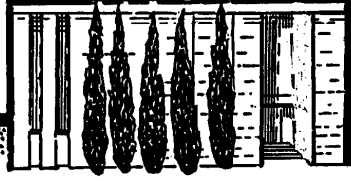


בסד

# Yeshivah ShulE



Nisan 5769 ~ 2009

ניסן תשס"ט

## *Community Magazine*



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# A Speck of Flour

Based on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's talks on the eighth day of Passover in the years 1967 and 1977, and on other occasions (Likkutei Sichot, vol. XXII pp. 30-38) adapted by Yanki Tauber Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com

It is rare to find a substance so utterly proscribed by the Torah. There are other foods whose consumption is forbidden; but this the Torah forbids us to eat, benefit from in any way, or even keep in our possession. Usually, a forbidden substance becomes nullified if it mixes with a much greater quantity of permissible substances; of this, the Torah forbids the slightest trace--even if it blends with something a million times its volume, the entire lot becomes unfit for consumption.

We are speaking, of course, of *chametz*, or leaven, on Passover. In the weeks before the festival, the Jewish home is the scene of an all-out war of extermination. Floorboards are scraped, furniture dismantled, countertops boiled. On the night before the festival we conduct a solemn search for any survivors and consign them to the flames on the next morning. The enemy; the most minute bread-crumm, beer stain or pasta residue - anything in which grain and water have come together and fermented, rendering the product *chametz* and utterly intolerable for eight days a year.

On the spiritual level, leaven, whose primary feature is that it rises and inflates itself, embodies pride. This explains our uncompromising rejection of *chametz*. Other negative traits might be tolerable, or even useful, in small, greatly diluted doses.

Depression, for example, has been declared a grave sin, for man is commanded to serve G-d with joy; but a small dash of melancholy, counterbalanced by a hundredfold helping of joy, may serve a positive function, reflecting a necessary concern over ones shortcomings and the commitment to rectify them. The same applies to anger, stubbornness, *chutzpah*, and a host of other negative character traits: as a rule, they are undesirable, yet in the proper context and in the right proportions each has its positive applications. Arrogance and pride, however, are of such spiritual toxicity (the Talmud states that G-d says of the arrogant one, "I and he cannot dwell in the same world") that we must forgo any attempt to exploit them, and must totally eradicate them from every crevice of our hearts.

## The 49-Day Difference

And yet, despite the severity of the prohibition of *chametz*, it is only forbidden for eight days and several hours a year (from mid-morning of the day before Passover, until nightfall of the eighth day), while other, less toxic elements are forbidden year-round. In other words, there is a state of being, which Passover represents, in which arrogance and pride are objectionable in any context and quantity. After Passover, however, *chametz* becomes permissible and even desirable.

This duality is also expressed in the laws governing the offerings brought to G-d in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. In the Holy Temple, it was Passover all year round: all grain offerings had to be unleavened, in keeping with the divine command (Leviticus 2:11), "No leaven ... may be brought as a fire-offering to G-d." This, too, reflects G-d's utter abhorrence of arrogance and pride. Nevertheless, on the festival of Shavuot, two loaves of bread, specifically commanded to be "baked leavened" (Ibid., 23:17), were offered in the Temple. In other words, Passover and Shavuot represent two extremes in the desirability of pride. On Passover *chametz* is wholly and utterly forbidden, while on Shavuot it is not only permitted but is a mitzvah, commanded and desired by G-d.

Passover marks our birth as a people, when G-d extracted a clan of slaves from the forty-nine gates of depravity of Egypt and set them on the journey toward Sinai, where He took Israel as His eternal bride on Shavuot. Connecting Passover and Shavuot is the forty-nine day Counting of the Omer: the Torah commands that beginning on the eve of the second day of Passover, we should conduct a daily count of the days that have passed from the day after the Exodus.



The Kabbalists explain that the human personality consists of seven basic attributes (*chessed, gevurah, tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod* and *malchut*, or love, restraint, harmony, ambition, devotion, connection and receptiveness), reflecting the seven divine attributes (*sefirot*) which G-d invested in His creation. Each *sefirah* contains elements of all seven, making for a total of forty-nine divine channels of relation to our reality, and forty-nine corresponding traits in the human heart. Thus, the Kabbalists speak of the utterly corrupt society of Egypt as a moral nadir of forty-nine gates of depravity. These are paralleled by forty-nine gates of understanding--the ladder and process by which one achieves the refinement and perfection of all elements in ones character.

Therein lies the significance of the forty-nine day count and climb from Passover to Shavuot. On the first day of Passover, we were physically removed from the land of Egypt; yet we still had to remove the Egypt from within us, to cleanse our hearts and minds of the residue of two centuries of pagan environment and practice. So on the second day of Passover begins a forty-nine-day count, chronicling a daily internal exodus from another of Egypt's gates of depravity and entry into another of the gates of understanding. After forty-nine days, we attain the internal purity required to receive the divine election and communication of Shavuot.

Hence the difference between Passover and Shavuot regarding *chametz*. One who is still burdened with negative drives and emotions (though he has already come out of Egypt in the most literal sense by abandoning the negative behaviour they engender) lacks the ability to sublimate the most potent and corruptible of the hearts traits--pride. So immediately following the Exodus, *chametz* is banned. It is only upon attaining the full refinement of all forty-nine compartments of the heart on Shavuot that the offering of leaven to G-d becomes a *mitzvah*, appropriate and desirable.

On this level, pride is no longer the self-inflating *chametz* of the Passover personality, but the selfless pride of one who has cleansed his heart of every last vestige of self-interest and has dedicated it exclusively to the service of his Creator. This is a pride not in what one is or has achieved, but an expression of the majesty of He whom he serves and whose reality he conveys in his every thought, word and deed.

### **Wet Matzah**

This also explains an interesting law regarding *Acharon Shel Pesach*, the eighth and final day of Passover.

One example of the extremes to which we go to avoid the slightest trace and chance of *chametz* on Passover is the practice, in many communities, of refraining from eating *matzah sheruyah* (soaked matzah) on the festival.

Matzah is made of water and flour that have been speedily and thoroughly blended and baked, to avoid any chance of leavening. Once baked, the flour in the matzah will not leaven; matzah (or matzah meal made by grinding matzah to a fine flour) may now conceivably be mixed with water and other liquids in the preparation of food for the festival. However, there remains an extremely slight chance that some of the flour might have failed to mix completely with the water at the time of the matzah's original baking, leaving a few particles of raw flour at risk of leavening should they come in contact with water.

For this reason, many halachic authorities, including Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, rule that it is best to avoid the use of *matzah sheruyah* on Passover. This ruling has been accepted by many communities, to the extent that there are those who are careful not to even place matzah on the table during mealtimes unless it is securely covered, lest a single drop of liquid alight on a piece of matzah. This is one of the many examples of the unparalleled lengths to which we go in the avoidance of *chametz* on Passover.

On the other hand, Rabbi Schneur Zalman permits the use of *matzah sheruyah* on the eighth day of Passover. Furthermore, his successors, the Rebbes of Chabad, made a point of wetting matzah at every course of the meals of *Acharon Shel Pesach*. There are those who are wont to explain this leniency by the fact that the eighth day of Passover is a rabbinical institution, as opposed to the first seven days, which are biblically ordained. But the observance of the rabbinical added days to the festivals are just as binding for the Jew as their biblical sisters; in fact, Halachah is even more stringent regarding certain aspects of their observance, for the very reason of forewarning any inclination to treat them lightly. Indeed, with the exception of the eating of soaked matzah, we are no less diligent in our rejection of leaven on Passover's final day. Why, then, this exception?

### A Taste of Future

As we have discussed, the forty-nine-day count from Passover to Shavuot represents the process of refining the seven basic attributes of the heart as each comprises elements of all seven, making for a total of forty-nine traits. This is why the Torah speaks of the count as consisting of weeks ("Seven weeks you shall count for yourselves..."-- Deuteronomy 16:9). In our daily count, we, too, emphasize its weeks: on the twenty-fifth day, for example, we say, "Today is twenty-five days, which are three weeks and four days to the Omer [count]." Indeed, Shavuot--the name of the festival that culminates the Counting of the Omer--means "weeks." For the internal count also consists of seven weeks, being the refinement of seven attributes of the heart that are each a unit of seven.

Thus, each week of the count is a microcosmic "Omer Count" of its own, involving seven days or sub-traits as they are reflected in the various nuances of that weeks attribute.

The eighth day of Passover is the seventh day of the count and the final day of its first week. It therefore represents the point at which elements of each of the seven attributes (as they are present within the attribute of "love") have been refined and elevated. The eighth of Passover is thus a mini-Shavuot, and shares its leaven-tolerant quality. While outright *chametz* is still strictly forbidden, we mark this milestone on the road to perfection with the positive use of a *chametz*-vulnerable element, employing wetted matzah to enhance our festival meal.

This corresponds to another feature of the eighth day of Passover; its identification with the era of Moshiach. The haphtarah (reading from the Prophets) for this day (Isaiah 10:32-12:6) describes the coming of Moshiach and the harmonious perfection of a time when "the world shall be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea."

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov instituted a special meal, The Feast of Moshiach, to be held on the afternoon of eighth day of Passover, as a time that is profoundly suited to taste and experience the divinely perfect world we are creating with our positive efforts; a world in which the spirit of impurity shall cease from the earth and everything, including the pride so abhorrent to G-d today, shall be sublimated as a wholly positive and altruistic force.

Therein lies the lesson of the eighth day of Passover: even if perfection seems a far-off goal, you possess the ability to create a taste of perfection in the here and now. Start with a single trait of your personality, with a small corner of your community. If you wholly devote yourself to it, you will find in it elements of your entire self, indeed of the entire universe.

Your creation of this small model of perfection will serve as the catalyst for its realization on a holistic, and ultimately universal, level.



# The Future – Our Children and their Parents

Rabbi Z H Telsner Yeshivah Shule

One of the main threads running through the Seder ceremony is the emphasis on children. We try to begin early in order that the children should not fall asleep. We give them almonds and special treats in order to keep them occupied. We wash our hands before we dip a small amount of vegetable in order to arouse curiosity and they will fire questions at us. Then the four questions are recited which according to many customs are said by everyone young and old. Then we talk and discuss the four sons quoting what the Torah says about each one and our response to them individually. The famous Afikoman barter challenge which is customary in many communities where the matzoh is taken by some young daring boy and hidden, and only returned if a handsome return is forthcoming.

All in all there seems to be an almost total concentration on the younger generation from the beginning of the Seder till the very end. The reason for this is quite explicit in our heritage. To make sure our exodus from Egypt is complete to fortify our nation and to be sure of our future can only be done if our youth are catered for. Pharaoh asked Moshe who does he want to take with him when he leaves, Moshe answered quite unequivocally “with our youth and elders, sons and daughters we will go.” There can be no Jewish entity without our young ones, both boys and girls. Judaism throws its full weight behind our responsibility to make sure our young ones feel and know what we are all about and what we stand for.

To educate the next generation we have two ways: straightforward schooling from kindergarten to maturity. As has been the tradition of the Jewish community from time immemorial, as the Talmud makes it quite clear – “Since the beginning of time a Yeshivah house has not departed from our forefathers.” Study and knowledge is the basis for Jewish commitment. In our own community the sacrifice of so many to make our institution open for the whole Jewish community is a shining example of the response a group of Jews have made to guarantee a Jewish future.

Yet we sometimes forget that there is still a very important ingredient that must be added if one wishes to see our children turning into good and proud Jews. It is something schools cannot give, books cannot impart and personal intelligence cannot guarantee. It is that factor which is richer and more dynamic than book facts. It is the influence that by just being living examples have on our youth. By being under the wings of Jews who, when we watch them carefully while they daven, learn to perform mitzvos, move us to be influenced and challenged to emulate such individuals.

In every community there are always those few who by their just being there mould and shape those who come into contact with them.

The Rebbe once quoted a story from Rabbi Perlov’s z”l book in which he tells the story of R.M. Berliner, an old Chosid who taught in Lubavitch. When he became too weak to teach, he still stayed in Lubavitch and just stayed in the Beis Hamidrash most of the day. The Executive Board always looking to save on salaries went to the Rebbe Rashab z”l and suggested that R.M. Berliner’s salary should be reduced since he is not teaching any more. To which the Rebbe replied “R.M. Berliner walking up and down in the Beis Hamedrash is worth his full salary.”

However, this in no way exempts the parents from their responsibility of and showing an example of what it means to be a good Jew. The father’s davening, setting aside time for learning, getting his priorities right and tzedokah are areas in life that influence both young and old tremendously.

Let’s this YomTov coming our way inject a feeling of responsibility to each and every one to be a living example for the next generation so that when Moshiach comes we will be able to proudly say “See the children we have brought up.”

Wishing the community a happy and kosher Pesach.

# Some Laws of Chol HaMoed

Rabbi Z H Telsner Yeshivah Shule

The days of Chol Hamoed (intermediate) are very special and have a biblical sanctity.

1. These days should not be degraded by unbecoming work or behaviour.
2. One is obligated to wear Yom Tov clothes or at least finer wear than on a simple day.
3. One should eat a festive meal and drink wine on every one of these days.
4. One should certainly endeavour to pray with a minyan (not only because of Kriyas HaTorah and Musaf) but simply because of the sanctity of these days.
5. One should increase one's learning of Torah on these days since we have more time on our hands.
6. It is the Chabad custom to study tractate Sotah during the 49 Sefira days starting on the second day of Pesach.
7. If one forgets Yaaleh VeYova during the Amidah one must repeat the Shmonei Esrei.
8. From the first day of Pesach we begin to say in the Amidah Morid Hatol.
9. One should not do any work on Chol Hamoed which is stressful physically and requires a length of time to do.
10. One should not cut grass or prune trees on Chol Hamoed.
11. Tying on undoing sailors knots or similar are forbidden on Chol Hamoed.
12. Work on Chol Hamoed is permitted under certain circumstances, i.e. loss of earnings (not just loss of profit).
13. Therefore a grocery store or fruit shop may be open on Chol Hamoed.
14. Other shops, i.e. clothing stores, should minimize the hours so that they don't lose their customers.
15. Work which is for the public benefit and is a necessity is permitted on Chol Hamoed.
16. Any professional activities are forbidden on Chol Hamoed, i.e. painting jugs, painting one's house, calligraphy, sewing, sharpening knives, making beverages, e.g. wine, etc.
17. One may not take a haircut on Chol Hamoed even if one has pain from his hair.
18. One should not cut one's nails both on the hands and feet on Chol Hamoed.
19. One is not permitted to do washing, ironing or sewing on Chol Hamoed.
20. One may wash only towels, underwear, socks and handkerchiefs.
21. One may wash children's clothing, sheets for their beds or cots – only what is needed for immediate use.

# The Escape Hatch

By Rabbi Yanki Tauber

You're trapped in your marriage. You've said certain things, she's said things, both quite unforgivable, so now you're imprisoned in this cube of tense silence you used to call "home" and the only place to go from here is down. Yes, there is a way out -- just yesterday there was a moment, a fleeting opportunity for reconciliation. But you were too big to squeeze through.

You're trapped in debt. There's the house redo you just had to do, the car you absolutely had to have, the vacation you simply wanted (you deserve something for yourself, too). The bills are closing in, and the only place to go from here is down. Yes, there's a small opening, through which a tiny voice inside you sometimes beckons, "You don't really need this." But you've gotten too big to squeeze through.

You're trapped in your life. Whichever way you turn, you encounter walls -- unshakable habits, antagonistic colleagues, elusive desires. The only direction that seems not to be closed to you is down -- the direction leading deeper into the quagmire.

Sometimes, the weather clears enough for you to see the escape hatch set high up in the wall - the way out to freedom. But it's so small. Actually, it's not so much that it's small as that you need to make yourself small - veritably flatten yourself - to fit through. You need to deflate your selfhood enough to say to yourself: "Wait a minute! I've got the wrong idea of what it's all about! It's not about me, it's about Us. It's not about what I can be and have, but what I can do and accomplish."

We celebrate the festival of Passover by eradicating all *chametz* (leavened foods) from our home and replacing it with matzah, the unleavened bread. The Chassidic masters explain that in order to re-experience the freedom of the Exodus -- the moment in history that liberated our souls from all and any future forms of slavery - we must eradicate the *chametz* from our souls and replace it with matzah.

*Chametz* -- grain that has fermented and bloated -- represents that swelling of ego that enslaves the soul more than any external prison. The flat, unpretentious matzah represents the humility, self-effacement and commitment that are the ultimate liberators of the human spirit.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that the liberating quality of matzah is also shown in the forms of the Hebrew letters that spell the words "chametz" and "matzah". The spelling of these two words are very similar (just as a piece of bread and a piece of matzah are made of the same basic ingredients) -- *chametz* is spelled *chet*, *mem*, *tzadi*; *matzah* is spelled *mem*, *tzadi*, *bei*. So the only difference is the difference between the *chet* and the *bei* -- which, as the illustration above shows, is also slight. Both the *chet* and the *bei* have the form of a three sided enclosure, open at the bottom; the difference being that the *bei* has a small "escape hatch" near the top of its left side.



ה צ ת      ך ת ת  
*matzah*      *chametz*

Figure 1: Hebrew spelling of "chametz" (leaven) and "matzah"

ה      ך  
*hei*      *chet*

Figure 2: The Hebrew letters *Hei* and *Chet*

Which is all the difference in the world.

# The Laws of Sefiras HaOmer

Rabbi Michael Stern Kollel Menachem Lubavitch Melbourne

There are a number of tragedies which occurred during this period, therefore we observe semi-mourning.

1. Twenty four thousand students of Rabbi Akiva died because they did not treat each other with respect.<sup>1</sup>
2. In the year 4856 (1096) many communities were destroyed, people massacred, scholars burnt alive during the crusades in Germany.<sup>2</sup>
3. In the years 5408-5409 (1648-1649) there was a vicious blood libel, which culminated in much Jewish blood being shed through Bogdan Chmielnicki. ש"מ.<sup>3</sup>

## Which period of mourning to observe

1. Chazal require us to mourn for 33 days in memory of the twenty four thousand students of R' Akiva that passed away between Pesach and Shavuot. There are a number of opinions as to how to calculate these days:<sup>4</sup>

1. From first day of sefira until Lag B'Omer. Since the last of the students died on Lag' B'Omer.
2. From ב' אייר until Erev Shavuot.
3. From Rosh Chodesh Iyar until the first day of הגבלה.

