



HAPPY CHANUKAH!



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KISLEV 5781 ב"ה

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Dear Chabad

Enclosed is another small donation. No amount - NONE - could ever begin to express the gratitude and affection we have for you & Chabad for the myriad of blessings we have received from you. You've had a profound influence in our lives and we are eternally grateful.

Jeff & Lyn Springut

There are so many ways in which you inspire me. Among them is your positive spin on every issue. I thoroughly enjoy your Positivity Bias chats and I take notes and reread them during the week.

This is a difficult time for the world. For some reason, I have been blessed with all of the important things, like a good family, relative health, and all I need materially. I spend a lot of time on-line attending Jewish study classes and lectures, trying to learn more and to apply teachings to my own life. Mostly, I am working toward sharing any talents or abilities I have been given to help others. That has become more and more of my focus. People like you are so instrumental in that because you do it so well every day. I will never forget your kindness and wisdom on the phone call I made to you many months ago when I was feeling down.

Here is a small contribution for the High Holy Days. I lost my job due to pandemic, so it isn't much, but there will be more, G-d willing, little by little, for calendar, flowers, etc. May you and your family be blessed and may G-d continue to favor you.

Lisa Klein

Please accept this donation

to thank you for all the Zoom classes. They have been a positive experience especially during these times. Miss you all. With love,

Sheri & Bob Simon

A small donation for adult education or where you see a need. Thank you for all! Gratefully,

Deborah Greenholtz

So happy that Chabad is sponsoring Camp. Statistics show that Jewish Camps are the best way to ensure Jewish continuity!

Sheila Weinbach

Words cannot express the gratefulness of your presence and support during the difficult times. Your dedication and inspiration has uplifted and elevated my dad and my sister with your words of wisdom during the holidays. It made a special impact in our lives. I can never thank you enough for everything you have done for me and my family with all the delicious wonderful Shabbat dinners and holiday dinners too.

My sincere and heartfelt gratitude, may G-d bless you and your family with good health, Nachas and lots of Simchas.

Vickie Ouriel & Family

Thank you for caring for my well being by your check in calls during this horrific Pandemic. I really appreciate your genuine concern. This check commemorates the Yahrzeits of my father, mother, mother-in-law and Esther Jackson. Fondly,

Ruthie Goldstein

Hope you and your family are well and safe. Please accept this check for a donation, with thanks for all you do! Best regards,

Linda Reynolds

In times of need I turn to your "Chabad Times" for reassurance and wisdom. Thank you for blessing my life and the life of my Mom (may she live a long time) who LOVES your calendar! Stay well & healthy!

Josh Nichols

Shalom, this check is sent in loving memory of Myron Kolko, who always supported Chabad. May you all continue in good health to serve the Jewish people and the community. All the best,

Dvorah Kolko

Hi, Hope all is well! Shanah Tova! Take care,

Amy Soleimani

Thank you for the Monday Night Parsha class. It is amazing & I look forward to it every week. I hope you & your family are staying safe & healthy. Best,

Judy Wolf

I enclose my donation. I appreciate all the good work you do in our community. May you continue to be a beacon of light. All the best.

Bob Israel

Wish you and your family Shana Tova - and a very happy and healthy new year.

Mary Davis

Thank you for all that you do for our community day in and day out! Sincerely,

Dan Barish

Blessings to all Chabad-nicks in Rochester - please stay safe and healthy during this period of uncertainty.

Jane & Norman Rushefsky

Even though we are past Rosh Hashanah, the bright colors and promise of the card seemed right for the occasion. Know that we are well and rolling with the many changes 2020 has brought. I hope that you are all keeping safe and healthy as well. I am confident that things will continue to change and that we have the strength to do right and do well in the year to come. Sending all the virtual hugs one can fit in a card. Much love,

Jodi Kefer (& Adam, Mia & Charlie Foxx)

Thank you for the excellent calendar and the newspaper which we enjoy all year long.

Judy Adnepos

We want to thank you so very much for being there at the cemetery for the funeral for my dearest blessing, Hersch. Amen. He is still my blessing.

I appreciate so very much your visits to my wonderful Hersch at Creekstone in Fairport - affixing the Mezuzah and saying prayers. It meant a great deal to both of us. And coming to Brookdale for the same affixing of the Mezuzah and prayers again - so very much appreciated.

Doing the Tefillin and prayers with Hersch was very special, too. I remember and thank you for all your visits and support and comfort. Blessings and warm regards - stay safe!

Carolyn Bornstein & Ellen, Jenny, Lisa

Enclosed is a contribution to help support all the wonderful things Chabad does for our community, particularly during these difficult times. Thank you for being there when we're all "counting on you". We wish you and your wonderful family Gmar Hatimah Tovah. May we all be together soon. Best wishes, Amichai, Mikhail, & Avraham ben Henoch HaCohen Sassamasn

Shannah Tovah, This year is different from other years. Let us hope that Covid disappears and all will be safe. I hope your families will have a

very sweet year.
Martin Eichman

Thanks for welcoming us to services & blowing Shofar at our house. Shana Tova!
Sue & Gerry Segelman

May Hashem bless you and your wonderful family with health, positive energy, and prosperity. I keep you in my prayers. We all... I need you in my life. May your home light up with joy! Shana Tova!

M.B.

Thank you for all you have done with and for our family over the years, including all your help preparing for Elijah's Bar Mitzvah Ceremony & Celebration. Thank you!

Steve, Francine & Elijah Barnett

Thank you for your many kindnesses throughout the years. Your Shabbat hospitality is filled with peace, Torah, chesed & joy. May Hashem help us meet again. Thank you for facilitating this memorial plaque for my beloved. Be well, Kol tov!

Rahel Sherman

I send my appreciation to all of you for the 5781 Calendar for the major Holidays that you sent to me. It has so much information about them and all of the months that follow. Even great recipes. So, thank you and have great health and joy in the coming year. Blessings,
Leatrice Segel

Thank you and the Kessler Family Center for the book! This is my annual donation to the Chabad. I greatly appreciate your hard work this past year - and every year. Every future year, as well. However small my contribution may be, I know your work makes them bigger. Best,
Lauren Landsburg

Enjoying your Zoom programs! Best wishes,
Barbara Hollander

Happy, peaceful, healthy New Year to you and your Family. Best always,
Michael Farash & Family

As we approach the New
•Continued on page 12

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OIL AND WINE

by Yanki Tauber

Oil permeates the entire substance of a thing.

Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 105:5

When wine enters, secret emerges.

Talmud, Eruvin 65a

Oil is in. Oil shuns superficiality - you won't find it riding a fad or angling for a photo opportunity. When oil comes in contact with something, it saturates it to the core, permeating it in its entirety.

When set aglow, oil is the master of understatement. Soundlessly it burns - not for the oil lamp the vulgar cackling of firewood or even the faint sizzle of candlewax. Its light does not burst through the door and bulldoze the darkness away; instead, it gently coaxes the gloom to shimmer with a spiritual luminescence.

Wine is a tabloid reporter. Wine barges past the security guard of mind to loosen the lips, spill the guts and turn the heart inside out. Wine smears the most intimate secrets across the front pages of life.

Chanukah is oil, Purim is wine.

Chanukah is the triumph of the Jewish soul. The Greeks had no designs on the Jew's body; it was the soul of Israel they coveted, seeking to indoctrinate her mind with their philosophy and tint her spirit with their culture. The Jew fought not for the freedom of his material self but to liberate his spiritual identity from Hellenist domination.

Haman and company did not bother with such subtleties. They had one simple goal: the physical destruction of every Jew on the face of the earth. Purim remembers the salvation of the Jew's bodily existence.

Chanukah is commemorated with oil. Chanukah celebrates the innerness of the Jewish soul, the essence which permeates and sanctifies every nook and cranny of the Jew's life. Chanukah celebrates the secret glow of the spirit, which, rather than confronting the darkness, infiltrates it and transforms it from within.

On Purim we pour out the wine. Purim is a noisy party, a showy parade, a costumed extravaganza. Purim celebrates the fact that the Jew is more than a soul - he is a body as well. Purim celebrates the fact that our Jewishness is not only an internal spirituality but also a palpable reality; that it not only permeates our beings from within, but also spills out into the externalities of our material lives.

RAISE THE FLAME

by Menachem Feldman

The L-rd spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and say to him: 'When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall cast their light toward the face of the Menorah.'"

The Menorah is a symbol of the mission statement of the Jewish people. Our task is to illuminate ourselves and the world around us with the warmth, enlightenment and inspiration of the Torah. As we journey into the world to implement the teachings of the Torah, we are reminded that each of us is heir to the legacy of Aaron, who would kindle the lights of the Menorah, symbolizing Aaron's effort to inspire and illuminate each and every soul.

The word the Torah uses to describe the lighting of the Menorah, *behaalotecha*, means "to lift up," which is an unusual word to describe kindling a flame. Rashi offers two explanations why this word is used:

The Kohen is required to kindle the lamp until the flame rises by itself. Our sages further expounded from here that there was a step in front of the Menorah, on which the kohen stood to prepare [the lamps].

These two explanations apply to the figurative kindling of the flames as well. The first interpretation explains that the word "rise up" is used because the flame rises up independently and no longer needs the influence of the first flame that ignited it. This teaches us that when we seek to inspire others, be it a child, a student or a friend, it is not enough to bring our flame close to theirs and

allow them to be affected by our excitement and passion. To "lift up" their flame is to "kindle the lamp until the flame rises by itself" - by sharing the fire until the recipient no longer needs the teacher, for the student is inspired and passionate on her/his own.

The second interpretation explains that the words "when you rise up" refers not to the flame but to Aaron, because Aaron would rise up on a step in order to light the Menorah. This interpretation also contains a lesson for each of us: The surest path to elevate oneself is to seek to inspire others. While the natural tendency of someone who seeks to grow spiritually may be to seclude himself and focus inward, the Torah teaches us that by preparing to ignite someone else's flame, you too will rise up, you too will be inspired.



This double message - that we must seek to inspire others until they shine on their own, and that the surest way to grow is by inspiring others - is at the heart of what the Rebbe constantly taught us.

