

Living Jewish



Tell your Children

No Outreach is Ever in Vain

Rabbi Ari Shishler runs Chabad of Strathavon in Sandton which is not far from Johannesburg, South Africa. Some years ago he was invited to be the rabbi in residence of Plettenberg Bay, a popular holiday resort near Cape Town. During the holiday season it fills up with many Jews searching for the cooler air away from Johannesburg.

The day after he arrived at the resort, he arranged a lively breakfast farbrengen. After the participants had dispersed, one of the locals walked over to him and asked he would take a question, albeit a long one. With a wide smile, Rabbi Shishler replied in the affirmative for after all, he himself was on holiday.

"Well Rabbi, some six or seven years ago two young Chabad yeshiva bachurim (students) came to visit us here in Plettenberg Bay but it was not during the holiday season. They came armed with a list of the members of the local Jewish community and proceeded to visit each family, one by one. When it was my turn, I was happy to welcome them into my home and we spent a very pleasant time discussing all matters Jewish. After a while they asked me if I would like to don Tefillin, but I declined because I hadn't done it since my bar mitzvah and had no intention of starting it again. Nothing could persuade me to change my mind. We parted on good terms but the Tefillin never left their bags.

"That night I couldn't sleep. I berated myself for not having taken up the kind offer of those two sweet boys. What harm would it have done to put on Tefillin? The next morning I climbed up to the attic to dig out my bar mitzvah Tefillin, covered in fifty years of dust. I brought them down and resolved to put them on every day of the coming year, to compensate for my stubbornness.

"When the year was up I decided to make a new resolution. I would put the Tefillin on every day for another year, but this time with a bracha (blessing). However, I had no idea what the bracha was! So back I went, climbing up to the attic, to find my bar mitzvah siddur, the inequitable Singer's Prayer Book of course. It was covered in fifty years of



Helping a Fellow Jew Put on Tefillin, picture reprinted from COLlive.com

dust. I flipped through the siddur until I found the bracha, but in so doing, I discovered that one is not supposed to don Tefillin on Shabbat. You live and learn!

"At the end of the 'second year,' I decided to upgrade and see if I had any other Jewish books in my possession. Back to the attic, wading through more dust until I found my Soncino Chumash (Five books of Moses). I had now retrieved my entire Judaica library. I turned to Google for assistance in understanding what exactly these Five Books of Moses were all about. I learnt that they are divided into approximately 52 sections and every Saturday the Jews read one of them, usually in the synagogue, until they finish the whole Chumash. Rabbi Google was kind enough to tell me which section we were up to at the time.

"And so week by week I read the English translation of the weekly sedra. I didn't understand an awful lot but it made me feel very Jewish. At the end of the year, another session with Google taught me that there was a famous commentator by the name of Rashi who could probably help me understand many of the mysteries hidden between the layers of the Chumash. The Soncino Chumash had extracts from Rashi printed at the bottom of the page and indeed they were most helpful.

"Another year went past but by then I was looking for something much more serious. With Google's help once again, I discovered that there was a page printed each week and it was called 'Thought for the Week.' It summarized the week-

ly talk of a rabbi named Rabbi M. M. Schneerson. A brave new world had opened up.

"Yet another year passed and I realized to my sad dismay that I had failed to share my new delight in the Torah with the other members of my community. I phoned them all up one by one to let them know I was starting a Wednesday evening get together: whiskey, smoked salmon and some food for the soul. Ever since then, we get together every single week to bask in the Rebbe's wisdom.

"And now Rabbi, here is my question: I still feel terrible for turning those boys away with their tails between their legs. As you are a Chabadnik I thought that just maybe you could help me find them so that I can apologize for my insensitivity. How bad they must feel."

Rabbi Shishler smiled his big warm smile and said the search was to end right there and then because he actually knew who the boys were.

The man was quite taken aback for he had not been prepared for such a quick solution to his years of despair. The explanation was very simple, as Rabbi Shishler continued: "I myself was one of those two bachurim!"

By Yaakov Cass (as related by Rabbi Shishler) with appreciation to Rebbetzin Malka Touger for her assistance. Rabbi Cass is a Lubavitcher chossid living in Jerusalem. Until recently he was a senior official in the Israel Ministry of Health.

Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	4:16	5:27
Tel Aviv	4:31	5:29
Haifa	4:21	5:27
Beer Sheva	4:34	5:30
New York	5:36	6:35

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Avraham - Hashem's Possession

This week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha, deals entirely with Abraham, the very first Jew.

In the Mishna "Ethics of the Fathers," Abraham is referred to as one of G-d's five special "possessions": "The Holy One, Blessed Be He, acquired five possessions in His world. These are the Torah, one possession; heaven and earth, one possession; Abraham, one possession; Israel, one possession; and the Holy Temple, one possession."

