

Living Jewish



Tell your Children

A Bottle for the Wedding

Shlomo, a fine religious Jew who was living in France had unfortunately not been blessed with children. Just before his 25th wedding anniversary his Lubavitcher friends invited him to 770 for dollars. The visit was exciting and eventful, the experience of a lifetime. After Shlomo received his dollar, the Rebbe did something unusual and handed him a bottle of vodka saying, "this is for the wedding."

Shlomo was bewildered, he had no children, so he wasn't expecting to make a wedding. He arrived back in Paris and put the bottle away safely, with no resolution to the puzzle.

Meanwhile, a young girl, Sharon, was growing up in Paris with her parents. Her parents had mentioned that they were Jewish but with no explanation as to what that meant. When she reached her teens, her parents said to her:

"Remember we told you are Jewish? Well, make sure that your future husband is also Jewish."

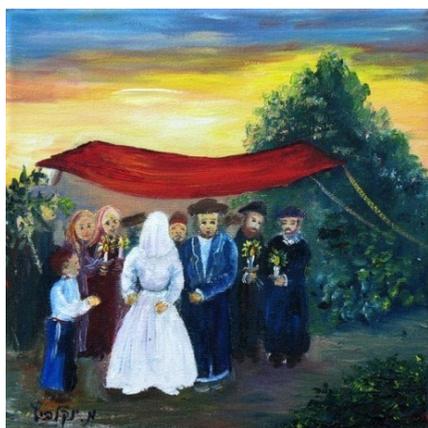
She was baffled, not understanding what difference her future husband's religion could possibly make and put the matter out of her mind.

When it was time for her to go off to university, her parents repeated the strange request: "Make sure, you do not end up with a non-Jewish husband."

This time she was motivated to read up about being Jewish to discover why it was so important for her to have a Jewish husband, but she was not able to find anything to help her. However, she discovered that there was a synagogue near where she lived. She went to see the Rabbi there hoping he could explain. Kind as he was, they were not on the same wavelength. Finally, he came up with an idea.

"Not far from here is a Chabad seminary for young Jewish girls, perhaps someone there might be able to explain better than I can."

The Rabbi wrote the details for her on a piece of paper which she put in her bag and promptly forgot about it.



Menucha Yankelevitch menuchay.com

As Divine Providence would have it, sometime later she happened to pass by the seminary and the name rang a bell. On an impulse she walked inside and struck up a conversation with some of the students who were milling around. It wasn't long before she became a frequent visitor.

She decided to put her degree studies on hold for a year so that she could study full time at the seminary. After a few months, one of the teachers proposed the idea of a shidduch to her and with her agreement, arranged a meeting with a wonderful Lubavitcher young man.

The young man began the date by telling her that he was not born Jewish and was a "ger tzedek" (a righteous convert). He was concerned that this might make him unacceptable in her eyes. She reassured him that it didn't bother her at all.

After a few pleasant meetings, they were ready to get engaged. She now went home to break the good news to her parents, but to her utter distress and amazement they exploded with fury and venom.

"Didn't we tell you that you have to marry a Jew? Someone who wasn't born a Jew can never become Jewish. For us he is a non-Jew."

A terrible fight ensued. They screamed at her: "If you marry him, we will cut you off, we will not attend the wedding and we will never speak to you again."

Upon her return to the seminary, Sharon cried herself to sleep.

In her dreams, the Lubavitcher Rebbe appeared to her. "Don't worry," he said, "he is your soul mate and it is a good shidduch. I will be with you and I will be there at the wedding."

When she awoke in the morning, the dream had assuaged her broken heart. Chatan and Kalla decided to marry in a very simple ceremony at the shul near the seminary with just a few friends.

Meanwhile, Shlomo's 40th wedding anniversary was approaching and he wanted to celebrate in grand style with no less than 500 guests. At 6:00 in the morning on the day of the party, the caterer phoned. "Shlomo, disaster has struck, last night there was an explosion in the hall and it is flooded with sewage and water. Only the food is safe for it was prepared elsewhere. But don't worry, I will find another hall somewhere, somehow."

Two hours later the caterer rang again.

"What amazing good fortune! I have found a smaller hall in the shul, not far from the original venue. Prepare signs directing the way to the new place."

When Shlomo arrived at the hall, the Rabbi came in from the shul downstairs and asked him if he could spare five men for a short time to make up a minyan for a wedding. Shlomo was taken aback, "doesn't everyone have a minyan for a wedding?" he exclaimed.

Continued on page 3

Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	7:01	8:15
Tel Aviv	7:19	8:18
Haifa	7:12	8:18
Beer Sheva	7:17	8:15
New York	7:54	8:56

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Mitvos - Infinite Bond

In a Torah reading filled with many important events: e.g., the repetition of the Ten Commandments and the *Shema*, there is one small passage that is occasionally overlooked: The Torah relates that at that time, Moses set aside three cities in the area of Trans Jordan to serve as cities of refuge for anyone who accidentally killed another person.

