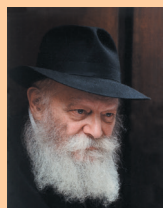


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, *Vayeishev*, we read about Jacob and his 12 sons. Joseph receives preferential treatment from his father, causing his brothers to be jealous of him.

Two of the brothers plot to kill Joseph, but he gets thrown into a pit and eventually sold into slavery instead.

Joseph is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officers. G-d blesses everything Joseph does but he eventually winds up in jail on false charges. Even in jail Joseph's abilities are recognized, and he is appointed to a position of authority in the prison.

Despised by his brothers, sold into slavery, and thrown into jail on false charges. Orphaned of his mother, alone in a foreign land. Yet you don't get the feeling that Joseph was depressed or down. He seems able to rise above and succeed in every situation.

How is Joseph able to stay positive? How can we be like Joseph and stay positive?

There are several approaches one can take when confronted with challenges. One can become a life long victim, the "woe is me" mentality. This type of existence is a miserable one. Then there is the guy who can get up after being knocked down. Although this sounds admirable, it can be exhausting, and it is very difficult.

A third option is the "Joseph" approach. Joseph's paradigm was the key to his positive outlook. Joseph saw himself as part of G-d's plan, he saw every situation as part of the plan. When you perceive the world from this perspective, every so-called "challenge" is nothing more than part of the plan and thus positive. You are never pounded to begin with.

Our perspective is the key to our happiness. When we only see ourselves, we are stuck with the difficulty of being beaten, the pain, the hurt, the anguish, the suffering, etc.

However, when you see everything as part of G-d's plan, every situation is seen as an opportunity. The crazier/stranger the situation, the more meaning to find in it. Instead of being clobbered, you are uplifted.

It is not easy to get past ourselves, but by doing so, we can see things from Joseph's perspective. By seeing it all as part of G-d's plan, we can overcome life's challenges.

I have so much faith in our ability to be like Joseph, to always recognize that our challenges are purposeful. In this way, we can lead with wisdom and grace.

However, this life approach does not absolve G-d. We have too many challenges and we have seen too much pain. It is time for G-d to let us all know how well we have done, and bring Moshiach now.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzhihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

Are You Ready?

by Rabbi Mendy Herson

Covid doesn't stop the clock, and Chanuka is upon us!

So, are you ready?

Celebrating Chanuka may seem simple, especially this year: We light the Menora, eat some latkes and play some Dreidel. Give some gifts at our small, Covid-safe, immediate-family-only party, and we should be good. So how much preparation do we need?

Actually, experiencing Chanuka is so much richer and more complex.

Look at the Menora, an instrument of 'illumination.' By its dictionary definition, to 'illuminate' means to cast light on something, as kindling a Chanuka Menora illuminates a dark room.

Taking it a notch deeper, 'illumination' means to brighten, in the sense that a smile brightens your loved one's mood.

'Illumination' means to clarify, in the sense that your insightful statement can settle a friend's frazzled emotional state.

'Illuminate' means to ignite, in the sense that an inspiring word will spark your co-worker's soul.

'Illuminate' means to enlighten, in the sense that finding purpose will brighten your life, by dispelling the dark shadows of meaninglessness.

'Illuminate' means to make something dazzle, like nurturing your spousal relationship makes its beauty shine.

Conceptually, illumination is a lot more than striking a match. It's about creating and highlighting transcendence, beauty and clarity.

This brings us to Chanuka. More than

two-thousand years ago, the Hellenists tried to gut Judaism of its 'G-d element;' they permitted 'rational' Jewish practices, but forbade Divinity – finding connection with G-d - as part of the equation. The Hasmoneans (Maccabees) understood that this would strike at the essence of Judaism, rendering any observance soulless.

If we see our world as just a sphere



hurtling through space, then life is inherently vacuous, no matter what rituals one follows.

The Hasmoneans knew that G-d and Torah would bring Holiness to their lives, clarity to their quandaries, a spark to their souls, and purpose to their worldly journeys. They knew that G-d is the indispensable ingredient for a genuine life of beauty. And they fought for that.

