

# Living Jewish



## Tell your Children

### One's Life for the Torah

I [Rabbi Mayer Plotkin] was raised in Montreal and educated there until my Bar Mitzvah. Shortly after, in 1956, I came to New York to learn at Yeshiva Torah Vodaas. At that time, it was one of the biggest yeshivas in the world, and certainly the biggest yeshiva in North America with over two thousand students from grade one up until the highest level of Beis Midrash. It was situated in Williamsburg, Brooklyn - which was a big change from Montreal, let me tell you.

I stayed at Torah Vodaas for two years and then I moved to the Lubavitch Yeshiva. But while I was still at Torah Vodaas, I heard the following story about the Previous Rebbe [the sixth Rebbe of Lubavitch, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn]. The occasion was the anniversary of the passing of a previous head of the yeshiva, Rabbi Shlomo Hyman, which was always observed with a major address to the entire student body. The speaker that particular year was a rabbi from the Bronx, Rabbi Shmuel Koselewitz, who administered testing for rabbinic ordination at Torah Vodaas [the candidates went by subway from Brooklyn to his shul in the Bronx for testing]. The place was packed; all the students were in attendance. This is what he said:

"The Talmud states: The Torah is preserved only by one who gives his life for it. That means that the Torah cannot continue to exist unless you're ready to die for it." He went on to explain that a person has to be willing and ready to give everything he has for Torah, to give everything away - everything - and not hold anything back. Then he said, "I'm going to tell you a story about what that means, about somebody who did just that. The story I am going to tell happened right here, in this building where we are gathered today. It happened in the war years, '42, '43, or maybe '44. At that time, Torah Vodaas was in trouble. It owed a lot of money to the bank, and the bank called in the loan.

The yeshiva could not pay. The bank went to court and got a verdict that, if the loan was not repaid in full, they could foreclose and take all the buildings



*The Previous Rebbe, Otzov, Poland, 5696, reprinted from RebbeDrive*

from Torah Vodaas. The Yeshiva's financial officer, who was responsible for raising money, fell into a depression. He took it very badly. He felt that because of him Torah Vodaas was going to be closed. He tried everything he knew to remedy the situation. He placed appeals in newspapers, but very little came in, and the deadline was getting closer.

"And then one day, he received a telephone call from the office of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, then, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, asking him how much money he had managed to raise. Now, he knew that Lubavitch had its own hardships, so he didn't expect any help from the Rebbe. He thought, 'The Rebbe can't manage his own, how is he going to help me?'

"But a few days later, a Chabad chasid walks through the door with an envelope in hand, and says, 'This is from the Rebbe.' The man is stunned. He is speechless. And then the chasid says, 'The Rebbe asked that before I give you this envelope, I advise you of some facts: When he was in Russia, he had to fight against the strongest country in the world so that the Torah would not be extinguished.

"The biggest tyrant in the world was Joseph Stalin, and the Rebbe paid no attention to him. Whoever needed help in order to strengthen Torah, he helped them. He didn't ask if it's Chabad or not. Whatever they needed - a mikva, a kosher butcher, a teacher - he tried to supply it. He did whatever he could so the

light of Torah would not be extinguished. His emissaries were caught, shot and killed, and he then had their orphans and widows to support. And still he would send another person to replace the one who perished. All the while, his focus was only that Torah's light not be extinguished.

"Now Divine Providence has brought him to the United States of America where there is freedom of religion, and he is pained to learn that a major yeshiva with thousands of students is going to be closed down. Not because Stalin in Russia wants to get rid of Judaism, but because the Jews in America don't care. This the Rebbe cannot abide. He is willing to put his own movement in danger - because he also has debts to repay - but he is giving you a check for the whole amount you need, in order that the Torah not be extinguished. Please repay it as soon as possible, because everything the Rebbe has built up is now in danger."