Before Rabbi Yisrael and Rebbetzin Vivi Deren set out to establish Chabad in Western and Southern New England, they had a private audience with the Rebbe. In the words of Rabbi Deren:

The Rebbe told us something very powerful, which continues to guide us until today. The Rebbe said, "*Ir vet machen lichtig un varem ba andere, un der Aibershter vet machen lichtig un varem ba eich* - you shall bring light and warmth to others, and G-d will bring light and warmth to you." That blessing and assurance is what keeps us going until today.



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What Can We Learn From Kosher Animals?

by Nechoma Greisman

The Torah lists the different animals, fish and birds and gives us signs to tell us which of the many species of creatures we may and may not eat.

As far as four-legged animals are concerned, the Torah gives two very simple identifying characteristics: Those animals that chew their cud and have split hooves, we may eat; those that have only one, or neither of these signs, are forbidden for us to eat.

G-d created thousands of kinds of animals, and in a small minority of them G-d created these two characteristics. G-d chose these two specific characteristics to be the differentiation between kosher and non-kosher animals. It cannot be a coincidence; there has to be a specific reason why it is these characteristics, and not others. For example, G-d could have made all kosher animals with a red stripe around their necks, or any of an infinite number of possible characteristics to make those animals look different from non-kosher animals. Why specifically these two characteristics, chewing the cud and having split hooves?

You might argue that these characteristics are not significant in themselves; they are only indications of the kashrut of these animals, not causes of their being kosher, and are therefore not directly

related to the fact that they are kosher. Nevertheless, nothing is by coincidence. Anything which we witness should teach us a lesson in serving G-d. Therefore, there something to learn from chewing the cud and having split hooves.

People, in a sense, are also animals. There are certain things we have in common with animals - certain ways of behavior, certain needs, certain drives. Within us, in addition to the Divine soul we have an "Animal" soul. We cannot go through life without eating, drinking, sleeping, and doing other things that animals do. Nevertheless, there are ways that we can elevate our lives so that we become "kosher animals." In other words, everyone on earth has to live a more or less physical life, as a soul within a physical body. However, there are kosher and non-kosher ways of living.

What are the motivations of an animal? An animal is driven by a desire for food, to reproduce, to look out for itself. An animal is motivated by instincts rather than by reasoned intellect or principles. These things are part of life, and we have to live our life partially on a physical plane and partially on a spiritual plane. G-d has given two characteristics which differentiate between kosher

animals and non-kosher animals. These characteristics are guides by which we can try to keep our lives on a level that will make us kosher, and even holy.

Split Hooves

All non-kosher animals have either a round hoof, where there is no division at all, like a horse; or toes with more than two divisions, like the paws of dogs and cats. Kosher animals, by contrast, have split hooves, with two sides to the hoof and a gap between them.

A person is born with certain inborn natural tendencies which are not the result of education or environment. We can see these even in the smallest infants and young children. Some people are naturally gentle; others are naturally aggressive; some people gravitate toward one kind of activity, while others gravitate toward a completely

different kind of activity.

If a person spends his life totally devoted to the things that come naturally to him, this is not called serving G-d. It is serving oneself. In other words, suppose that by nature you find a certain way appealing, comfortable, and easy for you, and you never deviate from it your whole life. You remain with what is comfortable and easy. Then you've never risen above what is natural; you have made no effort to transcend your natural self.

In the sixties and seventies there were people, and even entire movements, that set themselves the goal of being natural, of living like animals. "That is pure," they taught, "that is holiness." If you can just walk around with a loin-cloth, eat raw food, drink water out of your hand, and live by your animal passions and instincts, then you have achieved perfection. Judaism, however, teaches that we have to transcend our natural, animal self. A real animal could never rise above its nature. A cow, for example, could never become more than a cow. For its entire life, a cow is motivated by things that motivate cows; it could never do more than that, and it could never change itself to become more than a cow. When did you last see a cow sitting down and looking up at the sky, wondering why G-d created it? Tigers are different from cows. A tiger lives its life totally motivated by those tendencies that motivate tigers, and it could never become a cow. A tiger will never act like a cow, nor will a cow act like a tiger; each spends its life doing the

things that come naturally to that species.

How do we become a "kosher animal"? By rising above our innate nature, by transcending the way we were born. Sometimes we have to do things which do not come naturally to us, and even things that might be the opposite of our nature - because G-d said so. This a cow cannot do, nor can a tiger. This is what is symbolized by the split hooves. They indicate that there are two paths - the "left" path of strength and the "right" path of kindness.

There are times in a person's life when G-d says we have to "go left" and exhibit strength. A person might say, "But I'm not that kind of person. I'm a gentle soul. To exert force is against my character." However, the split hooves remind to say, "I know it's against my character, and it's hard for me to say or do things like this. But G-d told me to do it, so I have to overpower my natural tendency; go to the right when necessary and go to the left when necessary." By doing this one rises above one's natural tendencies, and one becomes a "kosher animal."

In other words, the prerequisite for being kosher is the ability to go in both directions, right and left. To only do what is comfortable, and ignore what is difficult, is not going to change us at all.

For example, our patriarch Abraham was the epitome of love and kindness. In order to prove that Abraham's kindness was not simply the result of his natural tendencies but

•Continued on page 12

I Made A Mistake, Now What?

Dear Rabbi,

I am so embarrassed; I don't know what to say.

Last week, I bought a tomato sauce that I thought was kosher. I always buy this brand, but this time it seems I chose a different flavor than usual. After cooking with it and feeding my family, I read the ingredients, and to my horror, the sauce wasn't kosher!

I will do whatever I need to make my kitchen kosher again. I know that can be fixed.

But what devastates me is that I ate it and fed it to my family. Is there anything I can do about it now?

Dear Embarrassed,

You have a rare opportunity before you, one that even the holiest people never have. You can transform that non-kosher food into something positive. Here's how.

While every food has its nutritional value, certain foods have the capacity to provide us with spiritual nutrition too. This is kosher eating. The Torah allows us to eat certain foods, not because they are healthy for our body,

but because they are healthy for our soul.

On the other hand, non-kosher foods block the connection between body and soul, deaden our perception of holiness and desensitize us from the world of spirit.

But there is a way that non-kosher food can elevate you. This can happen when the eating of non-kosher food itself stirs you toward spiritual growth. When you regret what you have done and resolve to be extra-cautious in the future, and when you commit to being more careful in your general observance of the dietary laws, reviewing the relevant laws, then you have made the non-kosher food a means for growth.

Since returning to G-d needs some action, resolve also to place some coins in a charity box (preferably affixed to the wall of the kitchen) before cooking, and refrain from some of your favorite foods for a few days - an exercise that helps one gain mastery over one's desire for physical pleasures. These actions and intentions will serve to transform what was a fall in spiritual observance - even an unintention-



al one - into a step towards a higher spiritual plane.

This creates an amazing turnaround. The item you ate actually made you more spiritual. The sin had the same impact usually reserved for the observance of a positive commandment: It made you closer to G-d.

This is the law of transformation. A dispute, when resolved, makes friends closer. An argument, when handled correctly, makes a marriage deeper. A mistake, when seen as a learning tool, makes one smarter. And a piece of ham, when one regrets eating it, makes one more kosher.

You should never deliberately start an argument, and you should never choose to eat non-kosher food. But if it already happened, don't spend too much time feeling down. Make the turnaround and elevate it.

Aron Moss



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LIGHTING UP MENORAH COUNTY! SEE BACK PAGE



Why The Yelling?

by Elana Mizrahi

I went to the supermarket the other day with my oldest daughter. We stepped out into the Jerusalem heat. Chatting with her, I pushed our shopping cart along the sidewalk. There was a woman pushing a shopping cart in front of me. Between us there was a full cart without anyone. I reached ahead to push the ownerless cart out of the way so we could get by. The woman ahead turned and yelled at me. It was her second cart.

Obviously, I hadn't known it was her cart. I wasn't pushing her; I was just trying to move the cart out of my way. Regardless, she had no right to yell. The question was how should I react to her anger?

I stopped because my ears heard a bunch of loud syllables, but I knew that there was so much more to hear in order to see the bigger picture. You see, sounds and syllables make up words, and words make up sentences. But we need to hear more than just noise to understand what is truly going on with another person.

I tried to put myself in her shoes. This was a woman who was trying to push two full carts in the boiling sun. I listened carefully.

I handed my daughter our cart and I took the other woman's cart and I said, "Where is your car? I have free hands. I can help you."

Her muscles softened and so did her voice. "Thank you."

It's amazing how when you understand that there is more than just what you hear that everything is heard dif-

ferently. You judge things differently. You look for solutions instead of trying to blame. You fix what can be fixed and learn for the next time what you cannot control.

As a doula, when I accompany a woman on a birth, I cannot measure the progress of her labor based on her perception of pain. One woman might have a high tolerance and another one that is quite low. One woman might feel fear and tension, another is more relaxed and able to just go with the flow.

One woman comes into labor prepared with relaxation tools and a calm nature, while another has fears and traumas from the past. So many factors affect how she will feel the pain of birth and how she'll handle it.

It's important to take my personal experience and perception of pain and put it aside as I try to step into the other woman's shoes. What is good for her? What will help her? What kind of support does she need?

To attempt to feel another's pain is no easy feat. But we can try. We can remind ourselves that there's so much that we don't know or understand when it comes to the pain of another.

And it's not just in birth that we need to realize that there is so much more than what meets the eye. This is true in so many areas of our daily lives.

On Rosh Hashanah we read the story of the prophetess, Chana. Chana was childless and went to pray in the

Tabernacle.

As she fervently prayed with all her heart and all her pain, someone saw her. It was Eli, the High Priest. He was suspicious of her behavior and her intense manner of praying. He took this to mean that Chana was drunk. But he misunderstood that Chana, a righteous woman, was just praying devotedly for the son she was later blessed with - Samuel (Shmuel), the great prophet.

How did Eli make such a mistake? He didn't see this woman's story. He didn't get inside her pain. He jumped to conclusions without fully listening to her predicament. He

did not know what was going on inside her heart.

We read about Chana on Rosh Hashanah, about how she was remembered and blessed with a son on this auspicious day of prayer. But perhaps we also read about Chana to teach us a very valuable lesson on this day of judgment.

We often do not fully understand what's going on with someone else. There are reasons behind a person's actions, even if the reason is simply that he didn't know - or she wasn't taught, or he was curious, and she didn't understand. Or that the pain they felt was too great to

bear. If even Eli, the High Priest, could make such a mistake, then realize that you may be seeing something that may look wrong, but in reality, it's not what you are seeing at all.