2. One may not keep the leniencies of both opinions. i.e. from ב' אייר until Lag B'Omer. However one may keep the stringencies of both opinions. i.e. from beginning of sefira until Shavuot. This is the Chabad custom.

## Haircuts

1. It is prohibited to get a haircut during Sefira.<sup>5</sup> Trimming the beard is included.<sup>6</sup>
2. If by not cutting one's hair one could suffer financial loss, there is room to be lenient; however a רב מורה הוראה must be consulted.<sup>7</sup>
3. One may trim the moustache if it interferes with one's eating.<sup>8</sup>
4. Eyebrows and eyelashes are not included in the prohibition.<sup>9</sup>
5. The custom is that women also refrain from haircuts during sefira unless necessary.<sup>10</sup>
6. For reasons of modesty so the hair will remain covered, or for the mitzvah of tevilah, a woman may cut her hair during sefira.<sup>11</sup>
7. A girl who is at a marriageable age may cut her hair if necessary.<sup>12</sup>
8. According to Halacha one is allowed to have a haircut on (the day of) ל"ג בעומר.<sup>13 - 14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> גמרא יבמות סב-ב

<sup>2</sup> ט"ז – או"ח סי' תצג ס"ק ב

<sup>3</sup> ספר התודעה חודש ניסן

<sup>4</sup> שו"ע אדמה"ז סי' תצג סעי' ה-ו

<sup>5</sup> ש"ע אדמה"ז סי' תצ"ג סעי' א

<sup>6</sup> נטעי גבריא פסח ג – פרק מט הערה 2 בשם שו"ת מפשטי עוזיאל תנינא סי' סח

עיין שערים מצויינים בהלכה סי' קכ ס"ק יא בשם שו"ת זרע אמת שמצדד להתיר כשצריך לקבל פני שרים ומפני הפסד ממון, ובשו"ת חת"ס סי' קנח דיש גדולים שמתירם

במקום הפסד רב. ועיין בשו"ת ישכיל עבדי חלק ה סי' נה

<sup>8</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל ע"פ ש"ע תקנ"א סעי' יג גב בין המצרים וכ"ש כאן.

<sup>9</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל סעי' ד

קש"ת אג"מ י"ד ב סי' קלז... אף שהיה מסתבר להתיר מאחר שגם באבלות אחר ז' תוך ל' מתירין הרבה ראשונים... אבל מ"מ נראה הדין שראוי להחמיר אם אינו נחוץ כל ל' יום

עיין שו"ת רב פעלים סוד ישרים ד-טו... ועל כן הגם דמצות הספירה לא שייך בנשים ואין סופם כלל, עם כל זה גם הם צריכים לשמור אזהרה זו של גלות..

אג"מ הנ"ל. עיין בהליכות בת ישראל פרק כד הערה ט שכשהשיער ארוך ביותר ויורד מעל העיניים – מסתבר שקיצורו נחשב ג"כ כצורך.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>12</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל סעי' יד

<sup>13</sup> כף החיים סי' תצג ס"ק יג

ק"ל ג בעומר ר"ח אייר מ"מ א"מ דתוסה"ש הקרק"ק גמש יבשדק"פ הקרק"ק מקק"קאקנ רנשי דןי אוב א"מ ג"מ אר"י ז"ל ק"ת

ועיין בנט"ג הנ"ל הערה כד בשם ספר שולחן טהור שהמגלח בל"ג בעומר הוא עבריין ועובר על דברי מרן האר"י ששקול כשבעים סנהדרין של משה רבינו ויות

ספר מעשה מלך עמ' 162 בשם ריל"ג שידועים על ב' פעמים ( פ"א לפני הנשיאות ופ"א בעת הנשיאות) שהרבי הסתפר בל"ג בעומר.<sup>14</sup>

9. According to Kabbalah and the אר"י ז"ל one is not allowed to cut his hair even on ל"ג בעומר and should wait until Erev Shavuot.<sup>1</sup>
10. If there is a bris milah the father of the child, Mohel and Sandak are permitted to take haircuts the day before the bris towards the end of the day.<sup>2</sup> However, these days since most people do not take haircuts specially for the bris, it should not be done.<sup>3</sup>
11. According to the אר"י ז"ל one may not take a haircut even in honor of the bris.<sup>4</sup>
12. Even if one has long hair, and is uncomfortable, he should not take a haircut during sefira.<sup>5</sup>
13. Dandruff is not considered enough of a physical ailment to allow one to get a haircut during sefira, even though it is healthier for the scalp.<sup>6</sup>
14. It is permissible to cut one's fingernails during sefira.<sup>7</sup>
15. There are no bathing restrictions during sefira.<sup>8</sup>

### Shehechyanu

There is a dispute amongst the poskim whether שהחיינו may be recited during sefira. Some authorities hold that שהחיינו may be recited.<sup>9</sup> Others hold that שהחיינו should not be recited during sefira.<sup>10</sup> The Chabad custom is to refrain from reciting שהחיינו during sefira with the exception of Shabbos and Lag B'Omer.<sup>11</sup>

### Buying/ Wearing new clothing

1. Many communities have the custom to refrain from buying or wearing new clothing during sefira.<sup>12</sup> Other opinions hold that since שהחיינו may be recited during sefira it is therefore permitted to eat new fruit and buy or wear new clothing or dishes.<sup>13</sup>
2. According to the custom that new clothing is not worn during sefira, many hold that this does not apply to unimportant garments.<sup>14</sup> Therefore undergarments eg singlets, underwear would definitely be permissible to buy.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> עיין נט"ג הנ"ל סעי' כז. ועיין בספר היום יום ג' סיון.

<sup>2</sup> "The Previous Rebbe writes "Haircutting during the three days of preparation, before Erev Shavuot was displeasing to my father" (The Rebbe Rashab)

<sup>3</sup> ש"ע אדה"ז תצג סעי' ד

<sup>4</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל פרק נ' סעי' ב'

<sup>5</sup> כף החיים ס' תצג ס"ק יג בשם אגרות הרמ"ז

<sup>6</sup> שו"ת מקדש ישראל ס' פד הביא מספר פחד יצחק בשם בעמח"ס שתי ידות דמי שיש לו שערות גדולות ומצטער עלה דמותו להתגלח באלו הימים ולא עדיף דבר זה שהוא ממנהגא ממצות עשה של סוכה דק"ל מצטער פטור מן הסוכה ע"ש... ודחה ראייתו מסוכה דשאני סוכה דבענין תשבו בעין תדורן.

<sup>7</sup> שו"ת מעיין אומר ג הל' ספירת העומר ס' ד בשם הרב עבדיה יוסף זה לא נחשב כמחלה שיהא מותר.

<sup>8</sup> שו"ת ס' תקנ"א ס"ק יב בשם שו"ת איתן האזרחי דלא כהמהר"ש מלובלין. ועיין ספר מועד וכל חי ס' ו סעי' א ... ובנטילת צפרניים ליכא שום חומרא...

<sup>9</sup> ספר בין פסח לשבועות עמ' רסז בשם שו"ת דברי מלכיאל ח"ג ס' יג

<sup>10</sup> מאמר מרדכי ס' תצג ס"ק ב

I was asked if one must be careful not to recite שהחיינו between Pesach and Lag B'Omer. I responded that I have not found a source for this in any of the sources, it is without a doubt that this mistake evolved by erroneously comparing sefira to מצרים.

עיינן שו"ת מהר"י שטייף ס' רמט "לא נזכר זה בפוסקים המפורסמים"

<sup>10</sup> We do not recite "זמן" during sefira since these are days of judgment.

<sup>11</sup> ספר מלך במסיבו א עמ' שיז – שיח, ליל א' דחג השבועות תשכ"ט

The Rebbe was asked the following regarding שהחיינו: we find a difference in ספר המנהגים between מצרים in which it says we make a point of not reciting שהחיינו over a new fruit or the like even on Shabbos, yet by sefira it says that we refrain from reciting שהחיינו during sefira and it does not mention Shabbos?

The Rebbe answered that this is what the Previous Rebbe instructed to write by sefira, and the entire concept is a novelty (not to recite שהחיינו during sefira since the אבילות is only a minhag, as opposed to מצרים) Also in פרי עץ חיים it says that the concept of not getting a haircut is because of the judgment and not אבילות.

When asked whether we actually make שהחיינו on Shabbos or not, the Rebbe answered "I did not ask my father in law (כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר)".

(implying if I had asked he would have told me)...

However on תורת מנחם תשמ"ט חלק ג) (עמ' 134) during a יחיות with the Chief Rabbis R' M. Eliyahu and R' A Shapiro, the subject of שהחיינו was discussed extensively, and the Rebbe commented that "By us our custom is to refrain from making שהחיינו on a new fruit during sefira, except for Shabbos and Lag B'Omer. However those that do have the custom to make שהחיינו during sefira should continue..."

<sup>12</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל פרק נד הערה ב בשם ספר תשובות ופסקים חכמי אשכנז בשם רב שרירא גאון "גזרו חכמים שלא לעשות שמחה בין פסח לעצרת, ולא לעשות כסות חדשה". עיין לקט יושר עמ' צ"ז שמהרא"י בעומר לא היה מתיר ללבוש אפ"ל מצנפת חדשה של פשתן..

<sup>13</sup> משנ"ב ס' תצג ס"ק ב בשם מאמר מרדכי - ... אם נזדמן לו איזה ענין שצריך לברך עליו שהחיינו, יברך. ועיין בספר ועליהו לא יבול א - אוסטר 28 שיהודי אחד שאל הגרשז"א האם מותר בימי ספירת העומר לקנות או ללבוש דברים שמברכים עליהם שהחיינו? וענה: מותר (זה דבר פשוט). לא כתוב באי מקום שזה אסור, אז ממילא זה מותר!

<sup>14</sup> משנ"ב ס' תקנא ס"ק מה - ובגדים שאינם חשובים כ"כ שאין צריך לברך עליו שהחיינו, כגון מנעלים חדשים ואנפילאות וכיו"ב, ובדאי מותר לקנותו

וללבוש מ"ז בתמוז על ר"ח... (וכ"ש בספירת העומר)

<sup>15</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל פרק נד סעי' יג

3. One may purchase and dress young children in new clothing during sefira.<sup>1</sup>
4. One may wear new clothing for the purpose of going out on a shidduch if one has no other appropriate clothing.<sup>2</sup>
5. A woman may wear new maternity clothing during sefira.<sup>3</sup>
6. The Chabad custom is also to refrain from wearing or purchasing new garments during sefira<sup>4</sup> with the exception of Shabbos and Lag B'Omer.<sup>5</sup>
7. It is permissible to purchase and wear a new tallis during sefira if one does not have another tallis to fulfil the mitzvah.<sup>6</sup>

## Marriage

1. The custom is to prohibit getting married during sefira.<sup>7</sup>
2. One may get engaged<sup>8</sup>, and even have a meal in its honor provided there is no dancing.<sup>9</sup>
3. It is permissible to have a communal meal with many people, even if it has no connection with a mitzvah, provided there is no dancing.<sup>10</sup>

## Music during sefira

1. It is prohibited to play musical instruments during sefira.<sup>11</sup> Recorded music is also prohibited.<sup>12</sup>
2. It is permissible to listen to music during Chol Hamoed Pesach and Lag B'Omer.<sup>13</sup>
3. During the three days before Shavuot the custom is to allow music.<sup>14</sup>
4. If necessary one may play music for young children who have not yet reached the age of chinuch.<sup>15</sup> However, to play music for a class of children not as part of the lesson would be prohibited.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>1</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל נד סעי' טז

The author writes that during sefira one may give a child a new garment to bless if he is not old enough to discern between the מצרים and the rest of the year. All the more so during sefira, where many poskim even allow adults to wear new clothing. וכן הביא בספר הקטן והלכותיו פרק כג סעי' יג בשם שו"ת ויברך דוד ב' סיבות להקל א' אין מנהגינו לברך שהיינו על בגדים חדשים ב' הקטן אין בו דעו לשמוח בלבישת בגד חדש.

<sup>2</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל סעי' יז

If one may get engaged even on באב ט', surely one may take measures leading up to the shidduch (such as wearing new clothing).

<sup>3</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל סעי' יט דהר"ל לצורך

<sup>4</sup> קונטרס בירורי מנהגים מועדים עמ' 59

The author asks - we know that we don't make שהיינו during sefira, what about purchasing new clothing, since our custom is that שהיינו is not recited? He explains that the issue is not only the technical reciting of שהיינו on a new garment; however there is still an element of simcha, much more than eating a new fruit. Therefore since we refrain from new fruit, we must also refrain from purchasing new clothing.

<sup>5</sup> On days that it is permissible to have simcha, as one may make a שהיינו on new fruit, one may wear new clothing. The author also writes that the Rebbe would wear a new hat on Lag B'Omer in the later years of the leadership.

<sup>6</sup> ספר בין פסח לשבועות בשם שו"ת שאילת יעב"ץ א' ס' פב - לענין מי שנפסקה קרן טליתו וא"א לתקנה... אף בשבוע שחלבו ט' באב. וא"כ כ"ש בימי ספירת העומר.

<sup>7</sup> ש"ע אדה"ז ס' תצג סעי' א'

<sup>8</sup> הנ"ל שמא יקדמנו אחר

<sup>9</sup> רבינו אוסר ריקודים ומחולות גם אם הם קשורים עם מצוה, שהרי סעודת שידוכין היא מצוה, ואעפ"כ אוסר לעשות ריקודים.

<sup>10</sup> ש"ע אדה"ז ס' תצג סעי' א' אבל מותר לעשות סעודת הרשות בלא ריקודין ומחולות ושמחת יתרות.

<sup>11</sup> ערה"ש ס' תצג סעי' א' "... לא בריקודין ומחולות וכ"ש שאסור לומר בכלי זמר..."

<sup>12</sup> ועיין גם בשו"ת מנחת יצחק א' - ס' קיא שכתב "ולדעתי הוא איסור כלי זמר, בכלל מה דאיתא במג"א... דאסור לעשות ריקודין ומחולות, בימי הספירה, וא"כ דלא הזכיר כלי זמר, מ"מ כלי זמר הוא כ"ש דהוי שמחה יתירה מריקודין ומחולות..."

<sup>13</sup> שו"ת אג"מ אור"ח א' ס' קא ועיין בפסק תשובות ס' תצ"ג סעי' ד'

This is the consensus of virtually all contemporary poskim.

<sup>14</sup> עיין בשו"ת שלמת חיים ד-כא שטייף הוא בכלל כלי זמר לענין מנהג שלא לומר בחתונות בירושלים בכלי זמר.

<sup>15</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל פרק נג סעי' ב'

<sup>16</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל סעי' ג' ועיין שם שהביא מקום להקל אף מר"ח סיון לצורך קצת וכ"ש לקטנים, ע"פ כה"ח ס' תצ"ג ס"ק ט'

<sup>17</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל סעי' ה' כיון שלא אסרו רק ממנהגא, לכן על קטנים שלא הגיעו לחינוך יש להקל ובפרט כשצריך לזה...

<sup>18</sup> פסקי תשובות ס' תצ"ג הערה עד בשם הגר"ש וואזנאר.

5. One should not play music even for young children who have reached the age of chinuch.<sup>1</sup>
6. Therefore a teacher would be allowed to prepare her class for a play with singing and instruments, or to play music as part of a lesson, however this leniency is restricted to A) Young children. B) In the privacy of their classroom. C) The children must be told that in general they may not listen to music during sefira, however this case is an exception for the classroom.<sup>2</sup>
7. One may teach music during sefira for parnasah reasons provided he has no pleasure in the music.<sup>3</sup>
8. A sick person who is bedridden may listen to music during sefira to calm his nerves if necessary.<sup>4</sup>
9. Singing without instruments in order to praise Hashem, or while learning Torah or davening is permissible during sefira.<sup>5</sup>
10. During sefira one should refrain from singing music that will lead to dancing, however music which is inspirational and does not lead to dancing is permissible.<sup>6</sup>
11. One may not have a band play music during sefira even for outreach purposes, however a video, with some subtle background music is allowed.<sup>7</sup>
12. One should change the ringer on ones cell phone so it should not play music during sefira.<sup>8</sup>
13. One may listen to tapes of chazanus.<sup>9</sup>
14. A tape which is primarily narrative such as stories or a lecture, and has background music is allowed.<sup>10</sup>
15. There is room to allow a person driving to listen to prevent himself from falling asleep at the wheel.<sup>11</sup>
16. During sefira if one calls a phone and is put on hold, he may listen to the music being played while waiting.<sup>12</sup>
17. If one has a non Jew working for him and he is playing music, it is permissible for the Jew to remain in the room.<sup>13</sup>
18. It is permissible to program music to play while ones clients/patients wait on the telephone, if these are non Jewish clients. However, if only Jewish people call then music should not be played while they are put on hold.<sup>14</sup>
19. When listening to the radio for news, and music is played in commercials, one need not shut off the radio.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> שו"ת אג"מ או"ח ד ס' כ"א ס"ק ד "ובדבר לשמוע מוסיקה בימי ספירה... ויש החמיר גם לקטנים שהגיעו לחינוך מאחר שאבלות דרבים הוא.

<sup>2</sup> עיין בהליכות בת ישראל פרק כד הערה יד

<sup>3</sup> שו"ת אג"מ או"ח ג ס' פז "... אם הוא לפרנסה מותר אף בימי ספירה דלדידיה אין זה ענין שמחהוואם הוא להנאות אסור אף ללמד דגם זה הוא הנאה ואסור בימי ספירה בעניני שמחה לפי המנהג."

