



When Reb Aryeh Leib, who was known as the “Shpoler Zeide,” (the grandfather of Shpola) had been Rebbe for three years, there was terrible famine in the area.

The Rebbe, whose love for the poor, the needy, the widowed was unbounded, felt compelled to provide for the thousands affected by the disaster. He could neither eat nor sleep, and his headache was so great that for weeks on end he couldn't bring himself to taste anything more than bread and tea.

As the famine spread to the furthest provinces of Russia, rabbis from the starving communities wrote to the Shpoler Zeide, begging him to raise a storm in the Heavens, and beg that the deadly decree be rescinded.

Who, if not he, a *tzadik* (righteous person), known to work wonders, could accomplish this?

The Shpoler Zeide, on his part, wrote to ten of the greatest *tzadikim* of the day - Reb Zusya of Hanipoli, Reb Yaakov Shimshon of Shipitovka, Reb Ze'ev of Zhitomir, and others – requesting that they come to Shpola immediately.

They soon arrived and were seated at the long table of the Shpoler Zeide, and heard his awesome words: “My masters, I am taking the Alm-ghty to a *din* Torah, a lawsuit, and you are to serve as the judges. It is true that, according to the law of the Torah, the plaintiff must take his suit to the place where the defendant is. However, since in this unique case, ‘there is no place devoid of His presence,’ and since, more particularly, ‘wherever ten are assembled the Divine Presence rests,’ we will hold the court case here.”

The holy congregation agreed, and joined in prayer their fervent supplications battering the Gates of Heaven. The Shpoler Zeide then instructed his aide to announce: “By the order of those gathered here, I hereby proclaim that Reb Aryeh Leib, the son of Rachel, summons the Alm-ghty to a court case which will be duly conducted here in three days.

The holy rebbes spent the next three days together, in fasting and prayer, and no one was permitted to interrupt their devotions. On the fourth day, after they had concluded the morning prayers and they were still wrapped in their prayer shawls and adorned by their *tefilin*, the Shpoler Zeide solemnly signalled his aide to announce that the court case was about to begin.

“In the name of all the women and children of the Jews of Russia,” the *tzadik* declared, “I hereby state my claim against the Defendant. Why does the Creator of the Universe not provide them with food, thereby preventing their death (G-d forbid) of hunger? Doesn't the Torah itself say, ‘For unto Me are the Children of Israel bondsmen; they are My bondsmen’? Do we not have His promise, recorded by the Prophet Ezekiel, that even if His children should someday desire to go in the ways of the nations of the world, that this will never happen? One can draw the conclusion that the Children of Israel are the A-mighty's servants for all eternity.

“In that case, they should, at least, be in the category of Jewish bondsmen. Jewish law teaches that a master is required to provide for the wife and children of his bondsman. Can the Al-mighty violate His own Torah so blatantly?

“Now I'm well aware that some clever prosecuting angel will argue in defense of the Creator, saying that these servants are remiss in their service; that they don't serve their Master as well as they should. But to this bogus argument I have two replies: Firstly, where is it written that if a bondsman is lazy and doesn't work properly, his wife and children are to be deprived of their sustenance? Secondly, if these servants are slack in their performance, their Master can fault no one, but Himself. For who else gave each servant an evil inclination whose whole job and purpose it is to drive them to abandon their loyalty and to destroy their desire to serve? Why, I can swear that if this evil inclination, which the Master Himself created, would cease to exist, they would become the most perfect servants possible!”

The ten rebbes whom the Shpoler Zeide had drafted as judges consulted their tomes of

Torah to search the law for the correct verdict. After the passage of some time they stood to deliver the unanimous ruling:

“This court finds in favor of Reb Aryeh Leib, the son of Rachel. The Alm-ghty is accordingly required, by whatever means at His disposal (and the whole world is His) to provide for the women and children of His People. And may the Heavenly Court above agree and support the verdict of this court in the World Below.

The court pronounced its verdict three times. Then the Shpoler Zeide asked to have refreshments served.

The *tzadikim* made a “*l'chaim*” and ate together in a joyous mood before departing for home. Five days after the momentous verdict had been reached, the government announced a shipment of thousands of tons of grain. Immediately, the grain prices fell and before long, there were ample fresh supplies. For the entire following year, bread was bountiful for all.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

You shall not afflict any widow or orphan (Ex. 22:21)
Whenever Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev reached this verse he would cry out. “Master of the Universe! You instructed us in Your holy Torah to be kind to widows and orphans, and yet we are like orphans in this bitter exile! You must therefore take us out of this exile at once!”

