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VOLUME 39 NUMBER 2

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Havdalah - How To Say Goodbye

by Rabbi Yosef Braun

We all hate goodbyes. As the famous saying goes, "Where is the 'good' in 'good-bye'?"

True, we should consider ourselves privileged to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard. But even so, every parting is heartbreaking. Absence from whom we love is a subtle form of death. How does one ease the changeover from verve and vitality to dullness and lifelessness?

So, we throw extravagant farewell parties and heap lavish gifts. For the final touch, we wait at the terminal, stick one foot into the "no entry without ticket" section and plant another wet smooch and bear hug, and bestow our

prolonged last goodbye. And then we look out and wave endlessly until nary a shadow can be seen.

Now, how does that help? Were there no gifts, kisses and hugs exchanged before? Will that which is distant become near now? Will the size of the globe shrink to reduce the many miles that separate between you?

But that last bear hug is different than its predecessors. Whereas till now the cuddles and hugs assisted in cementing the relationship, the final embrace takes it one step further. It is an avowal and affirmation that we are close even though we are far; we'll be together even whilst apart. We are parting only to meet again. A union where

geography plays no role; it surpasses the boundaries of physical space.

This new dimension of love saturates our entire being. We taste it, feel it and say it. We kiss, hug, say goodbye and party away, allowing every one of our senses to be inundated with our newly acquired relationship.



Goodbye Shabbat. We will miss you. We need a ritual to take you with us even as you are gone. Havdalah is not about separation, as its name seemingly implies; the name of the game is really unification. In the words of the kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Cordovero: "a separation which contains an attachment and union."

Havdalah is like a privacy curtain. In contrast to a wooden shutter which obscures all light, a sheer curtain is made from translucent fabric and allows the light into the home. With sheer fabrics, people from within get an outside view but passersby are prevented from peeking into the home. Havdalah too dims the Shabbat light and adjusts it, allowing the Shabbat light into the week. Now, the weekdays can gaze at Shabbat and enjoy its holy view all week

long.

To carry Shabbat into the week, we reach deep into the core of our soul, developing a relationship with Shabbat that can exist outside of Shabbat. We throw a farewell party, also known as "Melava Malka," put our foot in the door and go for a final embrace. We hold on tight to Shabbat ensuring that it will stay with us all week long. Holding on just a little bit longer until it permeates every fiber of our being.

A goodbye kiss, hug and a wave. Every one of our senses needs to be inculcated with the Shabbat spirit. We take the wine into our mouths, touch and smell the spices, gaze and wave at the flickering flames and listen or verbalize the special Havdalah goodbye blessings.

No wonder it takes a minute to say hello and forever to say goodbye. See you next week!



The Problem

by Tuvia Bolton

One day a learned and wealthy Jew came to one of the great European centers of Torah learning to search for a fitting match for his wise, pious and beautiful daughter. He invited all of the eligible young scholars in the town to the main synagogue that evening, and posed to them a difficult Talmudic problem. Whoever could solve the problem to his satisfaction,

he announced, would win his daughter's hand in marriage, and his own pledge to provide financial support for the couple and their future children for twenty years while the worthy scholar pursued his studies.

The town's scholars struggled to understand the problem, and then labored through the night to solve it. Dozens of answers were submitted to the visitor, but he refuted them all. He remained in town for three days, without any further success.

Disappointed, he ordered his bags packed for his early departure the next day.

The next morning he climbed into his carriage, settled into his seat, and gave the signal to his driver to begin the journey home. As the horses trotted off, a young student could be seen running toward the carriage, shouting for him to wait. The man ordered his driver to stop, and the young man looked in the window.

"Just a minute! Wait!" cried the young man, panting

to catch his breath. "You can't go yet! You must tell me the answer!" "Pardon me?" asked the visitor.

"Ever since you posed the question," said the student, "I haven't been able to sleep. I've been grappling with it day and night, but try as I might, the solution eludes me. I must know the answer! You cannot go without telling me!"

"Ah!" cried the scholar, satisfied at last. "You are the one whom I want for a son-in-law!"

The Chabad Times (ISSN 155) is published 4 times a year by: Chabad Lubavitch of Rochester, Inc. 1037 Winton Rd. S. Rochester, N.Y. 14618 Tel.: 271-0330 Fax: 271-0213



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WHY IS ADAR A MONTH OF HAPPINESS?

