



Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveichik, the rabbi of the town of Slutsk once happened to meet a young man who had been one of his students at the yeshiva in Volozhin. The meeting was very cordial and the rabbi invited the young man to dine with him at his home.

"What are you doing these days?" the rabbi inquired. "Thank G-d," the former student replied. "I have become a merchant and I'm very successful. In the past few years I have done very well for myself, and I'm making a very comfortable living."

The rabbi looked at his former student, paying close attention to his words and then said, "What are you doing?"

The young man was perplexed. Hadn't the rabbi understood him? he wondered, and he repeated his explanation. But instead of acknowledging his statement, the rabbi only repeated, "What are you doing now?"

"I hope the rabbi will forgive my asking, but three times the rabbi has asked me what I'm doing and I have answered him. I don't understand," asked the young man.

The rabbi replied with a deep sigh: "It is correct that you have answered my question three times over, but your answer is not the one I was hoping to hear. In so far as you have accumulated money, that is nothing to your credit, for it all belongs to G-d, as it says, 'Mine is the silver and mine is the gold.' It is He who gives you riches, health, and in fact, your very life.

"When I ask you 'What are you doing?' I am referring to your good deeds, which are wholly your own. Do you give tzedaka (charity)? Do you do kindness to your fellow man? Do you devote a set time every day to the study of Torah? These are the only things in this world which are truly your own possessions which you accomplish through your efforts alone. I am asking you what you are doing, not what G-d is doing for you!"



Reb Moshe Leib Sassover was a great Tzadik known for the tremendous love and kindness he constantly expressed for his fellow Jews. There was a constant stream of Jews who came to him to ask for a word of advice or a blessing.

One day a poor woman appeared at his door. As soon as she was admitted to his rooms she began to weep as if her heart was breaking. "I beg you, Rebbe," she pleaded, "give me a blessing for my daughter who is very sick."

Reb Moshe Leib responded with the blessing, "May G-d send her a complete and speedy recovery."

But for the distraught mother this blessing wasn't sufficient. "No, Rebbe, you must promise, you must swear to me that my daughter will recover. You must swear to me on your share in the World to Come that G-d will cure my child."

Without hesitating a moment Reb Moshe Leib replied, "I swear on my portion in the next world that G-d will cure her and she will recover." When she heard these words, the woman thanked the Tzadik copiously and left with a light heart.

Reb Moshe Leib's students who had observed the entire incident were astounded. They asked him, "Rebbe, how could you have made such a promise? The girl is seriously ill, and it is very possible she may not survive."

"What else could I have done?" Reb Moshe Leib replied. "The tears of a Jewish

mother are more precious to me than the entire World to Come. If my swearing on my future reward in the World of Truth was necessary to stop her from crying, then it is more than worth it to me, even if it will cost me my portion in the next world.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the Weekly Torah Portion

You shall bind up the money in your hand (Deut. 14:25)
The Torah commands the Jew to "bind up" his money and rule over it, and not the other way around. In other words, his monetary affairs must never exert such an influence over him that he becomes subservient. (Rabbi Meir of Premishlan)

It states in Psalms (51:16): "Save me from bloodshed ('damim'), O G-d, G-d of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness." In Hebrew, the word "damim" also means money; King David was thus praying that he never make the mistake of considering money to be G-d. (Rabbi Moshe of Kovrin)

And the curse, if you will not listen...and turn aside out of the way (Deut. 11:28)

In connection with blessing, the Torah states only "if you will listen," without mention of "the way." The reason is that when a Jew "listens" - has the right intentions, before he can even perform the deed - G-d "connects the good thought with the action" and blesses him immediately. By contrast, a "bad thought" is not punished until the person actually acts on it. (Be'er Mayim Chaim)

You shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from your needy neighbor (Deut. 15:7)

In performing mitzvot, complete simplicity and sincerity of heart are the highest motivations. We observe G-d's laws without asking questions. Yet there is one mitzva in which a little discretion is required: the giving of tzedaka (charity). The giver must always make sure that the recipient is not embarrassed. (Arono Shel Yosef)

Lest your eye be evil against your needy brother...and he cry out to G-d against you, and it be a sin in you (Deut. 15:9)

Not helping another person in his time of need is bad enough, but looking down on him and blaming him for his own predicament is even worse. For if "he cries out to G-d against you," your own behavior will be carefully scrutinized, and your own sins and failings come to light...(Rabbi Shmelke of Nicholsburg)

It states in Proverbs 22:2: "The rich and poor meet together; G-d is the Maker of them all." Most wealthy people think they acquired their riches because of how clever they are; the poor man, by contrast, is pitied as being a hapless ne'er-do-well. Yet when rich and poor come together, they both realize that everything is determined from Above. (Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh of Berlin)



