

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, *Vayakhel*, we read about the participation of all the Jewish people, men and women, in donating to and construction of the Tabernacle.

After the sin of the golden calf, G-d's presence left the Jewish camp. The Tabernacle was meant to be a dwelling place for G-d's presence, so that G-d be among us once again. G-d's command to build the Tabernacle was a clear indication that He forgave us.

Later we had various Tabernacles in Israel and finally the first and second Temples in Jerusalem.

Now that we have neither Tabernacle nor Temple, how do we merit G-d's presence in our midst?

Also, the Torah tells us that women brought more than the men. But the fact is, that they were not involved in the sin of the golden calf, so why were they so driven to be involved?

Today, one of the ways to do the *mitzva* (commandment) of building a Tabernacle is by making our homes into a place where G-d is comfortable. Each and every one of us can be involved. Being that the woman is the backbone of the Jewish home, and she naturally understands the value of having G-d's presence blessing her home, she sets out to design and manage her home in a way that it will create an hospitable environment for G-d's presence.

The family is mostly influenced by the woman, who is the *Akeret HaBayit* or "mainstay" of the home. She is successful because of her attitude, her drive to create a Jewish atmosphere and her ability to move her family in the right direction. The Jewish woman knows intuitively that the future of Judaism rests in her hands.

Although the men gave to and were involved in the construction of the Tabernacle, their involvement didn't reach the level and enthusiasm that the women displayed. This is for two reasons. First, while the men were obligated to give, the women were not. The men gave from a sense of obligation, the women gave from their hearts. Second, when giving, the men felt the guilt of sin of the golden calf, while the women felt their connection to G-d and yearned for His presence and closeness.

Every man, woman and child, can now give of themselves from a place of love and closeness. In this way, every family can make their home into a Tabernacle. In this merit, G-d will surely send 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.

The Laundry

Regardless of who does the laundry – whether you wash your clothes yourself, the cleaning help does it, or you take it to the laundromat down the block – laundry needs to be done regularly.

And aren't new or freshly laundered clothes such a pleasure?

Before we put them on, they are clean and smoothly pressed; everything is neat and proper. But after wearing them for awhile they become creased and/or stained.

Nevertheless, one need not discard these clothes; instead, we launder them.

The laundering process involves putting the soiled clothing into a machine filled with warm or hot water, and adding soap or chemicals that serve to remove the dirt and discoloration. When clean, the clothes are then pressed by applying a heavy weight or pressure. The garment can now be worn again.

So it is with the Jewish soul.

When G-d gives the Jew his or her soul, it is clean and pressed and perfectly, individually tailored to him or her.

As we say each day in our morning prayers: "The soul that You have placed within me is pure."

In time, however, as it is used for worldly matters, the soul becomes creased – creased through misuse for things that are not part of G-d's plan. The soul may also become soiled and stained when one has can do a *mitzva* (commandment) but doesn't seize the opportunity, or when one transgresses, G-d forbid.

Nevertheless, the Torah tells us not to despair, or give up on the soul's purity and potential.

First, one must immerse it in warm water; that is, warm the soul with the warmth of Torah and mitzvot, allowing it to "soak" in them and become revitalized.

Heartfelt prayer, about which it is said, "Pour out your heart like water," and heartfelt Torah study (the Torah being likened to water) enable the soul to absorb its holiness.



Do you use eco-friendly laundry balls? Consumer Reports' top-rated Tide or Persil? Whatever's on sale?

In your spiritual laundry, make sure to throw in the "cleaning" agents as well, to restore the soul to spotless purity: the giving of charity, and the observance of kashrut and other mitzvot. And, if one adds to this the "weight" and "pressure" of Torah – a weight and pressure that may seem, at first, to be a burden – this not only causes no damage to the garment, but on the contrary, restores it to its former glory.

In other words, through Torah and mitzvot, the soul becomes what it ought to be.

From a letter of the Rebbe in 1951

SLICE OF LIFE

Life Lessons

by Rabbi Uriel Vigler



I fell on the Ice!

It feels like minus a million degrees in NYC lately, and even though I've lived in this beautiful city for 25 winters, I still miss the incredibly mild South African ones. I just can't get used to the cold. And along with the freezing temperatures comes ice on the ground, which as we all know is extremely slippery and dangerous, and often virtually impossible to see.

This week I was walking with my boys, when I slipped and fell on the ice. I'd been walking slowly and carefully, but alas, I felt myself go down, as if in slow motion, trying desperately to catch myself. I landed on my side, hitting my head on the ground.

My boys, who were walking ahead, were oblivious.