If you lend money to My people, to the poor (Ex. 22:24)
Our Sages commented that not only is one obligated to lend money to someone who is poor, it is also a commandment to lend money to one who is wealthy. Sometimes, for whatever reason, a rich person is in need of money for a particular purpose; at that moment, it is considered as if he is poor. Furthermore, no matter how wealthy a person may be, he can always become richer. Thus, in comparison to his later financial status, he may be considered poor in his present state. The same holds true of the various periods in world history. Compared to the Messianic Era, even the golden age of the Jewish people under King Solomon, when the Holy Temple existed in all its glory, will be considered impoverished. Therefore, no matter how secure we may be in exile, we look forward to the Era of Redemption in the same way a poor man anticipates becoming rich. (*The Rebbe, Shabbat Parshat Acharei, 5746*)

And holy men you shall be to Me (Ex. 22:30)
G-d wants us to sanctify that aspect of us that makes us human, and to perform holy, “humanitarian” actions. G-d desires good and holy people, as He already has plenty of angels to do His bidding. (*The Kotzker Rebbe*)



5:10 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
30 Shevat/Feb 12
Rosh Chodesh Adar
Torah Portion Mishpatim
Shabbat Shekalim
Shabbat ends 6:10 pm

L'Chaim

בס"ד
1660
30 Shevat, 5781
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נוסד תוד ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
“Unveil my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your Torah.” (Psalm 119:18)

LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, *Mishpatim*, follows the Torah portion of *Yitro* that contains the greatest event in Jewish history, the revelation at Sinai highlighted by the giving of the Ten Commandments. *Mishpatim* closes with a review of the preparations the Jewish people made before receiving the Torah at Sinai. Sandwiched between the exciting retelling of the giving of the Torah and the review of the preparations that preceded it, many basic civil and business laws are detailed.

Why is it that right in middle of the most sublime, spiritual experience, we have the most rudimentary, seemingly mundane laws?

We all yearn for a moving, spiritual experience. To be touched and inspired. To rise above the mundane and soar, to experience a high and experience the divine.

This sounds nice, but is it what we are all about? Of course, we are meant to develop a relationship with G-d, but there is something more that G-d wants of us.

By putting these laws in middle of the most sublime event, G-d is telling us that there is something special, even sublime, about basic laws.

Could being good, kind, honest and just, be spiritual? When you think of these laws as rudimentary, they are not so spiritual. However if you see them as G-d's will, they take on a whole new meaning.

All of a sudden, the simplest things become meaningful. You are filled with a sense of fulfillment, knowing that you are doing what G-d wants. Inspiration can be found in kindness, honesty, and in acceptance of the simplest Torah laws. Suddenly spirituality starts to be found in the most unexpected places. The simplest act can be sublime, and holy.

I have found that the simplest things in life make the greatest impact. For example, smiling at someone, can lift their spirits. An honest compliment, can change the way a person sees him/herself. When you learn to find joy in small things, there are always things to be joyous about.

Think of all the small things you can do to make a difference. Find joy in small things. If you do, you will always have something to be happy about.

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

Happiness is...

Who can repress a smile when seeing the joy of a small child shrieking in delight as he glides down a slide in a park? Whose gait isn't emboldened as he passes a newsstand and the headlines report good news? Or what about when you're at a wedding and the stomp of the foot on the breaking glass elicits resounding cries of “mazel tov”; the surge of *simcha*, or joy, is electric.

“Serve G-d with joy,” King David demands. And since we are in the employ of our Boss 24-7 we must be in a continual state of joyousness.

“That's easier said than done,” you might be thinking. Perhaps in the above-mentioned scenarios joy is intrinsic, but what of other times, those regular, run-of-the-mill days when there's no particular reason to rejoice? Or worse yet, those gray periods when we see everything around us through cheerless lenses? How can we sustain an upbeat feeling, an optimistic outlook?

By not thinking too much about ourselves. When a person focuses on himself, it's natural that he should start thinking about what he lacks materially or his failings in regard to self-growth and actualization. Obviously, these thoughts aren't conducive to inspiring a cheerful attitude.

Also, by not thinking too much of ourselves. When a person has an inflated sense of self, he is often hurt or angered by slights real and imagined.

If a person really wants to be in a joyous frame of mind, he has to rise above self-concern. He needs to spend

time reflecting on the idea that there is something deeper and great beyond him, G-d. And when a person thinks more about G-d and less about/of himself (especially if those reflections are based on the Jewish mystical teachings found in Chasidism), he will find it easier to maintain a positive and even joyous attitude in life.



And there's something in it for us, as well. When a person is joyous, he generates a new-found energy that he would not otherwise be able to muster. This doesn't mean that real problems miraculously cease to exist (though sometimes they do disappear), but rather that we are able to view them and even solve them from our new, energized positive perspective.

When our joy is more on the level of “bursting” with happiness, it's natural to want to share it with others. An instinctive part of being happy is wanting those around us to be happy as well. And share it we should, especially now, as we enter the Jewish month of Adar. The Talmud teaches, “From the beginning of Adar we increase in joyousness.” So start being happy now.

One more thought about *simcha*: In Hebrew it shares the same root letters as *Moshiach*. By actually working on ourselves to be happy, we actually hasten the time when the whole world will be happy – the time of *Moshiach*.

Dedicated in honor of
Mr. Raphael and Rivka Mahpour