While Rabbi Koselewitz was telling this story, everybody was sitting there with their mouths open - the whole room. And then he shouted: "The Torah is preserved only by one who gives his life for it! And that's what the Rebbe did! When the Rebbe arrived in America - and I was there when he got off the boat - he was half paralyzed by the tortures he endured in Stalinist Russia. Then he lost his yeshiva in Poland to the Nazis. And since he arrived here, he has had to deal with a lot of hardships and opposition.

*Continued on page 3*

### Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Johannesburg	5:17	6:05
London	9:07	10:32
Melbourne	4:56	5:56
Montreal	8:29	9:43
New York	8:12	9:20

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## Beyond Proper Conduct

As related in the second of this week's Torah portions, Balak, when Bilaam went to curse the Jewish people, he woke up early in the morning "and saddled his donkey."

Bilaam was a very important personage, and was accompanied by an entourage of Moabite princes and leaders. Why, then, did Bilaam perform such a menial task himself?

Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator, explains: "From this we see that hatred causes disregard of proper conduct."

Bilaam hated the Jews so intensely and was so eager to curse them that he disregarded the usual mores of society.

## Avraham Preceded You

All this hatred, however, did not ultimately help him, as Rashi continues: "Declared G-d: Wicked one, Abraham their father has already preceded you, as it states, 'And Abraham arose early in the morning and saddled his donkey.'"

When Abraham set out to what he thought would be the sacrifice of his son Isaac, he too "arose early and saddled his donkey." [In order to speedily fulfill

Hashem's Will.] Abraham's actions thus "canceled out" Bilaam's evil intent and protected the Jewish people.

## Beyond the Usual Way

What exactly was Bilaam trying to accomplish? Surely he knew that G-d would not allow him to curse the Jews, for he had already been warned: "Only the word which I shall say to you, that shall you do."

However, Bilaam hoped to somehow provoke G-d's anger against His people and damage His love for them.

Bilaam was a master of incitement. When he saw that it would be impossible to curse the Jews within the natural order, he attempted to "disregard proper conduct" and circumvent convention.

Bilaam figured that after the Jewish people had sinned in the desert, G-d would also "disregard proper conduct" and stop showing them His attribute of loving-kindness.

Bilaam's faulty logic was derived from blind hatred. However, G-d said to Bilaam, "Wicked one, Abraham their father has already preceded you."

In other words, in the merit of Abraham, the Jewish people are deserving of blessing within or without the natural

order. For Abraham's actions also transcended the "usual" way of doing things.

## Transforming Curse to Blessing

The Torah portion of Balak expresses the transformation of curse into blessing: "The L-rd your G-d would not listen to Bilaam, but... turned the curse into a blessing to you, because the L-rd your G-d loved you."

Bilaam's hatred for the Jews caused him to "disregard proper conduct"; conversely, a Jew's love for G-d should prompt him to observe Torah and mitzvot even beyond the letter of the law, with dedication, devotion and commitment.

This love must be so intense that it can even transform evil into good.

When a Jew is strongly connected to G-d, it arouses a reciprocal love from on High; curse is turned into blessing, and G-d's love for His people is revealed.

*Adapted from the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; Shabbos Table, From our Sages and Moshiach Now! reprinted from www.LchaimWeekly.org - LYO / NYC*

## From our Sages

*You shall see but the utmost part of them, and shall not see them all (Deut. 23:13)*

It is only if one looks at a "part" of a Jew, a small detail of his make-up, that one might notice any flaws; if he is considered as a whole, no defects will be visible.

*(Ohel Torah)*

*There shall come a star out of Jacob (Num. 24:17)*

Nachmanides (the Ramban) interprets this verse as an allusion to Moshiach; according to the Jerusalem Talmud, it refers to every Jew. However, this is in no way contradictory. Every Jewish soul contains a "spark" of Moshiach. It is the individual's function to bring that spark out of concealment, as preparation for the revelation of Moshiach in the world at large.