I lay there in shock for a few seconds, trying to evaluate how serious of a fall it had been. Could I move? Was I injured? How badly? I know so many people who have broken bones and required extensive surgery after slipping on the snow and ice. Would I be one of them?

I slowly tested my legs and realized that aside from some scratches and bruising, I was actually 100 percent OK. I was in pain for a few hours, but thank G-d, that was the extent of it. Thank G-d, because I know it could've been so much worse!

I eventually caught up to my boys and asked, "Did you notice I wasn't following you?" They said no, they had assumed I was right behind them the entire time. They hadn't noticed my fall at all!

And then I was struck by an important lesson: In life we ALL fall. We fail, mess up, sin. And when that happens, we often think to ourselves, "That's it. I've done the very worst. There's nobody as bad as me. If people knew what I'd done, they wouldn't talk to me." But that's the evil inclination trying to keep us down. After all, if we're so bad, what chance do we have of getting back on track?

But G-d gave us a tremendous gift—the ability to get back up and right ourselves.

Every morning when the sun rises, that is G-d saying, "I don't care what happened yesterday or how badly you messed up. Today is a new day. See the sun shining? Leave whatever happened yesterday in the past. Today, you get up! Try to repent, but leave the past in the past. Don't let it bog you down. Today you have a fresh start. Make the most of it."

We all fall, but the falls don't matter. What matters is getting back up.

You went on a bad date and you feel miserable because it didn't work out? Tomorrow you start over and try again.

You messed up by letting out your stress on those you love? Tomorrow, get up, apologize, and start fresh.

You slipped up by eating non-kosher? Tomorrow, you'll recommit.

Didn't give enough charity in 2021? Ok, it's a new year, you can do better this time around.

Haven't been to shul in a while? Don't let that keep you away. Get up today and go.

When you do that, nobody will remember the initial fall. All they'll see is your perseverance and commitment to starting over and getting things right.

A Word Is a Word

A few weeks ago, we packed up our shul and moved out of the location we had occupied for almost 10 years. It was not an easy process. That space held so many memories for us—tears, laughter, Purim parties, Shabbat and holiday dinners, Pesach seders, friendships formed, Torah classes enjoyed.

For 10 years the owner donated the space to

us, but unfortunately he passed away last year and his family decided to sell the building. They gave me a few months' notice to start packing up and looking for a new location.

When the time came, I asked for a short extension - just a few more months. But they already had a potential buyer who needed the space to be empty.

So we vacated. Sad as we were, we packed up our menorah, megillas, tables and chairs, aron kodesh and sifrei Torah.

Many people asked me, "Why did you move out? Don't you know New York law? You could've stayed until they evicted you, you could've asked for a settlement. Who knows? Maybe you would've made some serious money. Why move out without demanding anything when NY law is on your side?"

No, I wasn't unaware. But when we started using the space 10 years ago, I made a deal with the owner. His main hesitation was that if he ever wanted the space for any reason, I would move out without causing him any problems. And I agreed. We shook hands, and I gave him my word that I would move out immediately when asked.

So even though he passed away and I could've used every excuse in the book, a deal is a deal. When you give your word, you don't go back on it, no matter what.

In fact, the Torah tells us that the very first question a person is asked when he or she passes away is not "Did you fast on Yom Kippur?" or "Did you pray every day?" but "Were you honest in business?"

In business, we are tempted on a daily basis. Tempted to rationalize why we deserve money, or why a gray area is really OK. And we have to be particular to maintain honesty and integrity.

So ask yourself, what will you tell G-d after 120 years, when He asks "Were you honest in your business dealings?"

As hard as it was, I know I did the right thing. And after we moved out, one of the people involved met with me and thanked me for moving out so graciously, without causing any problems.

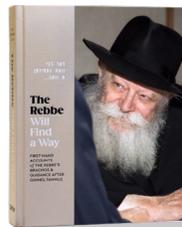
I have no doubt that G-d will direct us to a suitable space very soon, so that we can have a permanent home for our shul!

Rabbi Vigler co-directs Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side in New York City with his wife Shevi. From Rabbi Vigler's blog at www.chabadic.com



The Rebbe Will Find a Way

The Rebbe Will Find a Way is a collection of over 75 personal stories of the Rebbe's blessings and guidance. Curated from the popular column in the *Derher* Magazine, these stories serve to reinforce our conviction that the Rebbe finds a way to answer, no matter how large the challenge. Perhaps, like the enthusiastic children in this book, your child will discover new and additional ways to be helpful.