<sup>4</sup> ערה"ש י"ד ס' שצא סעי' יד... ודע שראיתי מי שכתב דמי שפרנסתו מכלי זמר אם הוא אבל מותר לו לנגן בתוך שנתו לאביו ואמו, ובתוך ל' לשאר קרוביו כדי שלא יפסיד פרנסתו. ובודאי כן הוא דאצלו לא שייך שמחה, דפרנסתו הוא עוסק. ועיין בשו"ת קנין תורה ב ס' צט שהגביל ההיתר ללמד מוסיקה בספירה רק בבית ספר של גוים ולפרנסתו, אבל ליהודים לשחצנות לא לשם פרנסה. כבר צעק המהר"ם ש"ק דכל השנה איסורא איכא.

<sup>5</sup> נט"ג הנ"ל סעי' ז בשם שו"ת דברי שלום

<sup>6</sup> ועיין בשו"ת משנ"ה ו ס' קו (לגבי זמרה כל השנה) הנה פשוט דחז"ל לא גזרו רק זמרה לשם תענוג... אבל לשם רפואה לא גזרו חז"ל. והביא שו"ת יד יצחק ו שכתב שהתיר אמירה לנכרי בשבת לבקש מהגוי לנגן לאדם עם בעיה של עצבים ע"ש.

<sup>7</sup> שו"ת יחוה דעת ו' ס' לד "כשהיא דרך הודאה להשם יתבך, בלי כלי נגינה, מותר."

<sup>8</sup> עיין בספר בין פסח לשבועות פרק טו סעי' ה שהלקט יושר עמ' 97 (שמביא הנהגות של רבו התומת הדשן) "ואין אומר אפי' אליהו בעומר רק כשחל ל"ג בעומר ביום א"ו והגרשז"א אמר "אפשר שהיו נוהגים לשיר את אלי' הנביא בניגון שמעורר לריקוד ושמחה"

<sup>9</sup> ספר אמת ליעקב ס' תצג הערה 406. להראות את הסרט אפשר להקל, כי המוסיקה בו היא רק ברקע ואינה עיקר הענין...

<sup>10</sup> ספר דולה ומשקה תשובות מהרב חיים קיינבסקי עמ' קצג

<sup>11</sup> עיין בשו"ת מקדש ישראל ס' סט-ג ספק שדוקא אם בידו לשנותו לצלצול רגיל, דבלאו הכי הוי פסיק רישא בשמיעת נגון ומותר.

<sup>12</sup> מקדש ישראל הנ"ל – יש להקל דזה לא חשיב זמרה, וגם לא שייך שיביא לידי ריקודין

<sup>13</sup> שו"ת מקדש ישראל הנ"ל ס' ס"ה – מסתבר דאינו נכלל בכלל האיסור, כל שעיקר דעת בני אדם אין כוונתם בשביל הנאת הכלי שיר.

<sup>14</sup> שו"ת מקדש ישראל הנ"ל מאחר שאינו מכוון בשמיעתו לשם שמחה ותענוג רק להקל עליו עול הנהגת האוטו.

<sup>15</sup> שו"ת מקדש ישראל ס' סט-ג – טעם ההיתר דלגבי השומע הוי הנאה הבא לו לאדם בעל כרחו, והו"ל פס"ר דלא איכפת ליה (ואין דרך בני אדם לקבוע עצמן להאזין לניגונים אלו לשם הנאה, והוא עשוי רק שבני אדם לא יורגו בינתיים.

<sup>16</sup> שו"ת מקדש ישראל – סט-ג – שהרי בע"כ שומע ונהנה מהזמרה

<sup>17</sup> שו"ת מקדש ישראל ס' סט-ד

<sup>18</sup> ספר שערים מצוינים בהלכה ס' כ"ק ד... י"ל דאזלינן בתר רוב תשמישו, והעיקר והרוב נעשה חדשות ודברי מסחר, ודומה למש"כ בש"ע או"ח תנא-סו דאזלינן בתר רוב תשמישו, וחומר רמ"א לא שייך כאן. ועיין בשו"ת שבת הלוי ו – ס' סט שכתב על ספר הנ"ל "ודברים תמוהים כ' דאין הכלי קובע אלא השמיעה קובעת. דאסור לשמוע כמש"כ הרמב"ם, ומה לי אם הכלי רובו ל ומה דאי אפשר לצמצם זה יתכן, דאז אינו מכוון לאיסור הנ"ל."

20. One should not eat new fruit during sefiras haomer unless on Shabbos or Lag B'Omer.<sup>1</sup>
21. An individual that has a family that does not keep the Halacha, and plays music during sefira, is not required to leave the house, especially if this will be offensive or cause arguments, however one must be careful not to be drawn in to the music.<sup>2</sup>
22. Even permissible music such as chazanus and the like should not be played excessively. Rather it should only be played if there is a reason.<sup>3</sup>
23. Rav S.Z. Auerbach once commented that he is bothered by the fact that he is asked so many questions of this type (such as the minutest details of the prohibition of music during sefira), yet when it comes to very serious issues which people constantly transgress like honoring parents and ribis, people are not careful to ask about the details.<sup>4</sup>
24. A religious girl who had left Judaism and became religious again asked R. Ovadia Yosef if she may listen to music during sefira since it is very difficult for her without music. He responded: "So listen! But will you die if you don't listen?!"<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Rav O. Yosef is quoted as allowing religious radio stations in Eretz Yisroel to continue playing music during sefira since people were listening to non Jewish music instead. Rav O. Yosef added that G-d fearing people should not listen, and "Great is a sin performed for the sake of Heaven"<sup>6</sup>

## Dancing

1. Dancing is prohibited during sefira. Therefore girls' schools should refrain from offering dancing as an activity during this period.<sup>7</sup>
2. It is permissible to dance in a circle after kidush levanah.<sup>8</sup>

## Customs

1. The custom is to learn מסכת סוטה throughout sefira in addition to one's regular shiurim, one daf per day.<sup>9</sup>
2. Amongst the reasons the Rebbe gave why we learn specifically מסכת סוטה, when there is also שבועות which has exactly 49 daf.
  - A) This is what the Previous Rebbe instructed.<sup>10</sup>
  - B) The Minchas Haomer comes from barley which is animal food. The Sotah must bring a korban from barley. This is the content of our Divine service during sefira, to refine the middos of our animal soul.<sup>11</sup>
  - C) The tractate is completed Erev Shavuos and ends discussing the quality of humility. The preparation for מתן תורה is humility.<sup>12</sup>
3. During this period one must be extra careful to show sincere love to one's friends.<sup>13</sup>
4. If possible one should avoid moving into a new house during sefira.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since our custom is to refrain from making שהיינו during sefira.

<sup>2</sup> הליכות שלמה פסח סי' יא הערה 51

<sup>3</sup> הליכות שלמה הנ"ל הערה 54 – אין לנהוג היתר בזה בשופי, דסוף סוף נהגו במיעוט שמחה בימים אלו...

<sup>4</sup> כנ"ל

<sup>5</sup> שו"ת מעיין אומר הנ"ל סי' לז

<sup>6</sup> כנ"ל

<sup>7</sup> ספר הליכות שלמה ומועדים פסח פרק יא ארחות הל' הערה 51. וכן הורה רבינו (הגרשו"א) להמנע בבתי הספר לבנות מקיום חוג ללימוד מחול בימי הספירה, שאע"פ שאין המטרה לשם שמחה, מ"מ כיון שהשמחה מתעוררת מאליה ע"י כך, לא לקיימו לימודים אלו

<sup>8</sup> שו"ת מקדש ישראל סי' סג הביא ב' טעמים

(א) יש מתירין ריקודים ומחולות של מצוה.

(ב) באמת אין הדרך לרקוד בשעת קידוש צנה בדרך שמחה. רק מסתובבים, ויש מתירין זה גם לאבל ב"ב חודש

ספר המנהגים עמ' 43, היום יום ז' אייר. עיין בתורת מנחם תשמ"ז חלק ג עמ' 396 שהרבי התייחס להמנהג ללמוד מסכת שבועות, והסביר "אע"פ ששני המסכתות שייכים לזמן מתן מורתנו, מ"מ בנוגע להוראה השווה לכל נפש... נקבע הלימוד דמ"ט דפים במסכת אחת (סוטה), ובלימוד זה נכללת גם המסכת השניה.

<sup>10</sup> ת"מ מ"ז חלק ג עמ' 394

<sup>11</sup> ת"מ מ"ו חלק ג עמ' 253

<sup>12</sup> תורת מנחם חלק כג עמ' 13

<sup>13</sup> מועד לכל חי סי' ו סעי' יג בענין אהבת החברים... צריכים להזהר ביותר בין פסח לעצרת... ומעיד אני שמים וארץ דבכל מקום שמצינו קנאה ושנאה בין אחים או שותפים... וכל אחד רוצה להפיל לחבירו ולהתכבד בקלונו לא יצאו נקיים ר"ל, ומרובה מדה טובה בכל מקום אשר ביניהם אהבה... הארכיו ימים ושנים

<sup>14</sup> Some authorities hold that one should not move into a new house since he will have to make a תנוכת הבית which is an act of simcha. ( פסקי )

(תשובות סי' תצג הערה ו בשם אבני צדק)

עייין בשו"ת לבושי מרדכי א – סי' קא שכתב שאין ליכנס לדירה חדשה בין י"ז בתמוז ט' באב בגלל ברכת שהיינו, ולפ"ז. שהיינו שהיינו בספירה, ג"כ אין ליכנס לדירה חדשה אלו שאין מברכים שהיינו בספירה, ג"כ אין ליכנס לדירה חדשה

The Satmar Rebbe was asked by the Satmar Rebbe if it was permissible for him to move homes for a new Rabbinical position in a different city, to which he responded that he has not found any poskim which prohibit moving into a new house during sefira, even during ( עיין בשו"ת יחוה דעת ג סי' ל שפסק שמוטר ליכנס לדירה. הסברא להכניס חפץ לדירה לפני חג הפסח – היא ישרה[כדי שלא להתחיל הכנסה לבית בימי הספירה]. חדשה בימי ספירה אף להרווחה)

ובשבת הלוי חלק י סי' קלה-ג – בענין ימי ספירה – אם אפשר בל"ג בעומר, או מר"ח סיון, ולצורך מל"ג בעומר ואילך, ולצורך רב עד ר"ח אייר. ובספר בנה ביתך (לקט משיחו ואגרותיו של הרבי) עמ' קכד, הביא "נהנתי לקבל מכתבו... הסברא להכניס חפץ לדירה לפני חג הפסח – היא ישרה[כדי שלא להתחיל הכנסה לבית בימי הספירה].

5. It is permissible to travel during sefira.<sup>1</sup>

6. When writing a letter during sefira the custom is to write the day of sefira next to the date.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> שו"ת מנחת אלעזר חלק ד סי' מד

Someone was told that it is an accepted tradition not to travel during sefira ("וכן מקובל מאבותינו ז"ל")

The מנחת אלעזר responded that he does not believe that a Rabbi made such a statement, for it is against Torah. We are commanded to make לרגל three times a year. This means returning home from Yerushalayim after Pesach, and traveling back for Shavuot, which is during sefira. The מנחת אלעזר traveled with his family to Meron for בעומר and remained there for three days, and they also traveled during sefira, until today many people travel from the N. African countries and Yemen to Meron for בעומר and they spend most of sefira traveling there and back. He forewarns the challenge that no proof can be made from these trips since they are connected with a mitzvah, for the מנחת אלעזר rules that even when a person travels or business or to see a friend, it is considered a mitzvah (therefore allowing him to travel on a boat three days before Shabbos.)

<sup>2</sup> ספר טעמי המנהגים אות תריג. הלכ' שאסור להסיח דעתו מהספירה שצ"ל שבע שבתות תמימות.

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## Throwing Stones

Rabbi B G Cohen Rosh Yeshivah, Yeshivah Gedolah Melbourne

In the memoirs of the Rebbe Rayatz נ"ע of Lubavitch, the story is related of Rabbi Adam Baal Shem of Ropshitz, a forerunner of the founder of the Chassidic movement, and his visit to the city of Slutzk.

At the time of the visit, some three hundred years ago, Slutzk was a community of Torah scholars. Given their commitment to the study of Torah, it was hardly surprising that they accorded the greatest honour to visiting Rabbis and men of learning. However, they were at the same time strongly opposed to the teaching and study of the Kabbalah (secrets of the Torah). Similarly, those nistorim (hidden mystics) who wandered from place to place, encouraging simple Jews to serve Hashem, found no favour in the eyes of the scholars of Slutzk and were definitely not welcome in their midst.

Rabbi Adam Baal Shem was, in fact, the leader of these nistorim, but was totally unknown to the Slutzk community. Thus, when he arrived incognito in Slutzk, no one imagined that this distinguished-looking visitor, who was clearly a great scholar, possessed some rather questionable affiliations. It was, after all, considered impolite and incorrect to enquire as to a visitor's name, unless he himself first volunteered the information.

Blissfully unaware of their guest's true identity, the heads of the Jewish community prepared for him a royal welcome. They invited all the scholars of the town and surrounding district to hear the honoured visitor deliver a Shiur (Torah lecture) in the large Beis Midrash (house of study), and, when Rabbi Adam walked in, the place was filled to overflowing. The Shiur itself was an unqualified success. The Rabbi fascinated his audience with the brilliance of his scholarship and the lucidity of his explanations. Never before had Slutzk heard such an outstanding discourse, and, upon its conclusion, they almost carried him back to the lodgings which they had happily provided for him.

It somehow emerged during the next few days that this visitor, upon whom they were showering so much honour and praise, might in fact be one of those terrible mystics and Kabbalists. The town shook in horror. How could they have been so deceived? As a result of the ensuing debate between the extremist and moderate factions, it was decided to confront the guest and demand that he come clean. An angry mob gathered outside his lodgings, and a couple of the outstanding scholars approached the visitor, bluntly demanding that he tell them if he was in fact a Kabbalist and member of the mystics. When he answered them, without hesitation, that this was indeed so, many of the younger element present showered him with insults and wanted to give him the punishment which, they felt, he richly deserved.

Rabbi Adam remained calm as he explained to them that, while he commended them for their sincerity, he nevertheless believed that their views were based on mistaken information. "And with regard to myself," he concluded, "I would like to say that the abuse which you have hurled upon me today is much dearer to me than the honour and respect which you accorded me during the past few days."

The visitor turned and, an hour later, was seen, stick in hand and pack on shoulder, ready to depart from Slutzk and its scholars.

Upon reading the above story, one cannot help being impressed, not only by the sincerity of the residents of Slutzk, but, far more significantly, by the striking humility and complete bittul (self-nullification) of Rabbi Adam. It is indeed true that the Gemorrah (Shabbos 88b) encourages a person to rejoice in the abuse which he receives from others, and, no doubt, great tzaddikim (righteous men) can put themselves and their honour on one side as they focus on loftier ideals. Most of us, however, tend to find words of abuse both hurtful and demoralising, if not downright destructive.

However sincere the intentions of the abuser, the fact remains that such words are normally uttered in anger and impatience, and hence highlight the shortcomings of the criticiser no less than the deficiencies of the recipient. One who really wants to achieve something positive will think very carefully before opening his mouth, in order to avoid that destructive negativity which is the inevitable outcome of most abuse.

All of this came to mind when a good friend of mine recently told me about an encounter which he had some years ago with Reb S.C., a well-known Jewish personality, when he visited Australia. Reb S.C. had, over the years, exerted a positive influence on countless individuals and families, causing, in his own unique way, many of them to re-shape their lives in accordance with Torah and Mitzvos.

There was, however, a touch of bitterness. When discussing his relationship with those whom he had influenced, he remarked to my friend, "I don't have any objection to their moving on. What is hard to take is when they spit in your face."

I never met or had any connection with the above personality, but can still appreciate his point. He was quite prepared to accept that his followers and disciples should move on, thereby, in effect, severing their connection with him. What he was **not** prepared to endorse was the subsequent vilification and abuse, as they sought to emphasise that they no longer viewed him as their mentor.

We live in an age of change. People do not feel that they have to behave in a certain manner just in order to continue in the ways of their parents. The last fifty years have witnessed much movement, and, Boruch Hashem, a large part of it has been towards Torah and Yiddishkeit. There are many who have, despite coming from a background of almost zero Jewish content, made the commitment to become completely Torah-observant Jews. In this case, the change in lifestyle has been spectacular and dramatic, in addition to often being well-publicised. There may, however, be a far greater number of Jews whose movement and change has been somewhat quieter and more gradual. Their progress, rather than being from nothing to everything, has tended to be from less to more. Their lives have always incorporated the basics of some Shabbos observance, a fair degree of Kashrus, at least at home, and a weekly Shule attendance. Over the years, many in this category have (either under the influence of their local Rabbi, or due to various pressures from their children) become far more committed. Regular Torah study has become part of their lives, and higher standards of religious observance have replaced a fairly token commitment.

Within the Torah spectrum itself there has also been a significant degree of movement. In the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, the predominant influence in the world of Torah study was that of the Lithuanian Yeshivos.

This, in turn, saw many scions of Chassidic families adopting a Lithuanian derech (approach) in their Yiddishkeit, in line with the style and emphasis of those Yeshivos in which they had spent most of their formative years.

A generation later, the Torah world moved in a different direction with the growth of many Chassidic movements and Yeshivos. This caused more than the mere return of some of the "defaulters" to their ancestral roots. There were additionally, and somewhat more surprisingly, many who came from a background which had little or no connection with anything Chassidic, and who nevertheless found themselves attracted to become fully-fledged members of one Chassidic group or another. It has often been difficult to explain the reasons for this change, but rationale and pure logic are rarely important in this context. The subject of the change is often incapable of articulating or clarifying his motives, but this has not been seen to detract from the sincerity of his convictions or the firmness of his new commitment.

**Having moved, he is now almost forced to justify his decision. To recognise certain aspects of his previous path as desirable and advantageous would present him with something of a dilemma:- If things were good before, why did I need to change?**

All in all, one cannot help suspecting that the number of Jews who have moved to the (religious) right of their parents, may be almost as great as the number of those traditionalists who have opted to continue in their parents' ways.

It would be both heartening and inspiring to know that the results of all this movement have been purely positive. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. It would indeed be a real achievement if all those who have chosen to make a move towards greater religious dedication, would not only feel more satisfied and

fulfilled in their new commitment, but would also view their previous experiences positively i.e. as a stepping-stone and contributory factor towards their arrival in their present position. Too often, however, the positive aspects of the change are accompanied by strong negative feelings towards all previous allegiances.