*(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

*What this people will do to your people in the end of days (Num. 24:14)*

In the end of days, before the arrival of

Moshiach, an attempt will be made to turn "this people" into "your people," i.e., to transform the Jewish people into a nation like any other, indistinguishable from non-Jews in custom and habit.

*(Reb Simcha Bunim of Pshischa)*

*And now come, I pray you, and curse me this people (Num. 22:4)*

It is interesting the language Balak used when he asked Bilaam to curse the Jewish people: "Curse me" he said, words which can also be interpreted to mean that he himself should be cursed, which is exactly what eventually happened. One must always think before speaking and pay attention to the words we use.

*(Shaloh HaKodesh)*

*.... he lies down as a lion (Numbers 24:9)*

Even when the Jew is "asleep" in exile he is considered "as a lion," for his heart is always "awake" to G-d, to Torah and to mitzvot.

*(Ohr HaTorah)*

## The Incriminating Documents

At one Yud Beis Tammuz farbrengen, the Rebbe turned to the warm chossid Reb Zalman Duchman.

Since he was present at the arrest of the Frierdiker Rebbe (Previous Rebbe) in 5687 (1927), the Rebbe asked him to share some memories.

Reb Zalman stood up, and began to relate:

"During the arrest, there was a grave risk that some incriminating documents would be found. I remember how the Rebbe, then the Previous Rebbe's son-in-law, spent that entire frightful evening concealing the papers.

"Some of them, I watched him chew and swallow..."

At this point, the Rebbe motioned with his hand, that enough was said.

Reb Zalman obeyed, but couldn't control himself from adding, "Oh, you were always modest..."

*Who's Who in Lubavitch, p. 59; see also Otzar Hachassidim NY, p. 469.*

*reprinted from The Weekly Farbrengen by Merkaz Anash, on-line at TheWeeklyFarbrengen.com*



# Chassidus page

## Three Reactions

On the 15th of Sivan, 5687 (1927), the Previous Rebbe was arrested by the Soviet Authorities for his efforts to spread Judaism and Chassidism among his fellow Jews, and taken to the Shpalerke Prison. The Shpalerke Prison was reserved for the most dangerous criminals and was the scariest jail in the country. Many that entered this jail did not come out alive. After being imprisoned in the Shpalerke, the Previous Rebbe was released on the 3rd of Tammuz and sent to exile in Kastrama. On the 12th of Tammuz, he was notified that he would be completely freed, and on the 13th he was freed. Since then, these two days – the 12th and 13th of Tammuz – are celebrated as Yomim Tovim.

When the Previous Rebbe was informed that he was free, the news reached the home of his host, the shochet of Kastrama. Reb Michoel Dvorkin was there, and in his great shock and joy over the unexpected good news, he grabbed a bottle of mashke. He did not drink it, of course, but held it and danced through the house singing a Russian song whose words mean, "There is no one besides Hashem."

Reb Michoel worked with non-Jews for many years, and would often use Russian expressions. That's why he sang this niggun in Russian too: "Nyet, nyet nikava krome—and here one would say Hashem's name—adnavo." Since the halacha is that Hashem's name cannot be mentioned in any language (not just Hebrew), we cannot say the Russian word for "Hashem," and so instead, we say "krome yivo," which means, "besides Him," and the meaning is clear.

We know of the reactions of three different people to the news of the Previous Rebbe's release:

Reb Elye Chaim's [Althoiz] face changed colors—half red, half white, to the point that the Previous Rebbe feared for his well-being and calmed him by patting his shoulders, so that he should calmly absorb the news.

Reb Michoel—as detailed above.

In addition: in the home of the shochet from Kastrama there also lived a young boy of around nine years old, who was not particularly intelligent. When he saw the commotion, he wanted to show how he, too, was excited. He did a handstand on the fence, and proceeded to do several cartwheels on the fence. Even a young boy, who had been raised in a different atmosphere, was affected and showed it in his own way.