Only G-d can look into our heart, know our thoughts - and truly judge. Only G-d can understand our actions entirely. Only G-d knows the full truth of what happened. We, meanwhile, can think about all the people in our life and have a bit more compassion and understanding, more forgiveness and acceptance.

And we can help bear someone else's load.

Thanks, Everyone, For Making Me Feel Like a Failure

by Karen Kaplan

Back when I was a youngster, schoolchildren were given a standardized test every year or so. I remember the teacher handing out the results, and gleefully seeing that I ranked in the 99th percentile in every category - the highest score possible. Oh boy, I was a proud Little Miss Smarty-pants! My head was so swollen I could hardly contain myself. I looked around at my classmates and yes, I was the best, the smartest, and clearly superior to them. I dashed home after school, handed the report to my parents, and waited for their inevitable praise.

Instead, my father scanned the page, looked at me standing there with my swollen head, and said with a twinkle in his eye, "So, Karen, all 99th percentiles. Why not 100%?" And here I had been thinking that I'd reached the summit of greatness at the age of 8... Yikes! Life was over at 8.

That's my earliest memory of what it feels like to "fail". Not the feeling of failure that happens when you know you haven't done your best, but the feeling that happens when your best isn't enough. It's a feeling we've all experienced. Whether it's an audition for the local theater group, the long pass at the end of the homecoming game, a job interview, or a failed romance, we've all had the wind knocked out of us at one time or another. Probably more than once.

In high school I had a series of crushes on boys, none of whom ever reciprocated my feelings. Not a single one. No. Dates. Ever. I was the girl who worked the punch table at prom, because I had no date. I had the dubious pleasure of watching all my classmates have a great time and then go to their afterparties while I cleaned up their mess after they left. Talk

about teenage angst! I was sure I'd never have a date, ever. At 17, my destiny was sealed on prom night. As I cleaned up that room, I thought about becoming a nun, because at least they have each other, like in The Sound Of Music. But I'm Jewish, and I love being Jewish, and there are no Jewish nuns. So, I was destined to be an old Jewish Cat Lady who lives alone with a houseful of cats. A hundred cats. And me. At 17 life was over.

And I flunked typing in high school. Yeah, I know, how can anyone flunk typing? Near the end of the school year, the teacher met with me and said I was a hopeless typist, but she was going to give me a B for my final grade because she knew I'd need a scholarship to go to college, and she didn't want a failing typing grade to ruin my chances. Talk about a bruised ego! I was the poor kid who flunked typing and got a "pity B". Not only was I never going to get a date, ever, but I couldn't even count on getting an office job to support myself and my 100 cats. Life was really, *really* over at 17.

But after my dad deflated my overblown ego all those years ago, I continued excelling in school, and gained some humility in the process. I may have been the best on that test, but I never again looked at my schoolmates as dolts. The boy next to me could draw much better than I ever would. The girl behind me could play the piano. We all are gifted in one way or another. And none of us is perfect, not at any age. Decades later, I've forgotten a lot of my school learning, but that lesson in humility helped form my character forever.

And after the dating debacle that was high school, I met the love of my life on the



first day of college. And I knew it, that very day. The difference between a crush and your *bashert* - soulmate is as wide as the universe. If I'd met him in high school, I wouldn't have been ready. All those rejections were just preparation for the real thing.

And after flunking typing, I knew I'd really better get that scholarship, and get a good education, because I'd never be able to hold down an office job. So I worked hard, and did indeed get that full scholarship! Looking back, if I had to flunk something, typing was the thing to flunk. Nowadays, with spellcheck and autocorrect, there's no need to be a flawless typist. But if I hadn't flunked typing back then, I may not have worked hard enough for that scholarship and have never gone to college. Funny how that all worked out.

I've learned that bruised egos heal, failures are just pre-successes, and rejections just sharpen your aim. We bang into emotional walls, but we bounce back. We hit a barrier and find a way around it. One person says no, but another says yes.

King Solomon says that "a righteous person can fall seven times and rise, but the wicked shall stumble in evil." In other words, it's inevitable that we will get knocked over by life. It's up to us to choose whether we will get up again, rising stronger and wiser, or if we will stay on the ground, deflated and beaten.

One can say that life is like a pinball machine. The bumpers are the rejections and failures we have to deal with and maneuver around. But the game's not over until it's over. So keep on playing!

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The Impossible Dream of a Chinese Girl in Singapore

by Sofya Sara Esther Tamarkin

Ten years ago, my husband and I traveled to Singapore. Before the trip, as is my habit, I reached out to the local Chabad Center.

Traveling the world is one of my biggest joys. I strongly believe that we are sent exactly where we are needed to bring light to others. Transcending the physical distance is allegorical to the emotional, spiritual and cultural differences between people.

I often joke that my hobby is to visit every Chabad center in the world. With thousands of centers in more than 100 countries and with a presence in every state in America, this might take a while. Yet any time there is an opportunity to travel the continents and meet these Chabad families who dedicate their lives to unconditionally embrace their fellow Jews is a highlight of my life.

Our Singapore trip ended with a beautiful Shabbat experience in the community shul.

Before Shabbat, I was directed by the Chabad Rabbi, Rabbi Mordechai Abergel, to go up a flight of stairs to light the Friday-night candles. Standing next to the small table with prepared candles, I saw a young girl hiding in the shadows. She was about 16 with Asian features.

I smiled, but was a little surprised by her behavior. Then, just as I was about to light Shabbat candles, she came towards me and asked in a broken English if I was a "real Jew." I wasn't sure if this was a joke or a prank, but I replied, with all seriousness, that I was. I told her it was time to light Shabbat candles, and I proceeded to do that.

She stood next to me, observing and crying. I shifted between being uncomfortable, inspired and a little nervous by this behavior. She asked if she could hug me, considering that, after all, I was the "real thing." And, of course, I agreed.

I invited her to come downstairs with me to participate in the Shabbat services, but she was too shy.

I couldn't stop thinking about this strange experience. After the meal, I returned to the area with the candles, but she wasn't there. I walked around the building, hoping to find her. I was so excited when I finally spotted her seated on the couch near

the children's playroom.

I sat down next to her. She shifted, clearly feeling timid. I said to her that I was visiting from Philadelphia, and that I was born in the former Soviet Union. I explained to her that I didn't know much about "real" Jews until I was about her age.

I asked her to share her story, for in a way I felt like I was once that girl who watched women light Shabbat candles with awe, curiosity and envy. After a few minutes of chatting about my life, she opened up enough to tell me about her journey.

She was born in a small town in China. Her father was abusive, and so her mother left him. They lived in poverty and despair. Her mother had terrible depression and moments of darkness.

Once, a co-worker in school took notice of her mother and told her that he will help her heal by giving her a page from a sacred book, called Tehillim, the Psalms of David that someone sneaked into China. The story didn't explain why the book was brought to this gentleman. Yet it was clear that he thought very highly of the author and its people. This woman knew a little English because she was a teacher, but nothing about the existence of Jews. Still, she was desperate for any remedy to overcome her inner darkness. She read the words on the page to herself over and over again, connecting to the light through these mystical poems.

After some time, the woman came up with an idea that would infuse her life with hope. She told her young daughter that somewhere there lives a nation of people who bring the purest light and peace into the world. She made it clear that her daughter was going to find these people and live among them, regardless of the effort it took.

At this point of the story, I realized that I was barely breathing. I was frozen, listening intensely to her quiet voice. It was unimaginable that in China, a woman found her salvation through a page of Psalms. I felt overwhelmed with pride about my Jewish heritage. After all, we are the light unto the nations. Up until this moment, it was more of an allegorical concept for me, but now it has become as real and practical as can be.



The story took a new turn as this girl's mother came up with a plan. She managed to discover that Jews pray in a synagogue, and the closest country that had one was Singapore.

This young girl's mother sold everything she could in

At this point of the story, I realized that I was barely breathing. I was frozen, listening intensely to her quiet voice. It was unimaginable that in China, a woman found her salvation through a page of Psalms.

order to buy a one-way ticket to Singapore for her as a high school senior exchange student.

When the girl arrived, she went directly to the address of the synagogue that her mother had given her. This was the beginning of her magnificent journey.

The rabbi and his wife embraced her with respectful caution. Apparently, there are many people who are trying to find the "way in" to become Jewish for many unauthentic reasons. Despite their cautious approach, she was given a couch to sleep on, food and an opportunity to talk with Jewish visitors.

Time was passing quickly, and I had to return to my husband, who was probably very worried about my whereabouts.

I embraced her with the biggest hug I could offer, and she smiled. I was surprised because up until this moment, she was timid and serious. "Do you know what's my biggest dream?" she asked. Without waiting for my answer, she continued, "To walk the streets of Jerusalem, wearing a modest skirt, just like religious

Jewish women."

Now I became serious. This was one of the purest souls I have ever encountered. A teenager who wanted so little, yet such an almost impossible transformation, considering her life circumstances.

Years have gone by, but this incredible girl remains an inspiration in my life. These were the moments that we shared together, which changed me forever.

Being a rather proactive person, I ran to the apartment where Rabbi Abergel lived and asked to speak to him. He reassured me that he was aware of the girl's desire to embrace Judaism. As customary, he was waiting to see if she was serious about her decision to embrace Judaism. It had been about four months since she had arrived from China, and the rabbi was getting more confident about her determination to embark on the journey to conversion.

The next day, I walked through the building again and again, but couldn't find the young woman. I felt that meeting her brought clarity to my own life. According to our sages, we are reassured that G-d helps us to achieve the impossible: "Open for Me an opening the size of the eye of a needle, and I will open for you an opening the size of a hall."

I knew with absolute certainty that this spiritual, lofty teenager will find her way. I left behind a check, asking the rebbeztin to purchase skirts for my future Jewish sister. This was my little contribution to the dream of a Chinese-born girl in another part of the world, who I felt would share my heritage one day.

We are sent exactly where

we are meant to be. I knew that I needed this encounter just as much as she did. Soon after meeting her, I resolved to commit myself to dressing modestly, wearing skirts. I now wear them proudly.

I am not going to leave you wondering what happened at the end of this incredible journey. After all, some stories do have happy endings.

