to move to Israel in peace and harmony, and even those Jews being forced to flee will arrive unharmed. It's almost like the Rebbe was speaking prophetically about the war in Ukraine that broke out 30 years later, to the very day of his talk!

But the real lesson for each of us is on a smaller scale.

Look how much power one individual has to affect others. One person decides to go to war, and we all feel it. One person has single-handedly unleashed a tidal wave that is sweeping through the world, sparing no one in its path.

We, too, need to go to war – but not this kind of war. Every time we do a good deed, we create an angel that can travel the globe and affect the entire planet. Every *mitzva* we do creates a superweapon. When we give charity, put on *Tefillin* or speak kindly to someone, positive energy is released. The more we do, the stronger our army gets, the more goodness we unleash in the world which will usher in the era of Moshiach when there will be no more war or bloodshed, and armies will lay down their weapons in peace.

May we witness his coming now!

Rabbi Uriel Vigler, with his wife Shevy, directs the Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side of Manhattan. This article was written on day 15 of the war.

SLICE OF LIFE

Stay As Long as You Can

by Mica Soffer



Rabbi Zushe Wilhelm *obm* and his wife Esther served as Chabad emissaries in Panama during a time of conflict and danger.

In 1986, the Ashkenazi Jewish community in Panama City sent a request to the Rebbe saying that they were looking for a new rabbi. Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Hodakov, the Rebbe's Chief of Staff, spoke to Rabbi Wilhelm, who knew Spanish, and suggested that he take the position. Rabbi Hodakov made it clear that if he went, it would be as a rabbi of the community and also as the emissary of the Rebbe. The Wilhelms agreed and set out to Panama.

Immediately upon arriving, the Wilhelms opened a Gan Israel Day Camp. Many children enrolled and enjoyed an uplifting Jewish experience. The Wilhelms spent three successful years serving the Jewish community of Panama. However, this was not to last.

The mutually beneficial relationship between the United States and the *de facto* ruler of Panama Manuel Antonio Noriega became sour in the mid-80s. Noriega was indicted by U.S. federal grand juries on drug-smuggling and money-laundering charges. Panama was placed under economic sanctions, and Panamanian assets in America were frozen.

Things came to a head in March 1988 when the Panamanian government charged that the United States was waging a "non-declared war" against Panama, and a state of emergency was declared.

Mrs. Wilhelm's father, Moshe Sperlin, who lived in Crown Heights, became worried. With phone lines and electricity in Panama down, he was

unable to communicate with them. Mr. Sperlin ran to 770. He reported the news and asked the Rebbe's secretary Rabbi Leibl Groner to ask the Rebbe what his children should be doing in such a situation.

Rabbi Groner said he would present the question to the Rebbe and that he would call the Sperlin residence once an answer was given. As Mr. Sperlin left 770, Rabbi Groner came running after him. "Please come back!" he called out.

Rabbi Groner said, "The Rebbe told me to tell you as follows: Your daughter and her three young children should come back to the United States. However, your son-in-law Rabbi Zushe should stay with his community as long as he possibly can. The Rebbe then said that you should be in touch with the *Rav* (rabbinic authority of the community), as well."

Reaching the Wilhelms was nearly impossible. Panamanian schools and banks were closed. Since the United States had frozen Panamanian assets, credit cards could not be used and phone calls between both countries couldn't easily be made. Provisions could only be obtained with cash.

During the next few days, the Wilhelms remained at home. At the window, they watched soldiers march down the street, tanks rolling by, and fires burning. Their sons Berel and Chaim Yisroel, both young children at the time, still remember the gunshots fired into the air as a show of force.

When they got word of the Rebbe's instruction, the Wilhelms weren't able to purchase airline tickets since they didn't have available cash. Mrs. Wilhelm's parents sent them tickets via the Telex text-based message network. The line stretched a full block to enter the building to pick up the tickets. Mrs. Wilhelm and her three children were able to safely board and arrive in New York.

The very next day, gunshots were fired while he was at *shul*. As an American and Panamanian citizen, Rabbi Wilhelm was soon offered security detail from the Panamanian army and later from the Southern Command of the American military base.

Rabbi Wilhelm was hesitant to accept either offer. Realizing that he was the subject to a game of "tug of war" between the opposing sides, he tactfully turned down both of them. He explained that this increased security would heighten the fears of community members, and they would be afraid to attend synagogue. Hearing this explanation, they relented.