The rationale behind the negativity is fairly predictable. The person concerned did, after all, decide to **change** his approach and make a move. Having moved, he is now almost forced to justify his decision. To recognise certain aspects of his previous path as desirable and advantageous would present him with something of a dilemma:- If things were good before, why did I need to change? Even if the benefits of a move far outweigh its disadvantages, no-one likes to feel that he has cast away a significant opportunity, despite the net result being one of gain.

The simplest way of avoiding this problem is to postulate that the change did not involve a loss of **any** sort.

**Everything** prior to my change was ( at least in retrospect) majorly deficient and probably harmful. Totally discarding it all, as I ran for dear life, was the best thing I ever did. Now I can breathe a sigh of true relief as I rejoice in my present fortunate situation. With this absolutist approach, I can feel secure and confident in my chosen path, and adequately protected from those doubts which occasionally assail me.

The simple facts of life tend, of course, to be rather different. It is highly unlikely that any previous path was all black and had **no** significant advantages. To pretend otherwise, in order to ensure peace of mind, is, at best, an exercise of questionable benefit. A more realistic and honest approach would see one prepared to recognise the need for sacrifice i.e. there **were** advantages, but I have decided to do without them. This view is more challenging, but is more balanced and, ultimately, more beneficial. A mature person recognises that genuine achievement in life is dependent upon establishing one's priorities. This will often mean being ready to forego something which, despite its value, is of only secondary importance. A refusal to accept this reality will often result in a person forcing himself into an intellectual and emotional corner, from where he will spend the rest of his life defending a position which may be unnecessarily elitist and pointlessly extreme.

Despite its naiveté, this black and white view of the religious spectrum would be fairly harmless were it merely confined to the philosophical and ideological differences between one *derech* and another. In practice, however, the ideology becomes inseparable from its proponents, and hence the rejection of the theory is often accompanied by the vilification of its teachers. No matter that a mentor went out of his way to help me, and of no consequence that he taught me much of value. True that without his assistance I would never have reached my present position, but I will just have to forget that. Intellectually and emotionally committed as I am to a rejection of his approach, I find myself similarly bound to disqualify him as a person with whom I can have a positive relationship. If this means belittling him, so be it. If it involves depicting him, to myself and others, as a harmful and dangerous influence, it will just have to be that way. I do, after all, have to be consistent, and I feel that I would somehow be compromising my position were I to accord him any respect or gratitude.

If all of this sounds to you like a gross exaggeration, and an overstated criticism of those who have moved religiously past their teachers, I can only hope that you are right. My limited experience has, however, led me to believe that, with his frank assessment of the relationship between himself and some of his followers, Reb S.C. hit the proverbial nail right on the head. On the one hand he accepted that his disciples had the right to move on to, what they considered as, greener pastures. By no means all teachers or religious leaders are capable of displaying similar generosity of spirit.

Many of them consider any move away as a betrayal and personal affront.

Every teacher would, however, do well to remember the statement of the Gemorrah (Berachos 58a) that each person has his own unique and individual way of understanding. The most ardent and devoted disciple does not surrender or lose his own intellect and independence. The role of the teacher is to guide and stimulate, but not to take possession of, that intellect. Hence, even if the pupil initially sees eye to eye with his teacher, there is no guarantee that he will forever share his views. Progress and change are normal and healthy, and no teacher need feel betrayed by the pupil who has moved past him.

Surely this is included in that which the Gemorrah (Sanhedrin 105b) says:- **בכל אדם מתקנא חוץ מבנו ותלמידו** - a person will be jealous of anyone other than his own son or pupil. The relationship between father and son can never be removed. Regardless of the son's views or actions, successes or failures, he remains his father's son. This enduring relationship and natural bond precludes the possibility of jealousy. The same basic idea applies with regard to teacher and pupil. The relationship can never really be uprooted, since, regardless of the student's future approach or achievements, his progress can be viewed as a development and outcome of that instruction which he initially received. The teacher thus retains a permanent degree of partnership, regardless of the particular direction of the pupil's views, and jealousy becomes impossible.

So much for the teacher's need to maintain an ongoing relationship with his pupil through an approach which is tolerant and supportive rather than inflexible and possessive.

A similar line of reasoning can be used to determine how the pupil should relate to his (former) teacher. The fact that you, the pupil, now view matters rather differently from your teacher, in no way negates the simple truth that you only arrived at your present views after, and probably as a result of, that which your teacher taught you. Commonsense and ordinary decency dictate that you recognise your teacher's role in your own intellectual development, and that you hence owe him a permanent debt of gratitude. No-one is suggesting that you change your views to conform with his, but respect and honour can be given even to someone with whom one is in total disagreement.

In the case of a teacher who taught you (some) Torah, this respect is obligatory rather than optional. We learn in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers) Ch.6, about the honour which Dovid Hamelech (King David) gave to Achitofel, from whom he learned just two Halochos (laws). Commentators explain that Achitofel was a Rosho (evil person), and yet Dovid Hamelech still gave him respect. Dovid was certainly aware of Achitofel's spiritual deficiencies, and there is no way in which he would have agreed with him, or allowed himself to be perceived as endorsing his actions. Despite all of this, Dovid found it both necessary and appropriate to preserve in writing, as a part of Sefer Tehillim (Book of Psalms) – the inheritance of the whole Jewish nation – the honour which he felt should be accorded to Achitofel.

This episode then passes into the Mishnah, where it becomes a message and directive to every Jew, instructing him to respect and honour his teachers, regardless of their spiritual level. Could anything be clearer than this?

Rabbi Adam Baal Shem rejoiced in the insults which he received. It is, nevertheless, highly unlikely that this provides any degree of justification for those who insulted him. His humility should not have become a catalyst for a display of their insecurity and small-mindedness. How much more so nowadays, when most of our leaders and teachers by no means rejoice in being insulted, that the basic approach should invariably be an expression of respect and appreciation. If, after that, suggestions need to be made with regard to the improvement of certain details, the person being addressed is more likely to listen, now that he feels that he is not being confronted by an adversary. Disrespect and intemperate criticism, however, will cause nothing other than strained relations or downright hostility, which hardly enhance Jewish (and especially religious Jewish) unity. If this additionally involves biting the hand which fed you, the resulting hurt and ill-feeling are bound to be highly destructive.

On the Yomtov of Pesach, we remind ourselves of the hundreds of years we were in Egypt prior to our deliverance and of the suffering inflicted upon us. The Egyptians murdered our children and enslaved our ancestors.

The Torah nevertheless commands us (Devarim 23, 8) not to completely detest and reject the Egyptians, since they provided us with a place to live at our time of need i.e. at a time when famine and hunger were the lot of all other lands. The fact that circumstances subsequently changed, and we would gladly have left Egypt, in no way removes the original debt of gratitude which we owe, and which has become enshrined in an eternal Halachic ruling. The Gemorrah (Bava Kamma 92b) and the Midrash (Bamidbar 22, 4) find in this ruling a basis for that which people say that you should not throw stones into a well from which you drank. As the Meiri (ibid) explains, one should never belittle any person in the world, but to do so to one who helped you indicates a totally unacceptable and shameful deficiency of character.

May Hashem help us view our own progress and achievements in a positive light, and similarly rejoice in the successes of others.

Bringing out the good in ourselves through discovering it in others – even in those with whom we disagree – can only help Jewish unity and hasten the coming of Moshiach.



## Not Just a Moment Raphael Aron [believebook.com.au](http://believebook.com.au)

*“Digital clocks have become very popular, perhaps because they represent a cultural attitude. The pointers on a clock’s face indicate the present time, but the present and future can be seen as well. A digital clock has no past and no future, only the now.”*

*When society rejects the traditions of the past, and exploits natural resources so as to endanger its future, the concern is only with the present. Ours is a digital clock generation..”* - Rabbi Abraham Twerski in “Seeking Sobriety Finding Serenity”

Jewish history, indeed all of history, is replete with significant events. The book of Bereishis lists these monumental events which include the creation of the world, the stories of Noach and Avrohom. The Patriarchs as well as the dramatic events in the life of Yosef contain powerful messages. So too, the account of the Ten Plagues leading up to the Exodus from Egypt in the book of Sh’mot. And the list continues throughout the Chumash and the books of the Tanach.

But these are events – not moments. In fact, although the Torah on many occasions mentions an event in terms of years or the year the event occurred, that is the extent of the particular time orientation.

Pesach is different. ‘Vayehi b’chatzi halaylo’ – ‘and it was at midnight’ – when G-d took out the B’nai Yisroel from Egypt. One fleeting moment and the whole course of history changed. In the seconds before midnight the Jewish nation was in slavery; in the seconds after midnight the Jewish nation was free. Indeed, our Rabbis tell us that had the Jewish people remained in slavery for even one more moment they would not have been redeemable.

Unlike all the events in our history or any other festival in our calendar, Pesach is about the power of the moment.

This power of the moment is also manifested in the intricate laws of Pesach and in particular the laws surrounding the prohibition of eating or possessing Chometz as well as deriving any benefit for it. For in just one moment these acts can be transformed from the realms of permissibility into the realm of prohibition and deserving of the harshest of punishments. Until a particular hour the eating of Chometz is perfectly acceptable; a moment later the person who consumes Chometz faces the punishment of being cut off from the Jewish nation.

Life is about moments. Time can be considered the composite of an infinitesimal number of moments each one providing a person with an opportunity for growth and for change. And the growth potential provided by each moment is dramatic as is the opportunity for change.

Abba Eban the former Israeli foreign minister once famously said in relation to the inability of the Arab world to agree to peace with Israel, "The Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." How many opportunities each day, each week, each month and each year do we miss?

Rabbi Twerski's statement above was written in relation to the scourge of addiction when all that counts is the present. The addict not only ignores the past and has no regard for the future, but uses the present in an utterly self destructive manner. In his desperation, he has lost track of the concept of time, what has transpired in the past as well as any notion of continuity.

We may not use drugs; we may have never smoked or used alcohol in excess. But have we savoured those moments which present us with opportunity for growth or for change? Do we capitalize on the inspiration we have derived from a Shiur, a Farbrengen, a Shabbos or a YomTov? How have we been affected by a Simcha be it a Chaseneh or the miracle of childbirth? Or do we wait until the occasion has passed and we slip back into mundane life as we know it having lost yet another opportunity.

We observe the Rebbe, his care and his love for every Jew. We are awed by his wisdom and his powers. We read, we learn and we watch the videos of the Farbrengens, the Rebbe distributing dollars and the messages he shares. And we are inspired. But do we grab the moment? How quickly does the inspiration evaporate and how many moments have we missed?

Unlike the addict to whom Rabbi Twersky refers, our past and the future are highly significant. At that time of Pesach over three thousand years ago, the moment of midnight was the interface between the harshest exile in our nation's history and the greatest liberation which preceded Matan Torah. Similarly, our ability to use every moment needs to take into account from where we are coming and to where we are going as the famous Mishna in Pirkei Avos states.

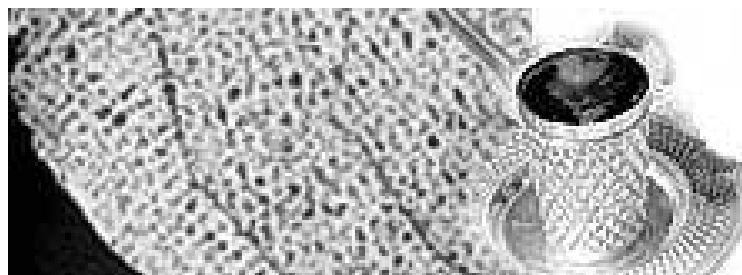
There will be one other occasion in Jewish life which is based on the concept of a moment. That occasion will involve a level of transformation which has never been seen before. It will force change upon even the unwilling and those averse to change. The coming of Moshiach will be like the wink of an eye; it will happen in a moment.

This is one of the reasons why we associate the Exodus from Egypt with the coming of Moshiach, as the prophet Michah says, "Kimai tzaischo me'erezt mitzrayim arenu niflo'ois," – "As in the days of your Exodus from Egypt, I will show [the people] wonders."

The moment of midnight which marked the liberation of the Jewish people from the Egyptian slavery was the most important moment recorded in the Torah. And the moment of Moshiach's coming will mark the greatest transformation ever experienced by not only the Jewish nation but the entire world.

Perhaps the best way to build a bridge between these two most significant moments in the eternal journey of the Jewish nation, is for us recognize the power of each moment and the unique opportunity it offers to every individual. In turn we must internalize what that means to each one of us in our own personal situation and to then act upon it to bring about positive change.

Pesach offers us that opportunity serving as a link between the moment of our first redemption and the moment of the imminent and final redemption, may it occur speedily in our time.



# The Rebbe's Public Will

Rabbi Yehoishophot Oliver. Baltimore, Maryland

On *Motza'ei Shabbos Terumah* 5748 (20 February 1988), ten days after the passing of the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka of blessed memory, the Rebbe shocked the *Chassidim* by delivering a *Sicha* that clearly referred to his passing as a possible scenario, and that prescribed clear instructions concerning how to act in such a situation. Thus, the Rebbe in effect delivered a public will. The full version of this *Sicha* was printed in the *Kfar Chabad* magazine several weeks after *Gimmel Tammuz*.

The *sicha* refers to the expression “Come, let us consider an accounting of the world,” which is a quote from *Bava Basra* 78b. The *Gemoro* explains this to mean that one should consider “a mitzvah’s loss against its gain, and a sin’s gain against its loss ... and if you do so, you will be built up in this world and established in the World to Come.” This is a reminder of the importance of calculating one’s actions carefully in anticipation of their consequences after one passes away. Thus, the expression “Come, let us consider an accounting of the world” represents considering the scenario of departure from this world to the World to Come. The Rebbe quotes a story of the Rebbe the *Tzemach Tzedek* that borrows this expression to refer euphemistically but unambiguously to a calculation of what to do in preparation for the *Histalkus* of a Rebbe.

In vol. 624 of the *Kfar Chabad* magazine, the full text of this *Sicha* was published.

The Rebbe began by telling a story. This story had never been printed elsewhere, and this was the first time that the Rebbe mentioned it in public. The story was not told in full in the *Sicha*, but the author of *Cheshbono Shel Olam* (Binyamin Lipkin, *Mechon HaSefer*, 5760, pp. 45-48) upon which the article below is based, ) relates that in an unpublished manuscript it is written as follows:

In the period before his passing, the *Tzemach Tzedek* would learn regularly with his son, the Rebbe *Maharash*, and his grandson, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Kapust (who was similar in age to his uncle, who was the youngest son of the *Tzemach Tzedek*). Every time they would learn (apparently towards the end of their studies), the *Tzemach Tzedek* would repeat the Midrashic statement: “Although Yosef and his brothers died, their G-d did not die.”[1] At the time the Rebbe *Maharash* would not respond, but when he went home, he would weep profusely. The *Tzemach Tzedek* would also say to them, “Come, let us consider an accounting of the world” (i.e., what will be after 120 years). Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Kapust would ask, “Indeed, what will be?” causing the Rebbe *Maharash* to become upset at him.

The Rebbe commented on this story, saying that the fact that it reached him indicates that there must be a lesson to be derived:

On that occasion I was surprised. Why was this told to me? Especially since this involved a lack of honor toward the one who said this before the *Tzemach Tzedek*. However, this implies that this too is related to the concept of “the living shall take to heart.”[2]

To preface, after the *Tzemach Tzedek* discussed “come, let us consider ...” he lived for many good years, in which his role as leader was widely spread, as were the wellsprings [of Chassidic philosophy] along with all the famous areas of his holy work, to the point that this reached non-Jews. ... Likewise, we saw that other *Rebbeim* of Chabad also followed the practice of “Come, let us consider an accounting of the world,” and this brought them a long, good life in the literal sense.

So, too, in our case. Since this story was told to us, this demonstrates that “the living shall take to heart” in this area as well. ...

On account of the length [of the amount spoken] the listeners may miss the main point. Thus, I repeat it: There exists the concept of “Come, let us consider an accounting of the world,” the reckoning of a person. If it [the position of leadership] needs to be transferred, or when it needs to be transferred, or it may remain in both ways, along the lines of what we find concerning *Moshe Rabeinu*, that while he was still alive, even before the Torah was given, when “Moshe received the Torah from Sinai, he charged his student *Yehoshua bin Nun*: “Go out, and fight against Amalek.”[3]

... The answer is thus clear: [When questions arise] one should consult with three *Chassidische Rabbonim* [trained halachic authorities], whether through one of them [who will then discuss it with another two], or with all three at the same time, and the greatest of them, or all three together, will deliver the verdict.

In other words, in addition to that which has been discussed recently concerning the imperative to fulfill the instruction of the *Mishnah*, “Make for yourself a teacher,”[4] and in matters related to healing, to consult with doctors, according to the statement of our sages on the verse, “And he will surely heal”[5] [“From here we see that a healer is given permission to heal”[6]]. These directives are not related to “Come, let us consider an accounting of the world.” Still, this applies in a similar manner, and with even greater intensity, concerning “Come, let us consider an accounting of the world”: the answer is clear, in a way that leaves no room for doubt, that this is the province of three *Chassidische Rabbonim*. This applies to various villages and cities, and in every single place there is a committee of the *Chassidische Rabbonim* of that place—whether for that city, for that neighborhood, or for the entire country—which are all legitimate practices.[7] Wherever there are three *Chassidische Rabbonim*, they are themselves the *Beis Din*. In a location that has less than three, they can combine *Rabbonim* from elsewhere, similar to what is written even concerning the Great *Sanhedrin*. This task is being assigned to the minds of these people, and they accept the task, the mission, and the strength that is granted them, to deliver the above ruling in their respective locations, and with joy and gladness of heart.

... As mentioned, this is being said in a clear manner, one that leaves no room for any doubt, even a doubt of holiness. There is not even room to ask about this matter again. This has already been transferred, and it is as if the decision in this matter has already been made. Let this be a clear demonstration of how one should behave for a long, good life, and there will be no room for any confusion. If anyone has further questions on the matter, whatever they may be, in these matters, the answer is already prepared by the *Chassidische Rabbonim*, in the role of a *Beis Din*.