The Hasmoneans also set the bar for future Chanukah celebrations. Brightening your living room is relatively easy illumination to accomplish. But achieving the more profound illumination, finding Higher Light and Connection, is more complicated than striking a match. It takes advance soul-searching and preparation.

So, are you ready?

Rabbi Mendy Herson and his wife Malki, are co-founders and directors of Chabad of Greater Somerset County

SLICE OF LIFE

A Miracle Behind Bars

by Harry Langsam



Dark clouds covered the European skies, threatening the children of Israel in the fall of 1939. The Nazis had tightened their grip over Eastern Europe and, as it often happens, nature acted with unfriendliness toward the oppressed. A cold winter came upon us – the refugees – after the traumatic and dreadful fall, when the German occupation began.

Jewish refugees who barely escaped with their lives from the Nazi savage were not met with open arms by the Soviet authorities. The Soviets had recently invaded the eastern part of Poland. They turned every public building into a temporary prison where the refugees from the Nazis were incarcerated under the suspicion that there might be German spies among the wretched.

My older brother, Simcha, and I were lucky to be imprisoned in a real prison, the infamous “Brigidkes,” in Lwow. This was a prison where political prisoners were kept during the reign of the Polish fascist regime till the outbreak of the Second World War. Fifty-eight people were deposited in one cell that could hardly hold 25. The majority of the prisoners were Jews who were detained during the crossing of the San

River, which became the newly established border between the Soviets and Germany.

We suffered horribly, morally and physically. The Soviets stripped us naked while searching our belongings and confiscated every valuable item, including items that were close to our souls. They confiscated all our prayer books, prayer shawls and tefillin. This painful situation added to our depressive mood when our thoughts were with our beloved ones. The only happy moments that we were blessed with were the times we spent donning the tefillin one man had successfully managed to smuggle into the cell. The pleasure lasted only a minute or two because everyone was eager to partake in the mitzvah of donning tefillin daily. Most of the refugees were religious people, and it was very hard for everyone to digest the non-kosher food that we were served. There were a few holdouts that survived on bread and water only.

There was among us one unique personality. His name was Reb Shmuel Nachum Emmer, a pious, Chasidic person. He was not an ordinary person; he was an angel sent from heaven. He supported us spiritually, and consoled us not to despair, assuring us that our suffering was only temporary. His love for a fellow Jew was immeasurable. He never became angry with people who were not observant. He suffered for all of us, but he did not show it outwardly. On the contrary, whenever he talked someone into reciting a blessing over food, or not to smoke on the Sabbath, it made him the happiest man in the cell.

When Chanukah was upon us, suddenly, Reb Shmuel’s face dropped and became filled with sadness.

“How in the world are we going to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles?” he lamented.

We all felt his pain but could not help him. We found no words to cheer him up. Unless another miracle occurred, people thought to themselves, what chance did we have to observe Chanukah in a Soviet jailhouse?

On the first night of Chanukah we recited the evening prayers in a depressed mood. Everyone was heartbroken, Reb Shmuel more than anyone else. After the sound of the whistle was heard that signaled to us that it was time to lie down on our uncomfortable beds, the lights in our cell were left burning, as it was customary around the world that in every prison the lights never go out.

Around midnight the lights did go out. A power failure occurred in the entire prison compound. Soon after, the guard ran from cell to cell distributing candles so that the prisoners should not be in the dark. When the guard opened our cell door, with a box of candles in his hands, someone sneaked behind his back and pulled the bottom flap of the box open and the candles spilled all over the floor. Needless to say, the guard never collected all the spilled candles. As soon as the guard left, we quietly gathered in a corner, and Reb Shmuel, with a radiant face, lit the first Chanukah candle with great devotion. We quietly sang Chanukah songs, and the stronger believers were convinced that it was a divine act, that a real miracle had occurred.

We managed to light a small candle each night during the eight days of the Festival of Lights. Believe it or not, in a certain way, we had a happy Chanukah.