Several tense and frightening weeks went by. Throughout this time, Rabbi Wilhelm continued to encourage the Jews to remain strong and faithful.

When the United States began gathering American citizens for evacuation, the American

Embassy called Rabbi Wilhelm. They notified him that the U.S. would no longer be protecting its citizens.

To stay protected, they said, Rabbi Wilhelm would be required to either leave the country or relocate to the American military base. Rabbi Wilhelm refused both offers, following the Rebbe's directive that he stay with the Jewish community.

On March 16, there was an attempted coup against Noriega; it failed, demonstrating that Noriega was still supported by the Panamanian Defense Force. Three weeks later, on a Thursday, the electrical grid in the country collapsed. All lines of communication were cut off. Some feared that Noriega might order the abduction or killing some of the nearly 35,000 U.S. citizens residing in Panama.

Having no ability to communicate with his relatives abroad and being afraid for his life, Rabbi Wilhelm made the difficult decision to leave. He had stayed in Panama as long as he could, as the Rebbe had instructed, and now it was time to leave.

Rabbi Wilhelm left with nothing more than a small bag. A day earlier he had met with the director of the local branch of Israel's Bank Leumi who had let him enter through a back door and withdraw some cash from his account. That money would be the only way he could get a ticket.

Rabbi Wilhelm's car was stopped by a group of soldiers. It was right outside a statue of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in tribute to the U.S. help in creating the Panama Canal. The bronze statue was now completely destroyed and Roosevelt's head was chopped off and covered with red paint.

The soldiers frisked Rabbi Wilhelm searching for ammunition and then questioned him at great length about his affiliations and whereabouts. Rabbi Wilhelm begged one soldier to let him leave, explaining he was more than halfway to the airport to be reunited with his wife and children. Finally, they let him go without harm.

Rabbi Wilhelm arrived at the airport, but there were no flights. He slept on an airport bench that night. The next morning was a Friday. A single plane would leave Panama that day, destination unknown.

There was a rush to get tickets to that flight and Rabbi Wilhelm obtained one. Onboard, he and the other Jews recited the Traveler's Prayer with great concentration. Once the flight took off, the pilot announced that they were headed for Puerto Rico. From Puerto Rico, Rabbi Wilhelm was able to take another flight to Miami, Florida. He arrived in Miami just in time for Shabbat.

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The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Third Day of the Week of Shemini, 5741 [1981]

Many thanks for the rare copy of the *Tanach* [Jewish Bible] in Yiddish, printed in Amsterdam in 5436. I sincerely appreciate your thoughtfulness. The *sefer* [holy book] will certainly occupy an honored place in our Library. Thus you also have a share in the *zechus harabim* [public merit] that is associated with it.

May G-d grant you to continue doing good deeds for many, many years, in the spirit of the Torah which, as our Sages emphasize, is the real good – *Lekach Tov*.

Apropos of this, I may add, this acknowledgment is written on the day "twice blessed with *ki tov* [it was good]," meaning, according to our Sages, *tov lashamayim v'tov labriyos* [good for Heaven and good for the creatures]. For it is not sufficient to do something good for a fellow Jew merely out of the goodness of one's heart, but it must be coupled with a sense of *kedusha* [holiness], as the fulfillment of a G-d-given *mitzvah* [commandment], especially the *mitzvah of v'ahava l're'acha kamocha* [love of one's fellow Jew], the Great Principle of our Torah.

The above is also relevant to the *sefer* itself, which made the Yiddish translation of *Tanach* available to the Jewish masses, whose spoken language was Yiddish at that time, as it still is, of course. One can well imagine the tremendous effort that went into this task in those days, more than 360 years ago when a special government permit was required, as also the Censor's approval, getting expert Yiddish typesetters, painstakingly done by hand, not to mention the enormous financial outlay. Yet, despite all these difficulties, and this despite the fact that important *Halachic seforim* [books of Jewish law] were urgently needed to be

printed, priority was given to this enormous undertaking in order to bring G-d's words to the many Jews who were not well versed in *Chumash* [the Five Books of Moses] and *Nach* [the Prophets and the Writings] in the original Holy Tongue.

Needless to say, this kind of good deed is doubly good, since for a Jew the spiritual is the source of material benevolence.