[1] *Shemos Rabba* 81:8. [2] *Kohel* 7:2. In the year after the passing of the Rebbetzin, the Rebbe would often refer to this verse in his *Sichos*.

[3] *Shemos* 17:9. [4] *Avos* 1:6. [5] *Shemos* 21:18.[6] *Bava Basra* 85b. [7] In the original, “נהרה ופשטיה.” Cf. *Mishnah Berurab* 423:6.

**Summary:** In the event of the Rebbe’s *Histalkus*, the Rebbe is making clear in advance that when important questions arise about which people would have consulted with the Rebbe, they should consult with three local *Chassidische Rabbonim*.

In my experience, this *Sicha* is widely unknown even amongst *Chabad Chassidim*. I have almost never heard anyone speak about it, and those whom I have told about it express amazement. It needs to be widely publicized. In my humble opinion this is the most significant *Sicha* for *Chassidim* in their current situation, for it shows how the Rebbe clearly foresaw our situation, and prepared us for it.

Not only had the Rebbe said that *Chassidim* should turn to local *Chabad Rabbonim* for guidance, he had also alluded to the possibility that the *Chassidim* could turn to *Rabbonim* for leadership even during his lifetime (see the *Sicha*: “or it may remain in both ways, etc.”)—which clearly presaged the situation after the Rebbe’s first stroke on 27 Adar. After the *Sicha*, the Rebbe immediately began distributing dollars to be given to charity. Rabbi Yehuda Kalman Marlow (of blessed memory), who was a member of the Crown Heights *Beis Din*, passed by the Rebbe to receive a dollar, and referred to the beginning of the Torah portion of the week to come, “It is written ‘*ve’ata tetzaveh es bnei Yisrael*—‘you [i.e. Moshe Rabeinu] should command the Jewish people’ (*Shemos* 27:20) and everyone knows to whom ‘you’ refers.”

What Rabbi Marlow meant was clear: He wanted to bless the Rebbe, the *Moshe Rabeinu* of this generation, that there be no *Histalkus* (in which case the *Rabbonim* would be charged with the role of practically leading the *Chassidim*, as the Rebbe had said), nor should it be shared with the *Rabbonim*. Rather, the Rebbe alone should lead the *Chassidim*. The Rebbe responded to Rabbi Marlow, “May this not be in a way of ‘*kosis*’ [“crushed,” a reference to the continuation of that verse].” To this Rabbi Marlow responded, “May [the Rebbe] have long life [*arichus yomim ve’shonim tovos*].” “*Amen*,” the Rebbe responded.

My understanding of this response is as follows. Even after 27 Adar, and after *Gimmel Tammuz*, the Rebbe is still leading us. The *Rabbonim* are merely an intermediary through which the Rebbe’s leadership is practically administered, and “one’s agent is the legal equivalent of oneself” (*Nedarim* 35b). However, we are crushed at the fact that *Gimmel Tammuz* occurred, and that therefore we do not see him and his leadership openly.

May we merit to see the Rebbe openly leading us again, with the coming of *Moshiach* now!

# Freedom or Slavery

by M. E. Gordon

On Motzei Shabbos Parshas Trumah the Living Torah played an excerpt from a Sichah about the airline mogul, Howard Hughes. It's quite unusual for the Rebbe to mention anyone by name in a sichah, but he found a very relevant message in the life and death of this man. Howard Hughes, one of the wealthiest men in the world, was truly enslaved by his wealth. He did not live a normal life, had no personal freedom, because he was constantly worried that everyone was after his money. He died a lonely and neglected man, because he was suspicious even of his hired staff. The Rebbe connected this to Pesach, the Festival of Freedom. Who is truly free? One who accepts the yoke of Torah.

For most of this Galus, the Jewish Nation was tested with the test of poverty and oppression. Now we are for the most part, experiencing a different challenge- the test of wealth and ease. The American Declaration of Independence, looked upon as one of the foundations of democracy, declares that the Pursuit of Happiness is an inalienable right, together with Life and Liberty. It seems that the pursuit of happiness has become the all encompassing endeavour of this generation. Is this compatible with Torah?? Not if it means pursuing materialism with the expectation that it will bring happiness. It is not what you have that makes you happy; happiness is a state of mind. That is why after attaining the item that was supposed to bring happiness, that euphoria doesn't last long. True simcha is a mitzva, and as it says "בשמחה" 'serve Hashem with joy'. Approach life with a positive and joyous outlook, and Hashem Yisborach's kindness will be apparent. We are so close to Geula we are already getting a tiny taste of the material and spiritual goodness of Moshiach's time.

In Sefer Hatanya, the Alter Rebbe describes the struggle of the Beinoni with his Yetzer Hara. He compares it to two opponents wrestling with each other. When the Yetzer Hara feels that he's about to lose the fight, he gathers the last vestiges of his strength to prevent defeat. Perhaps because the Geula is so immanent, the Satan has pulled out his strongest weapon- the test of beneficence.

The idea is not that we scorn material goods, and live a Spartan life. Chassidus teaches that one should utilise Gashmius to serve Hashem. What then is the test? The test of wealth is in our intention-that we serve Hashem, not ourselves. Our intention, however, affects our action. If we truly are frum, then the pursuit of self-indulgence is not our goal, and we fashion our lives differently to the secular world around us.

Before the very first Galus began, the One Above prepared the keys to Geula. He sent Yosef Hatzaddik to Egypt as a slave, to show future generations how we will overcome and elevate the Galus. Firstly, we find that whatever situation Yosef found himself in, he made the best of it. Wherever he was, he tried his hardest to be 'tzu G-t un tzu lite' (pleasing to both Hashem and his fellow man). It was obvious even to the idol worshipping Egyptians that "ה' עמו" 'Hashem was with him'. Yosef did not depend on possessions or circumstances to affect his mood.

He chose the attitude, and eventually the circumstances changed to suit.

The Chazal tell us that when the Bnei Yisrael were standing before the Yam Suf, carrying the bones of Yosef, the sea split in his merit. The posuk (in Tehillim- from Hallel) says הים ראה וינט 'the sea saw and fled' what did it see? It saw the bier of Yosef, about whom it is written וינס החוצה 'and he fled outside' to escape the seductive advances of Potifar's wife. He could've easily convinced himself that it's not such a terrible sin, he's endangering his life by refusing, and that there were even Heavenly signs that he should listen to her. However he remembered his father, Yaakov, the personification of Truth, and did what he knew was truly right. Perhaps the message to us today, is that we must be as strong as Yosef to withstand the garbage that is being thrown to us in the guise of freedom and pursuit of happiness.

The Satan is pulling every trick he's got to keep us in Galus- he's desperate. So he bombards us on all sides with things we shouldn't look at. And he convinces us that Internet is a necessity and that Internet protection is not. And he tells us how relaxing it is to sit in front of a television at the end of a long hard day. And we foolishly agree, after all, an adult is responsible enough to know where to draw the line, isn't he? But the line keeps moving, because what felt wrong yesterday is not so terrible today, and tomorrow it may even seem virtuous. If we don't create an impassable border for ourselves to protect our eyes from what they shouldn't see, and our mouths from coarse words that we shouldn't say, and then what can we expect of our children? Will they think of us at the moment of temptation, and be inspired to do what's right?

From where can we derive the strength of character to resist the allure of the eye catching images? I found two exemplary role models on two different plane trips. One was an example of 'סור מרע' 'avoid the bad', and the other of 'עשה טוב' 'do good'. The first was on a plane from Israel. A young man with a crocheted kippah was sitting in the bulkhead seat- the large movie screen was playing its drivel less than a metre from his nose, yet his eyes remained glued to a sefer. I observed him for quite a bit, and not once did he look up. The second incident was on a smallish plane from California to New York. A well known California shaliach was on the plane, and as soon as the movie began, he stood up, turned his back to it and started going from aisle to aisle with Tefillin in hand, asking passengers if they were Jewish. To those that said no, he gave his blessing, to those that said yes, he offered Tefillin and/or divrei Torah. To me it seemed that he was especially interested in distracting the yarmulke wearers who were watching the film.

Let us, too, strengthen ourselves, be role models to the younger generation, and together worthy of greeting Moshiach now.

# Thirty Years in Australia: Some Reflections

Miriam Grossbaum

*(Please note: this was written from my own perspective even though I have used the word "we")*

Thirty years ago we left our familiar homes, and our families. We were privileged to have a special Yechidus on the day we left. We left on Chof Ches Shvat. This year, the anniversary of our departure thirty years ago, the day of Chof Ches Shvat, was the same Kvius as that day so many years ago. Like then it was a Sunday and it was Parshas Terumah. Then the Rebbe talked to us about the meaning of the word Terumah. The Rebbe said that Terumah means 'Haromo' to lift up, when you give the Terumah to the Kohen you lift up that which is ordinary and through that, Kedusha is drawn down into the world. This accomplishes the second meaning of Terumah - separation. The grain, whilst remaining physical grain, once it is separated as Terumah, is now different to ordinary grain. On that day, Koach Shvat, we were being given the Koach to lift up another part of the world through separation.

I thought nothing of the distance, I did not really think about what it was like for our parents, or even what it might be like for each of us. We were going on Shlichus. This was the ideal, what we all dreamed of. The Rebbe was sending us. It was exciting and we were excited. It was inspiring and we were inspired. We were young, with our lives in front of us and every new challenge was a part of the fun. We felt honoured to be part of the Rebbe's vision.

'Australia,' friends said, 'but it is so far!' I felt ...Australia, how exotic! Did kangaroos really walk around in the streets? Well we were going to find out. We were going to travel the world. What an adventure. The Rebbe sent us first to Eretz Yisroel. And for two weeks we visited different Moisdois and spoke. We were the Rebbe's new Shluchim to Australia. We felt like celebrities.

We arrived in Melbourne on Purim.... We were amazed by the warmth of our welcome. What do you need? Sheets? Ok, sheets it is! Blankets? No problem! Pots ...whatever we needed we got. On our second day in Melbourne we went to Shul to hear the Farbrengen hook-up; and suddenly the Shul became very quiet. The Rebbe was talking about Australia. The Rebbe was talking about the new Shluchim who had gone to set up the Kollel. Oh my goodness! The Rebbe was talking about US! The Rebbe explained the

difference between the words Kol, Klal, and Kollel. In short the Rebbe explained that 'Kol' refers to the individual who has everything he needs. Klal on the other hand implies a group of people. I felt that I had everything I needed. I was also a part of a group, a Klal. But we had been sent to start the Kollel and Kollel the Rebbe said, is active in its nature rather than passive as is connoted by the word Klal. One can be part of the Klal but not make a contribution. The purpose of the Kollel, the Rebbe explained, was to actively include many others in the learning of 'Torah Achas'.

We were living in a place not too different from America. The language was the same, the standard of living was similar, and living here did not entail any big daily Mesiras Nefesh. There was Kosher food aplenty (yes it was more expensive!), there was good Chinuch and over time Australia became our home.

We worked, we laughed, and we cried as we lived with our fellow Aussie 'islanders.' Our families grew, Boruch Hashem. Life threw us some unexpected curveballs, and still we stayed here. This was the place our children called home.

I remember the first time I went back home to visit. I was so proud to be back in my homeland, so conscious of the American 'vibe' in the air.

But now thirty years later I feel more Australian than American. (I know I still sound like an American, but that depends on who I am talking to!) I get off the plane and wonder why I am in the line for Americans. I come back here and feel Boruch Hashem, so good to be home. Now after so many years I feel a part of the community. As the song goes 'I am, you are, we are Australian.' After thirty years I am proud to be a part of the Klal, the community which is known the world over for its hospitality and warmth.

Today our children leave us as we so easily left our parents, and our families, so many years ago. We commiserate with other Australian parents about how hard it is to be so far away from our kids. But we let them go, we encourage them to go. We want them to learn and to go on Shlichus. We want our children too to be actively involved in the Rebbe's Peulos.

This is part of the vision of a Kollel, according to the Rebbe's interpretation so many years ago; that others are included in our work and benefit from the concept of 'Tofeyas al menas lehat fiach' - taking in for the purpose of giving out, meaning that we are part of those who make a contribution, by learning, by involvement in the various peulahs that are part of Kollel life, we grow in ourselves for the purpose of sharing the knowledge and experience with others.

So really Australia is a great place to be. It is a good place to live and a wonderful place to bring up a young family. So what is the problem? Well now as my children leave and live overseas with their families only now do I realise what the word DISTANCE means. And all of a sudden the exotic, exciting Australia is not so exotic, or exciting. We are used to it now. No more big adventure. And as we get older we wonder how will we keep in touch with our older parents? How will we be there for them in their old age? Our grandchildren - will we know them? Yes technology helps. An American number with a 718 area code provides the impression of closeness. Webcams are used with increasing frequency by us, now grandparents, in an effort to be part of our grandchildren's lives. But the grandkids, they are not so interested in sitting in front of the wonderful webcam. It is quite boring after one minute.

In a Sichah on Parshas Terumah the Rebbe discusses the meaning of the Rashi where it is explained that the Shittim wood needed for the Mishkan (to be built in the Midbar) came from Yaakov who brought these trees to Mitzrayim. Yaakov planted these trees in Mitzrayim and told B'nei Yisroel to take them out with them when they would leave. Why, the Rebbe asks, does Rashi need to explain this? What do we learn from this Midrash?

The Rebbe explains that the cedars were planted in Mitzrayim to give Bnei Yisroel hope for the future. Whilst in Golus Mitzrayim it was easy to despair. But Bnei Yisroel would SEE these cedar trees grow and remember that 'we are going to take these trees out of here to build a Mishkan for Hashem in the Midbar'. The Rebbe explains that Yaakov Avinu was the Nosi who planted these cedars to give the people hope. I thought about this. The Rebbe, our Nosi, sent us here to the far shores of Australia. Like

in Mitzrayim, the Golus is long. It feels like nothing will change. We are far away from our families and it is hard. The Rebbe sent us far away from the centre. He planted us here and he said 'go there, make roots and grow there. Grow tall and strong become cedars in the community. Make a contribution, and know that when Moshiach comes you will leave the place that has become your home and join the rest of Bnei Yisroel in Eretz Yisroel.'

We could also see the Midrash about the cedars as being about the journey of the Neshama. The Neshama comes from Shamayim. It does not want to leave its home. But Hashem says to fulfil your purpose you must go far away. You must get comfortable in a distant place, the world. Plant yourself in this world, set down roots, and make a Dirah Btachtomim in the place where I send you. The danger for the Neshama of course is that it can become too comfortable and forget its mission and purpose. It could become overwhelmed by the Golus as many in Mitzrayim did.

**We yearn for our parents, our families, our children, our grandchildren. By virtue of our distance from the rest of the Jewish world we can never feel too complacent. Perhaps this is a message to us all. That as good as it is to live here, we are far from home.**

But here in Australia we don't forget our mission. We always feel the DISTANCE. We yearn for our parents, our families, our children, our grandchildren. By virtue of our distance from the rest of the Jewish world we can never feel too complacent. Perhaps this is a message to us all. That as good as it is to live here, we are far from home. We can make use of this sense of distance and the yearning it evokes to

spur us to more active work in the truest sense of the meaning of the word Kollel- to include others.

So on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of our arrival in Australia I want to thank the community for the love and support you have shown myself and my family throughout the years. My family may be far but those who have become (like) my family are here.

We are all getting older. We have to be the cedar trees and transmit strong Yiddishe and Chassidishe values to our children. And when they want to leave to further their growth in Yiddishkeit, we need to say, 'For Gezunt!...go in good health. But maybe, just maybe, they will come back., or their children will come back. So that they too will have an opportunity to give to the community that gave to them. In this way the tradition of Kollel- to actively contribute and include others will continue. This will surely make the world ready for us (the cedar trees) to be ransplanted in Artzeinu Hakdosha Bimheira Biyameinu Amen!

## Jewish Women and the Path to Redemption by Mrs. Leah Kohn

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These two classes focus on the generation of women who live during the enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt, and who subsequently leave with the Exodus, making their way through the desert towards Mount Sinai and, ultimately, to the land of Israel.

These women, as a group, exhibit an inner strength and burning desire to do the right thing. For them, every good deed remains a privilege, a source of joy and a wellspring of personal fulfilment - this in spite of the duress of their exile and the challenges of life in the desert. The women of Egypt and the Exodus never settle for what is acceptable, but instead insist upon standards of excellence that ultimately help steer the fledgling Jewish nation in the proper direction.

These women wear their good deeds like, "... an adornment of grace for your head and a chain for your neck" (Proverbs 1:9). To elaborate: Midrash Rabbah (6:3) on Deuteronomy, comments that wherever one goes good deeds are there, like a necklace on the neck. A precious necklace may be expensive and heavy, but never burdensome. Accordingly, the women of the desert generation are never burdened by their effort to do the right thing, but instead cherish the opportunity to do so.

A parable from the Magid of Dubno lends further insight into the comparison between the precious stones that might be on a necklace and the precious discharge of good deeds. (The Magid of Dubno was an eighteenth century contemporary of the Vilna Gaon. The "magid," throughout Jewish history, was someone assigned to inspire a community and guide their spiritual growth by indicating their flaws - often through storytelling and parable).

The Magid of Dubno tells of a merchant who brings his precious stones to market and, following the day's business, hires a labourer to carry the stones back to his hotel. While awaiting delivery, the merchant hears someone struggling up the stairs - stopping, breathing heavily and complaining, as though under a great load. The labourer finally arrives at the top of the stairs with a package. The merchant tells him, "this must not be my box, since precious stones are not heavy."

In the spirit of the Magid's parable describing the "lightness" of good deeds - even those that require effort - the women of the desert see in each obstacle an opportunity to develop the "precious" load of their relationship to God. They never look for a way out of this relationship, but rather a way in. As a result of their closeness to the ultimate Source of right and wrong, these women gain an intellectual and spiritual

clarity that enables them to rectify certain shortcomings within the Jewish nation that threaten to erode its connection to God.