A few months later, I sent an email to Rabbi Abergel asking about her progress. He replied that he had arranged for her to see the head of the rabbinical court from Sydney, Australia, who was brought down to Singapore for the express purpose of facilitating her and other's conversion process. This would eventually mean that she will be sent to Israel to study. Reading these words, I burst into tears. There is something so transcendent about impossible dreams becoming a reality.

Sometimes, before I fall asleep, I imagine this timid Chinese-born Jewish woman walking the streets of Jerusalem. In my dream, she is holding hands with her skirt-wearing daughters, while her kippah-wearing husband is talking to her in a soft, kind voice. Her warrior of a mother is walking right next to them. She is holding a complete book of Psalms.

This visionary mother was right, after all, that somewhere in this world lives a nation that knows G-d, is connected to the truth, and sings the Psalms of the greatest poet, King David.

Every Jew is part of this legacy. Connect your voice to the melody of eternal music and sing along.

Editor's Note: This story has an amazing sequel. Go to chabadrochester.com/sequel



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TWELVE CHANUKAH FACTS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

by Menachem Posner

1. Eight Nights = Miracle Lights

The difference between seven and eight is not just a number. Seven represents all that is found within this world. There are seven days of the week, seven classical planets and seven musical notes. In fact, the world itself was created in seven days.

Then there is the number eight, which represents that which is above, that which does not fit into the neat slots that hold the bits and pieces of our lives. The number eight evokes the transcendent and the G-dly. Eight is the number of miracles.

2. Light After Dark

The Chanukah candles must burn after night falls, since their purpose is to bring light into darkness. But they need to be lit early enough that someone will be around to see them. The lights need to be seen so they can serve their function of reminding others of the great miracles G-d wrought.

3. The Silent Holiday

Chanukah is the only Jewish holiday not mentioned in the 24 books of the Bible. That's because the canon was sealed by the Men of the Great Assembly, who flourished two centuries before the Chanukah miracle. Nor does Chanukah have a tractate in the Talmud that discusses its observances. Instead, it gets a by-the-way mention in Tractate Shabbat. In the context of discussing Shabbat candles, the Chanukah candles (and by extension, the Chanukah holiday) get their time in the Talmudic sun.

4. Before There Were Potatoes There Was... Cheese!

Today, there is a widespread custom to enjoy potato latkes on Chanukah, since the oil they are fried in reminds us of the miracle of the flames on the Temple menorah burning for eight days. But there is an older custom to eat cheese pancakes on Chanukah, which is reminiscent of the dairy (and intoxicating wine) meal that the brave Judith fed the Greek general before she decapitated him in his sleep, saving her village. Apparently cheese latkes morphed into potato latkes (potatoes were unknown in the Old World until the late 16th century), and a new custom was born.

5. You Light A Hillel Menorah

In the days of the Talmud, there were two major academies of learning: Hillel and Shammai. The House of Hillel taught that every night of Chanukah we add another light - as we do today. The House of Shammai, however, maintained that we begin with eight lights on the first night and light one less flame

every night, ending Chanukah with a single flame. Tempted to try the Shammai template? The time to do that is yet to come. Tradition tells us that when Moshiach comes, we will follow the rulings of the House of Shammai. But until then, there is a beautiful lesson to be learned from the Hillel model. Add more light every night. Every little bit of light adds up to create something brilliant.

6. Syrians, Greeks, Hellenists or Yevanim?

We sometimes hear of Greeks, Syrians or even Hellenists in the Chanukah story. So who exactly were the interlopers who were expelled by the Maccabees? All of the above! After the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was divided up: The Seleucid Greek Empire was based in Syria, and the Ptolemaic Empire had its base in Alexandria, Egypt. The soldiers stationed in Judea belonged to the Syrian Greeks. And who are the Hellenists and the Yevanim? The very same people: Hella is the Greek word for Greece, and Yavan is how we say it in Hebrew.

(Now, just to make things a bit more confusing, there were also the Hellenized Jews, or "Mityavnim" in Hebrew, who sided with the Greeks/Yevanim/Hellenists/Syrians/Seleucids and posed an even greater threat to the survival of traditional Jewish life.)

7. Menorahs Everywhere

On the first Chanukah, candles were lit all over the courtyard of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. This brought the Chanukah light from the inner sanctum of the Temple, the holiest spot on earth, out into the open. As Jews continue to observe Chanukah all over the globe, the ripples of holiness continue to widen and expand.

Today Chabad-Lubavitch sets up tens of thousands of public menorahs with public lightings and Chanukah events in over 100 countries. Additionally, thousands of menorah-topped vehicles roam the roads, creating holiday awareness in cities, towns and rural areas around the world.

8. Lots of Choices

Most Jewish holidays begin on only four out of seven days of the week. For example, the first day of Rosh Hashanah can be Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Shabbat - never Sunday, Wednesday or Friday. However since the month preceding Chanukah (Cheshvan) can have 29 or 30 days, Chanukah can actually begin on any day of the week besides Tuesday.

9. Were The Maccabees Really So Great?

Any kid who attends Chabad preschool can tell you that the heroes of the Chanukah story are the Maccabees, the clan who led the brave insurgency against the Greeks invaders. But it was not all good. Judah Maccabee and his family were Kohanim, members of the priestly tribe chosen by G-d to minister in the Holy Temple. Judah Maccabee's successors took the kingship for themselves, something that rightfully belonged to the descendants of King David from the Tribe of Judah. Indeed, it did not take long until the monarchy of Judea was dragged down into a series of unending power grabs and bloody intrigue, with king after king trying to imitate the very same Greeks their ancestors had ousted from the land.

10. Chanukah in the USSR

For most of his life, Avraham Genin lit the menorah in the privacy of his own home, or in the synagogue. A former soldier in the Red Army, he lost his foot to a German bomb. But that didn't prevent him from walking to synagogue every week - an effort that took him an hour and a half. A stalwart chassid who refused to bow to Stalin and his minions, he served bravely as a mohel and a teacher of Torah, a beacon of light in a G-dless communist era.

But then the unthinkable happened. By Chanukah of 1991, cracks had formed in the Iron Curtain and, in the presence of approximately 6,000 Jewish people, Avraham Genin kindled a giant menorah inside the Kremlin Palace of Congresses. (It was the second year that a large public menorah had been lit in the USSR; the previous year, a menorah had been placed near Russia's White House.)

Public Chanukah menorah lightings have been a staple of Jewish Russian life ever since.

11. Chanukah in Space

In December of 1993, Space Shuttle Endeavor was sent into space to service the Hubble Space Telescope. One of the astronauts to bravely perform a spacewalk to repair the telescope was Jeffrey Hoffman.

Knowing that he would be still be in space during Chanukah, Hoffman made sure to bring along a dreidel and a traveling menorah so that he'd be able to celebrate (because of lack of gravity and safety concerns, there was no way to light candles).

Then, via live satellite communication, he showed his Chanukah supplies, gave his dreidel a twirl in the air, and wished Jews everywhere a Happy Chanukah.

•Continued on page 12

Menorahs at The Kremlin, opposite Nazi Headquarters in Kiel, Germany, 1932, The Great Wall of China, The White House, Kauai, Hawaii, Detroit MI



A SHORT HISTORY

of the Happenings of Chanukah



The Jewish Rebellion Under Greek Rule

The events that led to the miraculous victory of Chanukah span a period of one hundred and seventy years, beginning at about 300 BCE. The Greeks, under Alexander the Great, conquered much of the known world, including the Middle East.



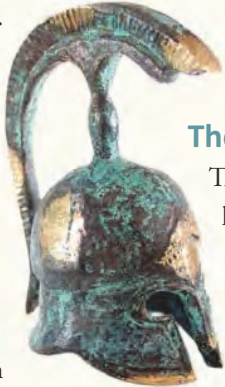
You would have thought that the Jewish people and the ancient Greeks would get along. After all, they had so much in common.

Both valued wisdom and beauty. The Greek philosophers acknowledged a single, great Mind behind all the cosmos, similar to Jewish monotheism.

Well, they did manage somewhat – at first. The Jews tolerated Greek rule from the time of Alexander of Macedonia. Many Jews studied Aristotle and Plato and King Ptolemy had the Jewish Torah translated into Greek. But, when King Antiochus attempted to force Hellenism down their throats, the Jews rebelled.

Laws Against Judaism

Antiochus forbade ritual circumcision. Mothers openly circumcised their infant boys in defiance. Antiochus forbade keeping Shabbat. Jews were forced to leave Jerusalem because that day was so precious to them. Antiochus forbade the study of Torah. Jews found ways to teach classes to children and adults in secret. When the Greeks raised up idols in the cities and towns and demanded the Jews worship them, all-out war ensued.



The Maccabees

It was the first time in history that a people fought not for their country or their lives, but for their integrity and the rights of their spirit. The problem was, the Syrian-Greek army was the most powerful in the world. Their soldiers marched in a compact formation of overlapping shields and long spears, almost invincible in those times. They had advanced weapons, were highly trained, and even brought elephants to the battlefield. The Jewish resistance, on the other hand, began with a handful of brothers of the priestly class, calling themselves the Maccabees.

The Miracle

There were many acts of courage, but the Maccabees' handful of warriors could never have beaten such a mighty army. In addition to the miraculous victory, they received a clear sign that their victory was all along a miracle from Above. When they took back Jerusalem and the Temple, they searched and found a single flask of undefiled olive oil – just what they needed to light the Temple Menorah. Although the flask held only enough oil for a single day, it miraculously burned for eight full days, providing just enough time to prepare new oil. To the Jewish People, this was a nod from Above that, yes, the One G-d of Israel was with us all along.



Chanukah Gelt

The word Chanukah shares the same root as *Chinuch* (education). During Chanukah we focus on the Jewish education of children. We use the opportunity to teach them to increase in charity and good deeds.

On Chanukah, it is traditional to give *gelt* (money) to children and adults as well, after lighting the Menorah. The recipients are encouraged to give a portion of their gift to *tzedakah* (charity).

Maimonides explained that the Greeks attempted to defile not only Jewish rituals, but also their property. It is, therefore, appropriate to celebrate Chanukah with dedicating a portion of our property to a sacred purpose - charity.