16th of Adar I, 5738 [1978]

...I trust that it is unnecessary to emphasize to you at length that the daily life and conduct in accordance with the will of G-d, namely in accordance with the Jewish way of Torah and *Mitzvoth* [commandments], in addition to being a must for its own sake, is also the channel to receive G-d's blessings in all needs. Therefore, every additional effort in this direction is bound to bring additional Divine blessings, and there is always room for advancement in all matters of goodness and holiness, Torah and *Mitzvoth*, which are infinite, being derived from, and connected with, the Infinite.

The above is particularly important since, as I note, you are planning to spend *Pesach* [Passover] in *Eretz Yisroel* [Israel]. As I had occasion to mention this to others, visiting another country often requires a visa, and the "visa" insofar as a country which is recognized even by non-Jews as the "Holy Land," is surely in terms of an extra measure of holiness.

Our Rabbis speak of *Eretz Yisroel* as the "Palace of the Supreme King," and it is understandable that when a person is about to visit a palace of a king or a president, one makes appropriate preparations in regard to dress and particularly conduct befitting the occasion.

Thus, however satisfactory the position may be in regard to goodness and holiness, Torah and *Mitzvoth*, in one's personal life an extra measure of it is called for when visiting the Holy Land, both before and, certainly, during the visit.

Wishing you and your son a pleasant visit to the Holy Land in the above spirit and in every respect.

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Shabbat a second Torah scroll is taken out of the ark and Parshat Para, a special chapter enumerating the laws of the red heifer, is read. The ashes of the red heifer (of which only nine have ever existed) have the power to remove the spiritual impurity that is caused by contact with a dead body. The tenth and final red heifer will be prepared by Moshiach, who will purify the Jewish people in the Messianic era.

The mitzva of the red heifer is a prime example of a "chok" – a commandment that completely transcends human understanding. While the person upon whom the ashes were sprinkled was purified, the one who performed the ritual was rendered unclean. The mitzva of the red heifer has long been derided by the non-Jewish world for its inconsistencies. The Evil Inclination wants Jews, too, to feel uncomfortable about it. But like other commandments in this category, it reminds us that the basis for our observing Torah and mitzvoth is not how much of Judaism we can understand and "agree" with. A Jew's faith in G-d is higher than the limitations of the human mind.

Of course, as human beings blessed with intellect we are obligated to study Torah and comprehend it to the best of our ability. Faith and intellect are two sides of the same coin, each one complementing the other and making us complete. But the bottom line is that the Torah is Divine, and we can't expect to understand everything.

The mitzva of the red heifer thus contains an important lesson: G-d promised us Moshiach; it doesn't matter if it makes "sense," or if there are skeptics who ridicule our belief. In the same way our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt in the merit of their faith, so too must we remain strong until the Final Redemption with Moshiach is a reality.

May it happen at once.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA

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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Chairman Director Rabbi Shmuel Butman Program director Rabbi Kasriel Kastel Secretary Rabbi Moshe P. Goldman Administrator Rabbi Shlomo Friedman Editor Yehudis Cohen Associate Editor David Y. B. Kaufmann Chairman Editorial Comm. Rabbi Nissen Mangel Rebbe photo S. Roumani

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Today Is...

26 Adar II

All that is sacred and fundamental to the Jewish people – in establishing and rearing an upright generation, kosher food, the sublime pure holiness of Shabbat, was entrusted by awesome and revered G-d – for preservation and development – to the Jewish woman. The woman who fulfills her obligation in the life of the family, in conducting the home, and in assuring the education be according to Torah, about her the verse extols – "The wisdom of fulfills women built her home."

JewQ

JewQ International Torah Competition, with 110 finalists from around the world, took place recently. The JewQ Hebrew School Shabbaton, attended by the children contestants and their parents, was held at the Hyatt Regency in Princeton, New Jersey. The JewQ "Ultimate Champions" were from Boca Raton, Florida; Northern Delaware County; Main Line, Pennsylvania; Brooklyn New York; Milford, Massachusetts.

Torah Dedicated to Fallen Officers

The Beis Yisroel Torah Gemach dedicated a Torah to two Police officers who were killed in the line of duty this winter. Detective Jason Rivera and Detective Wilbert Mora were recognized with the dedication of the Torah to their memory. The Torah will be deployed and used by the Rockwood Park Jewish Center in Howard Beach, Queens.