G-d created everything, so the whole universe obviously belongs to Him. Why, then, are these five "possessions" singled out? Furthermore, if the entire people of Israel is already a possession, why is Abraham regarded separately?

Ownership More Apparent

The explanation lies in the exact wording of the Mishna, which states that G-d acquired these possessions "in His world," not "in the world."

G-d "owns" all of creation, but in some creations this ownership is more apparent than in others. The five possessions listed in the Mishna were chosen because they

most openly demonstrate G-d's ownership. Let's look at each of them individually:

Five Possessions

The Torah, even as it is en clothed in physical terms we can relate to, is obviously G-d's wisdom and will.

The Jewish people, whose souls are "a veritable part of G-d Above," testify to G-d's presence in the world by revealing holiness.

Similarly, the Holy Temple functioned as a dwelling place for the Divine Presence. From Jerusalem, the Temple's light spread out to illuminate the entire world.

Heaven and earth reveal G-dliness because of their quality of everlastingness. Most creations are visibly affected by the passage of time, but the stars and planets appear immutable and unchanging. The earth, too, reminds us of G-d because of its latent powers of germination and growth.

Finally, our Patriarch Abraham is worthy of inclusion on this list because his entire life was devoted to teaching people about G-d. All Jews are G-d's possessions by virtue of their soul, but Abraham's sole *raison d'être* was to make G-d's Name known wherever he went.

Abraham is especially noteworthy because

he lived before the giving of the Torah. Nonetheless, he succeeded in fostering belief in G-d in his fellow man, despite tremendous obstacles.

Strength - Then and Now

Not only did Abraham remain uninfluenced by the prevailing idolatry of his era, he was able to persuade others to worship G-d and to serve Him.

Abraham is thus regarded as a "possession" in his own right, or as G-d told him, "I consider you My partner in the world's creation."

Furthermore, as a descendant of Abraham, every Jew inherits this ability to withstand opposing forces and reveal G-dliness and holiness in his surroundings.

Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, Likutei Sichot Vol. 35; Shabbos Table and From our Sages reprinted from LchaimWeekly.org - LYO / NYC

From our Sages

Go out of your country...to the land that I will show you (Gen. 12:1)

Surprisingly, the Torah does not explicitly tell us that G-d showed Abraham the Land of Israel, prompting another explanation based on Hebrew grammar:

In this instance, the letter kaf in the word "areka" does not refer to the Land, but to Abraham. In other words, G-d was telling Abraham that He would show Himself and reveal His true nature to the world through Abraham's service.

(HaDrash VeHa'iyun)

And Abram said to the king of Sodom...I will not take from a thread to a thong (Gen. 14:22-23)

In the merit of this declaration, Abraham's descendants were given two mitzvot: the blue thread of the tzitzit and the leather straps of the tefilin.

(Midrash)

For their wealth was great, so that they could not dwell together (Gen. 13:6)

Not poverty but wealth, and the jealousy it engenders, is the cause of most of the dissension and conflict in the world.

(Likrat Shabbat)

Your reward will be exceedingly great (Gen. 15:1)

The reward a Jew receives for doing mitzvot is vastly out of proportion to the deed itself: a finite and limited action is rewarded with an eternal and everlasting dividend.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

And the souls that they made in Charan (Gen. 12:5)

A person who takes pity on a poor man and sustains him is credited with having "created" that person, as we learn from Abraham our forefather:

"The souls that they made" refers to the multitude of guests to whom Abraham offered his hospitality and brought into his tent.

(Zohar)

The Two Circumstances

A woman once asked the Rebbe whether she should work out of the home.

Before answering the question, the Rebbe prefaced by clarifying the Torah perspective on the matter: "The primary duty of a married woman is to be a good homemaker, running the house in general and raising and educating the children in particular. This is also compatible with the theme of kol kevuda bas melech penima, the glory of the king's daughter is inward.

"With difficulty, the gedolei Yisroel (the leading Rabbis) have permitted a woman to work outside the home, in two circumstances:

"One, in order to work in the field of education. Since women have a unique motherly sensitivity, they therefore have a deeper effect on children.

"Two, in order to assist in parnassa (livelihood). Either so that the husband can learn Torah diligently, or in a case where the husband's breadwinning efforts do not make ends meet."

The Rebbe then directed his question to the petitioner, "Do any of those reasons apply to you?"

Teshura Levin, Nissan 5767

The Two Circumstances, Moshiaich Now! and Halacha Corner reprinted from The Weekly Farbrengen by Merkaz Anash, on-line at TheWeeklyFarbrengen.com

Chassidus page

Lech Lecha - A Path of Self-Discovery

This week's Torah portion is named *Lech Lecha*, recalling G-d's first command to Abraham. *Lech* means "go." G-d was telling him to go out, to leave his native land and his father's household, to emerge from the cocoon of protected existence and set out on his own path in the world.