Adapted from the works of
 Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson,
 The Lubavitcher Rebbe by Naftali Silberberg



The month that was reversed for them from grief to joy. (Esther 9:22)

When the month of Adar enters, we increase in joy. Talmud, (Talmud, Taanit 29a)

There are many joyous dates on the Jewish calendar, but besides Purim, none of them affect the entire month, causing it to be auspicious and joyous. What is the intrinsic connection between Purim and the month of Adar? Perhaps a comprehension of the unique nature of Purim will allow us to understand why its joy extends throughout the entire month of Adar.

Haman thought to take advantage of the Jews when they were at their lowest point. After nearly a millennium of freedom, independence, and constant reliance on miracles, they were now banished from their land, helpless and seemingly at the mercy of the laws of nature. This was a completely new experience for the Jewish nation. Their spiritual status was also significantly affected. The Temple in Jerusalem where G-d's presence was

One of the laws in the Talmud governing the reading of the Megillah is that, "One who reads the Megillah backwards has not fulfilled the obligation". The simple meaning of this law is that the Book of Esther must be read in order, not, say, beginning with chapter 10 and ending with chapter 1.

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov explained the deeper significance of this law: One who reads the Book of Esther "backwards" - as the account of an event that happened thousands of years ago - has missed the entire point of the mitzvah of reading the Megillah. The story told by the Megillah - of the hand of G-d concealed within the most "circumstantial" occurrences, of a people awakening their intrinsic commitment to G-d and deriving from that the strength to persevere against all odds - is the story of our everyday lives, in all times and under all circumstances. *Yanki Tauber*

manifest, a symbol of the special relationship He shares with His chosen nation, lay in ruins. As for the prospects of its reconstruction - even the non-Jews were aware of Jeremiah's prophesy that after seventy years of exile G-d would return the Jews to their land and rebuild the Temple. Seventy years had elapsed (or so everyone thought, due to erroneous calculations), and the awaited redemption had not arrived.

"The timing has never been better," Haman thought. "Surely the Chosen People have lost their exalted status. Now is the perfect moment to implement the Final Solution."

Haman, however, was not yet satisfied. He needed one more sign indicating the Jews' vulnerability. The lottery would have the final say. And indeed, the lottery provided the exact sign he anxiously awaited. The lottery designated Adar to be the month when his nefarious plan would be put into motion. The Talmud tells us that Haman was overjoyed by this favorable omen. "My lot-

tery fell on the month when Moses died," he exclaimed. The demise of Moses, the "head" of the Jewish nation, was surely a metaphor for the demise of the entire nation!

Haman successfully pinpointed the moment when the Jews were at their lowest point - historically as well as calendar-wise - to implement his plan... But his plan still did not succeed.

Why?

The history of our nation is very much compared to the human lifespan. Through the course of a lifetime every person undergoes drastic changes; fluctuation being the most consistent feature of life. The helpless newborn has virtually nothing in common with the independent, talented personality which will emerge years down the line. Adulthood, too, has ups and downs, happy days and depressing days, fulfilling days and seemingly wasted days. There is, however, one constant: the very identity and essence of the person. John Doe remains John Doe from the day he is born until the day he dies.



The same is true with our nation. We have ups and downs, both spiritually and materially, but our very identity, the fact that we are G-d's chosen nation, is never affected.

It can actually be argued that, in a certain sense, our perpetual relationship with G-d is more evident when we are exiled and downtrodden due to our sins, and yet G-d still interferes on our behalf, as was demonstrated by the Purim miracle. This phenomenon demonstrates the durability of our relationship; the ability of our essential identity to survive no matter our external state.

All other holidays celebrate the "highs" of our

relationship with G-d - and that is a constant. And therefore their joy is limited, because highs don't last. Purim celebrates a time when we were at a low point in our history - but our relationship with G-d remained intact. Its joy is therefore greater than the joy of any other holiday, because it demonstrates the essential nature of our relationship with G-d - and that is a constant.

The month of Adar, the month which Haman understood to be the most inauspicious month for the Jews, is the happiest month of the year - the month when we bear in mind that "inauspicious" has absolutely no bearing on our relationship with G-d.

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Don't Normalize An Abnormal Situation - Change It!

by Elana Mizrahi

"Am I normal? Please, tell me that I am normal."