Now the question arises: This act had no immediate purpose. The designation of these cities would not actually take effect until three other cities were set aside in the land of Israel between the Jordan and the Mediterranean and that would not be until several years later. Why then did Moses take the time to make this designation before his death?

Mitzvah - Connection

Our Sages answer: When a *mitzvah* comes to your hand, do not postpone its fulfillment. True, Moses knew all the laws and all the significance behind setting aside a city of refuge. But that was all on the intellectual plane. Here he had the chance to take part in the actual fulfillment of the *mitzvah*. There is nothing higher than that.

The Hebrew term *mitzvah* - מצוה - relates to the term *tzavsa* - צוהא - meaning

connection or bond.

Every *mitzvah* represents a bond with G-d, a step above the limits of humanity and a chance to relate to G-d on His terms.

A person can try to relate to G-d intellectually or emotionally, but then he is circumscribed by his thoughts and his feelings. He can go no further than the limits of his mind and heart. And G-d certainly transcends those limits.

A Means to Bond

Indeed, since G-d is infinite and man, finite, one might think that there is no way that one can ever relate to G-d, because finiteness and infinity are skew lines that will never intersect.

From man's own perspective, this is true. But the limits mentioned above do not confine G-d. For His infinity encompasses finiteness as well. He can step into the realm of finiteness and give man a means of bonding with Him.

That's what *mitzvos* are. G-d prescribes a physical deed for man to carry out. True, every one of these deeds has manifold significance, enabling us to refine ourselves and the world at large.

But over and above any and all significance, the advantage of a *mitzvah* is that

when a person performs a *mitzvah*, he or she bonds with G-d in all His infinity.

Grabbing the Opportunity

For this reason, Moses was eager to perform the *mitzvah* of setting aside the cities of refuge before his passing.

He knew the meaning and significance of all the *mitzvos*, but he was not interested in the intellectual satisfaction that this knowledge brought him. He wanted the infinite bond that can be achieved only through actually fulfilling the *mitzvos*.

That's why — on a personal level — he prayed so sincerely to be allowed to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, as related at the beginning of this week's Torah reading. He wanted the chance to fulfill all the *mitzvos* whose observance is associated with our Holy Land.

When G-d did not grant his request, he grabbed the opportunity to fulfill whatever *mitzvos* he could. Therefore, even though his act would have no immediate effect, he set aside the three cities of refuge in Trans Jordan.

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From our Sages

Lest you corrupt yourselves and make a graven image (Deut. 4:16)

Why did Moses have to remind the Jewish people not to make graven images, considering the fact that they had just spent forty years in the desert and had seen open miracles and wonders?

From this we learn that an individual must never think that his worship of G-d is perfect and he is beyond temptation. One must be ever on guard, even against sins which appear to have no attraction. *(Sifrei Musar)*

Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One (Deut. 6:4)

Our Rabbis said: "Hear--in every language." One can accept the yoke of heaven in any language, not just in the Hebrew tongue. Likewise, in every object that a person sees and every sound which reaches his ears he must strive to see that "the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One." We can find G-d's greatness and absolute unity reflected in every single thing which occurs in the world.

(Sefat Emet)

And these words which I command you this day shall be in your heart (Deut. 6:6)

"These words" of Torah should be always at the ready; all one must do is open up one's heart for a second and they will enter.

(Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk)

At that time, saying (Deut. 3:23)

Moses beseeched G-d that in later generations -- "at that time" - - when the Jews will be in the depths of exile, unable to muster up the proper intentions before praying and only capable of uttering the words, their prayers should be acceptable before G-d.

(The Amshinover Rebbe)

Take good care of your souls (Deut. 4:15)

One must not abuse or neglect the physical body, for "a small defect in the body creates a large defect in the soul."

(The Mezeritcher Maggid)

Respect for a Rav

Despite disagreements and irrespective of the actual dispute, the Rebbe taught that respect for rabbonim must be upheld.

To this end, in 5747 (1987), when as a result of a machlokes (dispute) the local rabbonim were not honored with being called to the Torah for the Ten Commandments aliya, the Rebbe publicly protested.

Rav Mordechai Shmuel Ashkenazi, a"h, (the previous Rav of Kfar Chabad) related: In the 5710's (1950's), there was a certain fundraiser in Eretz Yisroel who created much strife within the Chabad institutions. The episode involved my grandfather, Harav Meir Ashkenazi, the former Rav of Shanghai.

Once, in a conversation with the Rebbe, this man called my grandfather a shakran [liar]. The Rebbe responded sharply, "If one calls a Rav a liar, one's teeth fall out!"