R. Moshe Alshich explains: *Lecha* means "to yourself." By journeying throughout the world, Abraham was setting out on a path of self-discovery. The purpose of his journey to *Eretz Yisrael*, his descent to Egypt, his return to the land, and all his wanderings was to enable him to understand his identity and express his positive qualities in his surrounding environment.

Our Rabbis teach, "The deeds of our forefathers are a sign for their children." Abraham was a singular individual, one man who taught the belief in G-d to a world that did not want to listen. We are, however, all singularly unique. The Baal Shem Tov taught that G-d loves every Jew with the love parents lavish on an only child born to them in their old age. Just as He commanded and guided Abraham on a journey to his true self, so, too, with loving patience, He guides each one of us on our own journey through life. Through a web of interlocking designs, He directs us all to a common intent — that we each reveal to ourselves and to others the unique G-dly potentials that we have been granted.

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that everything which a person sees or hears serves as a lesson for him in his relationship with

G-d. Since everything that happens in this world is controlled by Divine providence, and man was "created solely to serve his Creator," it follows that any and every event or entity that a person encounters is intended to help him advance his relationship with G-d.

For that purpose, G-d leads us all from the cradle onward, step by step, through a variety of experiences — the sum total of which are intended to enable us to discover and express our inner G-dly potential.

When Abraham set out on his journey, he took with him "the souls he had made in Charan": the people he had motivated to join him in his mission. This too is a lesson. Man's journey through life is not intended to be a lonely trek on mountain crags or in desert settings. Quite the contrary, G-d leads us through a world with other people with whom we interact in synergy, both giving and receiving. For they are on similar journeys, parallel in purpose if not necessarily in route.

As a person grows to appreciate these concepts, he will be able to maximize his opportunities in life, making his experiences happier and more fruitful. He will not be encumbered by fear or worry, because he will realize that at every moment, a watching hand is guiding him, directing him to encounters intended to advance his personal growth and his contribution to the world.

Adapted from Keeping in Touch, from the teachings of the Rebbe, Sichos in English

A Real Jewish Mother

A renowned personage of the old Jewish settlement in Jerusalem was the holy R' Dovid Biederman, a scion of Rabbinic and Chassidic lineage. He was known as a Tzaddik among Tzaddikim. His only concern in life was whether he was living up to the expectations of his Creator.

Once, R' Dovid decided to undertake the arduous, almost day-long trek on donkey from Jerusalem to the gravesite of Rachel Imainu. He set out early in the morning, right after the conclusion of the sunrise minyan. The entire way he contemplated and organized the prayers he would say there. He wanted to be sure not to forget anything, since it was only infrequently that he had the chance to come. When he arrived he saw he was not alone. A woman with a number of small children had arrived previously and was making herself at home in the monument's domed chamber. She had already spread out a blanket and laid the youngest child down to sleep. When R' Dovid arrived she was busy preparing the evening meal.

R' Dovid was incredulous. Did she have no regard for the sanctity of the site? How could she busy herself with such mundane matters in such a holy place? R' Dovid, in a less than friendly tone, demanded an explanation. The weary woman replied softly, "I would think that our Mother Rachel would be pleased that we are eating and resting here."

R' Dovid felt suddenly faint and uneasy. He realized that he had been making the journey to Rachel's Tomb for decades and had not even begun to understand what it represented. Here was a simple unlearned woman, yet she possessed a profound grasp of the true holiness of Rachel's Tomb. He now understood that Rachel was the mother who wept and prayed for her children. Her desire is only that we should have some relief, some comfort in life, some peace of mind in order to better serve Hashem. From that day on, whenever R' Dovid travelled to the Tomb of Rachel, he made sure to bring with him a meal which he would share with all the others who came to entreat our mother Rachel to intercede for them and bring their prayers on high.

Rachel Imainu's yahrzeit is the 11th of MarCheshvan. Reprinted from Nishmas.org

Moshiach Now

Such Criticism!

When the Rebbe began speaking with increasing urgency about the imminent arrival of Moshiach, some people from other religious communities were disturbed by it.

In 5742, the future Gerrer Rebbe, Reb Pinchas Menachem Alter, had a personal audience with the Rebbe. The Rebbe addressed the burning issue of the redemption. "This is the fervent wish and hope of the Jewish people, to leave exile and to come to Eretz Yisroel with Moshiach Tzidkeinu. Indeed, as of late, I stress that Moshiach must come 'now'."

Here the Rebbe made a rare reference to himself: "Some have criticized my approach. How fortunate I am, that the criticism leveled against me is that I talk too much about Moshiach!"