Also, the Greek's objective was to remove the spiritual from our service to G-d. Initially, they did not try to kill us,

but to bring us over to Greek way of life. They did not try to destroy the Temple or spill out the oil; they "merely" defiled and made them impure.

Chanukah gelt is a statement of freedom and defiance in the face of the Greeks' attempt. Encouraging our children to give a portion of their gelt to charity teaches that the physical can, and should, be used in service of G-d.

Parents and others give Chanukah gelt. The most significant night to give is on the fifth, which is the first night that the majority of the candles of the Menorah are lit. However, parents are encouraged to give gelt each of the eight days.



The Menorah

Did You Know...

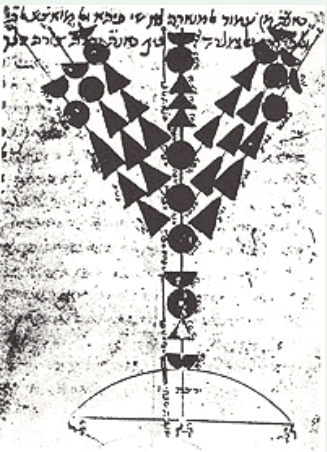
SEVEN OR EIGHT - The Temple's Menorah had only seven lights. The Chanukah Menorah has eight arms and lights to commemorate the miracle that lasted eight days in the service of the daily Menorah lighting in the Temple.

STRAIGHT OR CURVED - It is usually perceived that the branches of the Temple Menorah had a semi-circular or oblong shape. However, according to Maimonides and Rashi, both foremost authorities on Jewish tradition and law, the branches of the Temple Menorah extended diagonally, beautifully decorated as described in the Torah (Ex. 25:31-37).

UP OR DOWN - The Menorah in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was decorated with 22 cups. In Maimonides'

drawing of the Menorah the cups are all turned upside down! This was symbolic of G-d's blessing pouring down upon the world.

INWARD OR OUTWARD
The windows of the Holy Temple were wider outside than in. Rather than let the sunlight in like all other windows, to light the inside of the house, the Temple windows were built to let the light of the Menorah out, to shine into the rest of the world.



Sketch by Maimonides of the Temple Menorah

The Dreidel

The Dreidel is a four-sided spinning top. A Hebrew letter is written on each side: *Nun*, *Gimmel*, *Hay* and *Shin*, representing the phrase *Nes Gadol Haya Sham* - A Great Miracle Happened There.

The Dreidel dates back to the time of the Chanukah story. Since learning Torah was punishable by death, Jewish children would hide in caves in the hills to study with their teachers. If found by Greek soldiers, they would pull out their Dreidels and pretend they were just playing an innocent game!

Today, we remind ourselves of their courage by playing the game of Dreidel during the holiday of Chanukah.

How To Play:

1. Each player places some coins, candies or nuts into the pot.
2. Players take turns spinning the Dreidel.
3. If the Dreidel lands on: **נ** *Nun*, **Nothing** is won and nothing is lost. *Bang fist on table...*
ג *Gimmel* - the player Gets all. *Everybody cheers...*
ה *Hay* - the player wins Half the amount in the pot. *Everybody says, "Oooohhhh"...*
ש *Shin* - the player must pitCH in a penny, a candy or a nut from their individual pile into the pot. *Everybody says, "Aaaaawww"...*
4. If the pot empties out, everyone contributes equally once again.
5. You can always raise the ante, asking everyone to match the amount agreed upon.



What does the Dreidel have to say?

Wouldn't it be more fun if the Dreidel would have *gimmel* on all four sides? Couldn't the Dreidel do without a *shin*? Then whichever way you would spin, you would win....

The answer is obvious. If you can't lose, you can't win.

We often ask, why is there so much darkness, so many challenges? Wouldn't it be great if all of life was bliss? Why are we always faced with difficulties in the workplace, in business, in relationships, in achievements, etc? Why do we find so many difficulties and obstacles when it comes to anything Jewish?

Herein is the answer. The "fun" lies in the opportunity to overcome adversity. If evil did not exist, if our world did not contain darkness, we would be like trees bearing terrific fruit, but there would be no appreciation for all the good. It is the challenge that creates the "fun" and makes the good stand out. Overcoming adversity is what makes our life so meaningful.



EIGHT STEPS TO A SOULFUL CHANUKAH JOURNEY



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10
CANDLES ARE LIT AFTER NIGHTFALL
BLESSINGS 1, 2, & 3



LIGHT

A room full of darkness is drastically changed by even a very small flame. A little light drives out a lot of darkness. Darkness is the absence of light; so any light means the end of darkness. By the same token, evil exists when we are apathetic and don't make any effort to change the situation in our homes and in society, between us and G-d and between us and our fellow humans. Any effort, any change, any illumination we create goes a very long way. We should never allow the seeming smallness of our contribution to prevent us from making it and appreciating its importance.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11
THE CHANUKAH CANDLES ARE LIT JUST BEFORE THE SHABBAT CANDLES (4:16 PM) BLESSINGS 1 & 2



COURAGE

The lights of Chanukah speak of the need to never allow the majority's apathy or opinions to sway us when we know that which G-d desires us to do - as articulated in the Torah. The majority of Jews were resigned to the Hellenizing of Israel and the degradation of the Temple. Just one family - the Hasmoneans - refused to accept this, and by their seemingly futile gesture of rebellion ignited the latent sparks of G-dliness and zeal in their fellow Jews. In the parlance of the tune played by the band of the British at Yorktown, 1781, the "World turned upside down."

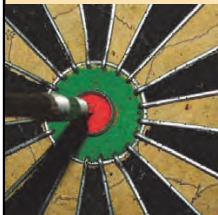


SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12
CANDLES ARE LIT AFTER SHABBAT ENDS (5:22 PM) BLESSINGS 1 & 2



FOCUS

The laws of Chanukah mandate that each flame should use only one wick, not more. When we are engaged in a Mitzvah or other holy task we must stay focused on the moment and the task at hand. Other moments and deeds will come; but true accomplishment is achieved only when our entirety is focused on the instant in which we are living.

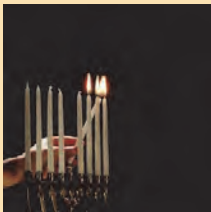


SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13
CANDLES ARE LIT AFTER NIGHTFALL
BLESSINGS 1 & 2



CONSISTENCY

Each night of Chanukah we add a light. This teaches us that we must avoid self-satisfaction in spiritual matters. If we are given another day - it is to accomplish something positive we have not yet achieved.



MONDAY, DECEMBER 14
CANDLES ARE LIT AFTER NIGHTFALL
BLESSINGS 1 & 2



DEVOTION

We kindle the Chanukah lights only when it becomes dark in our spot of the globe. We must devote our efforts to the particular darkness we see in our lives and communities. If there is a darkness in our "place," that is where we must bring our light.



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15
CANDLES ARE LIT AFTER NIGHTFALL
BLESSINGS 1 & 2



SHARING

We kindle the Chanukah lights by a door or a window - exits of our home. It is not enough to light up our own lives; we must share what we know to be good with others. Spiritual selfishness is not spiritual.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16
CANDLES ARE LIT AFTER NIGHTFALL
BLESSINGS 1 & 2



MITZVOT

An oil lamp or candle is made up of three elements: the fuel (oil or wax), the wick, and the flame. The wick corresponds to our body, the flame represents the enthusiasm of the G-dly spark we all carry within, and the Mitzvot of the Torah are the oil that feeds our flame. Spiritual enthusiasm - the flame - can consume the wick and destroy it while creating only a brief and smoky light. We need to allow the body to burn with the soul's light, but not be consumed by it. Mitzvot enable us to feed the enthusiasm of our spirituality in a way that illuminates our surroundings but does not immolate our self. The goal of life is not to escape it, but to make it holy and meaningful, which means that our every physical activity should express the light of the divine.

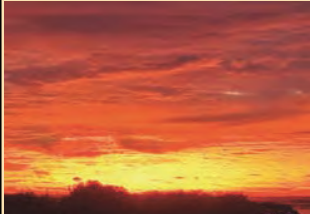


THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17
CANDLES ARE LIT AFTER NIGHTFALL
BLESSINGS 1 & 2



MIRACLES

The lights of Chanukah reflect a miracle that happened with the Menorah in our Holy Temple (Beit Hamikdash) in Jerusalem. The lights of Chanukah are the continuation of those lights from the past and a promise for the future. They glow with the promise that G-d will not be absent from Home forever and that those Holy Temple lights will once again be kindled in the Third and Eternal Temple, standing firm on its Mount, in a re-deemed, happy and united World. May G-d help that we soon see this with our own eyes.



THE BLESSINGS

Before kindling the lights, recite these blessings.

1. Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ho-olom a-sher ki-de-sho-nu be-mitz-vo-sov ve-tzi-vo-nu le-had-lik ner Cha-nu-kah.
Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by His commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the lights of Chanukah.
 2. Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ho-olom she-o-so ni-sim la-avo-sei-nu ba-yo-mim ho-heim bi-zman ha-zeh.
Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who wrought miracles for our fathers in days of old, at this season.
- The following blessing is said only on the first evening or the first time one kindles the lights this Chanukah:*
3. Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ho-olom she-he-che-yo-nu ve-kil-yi-mo-nu ve-hi-gi-o-nu liz-man ha-zeh.
Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, and has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season.

HANAIROS HALOLU

After kindling the lights the following is said:

We kindle these lights (to commemorate) the saving acts, miracles and wonders which You have performed for our forefathers, in those days at this time, through Your holy Kohanim. Throughout the eight days of Chanukah, these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make use of them, but only to look at them, in order to offer thanks and praise to Your great Name for Your miracles, for Your wonders and for Your salvation.

Thought For Food

To celebrate the miracle of the oil, it is traditional to eat fried foods, such as potato latkes (pancakes) and sufganiot (Israeli style doughnuts). To produce oil, intense pressure is put on the olive. Chassidus explains that many times people experience pressures in life. Yet, "G-d does not overburden His creations." The purpose of this pressure is to unleash one's potential and hidden strength.



We also eat dairy products on Chanukah, to commemorate the Jewish heroine, Yehudis. In 164 B.C.E., the Greek general Holofernes besieged the village of Bethulia. After intense fighting, Yehudis rebuked the town elders who were about to surrender. She then approached Holofernes to offer her services as a spy. She met him in his tent and offered him salty cheese, followed by lots of wine to quench his thirst, causing him to fall asleep. Yehudis then killed him and escaped. When the Greek soldiers found his corpse, they retreated in fear. Yehudis saved her village and countless lives - with the help of a little cheese.