Sadly, Reb Shmuel did not survive the harshness of the Soviet labor camps. However, he did leave a legacy, namely, a prayer book handwritten on small pieces of paper in the Zhitomir prison, which remains in the hands of my brother, Simcha. Reb Shmuel had a remarkable memory, and remembered all prayers by heart. The prayer book went through many searches and was never discovered. It is a work of art, which my brother cherishes to this day.

Harry Langsam (obm) was born in 1921 in Poland. After escaping the Nazi onslaught and spending the war years in the Soviet Union, he was settled in a DP Camp in Germany. He emigrated to Israel and then eventually moved to the United States. After retiring Mr. Langsam began writing his life story, including the above.

World’s Largest Menora

Be part of the Chanuka celebrations at the World’s Largest Menora at Fifth Ave. and 59th St. in New York City. The Menora will be lit all the nights of Chanuka. On Friday at 3:45 pm. After Shabbat Saturday night at 8:30 pm, on all other nights at 5:30 pm. For more info call Lubavitch Youth Organization at (718) 778-6000. For menora lightings near you call your local Chabad-Lubavitch.



My Parshah

My Parshah contains stories, insights, and more, conveying relevant, powerful, uplifting messages and life-lessons from every Torah portion and holiday. Bonus information, including a list of all the commandments in each portion, overview and connection of each Haftarah, laws connected to each Torah portion, maps and timelines of the main events in the Torah. Published by *Living Lessons*.



WHO’S WHO

Matityahu (Mattithias) ben Yochanan was the father of five sons, the most famous of whom was Judah the Maccabee. He was a kohein (priest) and was from the city of Modi’in. It was in the year 166 b.c.e. that Matityahu and his family, known as the Hasmoneans, stood up to the Syrian-Greek army and began the battle that would eventually liberate the Jewish people from the harsh Greek rule. He is mentioned in the Book of Maccabees and is also mentioned by name in the special “Al HaNisim” prayer added throughout the days of Chanuka.



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The followers of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, awaited his entrance into the synagogue for the lighting of the Chanuka menorah on the first night of Chanuka. For the past few years, Reb Zushe, one of the Maggid's greatest disciples, had been honored with lighting the shamash candle. Reb Zushe would then hand it to the Maggid who lit his menorah from it. But Reb Zushe was nowhere to be seen and the chasidim wondered if his absence was the reason the Maggid had not yet lit the menorah.

Minutes, then hours ticked by, as the chasidim waited for their Rebbe to emerge. Finally, at about midnight, the Maggid emerged from his room and walked towards the menorah. As if to himself, the Maggid said quietly, "Reb Zushe will not be with us tonight. We will light the menorah now."

The Maggid honored another of his chasidim with the privilege of kindling the shamash for him, the blessings were chanted and the one, solitary wick was lit. Then all of the holy assemblage joined together in singing the traditional Chanuka hymns.

The next morning, just as the Maggid and his chasidim were finishing the services, Reb Zushe walked in. Weary from traveling, Reb Zushe shuffled over to his customary place and dropped down on the bench. His friends came over and gave him a hearty welcome. One of them reported, "The Rebbe waited a long time for you last night. What happened?"

"After we light the Chanuka menorah tonight," promised Reb Zushe, "and with the Rebbe's permission, I will tell you what happened."

All of the chasidim gathered around the Maggid's menorah on the second night of Chanuka. After the Maggid lit the menorah they eagerly listened to Reb Zushe's story:

"As you all know, immediately after the High Holidays, it is my custom to travel throughout the small villages and hamlets near Mezritch. I go from town to town, speaking with the adults and teaching the children about the wonders of our heritage. I also speak to them about how G-d loves each and every single Jew and that they are all important to Him. I tell them about our Rebbe and explain some of the Rebbe's teachings.

"Each year, I plan my schedule so that I can return to Mezritch in time for Chanuka. Yesterday, I was on my way back to Mezritch when a terrible snowstorm started. I pushed on through the storm, though many times I felt I could not continue. Knowing that I would soon be back in Mezritch near the Rebbe was what kept me going.