7:46 PM Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
Menachem Av 24 / August 7
Torah Portion Re'eh
Blessing of the new month of Elul
Ethics: Ch 5
Shabbat ends **8:48 PM**

בס"ד

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24 Menachem Av, 5786

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The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תור ימי 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

In this week's Torah portion, Re'eh, the Children of Israel are commanded to maintain their own code of behavior and not to learn from the nations that inhabited Israel before its conquest. "Take heed to yourself that you not be snared by following them." A Jew must never ask, "How do these gentiles worship their gods, that I may do the same?" For G-d has commanded us: "You must not do this before the L-rd your G-d... But hearken to the voice of the L-rd your G-d, to keep all His commandments... to do that which is right in the eyes of the L-rd your G-d."

Moses warned the Jews against imitating the gentiles' conduct. They have their own culture and customs, he explained. Some worship idols, some spend their lives trying to satisfy earthly lusts and desires, while others are motivated by the pursuit of power. But it is forbidden for a Jew to learn from their behavior.

From a numerical standpoint, of course, the Jewish people is the most insignificant of all the nations. Nonetheless, its conduct is entirely unique. Some Jews might mistakenly think that the key to earning the respect and admiration of the gentile nations is to copy their behavior. And yet the opposite is true. It is only when Jews proudly maintain their Jewish traditions and unwavering faith in G-d that they merit not only the respect of their gentile neighbors, but their support and assistance as well.

G-d placed the Jewish people among the nations so that others may see and learn from their simple and uncompromising faith. Jews must always remember that "You have chosen us from among the nations" and conduct themselves according to His will, as revealed in the Torah.

When Jews conduct themselves in such a manner, so as to serve as living examples to the gentiles, they demonstrate that it is indeed possible to adhere to the Seven Noahide Laws that apply to all mankind.

The Jewish people has lived according to the Torah's laws for over 3,000 years. Yet despite its antiquity, the Torah is equally relevant to our present day and age, imparting to all who follow in its ways with renewed strength and vitality.

When Jews keep G-d's laws and refuse to mimic the surrounding nations, they merit a multitude of G-d's blessings: long life and good years, tranquility and peace, physical health and true pleasure.

Additionally, when Jews do what is right, the gentile nations not only hold them in high esteem, but lend their assistance as well.

Adapted for Maayan Chai from Hitva'aduyot 5745, Vol. 5

The Temple's Steps: Climbing to Level Ground

A visitor to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem did a good deal of climbing. Twelve steps rose from the eastern gate of the Temple Mount to the Women's Courtyard, fifteen more to the Courtyard of the Israelites, and a further flight to the Sanctuary, whose floor stood twenty-two cubits (more than thirty feet) above the complex's entry point. King Solomon built the Temple on Mount Moriah, and only the central structure sat on level ground, while the courtyards were terraced into the slope.

Maimonides opens his description of the Temple's layout with exactly this point: "The entire Temple complex was not built on level ground, but on the incline of the mountain." The holier the area, the higher it stood.

The emphasis is puzzling. Maimonides records laws, not geography, and the steps speak for themselves. The Temple was also modeled on the Mishkan, the portable Tabernacle of the desert years, which stood entirely on level ground. If the terrain imposed the Temple's elevations, why present them as a defining feature?

The Rebbe turns the assumption around. The Temple wasn't built on levels because it happened to sit on a mountain. It was set on a mountain because it was meant to have levels.

The Mishkan's holiness was in its structure, in the boards, curtains, and vessels. Its varying degrees of holiness were therefore marked by curtains and dividers, not

elevation. The ground beneath held no sanctity of its own, and when the people journeyed on, the site reverted to ordinary earth.

The Temple worked the other way. Mount Moriah is the place that G-d chose "to set His name there," and its holiness lasts to this day. Its sanctity flows from the Divine Presence, which can never be nullified.

Since the holiness belonged to the ground, the ascending levels of sanctity had to be built into the ground itself. Each holier precinct stood physically higher, which only a mountainside allowed.

Then the steps stop. The Holy of Holies, holiest of all, stood level with the Sanctuary. Steps can measure the distance between one degree of holiness and the next. Nothing measures the distance to G-d's essence, revealed there. Higher and lower don't apply.

Every Jew is built the same way. Growth is usually a climb, one level at a time. But the innermost point of the heart holds a bond with G-d that was never distant and isn't reached by climbing, only uncovered.

And the bond, once uncovered, doesn't stay in the heart. Through Torah and mitzvot, a Jew draws sanctity into the ground of daily life: the home, the workplace, the objects we handle. And this holiness, like Mount Moriah's, is never lost. Step by step, the world climbs toward the third Holy Temple, may it be built speedily in our days.