Human Interest

Shliach Army Chaplain

A Chabad rabbi was sworn in as a chaplain in the Colorado Army National Guard.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Gorelik, the Chabad director at Colorado State University and a faculty member at the university for the past 15 years, was sworn in on October 2nd by Colorado Governor Jared Polis, who donned a yarmulke for the occasion.



Gorelik, 44, told the Intermountain Jewish News that he was inspired to enlist by generations of his family who served in militaries including Russia, Australia and the United States. He also decided to enlist due to the rise in anti-Semitism in recent years.

Gorelik will be the first Jewish chaplain in Colorado's Army National Guard in at least 20 years, Lt. Col. David Nagel, who oversees the program, told the Coloradoan.

Reprinted from Chabadinfo.com

Cooking Tip of the Week

Browning Butter: Looking for a way to prevent butter from over-browning in your pan? An easy tip is to add a little bit of lemon juice.

Halacha Corner – *A person with Corona unwittingly infected me in shul and I was out of work for two weeks. Must he reimburse me?*

Coronavirus is assumed to spread mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes and these droplets are subsequently inhaled by another. A precedent may be found in the obligation to pay for damages caused by one's fire that was subsequently spread by the wind—including for loss of work and medical bills. (Poskim (Halachic authorities) dispute if beis din (Jewish court), which may presently only adjudicate common damages, can rule on fire damages, yet beis din can certainly make a takana (decree or directive) if they feel the need.)

Generally, one is liable even for unintentional damages. Imperceptible damages—e.g. applying tuma (impurity), making yayin nesech (wine used for idolatry)—aren't considered damage according to halacha, and one who did so unintentionally cannot be charged. Yet, a monetary penalty is imposed on one who does so deliberately. When the damage is physical just not noticeable to the naked eye—e.g. poisoning, or a virus, which are biologically recognizable—achronim (later Halachic authorities) rule that it is considered a discernable damage. If as a result of close contact, the other person did not contract the virus, but was mandated to quarantine by law, it is debatable whether that is considered a discernable damage since in this case nothing physical transpired.

Was the infected individual at fault for not wearing a mask? If one left out poison and an animal ate it, he is legally exempt—and only liable in the Heavenly court—since the animal is the one who consumed the poison. The virus, on the other hand, actually attacks the other person and he doesn't have the option not to inhale it. (For illustration, one who shoots a bullet can't say he is not liable because the other person didn't wear a bullet-proof vest.) To force someone to pay, one must have proof. While it is sometimes assumed that a certain person infected him, it is usually not known for sure that it was indeed that person. Thus, he can claim it wasn't him and avoid paying. In situations of need, beis din has the authority to institute special laws and enforce them. It goes without saying that one of the fundamentals of ahavas Yisroel is not to do to others what you wouldn't want done to yourself. Since one would not want someone else to infect him with the virus, he should take appropriate precautions to avoid spreading the virus.

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin, Rav of Chabad, Petach Tikva

Farbrengen

Question: You mentioned in a previous column that to build a connection with our teenage children we should show interest in what interests them. I have been doing what you said. However, when I try and talk about ideas in Torah, things that interest me, my son just spaces out and doesn't pay attention. I feel that if I am making the effort to be interested in his stuff, he should at least, out of respect, try and be interested in what I talk about. Do you think I should tell him?

Answer: The column you referenced discussed a situation wherein a parent was looking for ways to bridge the distance he felt with his teenage child. It was explained that teenagers are at an age where they are beginning to form opinions and are exploring new interests. When a parent shows interest in their child, the child feels respected and valued and the potential for closeness is created.

A parent must have an eye to the future. Expectations of quick gains with teenage children are a recipe for disappointment. While the short road looks tempting it is more often the "long but shorter road" which sees positive results. In other words, while it is possible for change to happen fast, it usually takes time, and requires investment and patience. Growth is a process. As parents we are sowing seeds, knowing that the future will yield fruit.

When the parent wants their child to change because it is good for the parent, the relationship becomes a battle of wills - the parent versus the child. However, when the parent's focus is on the good of the child, the situation becomes less personal; it is easier for the parent to remain calm and regulated. The child senses the difference, he feels the genuine care of the parent, and space is created for a real connection to take root.

Consider taking a dual approach. On the one hand, don't give up, but continue to speak with your child. Your child may not seem like he is listening, but your words do seep in. Try and speak with stories and analogies that have the potential to arouse his interest. At the same time, connect with your child where he is holding. Show interest in what interests him. You cannot change him, but by creating an environment where he feels accepted and supported, he will be inspired to change. Let go of the pressure and expectation that he will now listen to you as you listen to him. Just enjoy spending time with your teenage child. The better the connection, the better things will be.

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