

L'Chaim

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The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תור 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 we read two portions, *Acharei* and *Kedoshim*. In the portion of *Kedoshim* we find the *mitzva* (commandment) of making and keeping honest measuring tools. This *mitzva* applies whether measuring weight, dry measure, or liquid. It is forbidden to make or have in your possession inaccurate measuring tools, even if you have no intention to use them.

After this *mitzva* is commanded, G-d declares, "I Am G-d your G-d who took you out of Egypt." What is the connection, between honest weights and measures, and the exodus from Egypt? Another question, why is it a sin to merely own them, even if you have no intention to use them?

Rashi explains that G-d took us out of Egypt so that we can be a paragon of honesty in business dealings. As well, just as G-d discerned in Egypt who is a first born and who is not; similarly He discern if someone falsifies his weights or is dishonest in business.

But there is a deeper reason. False weights and measures are the tools of the evil inclination. The evil inclination doesn't tell you to steal or rob. You would never go for that. First he says, "What is so bad about owning false weights, you would never use them." Then he goes a step further. "What is the big deal about using them, they are just a drop off." And step by step he drags you down until he's made a thief out of you.

Owning false weights and measures are the first steps. It is the beginning of dishonesty, though no action was done with them, they represent ill intent and bad choices, the prelude to dishonesty.

And this is where Egypt comes in. Though G-d decreed that the Jewish people would suffer by the hands of the Egyptians, each Egyptian had free choice to bring suffering upon or not to oppress the Jews. The Jewish people would have been oppressed without their involvement. It was each individual Egyptians bad choice or evil intent to heap suffering upon a Jew and that is why the Egyptian was ultimately punished by G-d.

It all begins with ill intent and bad choices.

After commanding us to use honest weights and measures, G-d declares, "I took you out of Egypt, the place of ill intentions and bad choices. I want you to be better than them. I want you to be a beacon of goodness and honesty. That is why I took you out of Egypt."

Honesty is the basis for the *mitzvot* and defines us as G-d's people.

To dispel dishonesty, we need to first dispel ill intent and bad choices. Get rid of bad influences and temptations. You will find it liberating, like a weight removed from your shoulders. Honesty in business and with your acquaintances, is how you influence them to want to be more like you and to follow in G-d's ways.

Additionally, by connecting honesty with the exodus from Egypt, G-d gives us a clear indication that honesty is a prerequisite to bringing the future redemption. May it come soon.

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.

The River Flows

by Rabbi Dovid Y. B. Kaufmann

Rivers fascinate. And rivers are like thoughts.

First, some facts about rivers: Rivers always flow downhill. They begin in mountains or, paradoxically, spring from underground. Rivers begin in hidden places.

And rivers flow in ways we don't usually consider. We see the river flowing in its channel, between its banks. What we don't see is the river flowing beneath the substrate, the bottom of the river. We don't see is the river flowing beneath the ground of its own banks. The area where the water flows between the crevices and rocks is call the hyporheic zone.

Sometimes rivers flow swiftly; sometimes they surge; sometimes they cascade; sometimes they run their course; and sometimes they drift in a lazy rhythm. Sometimes a river is rapid, sometimes it meanders.

Rivers collect rivulets. Rivers change constantly. They change the land through which they flow.

Rivers can erode the land, pulling rocks, soil or vegetation from its land channel and transporting them down stream. And as rivers change the land through which they flow, they change their own course, find new channels in which to flow.

And thoughts: They also flow. They flow "downward," from the inner resources of our minds, from our souls. Thoughts flow downward into speech, and then action. And there is much beneath the flowing thoughts that we don't "see," don't realize is there.

Where do our thoughts come from? For they exist in the "subconscious," in a mental – or spiritual "hyporheic zone" – and emerge into our awareness. Thoughts spring from hidden resources of mind and soul, cascading from the

higher "mountains" or emerging from the underground "springs."

Sometimes thoughts flow swiftly, like rapids, chaotic. Sometimes, thoughts overwhelm us, so that we are awed by what has appeared in our minds – like watching a cascading waterfall. Our thoughts cut deep channels into the "landscape" of our being, creating the canyons and flood plains of our interactions and reactions.