The Torah portion of Pikudei, in the Book of Exodus, provides a starting point for an analysis of just how the women of Egypt direct the development of their generation. Pikudei details the amounts of gold, silver and copper that the Jewish people donate for construction of the Tabernacle (Hebrew: "Mishkan") in the desert. Moses prepares an account of these donations. His list excludes one item: the copper Basin (Hebrew: Kiyor) that the Kohanim would use to wash their hands and feet, before performing their rituals. The Torah portion of Vayakhel (38:8) relates that the Kiyor is not crafted from the initial pool of copper donations, but instead is made from the copper, "...mirrors of the legions massed at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting." Rashi states that the term, "legions" (in the above verse) refers to the Jewish women who mass with their donations of mirrors at Moses' Tent. And the Midrash connects the word "legions" to the fact that the use of these mirrors by the women leads ultimately to the production of "legions" of Jewish children.

To explain: during their enslavement in Egypt, Pharaoh prevents his Jewish labourers from sleeping at home, and forces them instead to sleep in the fields or on site where they work during the day. Ostensibly, Pharaoh intends through these practices to prevent his labourers from wasting time at home with family, or from being late to work. In fact, however, his purpose is to forestall Jewish procreation.

Midrash Tanchuma states how the Jewish women respond to Pharaoh's decree: The women find that God has provided small fish in the basins of water they draw from the Nile. They sell a percentage of the fish - buying wine with their proceeds - and cook what remains. With fish and wine they greet their husbands in the fields.

Rashi sums up the above mentioned midrash:

"When their husbands would be exhausted because of the racking labour imposed upon them by the Egyptians, [the women] would go and bring them food and drink, and feed them. Then they would take the mirrors, and each one would view herself with her husband in the mirror, and entice him with words, saying, 'I am handsomer than you.' By these means, they would bring their husbands to desire, and would have relations with them, and conceive and give birth

there..." (Rashi's commentary to Exodus 38:8, as translated Artscroll Sapirstein Edition of the Book of Exodus).

Rashi's commentary includes an explanation of how Moses, upon receiving the mirrors from the women, does not want to accept such objects of vanity for the Kiyvor. God, however, tells Moses to use them:

"The Holy One, Blessed is He, said: Accept them, because these are the dearest to Me of all, for by means of them, the women established many legions of offspring in Egypt" (Ibid.).

Since the mirrors have been employed with such purity of purpose, God tells Moses to use them for the Kiyvor, itself a vessel of ritual purification. Through the extraordinary effort the mirrors represent, the women of an enslaved generation under threat of extinction merit God's assistance in sustaining Jewish continuity. Their dedication is itself commemorated in the Kiyvor.

The women of Egypt face a seemingly hopeless situation. Pharaoh has obstructed normal family life and has decreed that every newborn male be thrown into the Nile. A logical response to this crisis might have been for the Jewish people to stop even trying to have children. This is in fact the reason behind why Amram, the father of Moses, separates from his wife, Yocheved. That their daughter Miriam brings her parents back together bespeaks her deep commitment to reviving family life.

In the same way, the women of Egypt pursue having children with their husbands, who are exhausted from long hard labour. Their faith in a better tomorrow initiates the redemption of an entire people. Behind their optimism lies a commitment to do their part and to leave the rest in God's hands. Through this approach, the women of Egypt remain empowered by a sense of purpose, inspired with the courage to endure hardship and unburdened about whether their efforts will yield results. Our women know who they are and what they have to do. Beyond their own human effort, their trust in God extends the path they walk, in a far-reaching direction...

(Second in a two-part series examining the women of the Exodus and their extraordinary clarity, commitment and enthusiasm). These women forge a path of righteousness that continues from Egypt to this day towards the ultimate redemption. Our essay will focus on their good deeds, and on how these good deeds relate to the concept of redemption.

In the incident of the golden calf (Exodus 32:1-6) the women of the desert generation distinguish themselves as a group and, in so doing, redirect the misguided actions of their husbands. When forty days after receiving the Torah, the men ask their wives to contribute jewellery for creation of a golden calf idol, the women refuse on grounds that the

Torah prohibits idol worship (Pirkei D' Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 45). They break ranks with their spouses - and commit to what they know is right in God's eyes. In response God rewards Jewish women of all time with the monthly holiday of Rosh Chodesh.

Later, when the Jewish people are about to enter Israel, the women again clarify a basic misperception on the part of their husbands. The men in this generation are afraid that the distractions of work and everyday life in the new land will erode their close relationship with God. The women, by contrast, remain convinced that this spiritual bond will persist since God, Himself has sanctioned their move to Israel. Ultimately, God brings untimely death upon the men, while he brings the women into the land.

A third example of how the women of the Exodus correct the mistakes of their husbands is in the story of a man by the name of Korach (Numbers, Chapter 16). Korach and several hundred followers rebel against the leadership of Moses in the desert. One of Korach's supporters is On, son of Peleth, whose wife takes action to prevent her husband from joining Korach's growing ranks.

As Korach's group moves from house to house enlisting support, the wife of On serves her husband wine until he falls asleep. She then stations herself at the door of their home - head uncovered and hair exposed. Jewish law forbids a married woman to venture outside without covering her hair and, as such, On's wife, sitting outside hair uncovered, renders her entire home - and husband - unapproachable.

Numbers (16:32) relates that Korach and his followers ultimately lose their lives ("The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all the people who were with Korach...). On, son of Peleth is spared this fate in spite of his inclination to join Korach, thanks to his wife.

Beyond correcting certain misjudgements their husbands make, the women of the Exodus themselves act with clarity and enthusiasm. One example of their conduct is the way in which they contribute to construction of the Sanctuary, God's dwelling place in the desert.

The Sanctuary travels with the Jewish people as they make their way through the wilderness. At each stop along the way it is re-assembled, and then dismantled when the nation moves on. The structure is both opulent and portable - with walls, doors and roof of tapestry and skins, and vessels from precious metals. The Jews, themselves, donate most of the materials for the Sanctuary. In general, when one member of a household makes a donation, the gift is considered to be on behalf of the entire family. In the case of the Sanctuary, however, the women, as a group, express their enthusiasm by making an independent contribution:

"The men came along with the women; everyone who is generous of heart brought bracelets, nose-rings, rings, body ornaments - all sorts of gold ornaments..." (Exodus 35:22).

Ramban and Ohr HaChaim elucidate the phrase, "the men came along with the women," by explaining that the women offer their own jewellery to the Sanctuary and the husbands accompany them in a show of support. The commentators observe that the Torah pays tribute to the women, by relating this fact.

Since the Sanctuary, its vessels and the priestly garments are things of great beauty and public exposure, the project is an opportunity not only for generosity of a high order, but also for the personal and civic distinction that often results from funding a major edifice or monument. In a move that suggests a desire to avoid this specific type of attention, a group of women make a gift that, while important as any, is decidedly understated and hidden from public view.

This group fabricates from goat hair the innermost layer of the Sanctuary roof (Hebrew: "yeriot") - a layer entirely hidden from public view. As an internal source of support sustaining an entire edifice, the "yeriot" reflects the modesty, strength and wisdom of the Jewish woman. Elaborating on this theme, the 19th c. commentator, R' Samson Raphael Hirsch explains how the layer of goat hair is a metaphor for the contribution of the Jewish woman to her people:

"This [layer of goat hair], after all, was the essential part which held the whole together, was the real [tent] and the making of a [tent] is where the quintessence of womanhood is concentrated, so that in this they displayed both careful thought and their sense of true womanhood, their [wisdom]" (The Hirsch Pentateuch).

In the hands of the women, even the fabrication of the yeriot becomes an expression of their eagerness to build the Sanctuary. Jewish law mandates that, when engaged in building the Sanctuary or something in it, an individual must not be in a state of ritual impurity. Any number of situations may cause this type of impurity. These include contact with a dead body; being under the same roof with a dead body; touching certain animals; and certain bodily discharges.

In their desire to work without interruption, the women of the Sanctuary contrive a way to weave the yeriot regardless of whether or not they are in an impure state. To explain: according to Torah, if any aspect of a living thing remains attached to its life source, it remains pure even if touched by an impure person.

As regards the yeriot, therefore, if the goat hair as it is woven remains attached to the goat, the weaver may, herself, be in a state of impurity without compromising the purity of the yeriot. The women come up with a way to comb and spin and even weave the fleece while it is attached to the goat. Their method - which requires skilled craftsmanship, infinite patience and a high level of organization - enables the women to work full time on the yeriot, beyond a point at which even Jewish law would provide reason for them to stop.

While the women of the Sanctuary are clearly impressive, why are their good deeds connected specifically to the idea of redemption?

The Rambam states that at redemption the world will appear much as it does now, but with full recognition of God and absence of impediments to His service. One who awaits redemption, therefore, would be aware of current obstacles and eager to overcome them. Accordingly, the redemption from Egypt takes place in the merit of the women of that generation who - undeterred by slavery and hardship - find routes to Jewish continuity, where others may have long called-off their search. The women continue to express this commitment even after the redemption from Egypt, through the distinct ways they contribute to the Sanctuary and to the general spiritual clarity of the Jewish people.

Today's Jewish woman faces her own impediments to clarity, to awareness of and connection to her heritage and to closeness with God. Nonetheless she, like the women of the Exodus has the potential to redeem both herself and the Jewish nation.

On a spiritual level she need only believe in a better future.

On a practical level she need only never give up.





Printed from Chabad.org From the series Through the Eyes of a Woman

## Life's Journeys

Nechoma Greisman, based on the teaching of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory.

Nechoma Greisman was an educator, counsellor and speaker who reached thousands of women through her classes and books. Tragically, at the age of 39, hours after giving birth to her tenth child, Nechoma was taken from this world, leaving an enormous and irreplaceable loss to Jews worldwide.

It took 42 stages for the Jews to get from Egypt to Israel, over a period of 40 years. Each stage of the journey was determined exclusively by Divine decree--the cloud which hovered over the Jewish camp when they were required to relocate, began to move on. The entire camp then packed up their belongings and moved on, following the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Whenever the cloud was stationary they were stationary, and when the cloud moved again they followed the cloud. This is what happened through 42 stops and starts to get to Israel.

The Torah states, "These are the journeys of the Children of Israel, who went forth from the land of Egypt..." (Numbers 33:1). The question is asked why the verse states, "These are the *journeys*..." in the plural. They weren't going out of Egypt on all of the 42 journeys. Surely after the first stage of the journey, after they had arrived in Ramses, they were no longer leaving Egypt but Ramses, and so on? After the first stage of the journey, weren't the other 41 stages going to Israel, but not from Egypt? The simple answer is that until a person arrives at the ultimate goal, Israel (in a spiritual sense as well as a physical one), he is always in the process of leaving Egypt.

However, the verse has an even deeper meaning -- it refers to the journeys through life of every individual. Moreover, every person's life may be analyzed in terms of these 42 journeys of the Jews from Egypt to Israel. In other words, it is possible to identify each person's journey through life with the 42 stages of the journey described in the Torah.

The word "Egypt" in Hebrew, *Mitzrayim*, can also be derived from the word meaning "constricted" or "limiting place." In Hebrew, a *metzar* is a strait. It comes from the word *tzar*, "narrow."

Every person, in his or her life has situations which the Torah describes as a constricted, a limitation and constriction, where the person feels that something is obstructing him from behaving in the right way. In order to get out of this constricted area, a person has to exert energy. And when he manages to escape the constriction, it is as if he has left that place and gone to a place that is a wide-open place. When you're finished with that problem you breathe a sigh of relief: "I've gotten out of that tight spot."

The verse therefore means that the life of the Jew, which begins at his birth, is a succession of tight spots followed by relief and expansion. It means that at every given time in our life, in every given stage in our life, we are given certain obstacles and certain tests. These are the tight spots. Of course, these situations are not meant to stifle us or to make us surrender. On the contrary, through overcoming these difficulties, we become strengthened and our awareness of G-d is expanded.

This can be compared to an army. When you go for basic training they make you run ten miles, they make you carry packs, they make you go through difficult situations. Why? Because only after you have undergone the difficulties they put you through do you become a good soldier. If you had never done that you wouldn't even have known you were capable of doing it. When you undergo difficulties, you build up your strength. Just as this is true of physical situations, it is true also in spiritual situations.

In this context, "Egypt" doesn't mean a geographical land, a country called Egypt; rather, it refers to the stages of constriction and development that we all go through on our journey to spiritual perfection -- signified by the Land of Israel.

This is life. What may be difficult at the age of five is a joke at the age of ten, and what's difficult at the age of ten is a joke at the age of twenty. A person that just got married is struggling with the first year of marriage and getting used to marriage. That's a big struggle. But when people are married for 25 years and are marrying off their children there's a whole different set of difficulties and problems. Then there are the problems that come with older age and being grandparents. Every stage in life has its own qualities. G-d is constantly placing us in new situations, and we have to deal with them and grow through them. Then we go to another stage and then we come to a third stage and a fourth stage. This is a succession of constrictions.

When does it end? It ends at the end of a person's life. In other words, the beginning is Egypt -- the birth; coming into Israel at the end of the forty-second journey is when a person completes his journey in this world and comes into the land of the World to Come. Until then a person's life is a series of journeys, each one being a strait in comparison to the one after it, and the tests change and get more difficult as you pass through them. This is on an individual basis.

This also happens every single day. There are, of course, different levels. The nation goes on its journeys, the individual on his. On any given day, the person goes through these journeys from the time he wakes up until he goes to sleep at night.

This condition of being on a continual journey can have two possible reactions. One reaction is that the person can become very arrogant and he can say, "Look how far I've come. I remember years ago I was on this level and now I've really struggled and worked hard and now I'm on a much higher level." To the arrogant person, the Torah says, "Don't be so arrogant. You may have gone through

22 journeys. That's fantastic, but you still have another 20 to go. As long as you are alive you can never become complacent about the number of journeys you've traveled."

Then there's a person who can get depressed. He's saying, "My goodness, this is terrible. I'm on such a low level. How can I ever get to the level of this other person? Look at her. She's so much higher than me and what's the point of even starting?" For that person there is also a word of encouragement. Depending on who you are and on how you're relating, the Torah has a reaction for each situation. The reaction to that person is: Do not despair because G-d never intended that a person go from Egypt to Israel in one move. The Torah told us from the very beginning that it's going to take 42 small journeys. No one should ever get depressed, because as long as you're involved in the journeying, as long as you didn't give up and stop running, you're still in the race. G-d is the One who can read

everybody's heart. He is the One that gives points. You cannot ever compare yourself to anybody else because you don't know where the other person started from and what their handicaps are. The important thing is to know that you have to keep going. Just keep going from one journey to the next and let G-d do the grading."

To a person who says despairingly, "Look how far I have to go," the Torah says, "Do not give up. After all, look how far you've come. A little further; a little more effort, and you will reach the next stage. Don't take on the whole journey at once. Go one step, one stage at a time. Set your goals on the next stop."

Eventually, all of us will get to the Land of Israel. Each of us will experience our own individual redemption, and the Jewish people as a whole will also achieve redemption. May it be speedily in our days!

**Every stage in life has its own qualities. G-d is constantly placing us in new situations, and we have to deal with them and grow through them. Then we go to another stage and then we come to a third stage and a fourth stage. This is a succession of constrictions.**



# In Order to be a Believer, One Must First be Trustworthy

Rabbi Yissocher Frand Torah.org

The first pasuk [verse] of Parshas Vayikra reads: "He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying (leimor)" [Vayikra 1:1] The Gemara teaches that the word leimor means to say over to others. The Talmud derives from this wording construction that one is not allowed to share information he is told in private unless the party who related the information specifically authorizes its further transmission. [Yoma 4b] This is known as the prohibition of Gilui Sod – revealing a secret.

In the secular world, there is a concept of lawyer-client privilege and doctor-patient confidentiality, where a lawyer or doctor is not permitted to reveal information provided to him in confidence. In Halacha, this requirement has a much broader scope and basically applies to every Jew.

The Yalkut in Parshas Emor states that in the merit of 4 things, the Jews merited to be redeemed from Egypt. The first 3 are well known: They did not change their names, their language, or their mode of dress. The fourth source of merit enumerated by the Midrash is that they did not speak lashon hara [gossip; slander]. As proof that they did not speak lashon hara in Egypt, the Midrash cites the fact that they were able to keep a secret. The secret that they kept refers to G-d's original message to Moshe in Parshas Shmos: "I am going to take the Jews out of Egypt and before I take them out of Egypt they are going to go to their neighbours and ask for their gold and silver vessels." The Jews heard this prophecy before any of the plagues began and no one let it get out to the Egyptians that before the Jews left they would strip the Egypt of all gold and silver! The Egyptians were unsuspecting because no Jew revealed this secret.

The question that must be asked regarding this Midrash is – what is the connection between keeping a secret and not speaking lashon hara? The answer to this question is actually an explicit pasuk in Proverbs: "One who goes along slandering reveals secrets" [Mishlei 11:13]. The root problem of one who slanders is that he cannot be trusted. If a person shares it with others that which he is told in confidence, there is a fundamental problem, besides the aspect of slander (rechilus). The person's word is not a word. He cannot be trusted.

The Midrash is teaching that the reason why they were redeemed from Egypt was, among other reasons, because they were able to keep secrets. What is so great about being able to keep secrets?

Prior to answering this question, consider another incident at the beginning of Sefer Shmos. When Moshe Rabbeinu was still in Egypt, he saw an Egyptian beating up a Jew.

He killed the Egyptian.

The next day, he saw two Jews fighting. He said to the bully, "Wicked one, why are you hitting your fellow man?" The bully turned on Moshe and said "Aha, do you plan to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?" Moshe's reaction was "Behold, the matter is known" (achen nodah ha'davar) [Shmos 2:11-14].

Rashi explains that the words achen nodah ha'davar do not merely mean "behold the secret is out". Rather, the words mean: "behold, now I understand (i.e. – the matter is known to ME) what Israel's sin was that caused them to suffer as slaves. In other words, Moshe now understood why the redemption has not yet arrived. It was because they couldn't keep a secret.

So we see from the very beginning of the story in Shmos that getting out of Egypt was somehow dependant on the ability of Israel to keep secrets. So again we must ask, what is so important about the ability to keep secrets?

The answer is that leaving Egypt was all about believing and keeping the Word of G-d. The whole purpose of leaving Egypt was to accept the Torah and to believe in the Almighty. When the Master of the Universe tells us to do certain things, we must believe that these things must be done!