I couldn't. Because what she described to me wasn't normal.

No, it's not normal to feel alone and anxious for years on end. It's not normal that fears take over your body. It's not normal to be in a constant state of worrying about not being normal. In short, it's not normal.

I explained. "Let's say that I hit my hand hard on the door. The hand now throbs with pain. It's normal to feel the pain, right? But it's NOT normal to constantly have a throbbing hand, either."

Meaning, it's normal to feel anxious, nervous, worried and alone when going through certain difficult situations or challenging times. It's normal to feel grief at the loss of a loved one or at the end of a relationship. It's normal to have feelings of anxiety throughout this long harrowing pandemic.

But a constant state of grief, depression, anxiety or pain isn't normal. Telling ourselves that it is can create a situation where we are frozen, immobile. When we are stuck in our circumstances to the extent that we don't want to examine it, work on it, get help for it or even accept what it really is, then we don't allow ourselves to ever heal. We can then never come to peace with it because we live with throbbing pain, believing that throbbing pain

is normal.

Well, it's not.

This brought me to thinking about something that I had never understood. In the reading of the Megillah on Purim, Mordechai sends a messenger to Queen Esther that the time has come for her to reveal her identity as a Jew and save the Jewish people from annihilation. She tells him that she cannot, explaining that if she were to go to the king without being summoned, she could be killed.

Mordechai responds to her, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and rescue will arise for the Jews from elsewhere, and you and your father's household will perish."

This is what I had never understood: Esther is telling Mordechai that she might be killed for doing what he tells her. He responds that if she doesn't go to the king - doesn't try, doesn't do something - then surely, she will perish. Not only her, but her father's entire household. But wasn't it the opposite? To go to the king would be death; if she stayed away, she could keep on living as she was.

But, wait a minute. How was Esther living? She was literally a prisoner in the palace. She lived in constant fear. The sages describe how much courage this brave woman had each day, to wake up in the morning and do whichever mitzvot she could - connect to G-d and to her

soul in any way possible. Living like this, day after day, did Esther perhaps become accustomed to her hopeless, imprisoned state? Maybe, in a way, she got used to it? Had she accepted that this was her fate and nothing could change it?

I think about Esther, and about all of us in our personal and worldly struggles, our sorrows and challenges. I think about how we get used to suffering, we complain about it without doing anything to change it, and we believe that this is our destiny.

G-d has so many ways of bringing about salvation. He has so many ways of making the impossible possible. But there is one thing that G-d asks from us to make it happen: not to be complacent, not to just wait for something to happen. The sages teach us that G-d says: "Open for Me an opening the size of a pin-hole [an opening to desire, to repentance, to reflection, to closeness] and I will open for you [salvation, acceptance, forgiveness, closeness] a door."

Perhaps Mordechai was telling his dear Esther, "Esther, this is all for a reason, and now is the time to act, not just for others, but yes, even for yourself!" Do something, because if we continue in a way that is "not normal" and accept this as normal, then there is no hope. But if we realize that we just need to try, take some action, make some movement, no matter how big or small, in a



In the Megillah Esther is identified as "Esther, who is Hadassah." Hadassah is Hebrew for myrtle, and the rabbis teach that Esther's skin had a yellowish tone. They also see this name as an indication that her actions were as pleasing as the fragrance of myrtle.

Esther, on the other hand, is a Persian name, related to the "morning star." In Hebrew, it is related to the root word for "hidden," as G-d's intervention was hidden throughout the entire turn of events. On the surface, all one sees is a dramatic tale of palace intrigue, but "behind the scenes" every development is intimately guided by His hand.

positive direction, then change has to happen. Because we have opened a door for G-d to make it happen.

And she did. Queen Esther

prayed with all her heart. She took a leadership role. She took a chance. She went to the king (as well as the King of all Kings), and he extended his scepter. Not only did she not die, but she was instrumental in saving her nation. Not only did she not perish, but her memory and her valiant actions are still preserved and celebrated more than 2,000 years later.

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To Raise A Mentch

by Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

Perhaps the greatest single challenge facing parents is to raise their children with values, with the knowledge of what is right and wrong, and with the desire to do that which is right and avoid doing wrong - while at the same time promoting the development of a positive self-concept and not making the child feel that s/he is bad if s/he has done something wrong.