And our thoughts can change course. They do find new channels. Sometimes the change is rapid; sometimes the change meanders. But our thoughts are redirected – by our experiences, yet also by our conscious choices: we can gather the rivulets and carve out the canyons – the deep commitments – and flood plains – the actions with which we engage and transform the world.

Rivers have long been a symbol of life. But when they overflow their banks, they can wipe out all that has flowed from and through them, all the life – vegetable, animal, human – that depends on them. Thoughts, too, give life. But when they overflow their "banks," when our thoughts overflow with negative character traits and destructive emotions, our thoughts can destroy all that depends on us – all those who depend on us.

We can control our thoughts, re-channel them, give them a new course to follow. For Will – our soul-directed desire – is higher than thought. No, it's not easy. Rivers are stubborn things. They have their passages. They are conduits – and they narrow. After all, "narrows" refers to a channel connecting two bodies of water.

Still, just as G-d directs rivers, we direct our thoughts.

And that's why rivers resemble thoughts, not the other way around – even though we make the analogy the other way around.

How flows your river?

SLICE OF LIFE

Alone in Shul

by Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman



Rabbi Schusterman in his shul. Photo not taken on Passover

It was the last day of Pesach (Passover), and I was in Shul, alone, just me and the many empty chairs, as mandated by the Health department and Rabbinic authorities that all must practice social distancing and not assemble, to help slow/end this horrible pandemic.

I was keeping my promise to act as proxy *Yizkor*-sayer for my community. I gingerly walked up to the ark to carefully remove a scroll and prepare to read the list of names sent in for memorial on this final day of Pesach.

I pushed aside the curtains, and began to slide the doors of the Holy Ark open to be able to take a Torah in hand. The musty smell of the Torah hit me like a blast in the face. It was a wonderful scent, not at all unpleasant. It was the smell of parchment, and the beautiful covers sitting in an airtight environment encapsulating the over 3,300 years of our Jewish history in front of me.

As I carefully took the Torah into my hands, I rested it on my chest as I pressed my nose into the soft velvet cover, to take in the wonderful aroma of everything deep into my lungs. Tears formed at the corners of my eyes as I realized that I was holding our precious Torah for the first time in nearly six weeks. In my life, I don't remember going that long not touching, seeing or reading from our holy scrolls.

I realized, as simplistic as it might sound, I missed the Torah. I missed the Torah, and missed our community. I guess I just took for granted the centrality and sense of community that the Torah created. I missed our *minyan* people and Shul environment more than I realized.

My thoughts moved over to the colorful and eclectic bunch of men who made up the totality of our little minyan that could.

There is *Robert. Robert who walks over five miles each way, to and from Shul. He certainly comes to imbibe the community element of Shul, the camaraderie that is in Shul, but who contributes much more than he receives. With his melodic tenor/baritone voice, you hear him before you see him. When he enters the room, the musical part of everyone present is awakened. We all suddenly start praying harder, more meaningfully and with more soul.

Of course there is Mathew. Mathew *schleps* a long distance and knows most of the prayers but has a palpable depth and connection to the services, almost as if he sees the Kabbalistic underlying meanings in everything being read. Being in his presence is like being in the presence of a rebbe. It makes you want to dig deeper into your soul and find greater meaning to the already time enriched words.

I can't hold back from mentioning Simcha, our holy Kohen. Reliable as a chronograph, pragmatic as a scientist, friendly as your best neighbor but perhaps his greatest value – like the Kohanim of the ancient times, he is imbued with the inborn attribute of kindness that is deeply attractive, inspiring and encouraging to be our best all at once. He is a magnet of love, and I miss him terribly.

I'm thinking of Mitch, who in his cowboy boots and his strong intentional strides, comes to Shul, not because he was begged to come but because he wants to be there. He represents the essence of a spiritual growth mind-set person. We only met a few years ago, and we became fast friends as his pragmatic approach to Judaism has taught me that business, math and science can be tools for greater Jewish adherence and growth. I recall him hearing the line from a Chasidic discourse said at my son's beginning-to-put-on-Tefillin party, where it says that since we are obligated to study Torah all day, but are unable, G-d makes us a deal. Put on Tefillin and I will consider it as if we've studied Torah all day. Mitch purchased a pair of Tefillin that instant and started laying them daily. As he put it, "this is the greatest ROI (return on investment) I have seen in a long time."