In our own lives, each of us goes through a similar three stages of childhood, adulthood, and old age. We experience these stages—in a way—every year and every day. There are times that our minds think small—like a child; there are times that our minds think with the maturity of an adult; and there are times when the mind is like that of an elderly person, whose mind is calm and settled.

The geula, redemption, must permeate all of these mindsets, and cause them to go beyond their typical limitations, each in its own way.

*Adapted from a talk of the Rebbe, 12th of Tammuz, 5725; adapted from Derher*

## One's Life for the Torah

*Continued from page 1:* "Find me someone like that! Find me someone who is willing to put everything he has on the line for no personal gain. The check he sent to Torah Vodaas put his own movement in serious debt and in grave danger. Thank G-d, Torah Vodaas was able to repay fast. The Rebbe did get his money back. But when he gave it, he could not have been certain that would happen. That's real self-sacrifice."

This was the story that Rabbi Shmuel Koselewitz related, and it became one of the reasons why I eventually went over to the Lubavitch Yeshiva. I saw that same genuine spirit of self-sacrifice in the followers of the Rebbe, and I was inspired by them. I wanted to be a part of a movement which had such a high level of dedication to Torah and to their fellow Jews.

**Connection:** Yud-Beis (12th) Tammuz is the anniversary of the birthday (1880) and Liberation from Soviet prison (in 1927) of the Previous Rebbe.

**Biographical note:** Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn [of blessed memory: 12 Tammuz 5640 - 10 Shvat 5710 (June 1880 - Jan. 1950 C.E.)], known as the Rebbe Rayatz, was the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, from 1920 to 1950. He established a network of Jewish educational institutions and Chassidim that was the single most significant factor for the preservation of Judaism during the dread reign of the communist Soviets.

In 1940, he moved to the USA, established Chabad world-wide headquarters in Brooklyn and launched the global campaign to renew and spread Judaism in all languages and in every corner of the world. The campaign continued and expanded so remarkably successfully by his son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

*Story adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "JEM - Here's My Story" (JEmedia.org). Rabbi Tilles of Tsfat is a co-founder of ASCENT. His email list for stories is in its 23rd year. To join the list a/o his WhatsApp group for Saturday night Audio, Video and Zoom stories, go to AscentOfSafed.com or WhatsApp +972-526-770-137.*

## Moshiach Now

### Don't Fall Asleep!

The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, once said. "We are standing close to the top of mountain. There is only a small amount left to go. Moshiach is standing beyond the door, and he who has good hearing can already hear him and see him. It is known that before the light of day, sleep intensifies. We must stay strong and not give into sleep, in order that we be vessels that can accept the light of day. Every Jew must know this and when he meets a fellow Jew he must tell him 'listen my brother - do not fall asleep before the light of day.'"

*(Sefer HaSichot, 5689)*

## Human Interest

### One of First Farbrengens Filmed Now Released

Just in time for Gimmel Tammuz, JEM is excited to release a newly restored video of the Rebbe's farbrengen marking 12-13 Tammuz 5732-1972.

This black and white video, one of the first farbrengens ever filmed, was a landmark farbrengen. With thousands of young people crammed into 770 to hear the Rebbe's words, the Rebbe laid out his vision regarding the task and mission he placed on the young. Using powerful lessons from the self-sacrifice of the Previous Rebbe, the



Rebbe speaks about the endless potential of the youth and demonstrates how they can literally change the world. One of the unique characteristics of young people, the Rebbe says in this Farbrengen, is that "they have not yet accepted the inevitability of compromise."

The Rebbe also dwells on the inherent potential that lies in the thousands of new immigrants arriving from the Soviet Union, and honors one young man, the newly arrived Chazan Tzatzkes, to lead the crowd in a joyful repertoire of Russian niggunim. Later in the Farbrengen, the Rebbe distributes mashke to whoever established an institution in honor of the Rebbe's seventieth birthday, and declares the "tikun" for whoever did not: to establish two new institutions instead.