Indeed, not long thereafter, this man's teeth came loose and began falling out...

Respect for a Rav and Blessings for a Shidduch reprinted from The Weekly Farbrengen by Merkaz Anash, on-line at TheWeeklyFarbrengen.com

Chassidus page

The Greatness of the 15th of Av

The greatness of the 15th of Av is described in the end of the tractate Ta'anis, which says, "The Jews had no holidays like the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur." Since the holidays are reexperienced every year in the spiritual sense, we have this same holy effect each year.

Chassidus explains that the reason why the 15th of Av is so holy is due to its falling on the 15th of the month, when the moon is full. Since the Jewish people are likened to the moon, the full moon symbolizes the full holiness and revelation of the Jewish people. However, this seems questionable -- every month has a 15th! Furthermore, the holidays of Pesach and Sukkos both fall on the 15th of Nissan and Tishrei, respectively.

The answer to this lies in the unique nature of the month of Av, which contains the tragic date of Tisha B'Av, when the Temples (first and second) were destroyed. These, as well as other tragic events in this month, affect its entire character. Since later on, this month becomes a time of joy (because of the various joyous events of the 15th of Av), the joy is much greater than it would otherwise be. Since the month has been converted and transformed from a time of mourning to a time of joy, it has the advantage of "light which comes from darkness." The previous darkness contributes to the light which comes later.

In one's life there are times when one serves G-d more completely, and others when he is somewhat lacking. The latter times represent a sort of destruction --

since the person is likened to the Temple, a lack in his service is like its destruction, G-d forbid. The 15th of Av teaches that the lack can be transformed into an advantage. Just as the 15th of Av is such a great holiday because of the destruction, his lack in serving G-d can also be transformed into an advantage.

As our Sages mention regarding Av, the destruction was "in order" that there be a later ascent. So too, G-d created us with a yetzer hara (evil inclination), the intention being that we overcome it and transform it - leading to the greatness of "light which comes from darkness."

Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe in Sichos in English

A Blessing for a Shidduch

One of the qualities of the 15th of Av is that it served as a day for matchmaking for the young men and women of Jerusalem. Thus, we share the following letter:

A young woman requested a blessing for a shidduch. The Rebbe responded in his handwriting: "I confirm receipt of your letter of 11/13 concerning a shidduch and marriage. The source of blessings is Ha-Shem, Who gives the Torah and commands us to observe the mitzvos. The way to receive His blessings is by the daily observance [of the Shulchan Aruch].

"And concerning a shidduch: First and foremost -- a life of tznius (modesty), exactly as described in our Torah, the Torah of Life."

A Bottle for the Wedding

Continued from page 1:

"Not in this case," said the Rabbi and told him about the wedding of the ger tzedek and the newly religious girl whose parents were boycotting the wedding.

Shlomo did not hesitate for a second. They will be my personal guests at my simcha. He told the Rabbi to invite the wedding party to his banquet and he would put them at the head table as his guests of honor. In addition, he offered to take the couple under the chupa together with his wife.

When the wedding contingent turned up, they were ushered into the grand hall where Shlomo's guests were arriving at the same time. The chupa was erected on the balcony.

The story of the amazing Divine Providence flew from mouth to ear among the throngs until there was not a dry eye to be seen.

At some point during the meal, Shlomo related to the assembled guests the story of how the Rebbe had given him the bottle of vodka, with the words, "it's for the wedding."

Then the bride asked for permission to speak. "Actually, the bottle of vodka belongs to me. In my dream, the Rebbe told me that he would be present at the wedding. I now understand that his giving you the bottle of vodka to be used at my wedding is the Rebbe's way of participating and attending."

By Yaakov Cass

Author's note: This story is being presented in honor of the 15th of Av. It was related to me by Harav Moshe Viner, Rav of the Chabad community in Ramot Gimmel. He vouches for the authenticity of the narrative. Names have been changed to respect the couple's privacy.

Rabbi Cass is a Lubavitcher chossid living in Jerusalem. Until recently he was a senior official in the Israel Ministry of Health.

Moshiach Now

And I besought G-d at that time, saying...let me go over, I pray You, that I may see the good land (Deut. 3:23-25)

The Midrash relates that Moses beseeched G-d with 515 prayers (the numerical equivalent of the word "va'etchanan" -- "and I besought") to be allowed to enter the Land of Israel. Even after G-d explicitly told him, "Do not continue to speak to Me any more of this matter," Moses persisted.

We learn from this that we must never give up begging and imploring G-d to allow us back into the land of Israel, with the coming of Moshiach, for we have been promised that we are the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption.

(the Rebbe, Shabbat Parshat Devarim, 5751)

Human Interest

The G.I.F.T.

G.I.F.T is an organization in Tzfat, Israel supporting women who live on their own. Its purpose is to be there for them emotionally and practically.