There are so many others who are worthy of mention but time does not allow me to go through our entire minyan that could, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention missing my friend Eric. Eric might be best described as your best friend. The sweetest, most easygoing and unassuming person you can meet. Completely comfortable in his own skin, you cannot help but immediately be at ease in his company. You just want to share your mind and heart with him. Your wins and losses are celebrated and empathized with by him as if he were your brother. Notwithstanding his own medical challenges, you never hear a complaint leave his mouth. He is positivity embodied. He is the Jewish Mr. Rogers of our Shul and I can't wait to be reunited with him.

As I finished the Yizkor prayer and put the Torah back into the ark, I took one final deep breath to inhale the fragrance and allow the aroma to enter my lungs and my soul so I can hold onto these deep memories until we can once again reunite in person with the personalities that make up the totality of our little Shul that could.

**Names have been changed to protect the innocent*
Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman and his wife Raizel run the Chabad of Peabody Jewish Center. Rabbi Schusterman is a proud father of 7 who enjoys many hobbies, including exercise, skiing and writing. He is a certified mohel and loves to write on a wide variety of topics. Read more of his writings at RabbiSchusterman.com



Jewish Hour

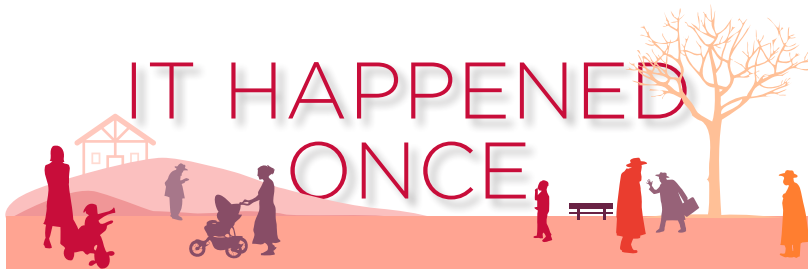
The Released Time Program (or Jewish Hour) under the N.C.F.J.E has been running for the past 80 years. Groups of young instructors are sent each Wednesday to public schools throughout New York City to teach the Jewish children during the last hour of the school day. As schools throughout NYC switched to on-line, the Released Time Program did as well, ensuring that hundreds of public school children don't miss out on their weekly dose of Jewish education. The Zoom class is designed to replicate the hour on Wednesday they are all familiar with. Songs, prayers, stories and interactive games creating a fun energetic atmosphere for these children, bringing out their strong Jewish pride, even during these trying times. If you know anyone that may know a Jewish child that could benefit from this program, email us at info@jewishhour.org to receive the necessary information.



WHO'S WHO

Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi (Judah the Prince) was the son of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel II, a descendant of King David. He occupies a singular position in Jewish history. A remarkable scholar, teacher, and communal leader, his crowning achievement was the compilation of the *Mishna*, the basic work of Jewish scholarship forming the basis of the *Talmud* and *Shulchan Aruch*. His court was extremely lavish, but only to preserve the honor of the patriarchate in the eyes of the Romans. He was known to have lived abstemiously, devoting all his energy to Torah and communal welfare.

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The *Talmud* illustrates the bounty of the Land of Israel with the tale of various sages who enjoyed the wonderful fruits of the land said to be flowing with milk and honey. Once the scholar Rami ben Yechezkel was visiting Bnei Brak and came upon an orchard of fig trees. It was the height of their season and the trees were heavy with fruit which fell to the ground oozing their delectable syrup. As he watched, a flock of goats which was grazing nearby was attracted by the smell, and began eating the fallen fruits. He noticed that the goats were full to bursting with milk, with dripped from their udders, and Rami ben Yechezkel exclaimed, "See, how this is truly a land which flows with milk and honey! Here are the words of Torah so clearly seen!"