THE TEST OF JEWISHNESS

by Rabbi Adin Even Yisrael (Steinsaltz)



Editor's Note: Rabbi Adin Even-Yisrael (Steinsaltz), the world-famous Talmudist, Kabbalist, educator, community rabbi, philosopher, prolific author, and devoted Chassid - who was internationally regarded as one of the leading rabbis of this century, passed away in Jerusalem this past 17 Menachem Av - August 7. Rabbi Even-Yisrael will be best-remembered for translating and elucidating the entire Talmud in Modern Hebrew and then English - an unrivaled solo feat that took decades. He authored more than 200 books and hundreds of articles, including groundbreaking translations elucidating the Tanach, Mishnah, Talmud Yerushalmi, Rambam and Tanya.

Many thinkers have attempted to define the uniqueness of the Jewish people: What is the nature of our difference from other nations?

Virtually all great Jewish thinkers agree that beyond our having been chosen by the Almighty, the Jewish people possess characteristics that justify our selection. In support of their conclusion, many cite the brilliant personalities who have emerged in each generation as examples of the Jewish potential for greatness, while others point to the prophetic revelations as the clearest proof of the unique spiritual worth of the Jewish people.

Yet all of these answers may leave one difficulty unresolved: How is this uniqueness apparent in the life of individual Jews who have not achieved greatness? Others have indeed suggested that our status as *Am Segula*, the Chosen, is not manifest in every single Jew, but is rather that of a collective, an attribute of *Klal Yisrael*, the entire nation. The Jewish people, as this collective, carries the G-d-idea through the ages, and from this collective there emerge the chosen few - those chosen for greatness who reach, as it were, "the higher spheres where the Almighty dwells".

But this still leaves unanswered the question: What role does each individual Jew who lives an "ordinary" life play in the chosen collective that is *Klal Yisrael*? Just as all the Mitzvot and all the spiritual and moral imperatives are imposed upon every individual Jew without exception, so too is the potential for greatness the heritage of every Jew. Not only is it an attribute of the Jewish collective, but it is engraved on the being, on the soul of every single Jew.

The deepest understanding of this characteristic of each Jewish *neshamah*, soul, is found in the Kabbalah, the mystical aspect of Torah instruction, as it is expounded upon and interpreted through the teachings of Rabbi Schneur Zalman, founder of Chabad, who is reverently known as the Alter Rebbe.

In the Alter Rebbe's approach, the greatness of the Jewish people and their uniqueness begins with, and is composed of, the hidden

strength in every Jew, no matter how low he may have sunk, and no matter how sinful he may be. It is this hidden strength that makes even such a Jew ready to give up his life: to die when forced to choose between renouncing his Jewishness or losing his life. This power to withstand the ultimate test of human endurance, to give one's life so as not to compromise the collective Jewish holiness, is the manifestation of the uniqueness of the nation as a collective, and the Jew as an individual.

This capacity is not confined to the great and the wise among our people; it is shared by every Jew, great and small, learned or illiterate, even by a Jew who has throughout his lifetime turned his back on all of the Torah imperatives and led a life virtually devoid of Mitzvot. A Jew, given the option of choosing to publicly deny G-d and renounce his Jewishness, or death, will choose to die rather than cut off his *neshamah*, soul, from *Klal Yisrael*.

It has often been demonstrated that people who have been cut off from every manifestation of their Jewishness, living virtually as gentiles in every respect, when faced with the ultimate test of their Jewishness have chosen to endure even the worst deprivations and tortures, and to die *Al Kiddush HaShem* (for the sanctification of G-d), as a final expression in this life of the Holiness of the Almighty, and the oneness of His Torah and His people.

Among other peoples and other nations there have also been men and women who gave their lives willingly for their beliefs; but it has been as a rule those special people who had a high degree of spirituality and devotion to their faith. Not so the Jews; even the most distant, bereft of spirituality, carries within him/herself this supra-natural capacity to renounce life rather than to renounce G-d. Again, it is apparent that this force derives not from the life-long efforts of highly motivated Jewish believers, but from something built into the fiber of the Jewish soul. And it is in this light that the biblical passage, "*V'amaich koolom tzadikim*" (and Your people are all righteous) takes on a simple and literal meaning: They are all ready for the ultimate righteousness - giving



ing their lives for the sake of Heaven.

But the Alter Rebbe's definition of the *Yiddishe neshamah* raises yet another question. If indeed every Jew has this spiritual integrity to give his life when called upon for the sake of Heaven, why does it lie dormant the rest of the time? Why does it demand the most terrible circumstances to bring it to the fore? Why does it not operate in the normal course of events? Why can a Jew first turn his back on all the sanctities of Torah and Jewish life, and only under extreme duress display his true loyalty?

The Alter Rebbe explains it roughly as follows:

Every Jew, no matter who s/he is, has a holy *neshamah*, virtually a *Chailek Eloka MiMaal*, a sort of microcosm of the Almighty. This gives the Jew the power to overcome every temptation of worldly pleasures - even cutting short his life for the sake of Heaven - so as not to be separated from G-d. This "identification" of the *Yiddishe neshamah* with the Almighty is not simply one aspect of his life that derives from "religious" commitment; it is the essence of his existence, of his life-substance. His being bound to G-d is the "I" that encompasses every aspect of his being on every level and in every sphere.

All living creatures - even the simplest forms - have a

desire to live, to survive, and they will muster forces that normally lie dormant, when their lives are at risk. In that same manner, the Jew confronted with the threat of spiritual death, the threat to his fundamental life desire, will muster every iota of energy to go on "living" - by sacrificing his life in this world. It is said that "all that a person has he will surrender for his life." And as this is so in the physical sense, so too will the Jew give all that he possesses - even his earthly life - to maintain his bond with G-d.

But having made this case, the question once again arises: Why cannot these incredible spiritual resources be put into play to make this same Jew manifest his ties to the Almighty by living every day as a good Jew who is close to G-d? Why does this Jew - who is willing to die for G-d -

not keep the daily Mitzvot for G-d?

The Alter Rebbe answers this question by drawing on yet another insight from our sages. "*Ain odom choteh, elo im kain nichnas bo ruach shtus*" - No one sins against G-d unless a spirit of folly overcomes him. The sages are not reacting here to the question of how a person who believes in G-d and His Torah can knowingly commit a specific sin, but rather to the broader question of how anyone aware of G-d and aware of His will through Torah can ever transgress the Divine will. Why does the force that can overcome his desire to go on living, and motivate him to choose death rather than cut himself off from G-d, not stand by him in resisting the very desire to sin?

The answer is that the

•Continued on page 14



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THE BLESSING OF LOVE

by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

One of the Torah's most moving passages, and the one that has had such great impact over the course of history, is very short indeed and is known by almost every Jew, namely the priestly blessings:

The L-rd said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'Thus shall you bless the Israelites. Say to them:

May the L-rd bless you and protect you;

May the L-rd make His face shine on you and be gracious to you;

May the L-rd turn His face toward you and give you peace.'

Let them set My name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

This is among the oldest of all prayer texts. It was used by the priests in the Temple. It is said today by the Kohanim in the reader's repetition of the Amidah, in Israel every day, in most of the Diaspora only on festivals. It is used by parents as they bless their children on Friday night. It is often said to the bride and groom under the chuppah. It is the simplest and most beautiful of all blessings.

It also appears in the oldest of all biblical texts that have physically survived to today. In 1979 the archeologist Gabriel Barkay was examining ancient burial caves at Ketef Hinnom, outside the walls of Jerusalem in the area now occupied by the Menachem Begin Heritage Center. A thirteen-year-old boy who was assisting Barkay discovered that beneath the floor of one of the caves was a hidden chamber. There the group discovered almost one thousand ancient artifacts including two tiny silver scrolls no more than an inch long.

They were so fragile that it took three years to work out a way of unrolling them without causing them to disintegrate. Eventually the scrolls turned out to be *kemayot*, amulets, containing, among other texts, the priestly blessings. Scientifically dated to the sixth century BCE, the age of Jeremiah and the last days of the First Temple, they are four centuries older than the most ancient of texts known hitherto, the Dead Sea Scrolls. Today the amulets can be seen in the Israel Museum, testimony to the ancient connection of Jews to the land and the continuity of Jewish faith itself.

What gives the priestly blessings their power is their simplicity and beauty. They have a strong rhythmic structure. The lines contain three, five, and seven words respectively. In each, the second word is "the L-rd". In all three verses the first part refers to an activity on the part of G-d - "bless", "make His face shine", and "turn His face toward". The second part describes the effect of the blessing on us, giving us protection, grace and peace.

They also travel inward, as it were. The first verse "May the L-rd bless you and protect you," refers, as the commentators note, to material blessings: sustenance, physical health and so on. The second, "May the L-rd make His face shine on you and be gracious to you," refers to moral blessing. *Chen*, grace, is what we show to other people and they to us. It is interpersonal. Here we are asking G-d to give some of His grace to us and others so that we can live together without the strife and envy that can so easily poison relationships.

The third is the most

almost all the priestly texts - is G-d as he relates to us as persons, individuals, each with our unique configuration of hopes and fears, gifts and possibilities. Hashem is the aspect of G-d that allows us to use the word "You". He is the G-d who speaks to us and who listens when we speak to Him. How this happens, we do not know, but that it happens is central to Jewish faith.

That we call G-d Hashem is the transcendental confirmation of our significance in the scheme of things. We matter as individuals because G-d cares for us as a parent for a



A young child is waving vigorously at the ship. Someone asks him why. He says, "I am waving so the captain of the ship can see me and wave back." "But," said the man, "what makes you think that the captain can see you?" "Because," said the boy, "the captain of the ship is my father. He will be looking for me among the crowd."

inward of all. There is a lovely story about a crowd of people who have gathered on a hill by the sea to watch a great ship pass by. A young child is waving vigorously. One of the people in the crowd asks him why. He says, "I am waving so the captain of the ship can see me and wave back." "But," said the man, "the ship is far away, and there is a crowd of us here. What makes you think that the captain can see you?" "Because," said the boy, "the captain of the ship is my father. He will be looking for me among the crowd."