New Facility

Chabad of Hampstead Garden Suburb in **London, England**, has acquired a new facility to call home to their many programs. Under the direction of **Rabbi Bentzi and Rochi Sudak**, the center offers adult education courses, a mother and toddler group, a Sunday morning Tefillin and breakfast drop-in and C-Teen programming for youth.

Today Is...

27 Adar I

Rabbi Sholom Ber of Lubavitch said: Truth is the middle path. An inclination to the right, to be overly stringent with oneself and find faults or sins not in accord with the truth, or an inclination to the left, to be overly indulgent, covering one's faults or being lenient in demands of avoda out of self-love – both these ways are false.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

8th of Adar 2, 5727 [1967]

Mrs. A. C. Y. H. Blessing and Greeting:
 Your cable reached me with some delay. I also received your recent correspondence. Upon receipt of your cable, the following reply was cabled back to you, "Replying to your cable, wishing you successful treatment, good news, with blessing."
 May G-d grant that you should have good news to report, especially now as we are in the auspicious month of Adar. The auspiciousness of this month is, of course, connected with the miraculous Purim festival, in which Jewish women have a particularly important part, for Esther, together with Mordechai, brought about the turn of events. And although Mordechai was as much the essential figure as Esther, and as we say in the Purim prayer, "In the days of Mordechai and Esther," yet the Megilla containing the story of Purim, and which is one of the sacred books of the *Tanach* [Bible], is not called after Mordechai, nor after Mordechai and Esther jointly, but solely after Esther – Megillas Esther – the "Book of Esther."
 With reference to your letter, I read with considerable interest your outline of your *curriculum vitae*. I am gratified to note that you are conducting your home in the way of our sacred Torah, called *Toras Chaim* [The Torah of life] because it is both the source of true life as well as the true guide in daily life, despite the difficulties that you had in the past, and are still experiencing to some extent.
 To be sure, that period of time in the past when the daily life should have been different, requires rectification, especially by means of a determined effort to improve the present and future, so as to make up

for the past. On the other hand, human nature is such that things that come easily are easily taken for granted, and are not so appreciated and cherished as things for which one had to fight and struggle. Thus, the level of *Yiddishkeit* [Torah-living] which you and your husband attained through real efforts has permeated you more deeply and thoroughly, and may G-d grant that you should both continue in this direction together with your children, without allowing yourself to be hindered or influenced in any way by the difficulties which you describe in your letter.

The difficulties themselves can serve as a challenge and stimulus to greater spiritual advancement...

On the contrary, the difficulties themselves can serve as a challenge and stimulus to greater spiritual advancement, as is also explained in Chasidic literature, namely that one could learn a lesson even from the *Yetzer Hara* [Evil Inclination]. For it is clear how persistent and relentless the *Yetzer Hara* is in doing its duty to distract a Jew from the way of Torah and mitzvot, by presenting him constantly with various difficulties, temptations and all sorts of arguments to the contrary. So much so that the *Yetzer Hara* often appears in a guise of piety and "The voice of morality," such as the commandment of honoring one's father and mother, the need to preserve peace and harmony, and the like justify a deviation from the *Shulchan Aruch* [the Code of Jewish Law].
 The determination and the dedication of the *Yetzer Hara* to its duty should therefore serve as an inspiration how much more should a person be devoted and dedicated to his real task, considering that the Jew has a Divine soul and a natural inner drive towards the good and holy, which should make one truly thrilled to be able to serve G-d with joy and gladness of heart.

continued in next issue

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

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."

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.

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MOSHIACH MATTERS

This week's portion relates, "Betzalel made the ark" (Ex. 37:1) Of all the components of the Sanctuary, why is Betzalel's name associated specifically with the ark? At

different times in history, all of the other vessels were also fashioned by other people (i.e., for the First and Second Holy Temples; they will also be made for the Third Holy Temple when it is reestablished). However, there has always been only one ark, made by Betzalel. Although hidden away after the destruction, in the future it will be revealed. (Meshech Chochma)



IT HAPPENED ONCE

In the olden days, the Jews of Germany were known for their highly organized social and community structure. Being chosen for a post in one of these communities was a badge of honor, as it signified having been approved by several screening committees. And once a candidate was selected, his authority and influence over communal life was considerable.

The selection process for religious leaders was equally stringent. Being the Rabbi of a German Jewish community was a prestigious position, and there was much competition.

Rabbi Refael Cohen, the Rav of Pinsk, was one of the leading Torah authorities of his generation. At the age of ten he had been accepted into the famous yeshiva of the "She'agat Aryeh," and at 19 he already headed the yeshiva. Before Pinsk, he had served as Rav in Posna and Minsk. It was therefore not surprising when he was asked to serve as Rabbi of Hamburg, one of the most important Jewish communities in Germany. The Rabbi set off for Hamburg to meet with its leaders and begin the official process of appointment.