The *Talmud* further tells of the time Rav Yehuda of Saskin asked his son to go to their attic and bring him some dried figs which were stored in a barrel. The boy went up to the attic, but when he put his hand into the barrel, he felt only a thick, sticky substance. "Father," he called, "I cannot find the figs. It seems there is only something sticky and wet in the barrel."

His father replied, "Put your hand further into the barrel. What you are feeling is the fig honey. The figs are deeper in the barrel." His son did as he was told, and lo and behold, he found huge, soft figs, so rich in honey, that they dripped with thick, sweet syrup.

In one more illustration of the wonder of the fruits of the Land of Israel, Rav Yossi of Tzippori once asked his son to bring him some olives which were kept in a barrel. The son went as his father asked, but he couldn't even get to the container, for the floor was slippery with the shiny olive oil which had spilled onto the floor. The olives of that time were so full of oil that the oil flowed out of the barrel in which the fruits were being stored. The blessings which were so apparent in those days have not been seen since, but in the time of Moshiach, these wonders will be common once again, only in a much greater measure.

Once a great sage was visiting the court of a famous Rebbe. In his honor, a special bottle of wine from the Land of Israel was brought to the table. This wine was used sparingly, and only for great occasions, since it was a rarity to obtain wine from the Holy Land.

Everyone looked forward to a small taste of this unique wine, but when it was served, the sage refused to partake of it, opting to drink instead the simple local wine. Everyone was surprised at his reaction and questioned him about his refusal to partake of the special wine.

The guest was reticent, but when pressed for an answer he replied, "I am no expert on wine; in fact, I know nothing about the relative merit of different types and varieties of wine. I am afraid that if I taste the wine from the Land of Israel I will not be able to sense its true value, and therefore, I will sin against the Holy Land, insult its fruits. That is why I prefer to drink only the simple wine of this land."

When his famous pupil, Rabbi Chaim Vital, arrived in Tzefat to study with the Holy Ari (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria), the Ari took him to the banks of the Kineret (sea of Galilee), where he filled up a cup and gave him water to drink.

Explained the Holy Ari, "This water comes from the well of Miriam, the water that

sustained the Jews through their travels in the desert. It has special powers and drinking it will enable you to learn Kabala and absorb it."

And it was true that Chaim Vital was given the ability to learn the holy, mystical secrets of the Kabala and master that knowledge.



Do not follow the ways of Egypt where you once lived, nor of Canaan, where I will be bringing you. Do not follow any of their customs (Lev. 18:3)

This verse is not exhorting us concerning transgressions; those are detailed later. Rather, it is informing us concerning the actions and deeds which are permitted; they must be performed in a different manner from the non-Jewish people in Egypt and Canaan. Even our eating and sleeping should be done in a Jewish way. (*Siftei Emet*)

You shall be holy because I am Holy (Lev. 19:2)

The Midrash explains that these verses were said during the "Hakel" years when all of the Jews were assembled together in Jerusalem. The fact that these words were said in public teaches us that even in the street, so to speak, one should be holy and not be ashamed of one's Jewishness. (*Divrei Shaarei-Chaim*)

You shall not stand [idly] by the blood of your neighbor (Lev. 19:16)

In addition to a command concerning someone in physical danger, this verse is also an instruction for spiritual rescue. If one sees a Jew who is in danger of spiritual "drowning," it is forbidden to just stand there and watch. You must do all you can to help him. And, if you say, "Who am I to go out and save a soul?" the very fact that you are aware that the other person needs help and is in danger is proof that you have the ability to save him. (*Likutei Sichot*)

You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am G-d (Lev. 19:18)

Love of a fellow Jew is even greater than love of G-d. He who loves a Jew loves the one whom G-d loves, as it is written, "'I love you,' says the L-rd." To love that which the beloved loves is even greater than loving the beloved himself. (*Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi*)

לעילוי נשמות
המחנך האהוב
הרה"ח ר' צבי אבא בן הרה"ח ר' חיים דובער לרמן ע"ה
Dedicated in memory of
Rabbi Tzvi Abba Lerman OBM
A devoted Chasid and educator
who guided and inspired thousands of students
ת"נ צ"ב



7:35 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
7 Iyar/May 1
Torah Portions Acharei-Kedoshim
Ethics Ch 3
Shabbat ends 8:38 pm