Rav Matisyahu Solomon says that one cannot be a believer (ma'amin) unless he is first faithful (ne'eman). One cannot believe in the Word of G-d unless he himself is a person who values a word. If it means nothing when I say something, then when G-d says something, why should I believe it? The more trustworthy a person is and the more meticulous he is about his own words, the more he will be faithful to the Word of the Almighty.

At the beginning of the story of the Exodus, Moshe said: "I know why they are still here – because they can't keep a secret." So what changed to indicate that they were worthy of redemption? When Moshe returned to Egypt many years later, the Almighty trusted them with a secret that they did not reveal. Since they were able to keep that secret, G-d knew that now they could be trusted and be trustworthy and be deserving of redemption.

Since they met their commitment not to reveal the secret of taking the gold and silver out of Egypt, they could be trusted that when G-d told them "I am the L-rd your G-d", His word would mean something to them as well.

Every Yom Tov has its own mitzvah. The mitzvah of the night of Pesach is to become ma'aminim [believers]. However, in order to become ma'minin, we must first become ne'emanim [trustworthy].

# The “Bones” of Yosef as a Metaphor for Unity

Rabbi Abraham Jeger.

The pasuk in Tehillim (114:3) states, “Hayom Ro’oh Vayonos” -- the sea saw and it fled. This alludes to the miracle of Krias Yam Suf, the splitting of the Red Sea, which took place on the seventh day of the first Pesach during which Klal Yisroel left the servitude of Egypt. The Midrash on Tehillim (Shochar Tov, 114:3) addresses the issue of what the sea “saw” that triggered it to split. One of its well-known responses is “Ro’oh arono shel Yosef yored L’Yam” -- it saw the casket of Yosef entering the sea. The Midrash continues, “Omar HaKodosh Baruch Hu, Yanus Mipnei Hanos” -- it should flee because of the one who fled -- namely, Yosef, who fled from the overtures of Potiphar’s wife, as it is stated (Bereishis 39:12), “Vayonas Vayetze Hachutza”—he fled and went outside. A similar statement linking the splitting of the sea to Yosef’s casket appears in the Midrash Tanchuma, Sefer Bereishis (Parshas Vayeshev, 9).

This is taken to mean that in the merit of Yosef, Am Yisroel earned the privilege to have the sea part for them, and thereby yield their final salvation from the approaching Egyptians. However, it remains unclear as to precisely how Yosef’s merits served as a catalyst for the sea to split. Furthermore, the expression that the sea split in response to the sight of Yosef’s casket requires explanation; it should have stated that it saw his “image” or “face” or “soul” or his “merits.” In fact, another Midrashic discourse (Bereishis Rabbah, 84:5) simply states, “Hayom lo nikra ela b’zechuso shel Yosef “ -- that the Red Sea split in the merit of Yosef.

I would like to suggest there must be some clue in reference to the “casket” of Yosef, which implies the linkage to triggering the splitting of the sea. We know that the casket contained the remains of his bones, as it is stated in the beginning of Parshas Beshalach (Shmos 13:19), “Vayikach Moshe es atzmos Yosef imo” -- that Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him when he left Egypt, as Yosef had commanded. Interestingly enough, a textual variation of the Midrash on Tehillim appears in Midrash Rabba (Bereishis 87:8) which states, “B’zchus atzmosov shel Yosef nikra hayom leYisroel” -- in the merit of Yosef’s bones the sea split for the Jews, as it is stated (Tehillim 114:3) “Hayom Ro’oh Vayonos” -- the sea saw and it parted. Thus, the word “atzmosov” -- his bones -- must reflect the “essence” of Yosef, and consequently will shed light on the underlying basis for the willingness of the sea to split for klal Yisroel.

Let us examine what transpired at the point of klal Yisroel’s encampment by the Red Sea. There is a famous Midrash (cited in Yalkut Shimoni, Shmos 234) that Satan complained to Hashem as to why He was performing miracles for the Jews since they too were idol worshipers. Upon hearing this

the Angel of the Sea sought to drown the Jews and not permit the sea to split. This is hinted at in the Verse (Shmos 14:29), “V’hamayim lohem Chomah” -- that the water transformed into a wall. The word “Chomah” is written without the letter “vov”, which therefore also spells “Cheimah” --meaning anger. Rav Meir Simchah of D’vinsk ( 5605-5686), in his Sefer Meshech Hochmah (Shmos, 14:29) raised the question as to why this prosecution statement was not voiced by Satan earlier, while the Jews were still in Egypt, during which the Egyptians were smitten with the ten plagues and the Jews escaped all harm. His response is as follows.

## Communal Versus Individual Transgressions

There are two broad categories of commandments with differential classes of punishments -- depending on whether they are transgressed individually or collectively. Sins between man and Hashem -- such as idolatry, forbidden unions, desecration of Shabbos -- when performed intentionally by an individual -- require various capital punishments as atonement. On the other hand, sins of an interpersonal nature -- such as “machloikes” (strife), “lashon haro”(slandering), and theft -- when performed by an individual -- do not even require “malkos” (court-ordered 39 lashes). For example, in the case of theft one can return the item, and seek personal forgiveness from his fellow man.

In the case of collective transgressions, precisely the reverse is true. That is, large-scale interpersonal transgressions on the communal level elicit capital punishments, while those between man and Hashem may be forgiven. The rationale is that when manifesting communal unity, there exists a divine protective power for the “tzibur” (collective). With large-scale interpersonal transgressions, the unity of the collective is violated -- resulting in each person being judged as a “yochid” (individual) for his sins in the man-Hashem domain, and is subject to their commensurate individual punishments.

Rav Meir Simchah supports his thesis based on evidence from the following four (4) sources:

1. Our sages in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Pe’ah 1:1) point out that in the generation of King David, although they were collectively pious in the domain of man-Hashem commandments, their soldiers were more likely to die in wars. This is attributed to the prevalence of “dilturin” -- slanderers and informants. In other words, they were “factionalized” and manifested interpersonal strife. This was in contrast to the generation of King Achav, which was prevalent with idol worshipers, but was consistently

victorious in wars, without suffering deaths. Their merit was that they were characterized by unity. In the absence of unity, Am Yisroel loses the protective power of the divine presence that is afforded to the collective.

2. Another manifestation of this principle is evident in the Talmud Bavli (Yumah 9b). Our sages contrast the differing triggers for the destruction of the two Temples. During the first Temple era, idolatry and illicit relations were the dominant sins – in contrast to the second Temple era where “sinas chinom” (baseless hatred) was prevalent. Thus, the first diaspora only lasted 70 years and the Temple was rebuilt. In contrast, we are still suffering for approximately 2000 years following destruction of the second Temple. Thus, the consequences of communal interpersonal transgressions are more severe than communal violations of man-Hashem commandments.

3. The destruction of humanity through the Great Flood in the generation of Noach is likewise compatible with this perspective. Rav Yochanan points out in Talmud Bavli (Sanhedrin 108a), that while this generation transgressed all commandments (including idolatry and illicit relations) their sentence for annihilation was only sealed due to large-scale theft. This is explicit in the verse (Genesis 6:13), “Hashem said to Noah, the end of all flesh has come before Me, for the land is abundant with theft, and I am about to destroy them.” (See Rashi on the verse who refers to multiple sources for this analysis.)

4. Finally, this principle was also operative with the generation of the desert, which left Egypt. For the sin of the golden calf (idolatry), klal Yisroel was forgiven by Hashem (Shmos 32:14). However, the sin of the spies, which was characterized by slander toward Eretz Yisroel, resulted in factionalisation. Since it encompassed a large-scale interpersonal transgression, the decree was meted out for all 600,000 men (between ages 20-60) that they must die over a 40-year period in the desert (Bamidbar 14:35).

While in Egypt, although our forefathers may have been idol worshippers and ignored the commandment of circumcision (with the exception of the tribe of Levi) – both of which carry a death penalty – due to their communal unity, they can be forgiven for these transgressions. Thus, the Satan had no argument for prosecution. However, at the foot of the red sea, our Sages tell us (Mechilta, Shmos 14:13) that klal Yisroel split into four factions: one sought to return to Egypt, a second proposed to fight the Egyptians, a third endorsed a “scream” strategy, while another advocated for jumping into the sea. Once they lost their unity, Satan argued that they must be judged as “individuals” – and individuals merit the death penalty for idolatry.

### The “Bones” of Yosef as a Metaphor for Unity

As stated at the outset, the sea ultimately split upon seeing “atzmos Yosef” – Yosef’s bones. I would like to suggest that the bones of Yosef connote a sense of “achdus” -- unity -- which countered the challenge of Satan that was triggered by his perception of Klal Yisroel’s factionalisation. In other words, I hope to demonstrate that Yosef’s bones -- as a metaphor of unity -- served as an antidote to the “pirud” -- factionalisation -- which was the source of our vulnerability at the base of the Red Sea.

How so? Let us reflect on the initial self-reference that Yosef makes to “atzmosei” – my bones. This occurred immediately prior to his death (Bereishis 50:25), whereby Yosef commanded his brothers (who outlived him) that upon their redemption from Egypt and ascent to Eretz Yisroel, “Ve’haalisem es atzmosey mizeh” – and you shall take my bones with you from here (i.e., Egypt) to Eretz Yisroel.

Interestingly enough, the same phrase appears in Parshas Beshalach (Shmos, 13:19), “Vayikach Moshe es atzmosey Yosef imo” – Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him – “ki hashbea hishbia es bnei Yisroel le’emor” – for he had adjured the Children of Israel, saying – “pakod yifkod Elokim eschem, ve’haalisem es atzmosey mizeh itchem” -- that Hashem will remember you, and you shall take my bones with you from here with you. Rashi on this verse cites an analysis of the Sages (in Mechiltah) that the word “itchem” (with you) is superfluous. This implies that Yosef commanded his brothers to take his bones along with theirs – meaning, the bones of the brothers, which indeed their descendants had obeyed. Thus, while “itchem” literally means “with you” – it can homiletically mean “with yours.”

Rav Moshe Wolfson, Sh'lita (the long-standing Mashgiach of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath) in his Sefer Emunas Itecha (Bereishis, Parshas Vayechi) posed several questions regarding Yosef’s commandment to his brothers:

A. First, why did he command his brothers vs. his own sons, which is the normative procedure pertaining to last wills?

B. Why did he also insist on the transmission of his brothers’ bones for burial in Eretz Yisroel? If this was their wish, it would be incumbent on them directly to command their own children to implement such will.

C. Furthermore, when Yaakov asked Yosef not to bury him in Egypt, and transport him to Eretz Yisroel, Yosef responded by saying “Anochi e’eseh ki’devorecha” (Bereishis 47:30) – I shall do as you say. The Midrash (cited in Daas Zekenim Mi’baalei Ha’tosfos on the verse) interprets Yosef’s response to his father to mean that, “Just as you are commanding me, likewise I will command my brothers, prior to my death, to transport me from here” (which he had indeed done, as noted above). The question arises regarding the propriety of such a response. At a time when Yaakov is

beckoning Yosef regarding his insistence on being buried in Eretz Yisroel, Yosef turns the conversation to his own futuristic needs – without an apparent direct acquiescence to Yaakov’s request.

D. Finally, why did Yosef refer to himself as “my bones” ? He should have said, “and you shall transport me” – referring to the totality of his remains. Surely his flesh remained intact as he was labelled “Yosef ha’tzadik” (the pious), and was no worse than the sage Rabbi Elezar son of Rabbi Shimon, who said of himself that his flesh shall remain for eternity (Talmud Bavli, Bava Metziah, 84b). (Parenthetically, Rav Tzadok haKohen, in his Sefer Pri Tzadik (Bereishis, Vayechi 16) raises this question as well, and adds that if Yosef was not confident about the preservation of his flesh, how was he certain about the survival of his bones?)

Rav Wolfson answers all four questions based on a famous Talmudic dictum (Niddah 31a) that there are three partners in the development of humans: Hashem, who infuses the soul; the father, who contributes the bones; and, the mother who is the source of flesh. Thus, Yosef, in his utmost respect for his father’s wishes and concern for their optimal fulfilment, responded by referring to his personal insistence that his own “bones” – which are a remnant of Yaakov’s essence – be ultimately buried in Eretz Yisroel. His focus was, therefore, exclusively on the bones vs. the flesh. It explains why Yosef was concerned about his brothers’ bones also being buried in Eretz Yisroel –since they represent direct remnants of Yaakov. He did not want to leave it to their discretion to command their own children – since Yosef was the one directly commanded by Yaakov, his dedication to fulfil his father’s wish prevailed upon him. He directed the commandment to his brothers because of their greater obligation to respect their father , relative to Yosef’s children who are also required to respect their grandfather. The requirement for respecting a father supersedes respect for a grandfather (Rashi, Bereishis 46:1).

It follows from this analysis that Yosef’s concern with “bones” - - his own and those of his brothers – in the interest of respecting Yaakov and perpetuating his commandment to the maximum, represents the ultimate in “achdus” – unity. That is why our sages specifically made reference to Yosef’s bones , or his casket which contained his bones, as embodying the essence of Yosef, and which served as an impetus for the sea to split. This was the symbol of unity, and the necessary antidote to the factionalistic which characterized klal Yisroel by the Red Sea.

This notion of Yosef as an embodiment of unity is further supported from a statement in the Talmud Bavli ( Shabbos 139a), “Miyom she’piresh Yosef me’echav lo ta’am taam yayin” – from the day that Yosef separated from his brothers he did not taste a drop of wine. The Ben Ish Chai (Rav Chaim Yosef of Bagdad, 5594- 5669), in his Sefer Ben Yehoyadah, offered several reasons for Yosef’s avoidance of wine. In an intriguing analysis, he suggests that Yosef was constantly engaged in prayer – beseeching Hashem not to harm his brothers for their sin of selling him into servitude. Since one who is inebriate is not permitted to pray, and since his prayer was constant – “min hayom ve’halayla” (from day and night) he practiced total abstinence from wine.

Thus, Yosef’s prayers were not focused on his own predicament – but rather on the welfare of his brothers.

This represents an extraordinary manifestation of unity on the part of Yosef.



# Passover is Over: Now What?

Baila Olidort LUBAVITCH HEADQUARTERS, NY -- (April 24, 2006)

While Jewish rye and bagels replace matzah after the week-long Passover ban on leavened bread, social scientists might want to chew on a fifth question: What is it about this particular holiday that makes otherwise unaffiliated and non-observant Jews care—enough to go out of their way to honour the holiday?

They often don't know anything about kosher or Shabbat, but when Passover comes around, something kicks in, and whether they call themselves agnostics or secular or just plain uninvolved, many find themselves gravitating to other Jews, to a Seder table, and often even to the strictures of a weeklong diet that forbids consumption of pizza and pasta.

It's a peculiarity that Chabad-Lubavitch representatives around the world have come to recognize, and, in the interests of Jewish education and Jewish continuity, to capitalize on in a big way. Not only in terms of the numbers—though it wouldn't be hard to extrapolate a figure of more than half a million Jews who were at a Chabad Seder on April 12th—the impact itself is substantive. Whether it's the 120 Jews in Guatemala City who sang the Dayenu with Rabbi Sholom Pelman, the 600 in Rostov-on-Don with Rabbi Chaim Friedman, or the 2,000-plus in Nepal with Rabbi Chezy Lifshitz, the effect of a spirited, content-rich Seder experience with Chabad has a long half-life that opens a path for many who make their way, gingerly perhaps, but steadily, towards becoming more involved and educated about their heritage. Rabbi Shimon Freundlich, of Beijing, China, told lubavitch.com that 80 of the 350 who came to the Chabad Seder at the Renaissance Hotel in Beijing, had never met him though they live in Beijing. The Seder was the drawing card for the beginning of a relationship with Chabad, with its educational and social programs that are intended to advance Jewish participation and involvement, he explains. With the familiar tune of the ma-nishtana (Four Questions) echoing simultaneously from various tables in respective languages, among them, French, Chinese and Hebrew, "it was a very powerful experience."

"There was something binding here that transcended the many languages and any other barriers—and the people felt it—they experienced it," said Freundlich.

After swimming upstream for 18 years in Lima, Peru, against often disheartening difficulties, Sara Blumenfeld, Chabad representative with her husband, Zalman, told lubavitch.com that this Passover was a watershed for her community. "People came to us wanting to buy kosher-

for-Passover foods. They didn't mind the expense. They wanted to observe the holiday properly."

Chabad's reach in Peru extends to Cusco's transient Jewish population, where 800 travellers joined the Seder, and this year for the first time ever, also to Huaraz—high in the Andes Mountains and a frequent base for expeditions to the Cordilleras Blanca mountain ranges, where some 50 mountain trekkers drank the four cups of wine and read the Haggadah with Chabad. But it's a qualitative change that matters, says Sara, who together with her husband and children hosted a Seder for 300 at their Chabad Centre in Lima. "We got calls before Pesach from many people with halachic questions about details concerning the Passover observances," she said. "They wanted to do it right."

Why the change? Sara credits it to the Lubavitcher Rebbe's blessing and to persistent efforts to educate and reach out to Jewish people with Chabad's trademark approach of openness yet uncompromising standards. "We used to get 10 requests for tefillin over the course of a month. Now, we're getting that weekly."

An Eskimo at the Seder table? Yes, in Anchorage, where Passover proper didn't begin until 10:30 p.m. (nightfall in Alaska at this time of year), Rabbi Yosef and Esti Greenberg met their first "Jeskimo." It was a first for this Jewish Eskimo too, who joined about another 100—among them residents and tourists, at the Chabad Seder. The Greenbergs, who are in the midst of building the state's first Jewish Historical Museum, devoted a lot of energy educating the community in advance, garnering local tv coverage of their model Seder and matzah bakery for children.

According to reports by the Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS, in Russia alone, 70,000 Jews participated at communal Seders conducted by Chabad Shluchim. In Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, some 10,000, and overall, the FJC counts 162,210 at their communal Seders. To be sure, these numbers are impressive. But it's what happens after the Seder that turns the sensation into a story:

When Ofer Kripor, an Israeli backpacker who completed his army service, decided to settle in the Andes of Peru, he had little interest in anything Jewish. Today, Ofer, who met Chabad at their Seder in Cusco several years back, is the Chabad representative with his wife, Yael to this exotic tourist city, where he now opened a kosher restaurant.