That is roughly what we mean when we say, "May the L-rd turn His face toward you." There are several billion people on the face of the earth. What makes us anything more than a face in the crowd, a wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the sea shore? The fact that we are G-d's children. He is our parent. He turns His face toward us. He cares.

The G-d of Abraham is not a mere force of nature or even all the forces of nature combined. A tsunami does not pause to ask who its victims will be. There is nothing personal about an earthquake or a tornado. The word *Elokim* means something like "the force of forces, cause of causes, the totality of all scientifically discoverable laws." It refers to those aspects of G-d that are impersonal. It also refers to G-d in His attribute of justice, since justice is essentially impersonal.

But the name we call *Hashem* - the name used in the priestly blessings, and in

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and noted Jewish philosopher, orator and author, whose extensive works of Torah scholarship and moral philosophy inspired and influenced individuals and communities around the world, passed away in London this past 20 Cheshvan - November 7. Rabbi Sacks was the author of more than 30 books and hundreds of articles, and published lectures on Torah subjects, contemporary Judaism, and general issues of morality and ethics. He will be remembered as an eloquent and effective spokesperson for Jewish values both to the Jewish community and to the world at large.



failure of faith.

Faith means that I believe that G-d cares about me. I am here because He wants me to be. The soul He gave me is pure. Even though I am like the child on the hill watching the ship pass by, I know that G-d is looking for me, waving to me as I wave to Him. That is the most profound inner source of peace. We do not need to prove ourselves in order to receive a blessing from G-d. All we need to know is that His face is turned toward us. When we are at peace with ourselves, we can begin to make peace with the world.

So the blessings become longer and deeper: from the external blessing of material goods to the interpersonal blessing of grace between ourselves and others, to the most inward of them all, the peace of mind that comes when we feel that G-d sees us, hears us, holds us in His everlasting arms.

One further detail of the priestly blessings is unique, namely the blessing that the sages instituted to be said by the Kohanim over the mitzvah: "Blessed are you ... who has made us holy with the holiness of Aaron and has commanded us to bless His people Israel with love."

It is the last word, *be-ahavah*, that is unusual. It appears in no other blessing over the performance of a command. It seems to make no sense. Ideally we should fulfill all the commands with love. But an absence of love does not invalidate any other command. In any case, the blessing over the performance of a command is a way of showing that we are acting intentionally. There was an argument between the sages as to whether mitzvot in general require intention (*kavanah*) or not. But whether they do or not, making a blessing beforehand shows that we do have the intention

to fulfill the command. But intention is one thing, emotion is another. Surely what matters is that the Kohanim recite the blessing and G-d will do the rest. What difference does it make whether they do so with love or not?

The commentators wrestle with this question. Some say that the fact that the Kohanim are facing the people when they bless means that they are like the cherubim in the Tabernacle, whose faces "were turned to one another" as a sign of love. Others change the word order. They say that the blessing really means, "who has made us holy with the holiness of Aaron and with love has commanded us to bless His people Israel." "Love" here refers to G-d's love for Israel, not that of the Kohanim.

However, it seems to me that the explanation is this: the Torah explicitly says that though the Kohanim say the words, it is G-d who sends the blessing. "Let them put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." Normally when we fulfill a mitzvah, we are doing something. But when the Kohanim bless the people, they are not doing anything in and of themselves. Instead they are acting as channels through which G-d's blessing flows into the world and into our lives. Only love does this. Love means that we are focused not on ourselves but on another. Love is selflessness. And only selflessness allows us to be a channel through which flows a force greater than ourselves, the love that as Dante said, "moves the sun and the other stars," the love that brings new life into the world.

To bless, we must love, and to be blessed is to know that we are loved by the One vaster than the universe who nonetheless turns His face toward us as a parent to a beloved child. To know that is to find true spiritual peace.



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WHAT CAN WE LEARN
FROM KOSHER ANIMALS?
Continued from page 4

was part of his serving G-d, he was put through a test where he was required to display the utmost degree of harshness - he was commanded by G-d to slaughter his beloved son, Isaac, for whom he had waited for so many years. When he showed his willingness to carry out G-d's command, even though at the last minute the decree was annulled, the Torah states that now it is known that Abraham fears G-d. Since he was able to transcend his natural tendency towards love and kindness, he proved that what motivated him was not his natural characteristics, but a love of G-d. When a person loves G-d, s/he can transcend his nature and do the opposite of what comes easily to him/her.

Thus, the split hooves teach us the necessity of going in whichever direction G-d asks, whether it is easy or not.

Chewing The Cud

What does this characteristic teach us? Life is about making decisions, some that are relatively simple and some that are more difficult, with many factors that could color the decisions. "Chewing the cud" means that instead

of rushing to decide, we pause to think it through.

A simple example: In conversation with another, that clever remark or comeback that is at the tip of my tongue. Pause and chew. Is it appropriate? Could it be offensive? And there are so many more momentous decisions that deserve the "pause and chew".

For the bigger decisions being a "kosher animal" includes talking things over with others, in addition to personal thinking. Discuss it with an objective person, preferably one who has experience in life. That person may see your life in a very different light from the way you see it. He or she may help you make that difficult decision by presenting options and situations in a way that will help you see what is right to do, though it may be difficult for you.

Just as kosher animals chew their food over and over, we, too, must think about things over and over. We must make sure that we've looked at a matter from all angles, and have chewed it well before we make a decision. This way we will decide correctly, based on the right motivations and the right reasons, and not just on the whim of the moment.

12 CHANUKAH FACTS
Continued from page 7

12. Is Your Menorah in the Doorway or at the Window?

The most common custom (outside of Israel) is to light the menorah at a window. In Mishnaic times, however, the menorah would be placed outside, on the left side of the door leading in from the street.

This led to a unique law. Normally if a person placed a flame in the street, and a straw-bearing donkey brushed by too close, the owner of the flames would be responsible for the ensuing conflagration. On Chanukah, however, he would be exempt because he was doing a mitzvah.

Why was the menorah placed to the left of the door? Because the mezuzah is placed on the right side. With the mezuzah on one side and the menorah on the other, you are literally surrounded by holiness.

The harsh realities of the diaspora, both sociopolitical and meteorological, forced the menorah to an indoor doorway, and some communities developed the custom to put it on the windowsill instead. Even today, many people (including Chabad) prefer to light in a doorway, surrounding ourselves with the mitzvahs of mezuzah and the menorah, just as in ancient times.



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YOUR LETTERS
Continued from page 2

Year, please find enclosed a check as a donation to Chabad of Rochester. Hopefully, the New Year will bring a respite from all the gloomy news we have endured. May you continue the Rebbe's work. Sincerely yours,

Joel Shertok



To me, there is no greater way to honor the memory of my parents than to say Kaddish for them on their Yahrzeit. It was even a greater honor for me, to recite Kaddish for my father at Chabad of Rochester. And if that was not enough, I was given an Aliyah, a special honor for me.

This was my first attended service at your Chabad. When I got home, my wife asked me "How was it"? My reply: "It was incredibly beautiful. So full of wonderful tradition."

May your wisdom, comprehension and knowledge continue to be a vital part of the Rochester Jewish community and especially reach the youth who are trying to understand life in these very

trying times. Be safe and well,
Mark Evra



We are so grateful that our sister and sister-in-law, Miriam Berger and her husband Yaakov, found such a warm and welcoming home at Chabad Lubavitch of Rochester. Her Neshomo thrived as part of your community for so many years, which brings us great comfort.

We know that Miriam was a great giver of Tzedakah in the community. Consider this gift our contribution to your holy work. Finally, please thank your wife for all the friendship, help and support that she showed Miriam throughout the years. Shana Tova Umetuka.

Aviva and Rabbi Joel Schwab



Enclosed is my contribution for the calendar. Many thanks for all Chabad has done & it is still doing for the Rochester Jewish community. It's always crucial, even more so during the corona virus. Sincerely,

Miriam Weidenfeld



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The End of the World

by Sara Esther Crispe

I thought it was going to be a typical freelance writing project. I jotted down the name of the organization, their website and location, and called to make an appointment for the interview. I left myself exactly 45 minutes before my next meeting so that I wouldn't have to stay too long. I wanted to make sure we would cover ground quickly so that I could get my angle without wasting time on aimless chatting. I figured a good story line and a couple of strong quotes and I'd be finished.

But then I walked through the front door and what I thought, wanted and figured no longer mattered. Time stopped, reality (or the reality that I knew) stopped, my calendar stopped. The next three-quarters of an hour would be an experience I don't think I will ever forget.

I had been so busy lately that for a few minutes I couldn't figure out why I heard Chanukah music playing as I entered the building. Then, as the songs continued, I glanced at my calendar and discovered that in just a few weeks it will be Chanukah! Such a joyous celebration of victory for the Jewish people, and I had temporarily forgotten.

The truth is that upon entering those doors I suddenly realized that I had temporarily forgotten a lot of important things. And when you are always temporarily forgetting it ends up meaning that you never really remember. You become so busy that you don't focus on what is really important, what really counts.

But in this place that was simply impossible. It was back to basics. Actually, it was back to much less than basics. It was back to virtually nothing.

You see, for this interview I was sent to one of the rehabilitative centers in Israel for severely disabled and handicapped children. But these are not children who will one day be mainstreamed or integrated into society. These are children who will spend the rest of their lives in this place, for this has now become their home. For them, this is it - for life.

The center itself is stunning. It is beautifully decorated with colorful pictures and displays everywhere. It has a top-quality staff and therapeutic activities. But then you look at the children, and they are simply heartbreaking. I couldn't really do my interview, because I was afraid to

talk. I knew that if I opened my mouth I would start to cry. But more than what I felt for them, I was just utterly scared. All I could think was that this could happen to me. This could be my child. I was not immune. These were such severely deformed children, and yet in most cases, there was no reason to expect it. Most came from families with other healthy siblings, healthy parents, and were born from healthy pregnancies. But then something went terribly wrong. And regardless of what the diagnosis ultimately is, these children will always be utterly dependent on others to live. They cannot eat by themselves (40% in this particular place are fed intravenously), they cannot go to the bathroom by themselves, most can't even sit up alone and virtually none can stand.