"The storm worsened and I soon realized that I would have to stop and rest a bit before continuing, if I wanted to make it to Mezritch at all. And so, I stopped at the home of Yankel in a village not too far from Mezritch. By this time it was already quite late in the afternoon. I pounded and pounded on the door until finally, someone called out, 'Who is it?'

"'It is I, Reb Zushe,' I said loudly.

"Yankel's wife opened the door. She looked absolutely terrified as she bid me inside. I noticed that the children, too, looked frightened.

"The poor woman burst out, 'Yankel left the house early this morning to gather firewood. He promised he would come back early, for even then he saw we were in for a terrible storm. It is late already and still he has not returned,' she wailed.

"For a split second I hesitated. If I went into the forest now, who knew if I would come out alive? But I knew I had no choice. I put on my coat and scarf once again and set out toward the forest.

"I passed a few rows of trees when I saw the upright form of a man covered with snow. Only his face was visible in that white blur. I saw right away that it was Yankel, and I thought for sure that he had frozen to death. But when I came very close, I noticed to my surprise, that he was still breathing. I brushed Yankel off and tried to warm him up.

"Somehow I managed to drag and carry Yankel back to his house where his wife and children greeted us with cries of joy. With my last ounce of strength I deposited Yankel on the bench near the stove and fell to the floor myself. Miraculously, Yankel's wife was able to "thaw" him out. She brought us a bottle of strong mashke which we drank eagerly to warm our insides. At about midnight we felt sufficiently strong enough to stand up

and light the Chanuka menorah. As we said the prayer, 'who made miracles for our ancestors, in those days at this time,' we knew without a doubt that G-d had made a miracle for us now, too.

"As soon as the sun rose in the morning I set out for Mezritch and arrived when you saw me this morning."

Reb Zushe finished his story. The Maggid looked deeply into Reb Zushe's face. "Know, Zushe, that in Heaven they waited--as it were--to light the Divine Chanuka menorah until you lit the menorah together with Yankel. In the merit of your saving a Jewish soul from death, the Heavens awaited you."



And he made him a coat of many colors (Gen. 37:3)

Chasidut explains that the coat was symbolic of a particular aspect of G-dliness (makif - which "envelops" creation like a garment) that is drawn into the physical world. Jacob bequeathed this ability only to Joseph, as he was the only one of the 12 brothers who was capable of accepting it. The brothers' jealousy of Joseph was, in actuality, envy of his superior spiritual abilities, which was later expressed on a more mundane level. (*Torat Chaim, Bereishit*)

And he was in the house of his master the Egyptian...and he was there in the prison (Gen. 39:2, 39:20)

The phrase "and he was" ("vayehi") is used to indicate something that is consistent and without change. Joseph was the same righteous person in Potiphar's home as he was in prison, for "the righteous person is the foundation of the world" regardless of circumstance. (*Sefat Emet*)

And the L-rd was with him, and the L-rd caused all that he did to prosper in his hand (Gen. 39:3)

In principle, the measure of blessing and success we receive from G-d is directly dependent on our Torah study and observance of mitzvot, as it states, "If you will go in My ways...and I will cause the rains to fall in the proper time." In other words, the spiritual light and abundance created by our service is transformed into material blessing in the physical world. At present, however, not all of this spiritual light becomes physically revealed. Only in the Messianic era will the light that is reflected below perfectly mirror its spiritual counterpart. (*Hemshech Tav-Ayin-Reish-Beit, Vol. 3*)

And on the vine were three branches (Gen. 40:10)

According to the Midrash, "the vine" is symbolic of the Jewish people, as it states in Psalms (80:9), "You have brought a vine from Egypt." For just as wine "brings joy to G-d and man," so too is there an aspect of love for G-d hidden within every Jew-an inheritance acquired from our forefathers. (*Torah Ohr*)



4:11 Candle Lighting Time

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25 Kislev//Dec 11
Torah Portion Vayeishev
Blessing of the new month Tevet
Shabbat ends 5:14 PM

Dedicated in honor of the
Mr. Joseph Fraiman