The founder G.I.F.T. realized that there was a great need in Tzfat, yet she knew she couldn't do it herself. So, she asked a friend, a Chabad shlucha in Tzfat, to come on board. Together they created G.I.F.T, which stands for "Going Forward Together".

The founders formed a WhatsApp Group. What started out with a few women expanded to nearly 40 participants and is still growing!

Many of the members are new immi-

Thank you so much for the Shavuot gift. It is so sweet and thoughtful. And this group is truly amazing

WhatsApp Message from one of G.I.F.T.'s members

grants to Israel, not familiar with the language and culture. A lot of them don't have family in Israel. The women of G.I.F.T. may be divorced, widowed or never married. What they share in common is the need to belong and not feel that they are alone.

G.I.F.T. activities began with Melaveh Malkas, followed by outings such as a forest barbeque, a visit to a local winery and many others. Attractive and meaningful gifts are hand delivered before Yom Tov. Some of G.I.F.T.'s members initiated new programs themselves - for example a Zoom art class that everyone can enjoy.

For women who live on their own, G.I.F.T. is a lifeline. Thanks to the activities, many of the women no longer feel isolated and cut off from community. They are committed to *Going Forward Together*.

By Baruch Gordon, freelance journalist, jongordon770@gmail.com

Cooking Tip of the Week

Marinated Pargiot: Marinate 1 kilo of pargiot in 3 tbs olive oil, 3 tbs lemon juice, 2 tbs grilled chicken spice and 1 tbs zaatar. I left it in the refrigerator for 3 hours. Place on baking pan and sprinkle the left over marinade on top. Bake at 180 C for 20 minutes. Turn and bake another 20 minutes. This can also be made in a grill pan.

Alizah Hochstead,
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Halacha Corner – Changing Children's Garments

According to halachah, a child's soiled garment, or any *inyan* of *tinuf* (dirt), should not be within the sight of a *mezuzah*; therefore, one should not change diapers in front of a *mezuzah*. There is a custom not to have young children walk around undressed in front of *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* candles out of respect for the mitzvah. In fact, it is considered a *sakanah* (dangerous) to walk around undressed in front of candles, even during the week. There are those who suggest that if one is changing a diaper or dressing a child in front of a candle, it's not a problem as long as the child is uncovered for a very short time, since most likely it was inevitable before the advent of electricity. Nevertheless, one should not allow a child to run around in an immodest state. The Alter Rebbe writes that children should be appropriately covered in front of *sefarim* (holy books) as well.

A solution for changing a diaper in a room where there are *mezuzos*, *sefarim*, or *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* candles (or ordinary candles)—is for the person who is changing the diaper to stand in a way that effectively blocks the view from the *mezuzos*, *sefarim*, or candles.

Rav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, *shlita*, Mara D'asra and member of the Badatz of Crown Heights, 1 Minute Halacha, reprinted from crownheightsconnect.com

Farbrengen

Question: We made aliya 15 years ago from New York and live in Jerusalem with our six children. Recently, we had an end of the year parent/teacher/child meeting for our 8 year old son. The teacher asked our son to draw a face that describes how he feels. My son drew the saddest face. We were shocked. The teacher asked him "why" but he just shrugged. The teacher later told us in private they did the same exercise three months ago and our son drew the same face. My husband and I do not understand. We are always giving to our kids and loving them unconditionally. How could he be so sad?

Answer: Love and giving, while important, are not the *only* ingredient of a happy child. Although children need love, they also want to feel *needed*.

Feeling needed gives a child a sense of belonging. The child feels secure in knowing that he has an important role in the family dynamic, in the home. In addition, it can create a deeper parent-child connection.

Mitzva, commandment, is related to the word *tzavta*, connection. We connect to Hashem when we fulfill His Will. Although a student feels good in the presence of his Rabbi, when the Rabbi asks him to do something, the student feels a greater sense of meaning, importance, purpose and closeness to his Rabbi.

Along the same lines, we can understand the verse, "serve Hashem with happiness," as a command. Or, we can read the verse, "serve Hashem" and as a result you will be happy. A person who serves Hashem with the awareness that He needs him to help accomplish the purpose of creation, the revelation of Hashem in this physical world, feels a vitality and happiness in his service of the Creator.

In addition, love is not only expressed through giving. Children want and need strength and boundaries from their parents. They want to know that their parents can contain their powerful desires and emotions. Children that get whatever they want are not the happiest children.

When a parent is confident in their role as a parent and sets healthy boundaries, the child feels secure. The child will also learn to set their own internal and external boundaries, leading to a self-confident, secure, calm and happy child.

Aharon Schmidt - marriage & individual coaching. Video and telephone sessions also available. For an appointment contact: coachingandcounseling1@gmail.com

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