It sounds so trite and insincere to say that when in such a situation you really appreciate what you have. But there is just no greater truth. You do. But I think it is more than being grateful for the fact that you are healthy. There is something about being in such a place that makes you aware of how warped our view of the world can be. What struck me most was that I felt so sorry for these children. But when I really thought about it, I couldn't understand why. They didn't appear to feel sorry for themselves. They didn't appear miserable. They didn't appear depressed. In fact, most seemed quite happy.

And what was even more amazing was how easy it was to make them happy. As the Chanukah music was played, I watched as their eyes literally lit up and they began to shake from side to side or move. Some began to groan in a loud but clearly pleasurable way. Others clapped their hands together with huge smiles across their faces.

And yet, as I watched their joy, all I wanted was to cry. Sure, a part of me wanted to cry because I felt so bad that they would never walk or run around or play like other children. But if I am honest, really honest with myself, I think a part of me was crying over the fact that the sound of music was never enough to make me so happy. A warm pat or loving smile was never enough to capture my full attention and bring me such joy. A simple pleasure such as looking at a beautiful picture or rubbing something soft is never enough to comfort me. And for these children it is. I felt sorry for them, but perhaps it is they who should feel sorry for me.

I live a wonderful, blessed life, thank G-d. I have four beautiful and healthy children •Continued on page 14

The Challenge of Scripted Prayers

by Naftali Silberberg

The Biblical commandment of prayer is worded as an enjoiner to serve G-d with "all our hearts" - which the Sages understood to be a commandment to pray. Originally, everyone offered personalized prayers, employing words which expressed their unique feelings. And as feelings fluctuate, so did every individual's personal prayers fluctuate on a daily basis. Eventually, the Men of the Great Assembly instituted uniform prayer for all Jews, creating the basic text of the prayer book which is used to this very day.

But can a person's relationship with his Creator be scripted? Is it possible to dictate the feelings one should be expressing to G-d?

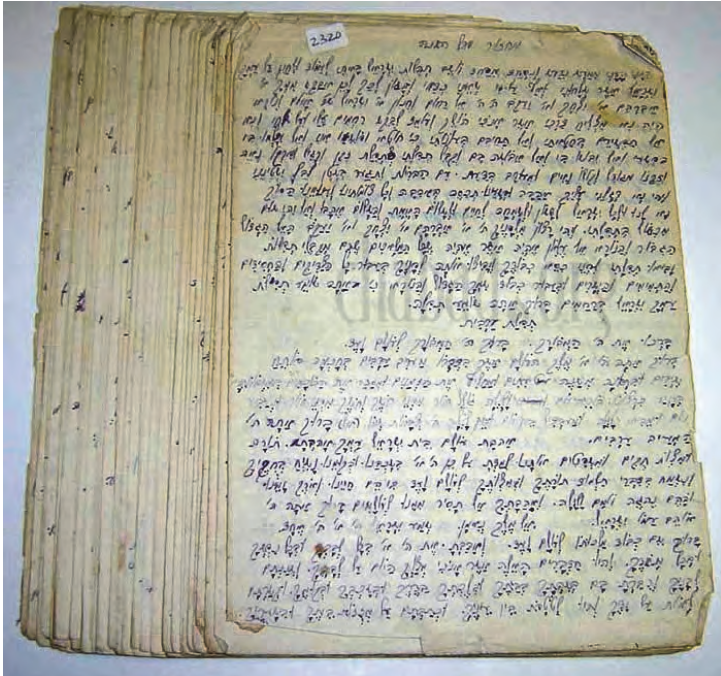
In the teachings of Chassidut, words are considered to be "vessels" - vessels for the feelings and thoughts which generate them. Two people can say the exact same words, words which seemingly express the same sentiment, but only the "vessel" is the same, the emotions behind the words can be worlds apart. Two people can tell their spouses, "I love

you"; does that mean that their love is the same, in either quantity or quality? Obviously not.

We live in a world largely obsessed with external trappings. Everything is judged by its most revealed dimension, while the essence goes unnoticed. Uniqueness is expressed through a nose-ring or sports car, not through emphasizing character and wisdom. Sometimes it is necessary to have two items which are externally alike in order to appreciate the profound difference which actually exists between the two.

The challenge we have is to create a personal prayer filled with personal feelings and sentiments - while using the same words as the person sitting next to us in the synagogue. This means truly immersing oneself in the prayer, for if the vessels are empty, if the words lack a backing of feelings and concentration, then the prayer which is being offered is actually no different than the prayer of every other John Doe.

And G-d loves unique prayers...



High Holiday prayer book (Machzor) copied by hand by Rabbi Moshe Greenberg when he was a prisoner in a Siberian Labor Camp in 1951. With this Machzor Rabbi Greenberg served as hazzan (cantor) for the twenty Jewish prisoners and recited each prayer, repeated by the others in low solemn voices. After nearly seven years in jail, he, along with all political prisoners, were released, due to the death of Joseph Stalin. The only item he took with him was his handwritten Machzor.

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THE END OF THE WORLD
Continued from page 13

I have a loving husband and great friends and work that I thoroughly enjoy. And yet, day after day I find something to complain about. I am too tired. The baby didn't sleep at night. The house is a mess. I was stuck in line at the bank for over an hour. My daughter won't stop whining.... And these things are enough to make me feel that my life is overwhelming. I can walk, talk, see, hear, think and do, and I still feel that my life is overwhelming.

And then I watch these children. They cannot do anything by themselves and therefore virtually cannot do anything. But they seem happy. Is it true that ignorance is bliss? Perhaps they are ignorant of much of what we consider the "pleasures" of life, but I think that it's more that they focus on what counts. They are happy because they are being taken care of. They are fed, bathed, changed, played with, spoken to and loved. And those are some pretty amazing things. But unfortunately few of us appreciate them.

At a certain point I glanced at my watch. I was late. I had spent too much time in this place and had almost missed my next appointment. I needed to run and interview and write and do it all by 1:30 when my kids would finish school and needed to be picked up.

Suddenly I was stressed again and had to get back to the real world.

But for the first time I wasn't sure where that was.

Was it outside those doors, or was it exactly where I was standing? There wasn't a child in that room that seemed to know what it meant to be stressed, to feel pressured, to have a bad day. To them, all that apparently mattered was that the music was playing and that they were enjoying it. And in truth, I think that is really all that matters.

I walked out the front door a changed person, at least temporarily. I sincerely thanked G-d for my health and for the health of my family. I decided to walk slowly to my next meeting as I tried to internalize the power of my experience. I knew I was late. I knew that it wasn't terribly professional. But in the scheme of things it just seemed pretty petty. Yes, I had probably annoyed some people, but as much as they may have been stressed, it wasn't the end of the world. Not moving, not speaking, not eating and not growing, that, as far as I had always thought, was the end of the world. And if for all these children it wasn't, then there was nothing I could possibly experience that could be.

Who could have known that 45 minutes could be so life changing?

THE TEST OF JEWISHNESS
Continued from page 10

ruach shtus, the folly that engulfs him, keeps him from considering what he is about to do. He knows what he is about to do, but he does not believe this particular transgression will sever his ties with the Almighty. The spirit that takes hold of him consists of this - whether he verbalizes it or not, whether in his consciousness or in some sort of intuitive response - that in spite of his sin, he is still a Jew! This spirit expresses itself in making it possible for him to deceive himself that life - and especially in relationship to the Almighty - can be compartmentalized to the extent that one area does not intrude on another. On the one hand, he can commit transgressions, and on the other, he remains a faithful and obedient servant of G-d.

Yet this folly has its limit in its capacity to deceive. When the Jew reaches the point of choosing between surviving as a renegade Jew or giving his life to sustain his ties with G-d, the *ruach shtus* loses its force, and without a moment's hesitation, the choice of eternal life becomes his only option; he is prepared to lay down his life to sanctify G-d's name.

Certainly the uniqueness of the Jewish people and the *Yiddishe neshamah* is not limited to a readiness to renounce worldly life, yet it demonstrates the tenacity with which the Jewish soul is bound to the Almighty.

Why a Mezuzah Is Not a Mezuzah

by Baruch Epstein

There is a mezuzah on the entry to the White House. There's a mezuzah leading into every room in the Kremlin. Your avowed atheist neighbor has one that all the neighborhood can see!

I'll explain. The word "mezuzah" means doorpost. In the Book of Deuteronomy we read: "And you shall write them on the doorposts (*mezuzot*) of your homes and your gates." So, if we're to be linguistic nit-pickers, the scroll is affixed to the mezuzah-doorpost; it is not the mezuzah itself.

Okay, so beyond my trite witticism (my mother thinks I'm clever), what do we learn from the vernacular use of an architectural term to refer to a ritual object?

Chassidism emphasizes that G-d has a plan - a passionate, inexplicable, irreplaceable desire that this world, wars and all, be transformed into a welcoming home for Him. That's why He created it. All of creation exists only to exhibit G-d. Humans tend to see it in reverse; we think of ourselves and our world as primary and then look to see where and if G-d fits into the picture. The reverse is true; G-d is, and we are here to prove it.

Like hidden treasure, divinity is just below the surface, waiting for us to expose it through a mitzvah. Every time we use a physical resource for something G-dly, we illustrate its true charac-

ter: a tool for us to discover the holy spark buried within.

Divinity, while exciting, often seems too spiritual for nine-to-five people like us to grasp. When presented with it, we just gawk in awe. Materiality, on the other hand, we get. So G-d embeds Himself in physical objects, and when we use them according to His instructions, we find Him. Like a metaphor, it makes the abstract tangible.

So maybe we have it right. Maybe the genuine meaning of mezuzah is the mitzvah scroll, and the doorpost is only called a mezuzah to emphasize that its existence is realized, not by holding the door in place, but by enabling a mitzvah. If not for the scrolls, there would be no reason for plain old doorposts.

And so it goes with all things; there are two perspectives: 1) I am, so when I earn money, I buy what I need, and then, if there is any left over, I'll give to charity. Or, 2) G-d is, and He has embedded Himself in cash as a way for me to discover Him. When I earn money, I first give one-tenth to charity and then use the remaining, now uplifted money for my own needs.

Don't view the mezuzah as an appendage to your house, see your house as a mezuzah holder. Don't just read this article, call your local Chabad center and get yourself, or someone you know, a mezuzah for their mezuzah!



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Happy Chanukah!

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