The five hour event will be released in two segments: the first in honor of Gimmel Tammuz, and the second with the approach of Yud Beis Tammuz. Both will be available on Jem.tv for the small price of \$7.

*Reprinted from Anash.org*

### Cooking Tip of the Week

#### Tuscan Tomato and Bread Soup:

A great solution for your leftover challah (or any bread) is this soup. In a pot, warm up 2 tbs olive oil. Add 4 thinly sliced cloves (teeth) of garlic and one small chopped onion with a hefty sprinkle of coarse dried chili pepper flakes. When soft add 700 grams of organic crushed tomatoes (jarred) and use a drop of water to get all the tomato out. Heat and add 2 tbs of Italian spices. Break into the mixture 200 grams of bread. While stirring and add one liter of vegetable broth (homemade or a carton). Sprinkle with coarse black pepper to taste (you might want to add salt). The bread becomes like a porridge.

*Alizah Hochstead,  
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### Halacha Corner – Is a Sefer as a Shtender Permissible?

There is a disagreement between the Mogen Avrohom and the Taz whether one is allowed to put a Sefer (a book) under another Sefer in order to lift the latter up so that it should be more comfortable to learn from. Since this is a disagreement related to Kovod HaSeforim, respect to Seforim, of course one should be strict and not do what is commonly done, piling up a few Seforim on top of each other in order to elevate the top-most Sefer or Siddur to a more comfortable height. If the Sefer is already there, that is a different Halacha. Once a Sefer is already there and one puts another Sefer or Siddur on top of it, there is absolutely no problem and that is permissible. Otherwise, taking a Sefer from elsewhere and using it as a Shtender for another Sefer or Siddur is unacceptable.

*HaRav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, shlita, Mara D'asra, member of the Beis Din of Crown Heights; 1 Minute Halacha, #6; from halacha2go.com*

## Farbrengen

**Question:** Please tell me what you would say to a wife who writes to you asking for help regarding her husband who does not believe his role is to make her happy, and thus he will be happy. A counselor he goes to says to him that the wife needs to make him happy and he also needs to make her happy.

**Answer:** What makes a man happy does not necessarily make a woman happy. For example, our Sages teach that on Yom Tov a man's happiness is from meat and wine whereas a woman's happiness is from clothes and jewelry. So too in marriage - what makes a woman happy is not the same for a man.

A man's achievements make him feel that he is something, worthwhile. He wants to accomplish and be successful. When a wife supports her husband by believing in him, encouraging him and cheering him on, it is almost certain that he will be successful. In addition, compliments are not only important, but fill a need. They imbue the husband with self-confidence - giving him the strength and courage to attain his goals.

A wife has different needs. She feels **happy** when she knows that nothing is more important to her husband than her and the marriage. Nothing else takes priority and nothing can get in the way of his connection to her. She feels **secure** when her husband provides for her emotionally, physically and spiritually. In addition, whereas a husband thrives on compliments, a wife needs her husband to acknowledge, recognize and **appreciate** who she is and what she does. A husband needs to be clear and consistent in his appreciation. He cannot assume that his wife knows she is appreciated.

On the one hand, it is true that when a husband makes his wife happy, he will be happy. As the saying goes - a happy wife is a happy husband. When a husband gives to his wife, she will be more capable of giving to him; when a wife feels secure and appreciated, her natural inclination will be to support her husband.

Never the less, neither side should say, "Since he/she is not doing their role, I will not do mine." Marriage unites husband and wife and transcends individuality by putting the marriage first. A healthy marriage is defined by giving. In other words, focusing on "what I can do" not "what my spouse should be doing". When the focus is on giving, the result will be an abundance of receiving.

*Aharon Schmidt - marriage & individual coaching. Video and telephone meetings available. For an appointment or to share a question contact: coachingandcounseling1@gmail.com*

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