SLICE OF LIFE

The Promise I Made Eleven Years Ago



By Rabbi Shimon Freundlich – Beijing, China

Eleven years ago, after about 15 years of traveling throughout China doing kosher inspections, I had a thought. “Why do I keep carrying my tefillin? I never meet anyone. They’re just extra weight.”

So I left them behind.

That day, while visiting a factory about two hours outside Qingdao, I met a Jew. I still remember the feeling. I had the opportunity to help another Jew put on tefillin, and I couldn’t. I regretted it deeply. That day I made myself a promise: Never travel without tefillin again.

For the next eleven years, I kept that promise. Every trip. Every factory. Every city. Despite traveling constantly across China, I never met another Jew with whom I could put on tefillin. Until today.

Last night, Dini and I arrived home from Italy at one o’clock in the morning. My alarm went off at five. After davening at home, I got ready to leave for a kashrus inspection in Dezhou, Shandong Province. I was exhausted.

As I reached for my bag, the thought came back. “Shimon, just leave the tefillin at home. You’re exhausted. You’re not going to meet

anybody anyway.”

The moment that thought entered my mind, I remembered the promise I had made eleven years earlier. So I picked them up and left.

After the factory visit, I arrived at the train station. As I was walking through the ticket gates, I heard someone call out, “Shalom.” I looked up and saw two Israelis, an older man and a younger man. They were in China on a business trip.

We exchanged a few words.

“What are you doing here?”

“Factory.”

“You?”

“Factory.”

Then we each continued on our way. As I walked down to the platform to wait for the train, another thought hit me. “You almost left your tefillin at home this morning. Maybe this is why.”

I found them on the train and asked if either of them had put on tefillin that day. The older man immediately became emotional.

He explained, in his own words: “I was already being mechalel Shabbat by leaving my home in Israel for the airport on Shabbat. I didn’t want to be mechalel my tefillin too by carrying them on Shabbat.”

He told me that he puts on tefillin every single day in Israel. But every morning on this trip, he had woken up without them. He knew there was nothing he could do until he got home, but it weighed heavily on him.

He then continued, “I actually feel bad for three reasons. First, because I didn’t bring my tefillin. Second, because this week is Tisha B’Av. We’re mourning the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, and I am missing a mitzvah that I do every single day. And third... this is my Bar Mitzvah parshah.”

The younger man looked at him and smiled. “Really? It’s your Bar Mitzvah parshah? It’s my Bar Mitzvah parshah too.”

I smiled and said, “My oldest son Aaron’s Bar Mitzvah parshah is also this week’s parshah.”

The younger man told me he hadn’t put on tefillin in two years. The last time had been in France on Erev Yom Kippur. So we put on tefillin together.

Three Jews. One train. One parshah.

We put on tefillin together. Afterwards I shared a thought with him. I said, “The Torah has 613 mitzvot, corresponding to the 613 different parts of the human body. If, G-d forbid, someone is missing a finger, does that mean he can’t walk? Of course not. Every limb has its own purpose.”

“The same is true with mitzvot. If someone isn’t yet keeping one mitzvah, that doesn’t diminish the value of another. Every mitzvah stands on its own. Every mitzvah brings light.”

He looked at me, stood up, and gave me a hug. He was crying. I went back to my seat. Then I remembered something.

During COVID, I bought a second pair of tefillin. With all the uncertainty and lockdowns, I wanted to make sure I always had one pair at home and another with me whenever I traveled.

I walked back to him and said, “Listen, I have another pair at home. Take them.” He couldn’t believe what he was hearing. He said “no I can’t that wouldn’t be right”. I said, “Don’t worry. I even have an AirTag on them. If they’re ever lost or left in a hotel somewhere, I can always track them. When you get back to Israel, give them to a rabbi you trust (he knows the Chabad Shliach in his area). Send me his details, and we’ll work out how to get them back.”

Eleven years ago, I missed one opportunity because I left my tefillin behind. For the next eleven years, I carried them everywhere and never met another Jew.

Then, on the very morning I almost left them behind again, Hashem reminded me of a promise I had made long ago, and showed me exactly why I had made it.

Sometimes Hashem plants a thought in our minds for a reason. Our job isn’t always to understand it. Sometimes it’s simply to listen.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

25th of Av, 5740 [1980]

I am in receipt of your letter of July 30th, in which you write about your youngest son.

Considering the seriousness of the situation, I am confident that you will not rest content with what has been done in this matter until now, and will intensify your efforts, both by your husband and yourself, as well as through enlisting the aid of friends, to do everything possible to prevent the tragedy. For, when it comes to a Jewish heart, one never knows what and how will come the moment of truth and proper response.