It's persistence, it's a lot of Jewish education, and a refusal to be discouraged. Most of all, says Sara Blumenfeld, it's the Rebbe's inspiration, and his blessing that if "we dedicated ourselves to our purpose, we will eventually see results."

## Reb Mottel Lifshitz      Dvora Lakein - lubavitch.com

In a small apartment on a busy Crown Heights intersection you can find 92-year-old Reb Mottel Lifshitz. Affectionately known as Reb Mottel the Shochet, he spends his days quietly studying, writing, and eating herring. Born during the final years of Czar Nicholas II's reign, Lifshitz not only survived two world wars, the Russian gulag, and Communist rule, but also lived to see his enemies perish. Throughout it all, he served his Jewish brethren as teacher, shochet, and mohel.

Reb Mottel's Kiev childhood was spent under Joseph Stalin's murderous power. Religion was forbidden: the young cheder boys crept from one clandestine location to the next, hiding their studies from the authorities. In this "utopia," poverty was rampant and a Shabbat meal of two potatoes was a feast. Forced to leave school at a young age in order to support his family, Reb Mottel became a welder, forever remaining a staunch Chabad Chasid.

He continued as such until he was 23 years old, when the KGB caught up with him, accusing him of trumped-up charges: illegal gatherings, teaching banned material, and consorting with the Polish enemy. (The KGB accused the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, of being a member of the Polish secret police.)

For his "crimes," Reb Mottel was sent to the frozen Gulag. In Kolyma, where Lifshitz spent much of his seven years in exile, more than one million people were killed. Daily life in this Arctic Circle camp involved manual labor in shifts of up to 30 hours. Workers often slaved barefoot as their frozen, bloated feet were too large for their shoes.

Reb Mottel recalls that his only wish during his incarceration was to be buried underground. Throughout the camp, corpses littered the terrain which was frozen solid for more than half the year. At 49 degrees below zero, it was the rare person who merited a proper burial. Survival could only be ascribed to miracles. And Reb Mottel certainly had his share of them. "At one point my grandfather had to have his toe amputated," recalls his grandson, Rabbi Levi Haskelevich of Lubavitch House at the University of Pennsylvania. "It was a painful surgery made all the more excruciating by the lack of anaesthesia. He had to stay in the infirmary all winter long to recover. That saved his life."

Freedom, or a taste of it, came in 1946. Lifshitz returned to his hometown of Kiev in search of the large, extended family he had left behind. He quickly discovered that they had all been murdered by the Nazis at Babi Yar.

Lifshitz focused his grief into activism, escalating his efforts to bring Judaism to thousands of Jews across the Soviet Union. "It is not enough to say he was an inspiration," explains Israeli Knesset Member Yuli Edelstein. "He was our source of knowledge, our power. He was one of the very few resources

for practical Judaism available to us."

Reb Mottel officiated at the marriage of Yuli and Tanya Edelstein in 1984, in a quiet ceremony outside of Moscow. "It was not a legal marriage, but it was a very moving event and it brought us one step closer to Judaism," recounts Edelstein. Soon after his wedding, Edelstein was sent to a labour camp until 1987 when he finally immigrated to Israel.

Today, the 51-year old refusenik-turned-MK credits Reb Mottel with giving him the will to fight. "Even in those days he wasn't young and he didn't look like a hero, but everyone knew that neither an earthquake nor the KGB could stop him from being there for us. We knew we could totally rely on him for questions, help, or procedures."

Haskelevich grew up hearing stories of his grandfather's valour. Though Lifshitz moved to the United States when Haskelevich was already 13, they corresponded for years beforehand. "I used to write crazy ideas about how I could save him from Russia," he says, "but my parents had to censor my letters to make sure I wouldn't bring any harm to my grandfather." Since his 1993 arrival, Haskelevich had encouraged his grandfather to record his memories. "Memoirs of the Gulag," written in Yiddish, sold out soon after it was published. An unauthorized and falsified translation was published shortly thereafter. Reb Mottel and his family hope to have a corrected version published in English shortly.

According to Benjamin Nathans, professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania and expert on the Soviet Union and modern European Jewish history, "this book is amazing. It is a dramatic story which is very valuable to historians. There are few people alive who can tell this story—it opens up a whole new window on the Jewish experience in the Soviet Union."

For Edelstein, in Israel, the memories literally live on. "Not a single holiday goes by where Reb Mottel doesn't call to wish me a good Yom Tov," Edelstein proudly says. "We last spoke before Purim and I am hoping to hear from him soon, before Pesach. It is truly a great merit to talk to him."

Reb Mottel Lifshitz will speak Wednesday, March 25th at Chabad Lubavitch of Midtown Manhattan. Lifshitz will discuss his book and life, speaking in Yiddish, as one of his grandsons provide a simultaneous translation.. The event, cosponsored by the Lubavitch House at Penn Alumni Association, is open to the public. For more information, visit [lubavitchhouse.com](http://lubavitchhouse.com)

See over for photographs of Soviet Gulag scenes



Useless rail tracks laid by prisoners as it appears today—hundreds of kilometres of similar track, canals and bridges all built by forced labour and mostly unserviceable are scattered around Siberia today.



Siberian Prison workers, circa 1927-1940



100,000+ prisoners with pick-axes, wheelbarrows and hatchets - dug a 227-kilometre long canal linking the Baltic and the White Sea in 20 months between 1931 and 1933. Tens of thousands died in the process. Ice-bound for half the year and too small for ships, the White Sea Canal never served any significant economic or strategic function



The White Sea Canal today



**JERUSALEM, ISRAEL -- (March 30, 2009)**  
Zalman Nelson ([lubavitch.com](http://lubavitch.com))

As part of an inspection of local schools and educational initiatives his administration hopes to implement as they tackle the city's scholastic challenges, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat and several members of his staff made a three hour visit to Chabad's Ir Ganim - Jerusalem school last week. Joined by a team of Jerusalem Education Administration officials, including director Benzi Nemet, local officials and community leaders, the 49 year old American educated Barkat interacted with students and teachers during a tour of the school. The student-led tour included a flower-filled welcome ceremony, 60-member choir performance, classroom visitations and demonstrations.

"He was very fun and said such nice things about our school," said 12 year old vice-president of the student body, Orel Avraham who helped lead the beginning of the tour. "It was a real honour to have him and show off our school."

The new Mayor, described in a recent *New York Times* profile as "bringing a sense of modern renewal and entrepreneurial spirit" to Jerusalem, moved from class to class, taking notes as he observed a second grade class learning to read with partners from the fifth grade, a special education room supplementing the education of advanced students, and the implementation of the Mofet program for developing thinking skills in math, English and the sciences.

After reviewing the stockroom housing the school's division of student-community programs including home visits, Shabbat food distribution, and holiday assistance, Barkat praised the effort and promised to increase his support. "I am very happy when a community works together to develop, grow and meet its needs. It makes it easier for us to help them," he said. The group of 20 visitors then met privately with Principal Rabbi Shimon Yedger, his staff, and student and parent representatives for a more in-depth discussion. The Mayor, saying he was

"very impressed" with what he has seen, called the school "one of Jerusalem's truly special and unique educational institutions."

"You here are leaders at the forefront of education. I only wish I could make a copy of your school and bring it to other places in the city."

Yedger shared the history, development and philosophy of the school since he was sent by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem M. Schneerson of blessed memory, in 1984 to be the school's principal when the student body numbered 86.

"I told the Mayor that we built this school up by developing meaningful relationships with the students and instilling in them a love of Judaism," he told [lubavitch.com](http://lubavitch.com). "They're empowered by the message that hard work brings success and the sky is the limit. We communicate that we believe in them."

A religious public school for children aged 3 to 13 founded by the Rebbe in 1954, the school's 330 students come mostly from non-observant homes with as many as 38 percent from Ethiopia and 11 percent from Russia. The school bridges religious, cultural and communal gaps by student-led activities such as the student government, cross-class interaction, and charity work with the community. "There isn't a child who doesn't participate," claimed Yedger, who said that the activities empower the students and encourage cooperation. He pointed to the Mayor's student-led tour as an example.

"They did much of the preparation of their own. It gives them great confidence knowing that we trust them with real responsibilities." He credited the staff's attitude with being at the core of the school's success. "The key here is our mission. Many of us were directly sent by the Rebbe to dedicate ourselves to working with these children," said Rabbi Yedger who is in his 19th year as principal. "It's the main force behind our activities and programs, and each of us considers it an honour and privilege to help these kids grow as students and people."

# UK House of Lords debate Gaza Motion to Take Note

Baroness Deech Hansard source Friday, 6 February 2009

My Lord, I recently heard a speech by President Peres of Israel. He said that if we look back 50 years, who would have imagined then that the Soviet Empire would have ended, that the South African system of apartheid would have been dismantled and Mandela would have become president, that the Berlin Wall would have come down and that there would be a black president of America? He said that we should look forward 50 years from now in the same spirit. I want to start on that optimistic note because I believe that if we wait that long no doubt beyond our lifetimes there will be change for the better. I want to emphasise that because inevitably much of my speech will be rather gloomy.

No one can accuse this House of not focusing on the distressing situation in Gaza. In the past twelve months, there have been 161 Questions and Statements about Israel, Gaza and the Palestinians compared with, for example, 33 on Sri Lanka and 24 on Tibet. I mention Sri Lanka in particular because noble Lords will be aware that recently there was a well attended protest in Parliament Square about the terrible attacks on the Tamils, the hospitals under siege, the killing of 70,000 people and the many more thousands who are trapped and displaced from their homes. This has attracted little opprobrium and no calls for the obliteration of Sri Lanka or talk of its brutalisation.

I raise that because I am interested in the particular focus on the Middle East that is expressed in this country. Part of the reason is that the war in Gaza has not been seen in perspective, but only as a minute fragment of what is, in truth, a larger picture. There is a wider war, of which Israel and Gaza are figureheads, and there is also a civil war. The talk about what is proportionate I prefer the word "necessary" has to be seen in the context of a response to an attack from Hamas designed not just to launch rockets at Israel 5,000 rockets deliberately aimed at Israeli civilians and schoolchildren at 7.45 in the morning but to end the state of Israel. Hamas has vowed to have an Islamic state over

Gaza, the West Bank and Israel as part of a wider Islamic empire. Israel has a 20 per cent Arab population, but not one Jew is to be allowed to live in this Islamic state.

We can well imagine the fate planned for the millions of Israelis were this to come about. The response from Israel was, if anything, as restrained as it possibly could be. We should recall the detailed precautions taken by the Israeli army to avoid wherever possible harm to civilians, bearing in mind the use of mosques, schools and hospitals, as has been referred to earlier today.

The charges of "disproportionate" were not made in relation to other wars that we have recently experienced; Kosovo, Georgia, Iraq or even Afghanistan, where people have died in their thousands. In fact, there has been some praise for the restraint that Israel has shown in trying to avoid civilian casualties. There is also a civil war in Gaza, which makes the prospects of peace unrealistic. The military dictatorship there did nothing to protect its own subjects, but took the opportunity of war to eliminate many of its Fatah political opponents. Other noble Lords have referred to the very cruel details of this. Even the Palestinian Authority's President Abbas said:

"Hamas has taken risks with the blood of Palestinians, with their fate and dreams and aspirations for an independent Palestinian state".

The wider war is one of destruction of Israel, and those who criticise Israel's attack on Gaza must realise that they are unwittingly giving succour to that plan.

Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas all share that same aim of destroying Israel entirely and, indeed, Hamas has thanked Iran for its support in the Gaza war. As others have mentioned, the result has been that Jews all over the world have suffered for this.

The attacks on Jews that have taken place here in the UK and elsewhere illustrate my theme of a wider war.

It is Jews and synagogues in London and Venezuela, in universities, to their shame, and streets, that are attacked, with Gaza as excuse, not Israelis. It is not Jews who see all criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism; it is some of the critics of Israel who vent their displeasure on Jews in general. The hatred of Israel, and sometimes Jews, is almost unique in international politics

Then there is the propaganda war. I urge noble Lords not to believe all that they read in the newspapers about damage and killings in Gaza. We do not have the evidence. I cite just one case. The tragic killing of the three daughters of the respected Gazan doctor Izzeldin Abuelaish now seems to have been by Gazan rockets, not Israeli fire, according to the post-mortem examination of the fragments of their bodies.

On the humanitarian front, of course, it is exacerbated, because Hamas wanted civilian deaths to increase its worldwide exposure and sympathy. Humanitarian aid is another area where the wrong and pessimistic view has been taken. I noted with interest and approval that the BBC refused to screen the advertisement for aid and that it was backed by its own NUJ branch of journalists.

It is not so good to hear talk of a Zionist lobby and Jews mugging protests and stemming disquiet in the United States, when you consider the very small numbers that there are. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency has a huge budget. We do not yet know what happened to the millions that Arafat salted away and took to his death. We note the failure of other Arab countries to come to the aid of their brothers. The oil revenue of the Gulf states in 2008 was \$562 billion; in Saudi Arabia it was \$260 billion one day's oil revenue would work a miracle for the West Bank and Gaza, but this is not forthcoming.

On the humanitarian front, Israel's Supreme Court in the past few days, a court known for its robustness, has examined the application of the Geneva conventions on humanitarian law and found them not to have been breached.

Other Arab countries have not only not helped but have literally turned their backs on the Palestinians, as one can read regarding Syria in the report in the Times today.

What of the future? Gaza could have had a future. Every Israeli soldier and civilian was removed from there. Everything was ready for the Gazans a few years ago to start a new period of economic development. There was no blockade, and it remains true that Egypt could open its crossing if it wanted to. It does not, of course, because it no more wants an Iranian state on its borders than Israel does. Instead the rockets and the tunnels came, and the sad destruction of the very greenhouses where flowers and fruit were grown and could have continued to be grown.

What can the UK do? It can support Egypt, which is acting very well in this crisis, albeit for its own reasons of survival. It can help block Hamas from smuggling more arms by sea. It can press for the release of Gilad Shalit, who has been a hostage in Gaza for two and a half years with no access to the Red Cross or any other international agency. It can persuade Hamas to change the charter and remove mention of destruction.

Above all, your Lordships should lend your voices to the end of the demonisation of Israel and to calm down the surging anti-Semitism. Your Lordships should recognise the need of Israel to exist and its legitimacy. It is no more arriviste in the Middle East than the other 22 Arab states to be found there. There can be no further removal of six million Jews from the Middle East.

We must do nothing to feed the hatred that surrounds this issue and we must do everything to look to the future.



# YESHIVAH SHULE - PESACH NISSAN 5769

Tuesday 13 Nissan Yahrzeit Tzemach Tzedek BEDIKAS CHOMETZ AFTER MAARIV at 6.40pm April 7

Wednesday 14 Nissan - EREV PESACH - Birthday Of The Rambam April 8

SHACHARIS 6.15, 6.45, 7.00 am

TAANIS BECHORIM SIYUM after first minyan. For 7.00am minyan, Siyum will be part of the Birchas Hachomah ceremony 8.00 am

BIRCHAS HACHOMAH 8.00 am in Yeshivah Playground at rear of Shule

LATEST TIME TO EAT CHOMETZ 10:27 am

LATEST TIME BURN CHOMETZ 11:24 am

MAKE ERUV TAVSHILLIN

MINCHA 5:45 pm FOLLOWED BY SEDER KORBON PESACH

CANDLE LIGHTING 5.46 pm

MAARIV 6:35 pm

Thursday 15 Nissan - FIRST DAY PESACH April 9

SHACHARIS 9:30 am, TAL in MUSAF

MINCHAH 5:45 pm

MAARIV. LIGHTING FOR YOM TOV NOT BEFORE: 6:41 pm **BEGIN COUNTING SEFIRAS HAOMER TONIGHT**

Friday 16 Nissan - SECOND DAY PESACH April 10

SHACHARIS 9:30 am

CANDLE LIGHTING FOR SHABBOS 5.43 pm

MINCHA 5:45 pm

KABOLAS SHABBOS 6.25 pm

Shabbos 17 Nissan - FIRST DAY CHOL HAMOED April 11

SHACHARIS 9.30 am

LATEST TIME FOR SHEMA 9:32 am

MINCHA 4:15 pm FOLLOWED BY A KINUS TORAH IN THE SHULE

MAARIV 6:39 pm **BEGIN SAYING V'SEIN BROCHO**

Sunday-Monday (Public Holiday) 18 – 19 Nissan SECOND-THIRD DAYS CHOL HAMOED April 12-13

SHACHARIS 7:00 am, 8.00, 8:30 am IN KOLLEL, 9:00 am, 10.00am

MINCHA 5:40 pm, 2.05 pm Kollel on Sunday, 4.03 pm Kollel on Monday

MAARIV 6:30 pm, 7.15, 8:30 pm IN THE LUNCHROOM, 9:30 pm KOLLEL

Tuesday 20 Nissan FOURTH DAY CHOL HAMOED EREV YOM TOV April 14

SHACHARIS 6.15 am, 6.45, 7.30, 8:30 am IN KOLLEL, 9:00 am

CANDLE LIGHTING YOM TOV 5:37 pm

MINCHA 5:45 pm

MAARIV 6:30 pm

Wednesday 21 Nissan SHEVIYI SHEL PESACH April 15

SHACHARIS 9.30 am

MINCHA 5:35 pm

MAARIV & CANDLE LIGHTING NOT BEFORE 6:33 pm

Thursday 22 Nissan ACHARON SHEL PESACH April 16

SHACHARIS 9:30 am (YIZKOR BEFORE MUSAF)

MINCHA 4:45 pm FOLLOWED BY SEUDAS MOSHIACH IN THE WERDIGER HALL

WOMENS SEUDAS MOSHIACH 5.00 pm at home of Stera Gutnick 16 Denman Ave East S Kilda

MAARIV 6:32 pm (**WAIT APPROX 30 MINUTES BEFORE USING SOLD CHOMETZ**)

Bochurim from Oholei Torah Zal Crown Heights NY took the day to bake Matzos.

Starting in the morning the Bochurim baked throughout the day in three shifts.