By that time, the winds of the Enlightenment had already begun to blow across Germany. The stated aim of its proponents was the "modernization" of Judaism, while retaining its age-old traditions. In fact, however, its underlying goal was the removal of all barriers separating Jew and non-Jew, and the ultimate assimilation of the Jewish people into the family of nations. Rabbi Refael, who hailed from the "backwaters" of Lithuania, had never met any Maskilim, as they were called, and the whole idea was foreign to him.

Moses Mendelssohn was one of the main proponents of the Enlightenment then living in Berlin. To many German Jews, he was a visionary whose opinions and "Weltanschauung" greatly influenced their own. Among those who regarded him in this light were several of the community leaders of Hamburg, who were now in charge of appointing a Rabbi. Their ideal candidate would be knowledgeable in Torah, yet "progressive" enough to keep up with current fashions and trends.

When Rabbi Refael appeared before the selection committee they were impressed by his obvious scholarship and wisdom. His personal views and beliefs, however, remained unknown. The board decided that the best person to judge Rabbi Refael's character would be Moses Mendelssohn himself.

Rabbi Refael was told only that if he wished to conclude the appointment process as quickly as possible, he must travel to Berlin to meet with one of the greatest Jewish thinkers of all time, Rabbi Moses Mendelssohn. If he received his recommendation, the position of Rabbi was his.

Rabbi Refael, in his naïveté, assumed that he was going to meet a Torah sage, and set off for Berlin. In the meantime, the board sent an urgent letter to Moses Mendelssohn explaining the situation and asking him to assess the moral fiber of the Lithuanian Rabbi. Was he truly qualified to be Rav of the "progressive" community of Hamburg?

Rabbi Refael walked into Moses Mendelssohn's home and saw the "Torah sage" sitting at his desk with his head uncovered, rifling through a Hebrew Bible. He was so astonished that he was momentarily speechless. In addition to his shock, he also felt as if he had been deliberately deceived and misled.

When Mendelssohn looked up and greeted his visitor with "Shalom," Rabbi Refael responded with a quote from Isaiah, "There is no peace, says the L-rd. How could they have sent me to a heretic?" he thundered. "I would rather be reduced to begging than have to obtain the recommendation of someone who sits and learns our holy Torah with an uncovered head!" With that, he turned on his heels and left.

Before he got back to Hamburg, however, a letter arrived from Moses Mendelssohn apprising the board of his findings: "I did not have time to assess the character of the Lithuanian Rabbi," he wrote, "for as soon as he saw me he called me a heretic and stormed out. Why? Because my head was uncovered as I was looking into a Bible. He refused to accept any recommendation from me, and declared that he'd rather be a beggar than need my approval."

The members of the board assumed that Moses Mendelssohn was telling them that Rabbi

Refael was obviously unqualified for the position. But no! The end of the letter contained a surprise: "I therefore recommend that you appoint him as Rav, for he is a man of truth. I am sure that such a person would never be anything less than completely impartial, even if a sword were suspended over his throat..."

In the end Rabbi Refael was appointed as Rav of Hamburg, and served in that capacity for many years. Throughout his life he continued to be a staunch opponent of the Enlightenment and of Mendelssohn himself, whose recommendation secured his job in the first place.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

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

It is preferable for a person to do a mitzva immediately, as the opportunity presents itself, and not procrastinate. Doing a mitzva with alacrity prevents all kinds of obstacles from arising to prevent its performance 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*)

Moses called Betzalel and Oholiav, and every wise-hearted man (Ex. 36:2)

Why didn't the "wise-hearted men" come on their own to Moses, and waited until he approached each of them individually? Because a person who is truly wise-hearted doesn't consider himself wise; when Moses issued his call, none of them thought he was talking to them. (*Ketoret Samim*)

Every one with a willing heart brought earrings and nose rings, and rings, and bracelets, every article of gold (Ex. 35:22)

Earrings: Jewish parents must listen to the Torah's directives concerning the Jewish education of their children. They should also overhear their children's conversations with their friends, in order to guide them properly. Nose rings: Parents should develop a keen sense of "smell" to make sure their children's playmates are appropriate. Rings: Parents must be able to "point" their children in the right direction. Bracelets: In addition to explaining things in a pleasant manner, parents must also stand firm (symbolized by the arm) when it comes to Jewish education. The child should always feel that this is his parents' priority. (*Likutei Diburim*)

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