If you will let me know the Jewish names of all the members of your family for whom you request a blessing, together with their mother's Jewish name, as is customary, I will remember each and all of you in prayer.

It is my duty to call your attention to the following, which I trust you will accept in the spirit it is offered:

All the members of a Jewish family constitute one organism, and when one part of it needs special treatment, it can be done in one of two ways: either directly, if possible, or indirectly, through strengthening the other parts of the body, particularly those that govern the functions of the entire organism.

Applying this illustration to the

present case, it is well to bear in mind that the head of the family is called Baal Habayis [Master of the Home], and the wife is called Akeret Habayis [Foundation of the Home], corresponding to the heart of the family. Thus, strengthening the commitment to the Torah and mitzvot on the part of the parents has a beneficial effect upon all the members of the family in the same direction.

Of course, it may sometimes entail certain difficulties by having to make some changes, perhaps even radical changes, in regard to habits and lifestyles, etc., but on the other hand, considering the far-reaching benefits, and especially the fact that parents surely would not consider anything too difficult if it can be beneficial to their children, of what significance can any difficulty be, especially as in most cases these are often exaggerated.

In any case, a Jew is always requested and expected to live up to G-d's Will; how much more so when special Divine blessing is needed.

At the same time, there is the assurance that however the everyday life and conduct was in the past, a Jew can always start a new life through teshuva (which literally means "return" to one's essence).

As we are about to enter the month of Elul, you surely know of the Jewish custom that from the beginning of the month of Elul, Jews wish one another a happy new year. I will, therefore, conclude with prayerful wishes to you and all your family for a truly Happy New Year, and may G-d grant that even before Rosh Hashana you should have good news to report to this effect.

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'chaim Publication.

From the Archives

This Shabbat is Shabbat Mevarchim, when we bless the upcoming month of Elul. The month of Elul is a month of preparation, when we take stock of ourselves in anticipation of the upcoming holiday of Rosh Hashana.

In Elul, one contemplates the past year, utterly regretting whatever has been undesirable, and resolving to be vigilant in the meticulous observance of the commandments, to be conscientious in one's Torah study and in one's prayers, and to habituate oneself to positive character traits.

The name of the month, "Elul," is an acronym for the Hebrew words which mean, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine."

"I am my Beloved's" refers to serving G-d through one's own initiative. When a Jew serves G-d through his own initiative, the bond between G-d and the Jew is internalized. "My Beloved is mine" refers to Divine revelation which inspires this bond. Elul represents a month of complete connection, through revelation from Above and service from below.

This concept is also connected to this week's Torah portion, Re'ei, which begins with the words, "See I am giving before you today." All of the aspects of our service to G-d should be seen and openly revealed. When someone sees something, it makes a greater impression than if it is just heard. Torah and mitzvot should be openly revealed, and not just something we hear about.

In a deeper sense, we should use our sight to see not just the physicality of the world, but also the essence of G-d and His handiwork in our surroundings.

Additionally, when one recognizes his own G-dliness and the G-dliness of other Jews, this will lead him to truly be able to fulfill the mitzva of loving one's fellow Jew.

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

In this week's portion, we read: "A blessing for obeying the commandments of the L-rd your G-d, and a curse, if you will not obey the commandments." (Deut. 11:27-28)

(Panim Yafot)

A Kosher Grill Pops Up in Jackson Hole, Wyoming



Jackson Hole, nestled in Wyoming's mountains, has long attracted visitors who appreciate its remoteness. While the town is quiet for much of the year, millions of visitors pass through the region each summer on their way to Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks.

This summer marks a first: locals and visitors can enjoy freshly prepared kosher meals at the Kosher Jackson Hole Grill, a pop up operating through mid-August at the Chabad-Lubavitch Jewish Center of Wyoming, directed by Rabbi Zalman and Raizy Mendelsohn.

"Kosher is an important mitzvah," says Rabbi Mendelsohn. "Providing it has required a tremendous investment of time, but it's a service we're always grateful to offer."

ETHICS CHAPTER FIVE

He would also say: Five years is the age for the study of Scripture. Ten, for the study of Mishnah. Thirteen, for the obligation to observe the mitzvot. Fifteen, for the study of Talmud. Eighteen, for marriage. Twenty, to pursue [a livelihood]. Thirty, for strength. Forty, for understanding. Fifty, for counsel. Sixty, for sagacity. Seventy, for elderliness. Eighty, for power. Ninety, to stoop. A hundred-year-old is as one who has died and passed away and has been negated from the world.