This requires discipline, and discipline demands that a child be made aware that some things that he has done, does, or wishes to do are unacceptable and not permissible.

But how does one do this without making the child feel that he is somehow bad or guilty?

I would like to share with you a childhood recollection. One of the few memories that I have of being disciplined by my father for something of which he disapproved, was of his telling me in Yiddish, in a quiet, firm, and no-nonsense tone, "Es past nisht!" (This does not fitting for you!)

The message was clear. I knew what it was that I was not to do. But it was not until many years later that I appreciated the full content of Father's rebuke. He had told me that I was not to do something because that particular behavior was beneath me. "Es past nisht" meant that I was too good for that. This is the diametric opposite of a put-down. I was told that I was a person of excellence. There was no mention that what I was doing was inherently wrong or bad, but the emphasis was rather on me. I was above such behavior. This is incompatible, Father told me, out of character for someone like yourself.

Today, I sit in my office, and a young or woman of sixteen or seventeen is brought in for treatment of a drug abuse problem. Questioning elicits that for several years this beautiful child has been putting these harmful substances into her body.

"Tell me," I ask. "What do you do if you are working in the kitchen and accumulate garbage? Where do you put the garbage?"

Invariably there is a puzzled look. "Why, in the garbage pail, of course. Where else?"

"Then tell me, my child, how is it that you have been putting all this drug garbage into yourself? I'm sure you knew this stuff you were taking was all garbage, didn't you?"

Discipline demands that a child be made aware that some things that he has done, does, or wishes to do are unacceptable and not permissible. But how does one do this without making the child feel that he is somehow bad or guilty? I would like to share with you a childhood recollection.

It has never yet failed. Usually the tears well up, and these lovely children tell me that they had never felt good about themselves. Essentially, they saw nothing inappropriate in introducing garbage into their systems, because their perception of themselves was distorted and deflated. They thought of themselves as trash cans.

How different would people be if they knew that certain types of behavior are proscribed because "Es past nisht!" Every child can understand that when you are dressed in your finest garments, you do not engage in activities which might soil them. Some things are just too fine and precious to be exposed to the risk of being soiled or damaged.

My father never read any psychological works on correct parenting. Undoubtedly, he too had been told, "Es past nisht", as had his father and grandfather before him, all the way back to the gathering at Sinai, when a people just

weeks away from decades of enslavement that broke the body and crushed the spirit were told, "You shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and sacred people." Then they were given a list of practices from which they must abstain for one overriding reason: "Es past nisht".



As a child, I was somewhat of a chess prodigy and was invariably triumphant when playing with the men in the synagogue after services. One Rosh Hoshanah, when I was nine, a rabbi from Chicago guested at our home, and in the afternoon when father was resting, he asked if I wished to play chess. I was surprised at this, being under the impression that playing chess on Rosh Hoshanah was prohibited; but the rabbi's assurance that it was permissible was sufficient for me. He was a good player, but I eventually won.

That evening, the second night of Rosh Hashanah, Father called me to his study. When I came in, he was studying, and I remained silent. After a few moments, he looked up from his books. "You played chess on Rosh Hashanah?" he asked quietly.

"Yes," I said, "Rabbi C. said it was permissible."

Father looked back down to his books, slowly shaking his head in the negative. The message was clear. Even though Rabbi C. was correct according to the letter of the law, it was not in the spirit of Rosh Hashanah to play chess, and I knew better than that. (The admonition, "You should have known better," is an insult because it chastises one for his ignorance. "You know better than that" is merely stating an oversight and is not insulting.)

As I had not been dismissed, I remained standing in silence while Father continued his reading. The remorse during these few



minutes was most profound. There had not been any beating nor even any shouting, yet I resolved right then and there that never again as long as I lived would I violate the spirit of Yom Tov even with something that was technically permissible.

After a few moments, Father looked up, and there was a twinge of a smile accompanying the twinkle in his eye. "But you did checkmate him, didn't you?"

This little scene could not have been orchestrated more perfectly. I had done something wrong, and I was held accountable for my behavior. I sincerely regretted my misdeed, and this wiped the slate clean. It was now time for some positive stroking. It is clear to me that Father would not have risked embarrassing me in having me admit that I had been beaten in chess. He asked the question because he knew the answer, and this meant that he had the confidence in me that I was a winner.

Did I analyze all this at the age of eight? Of course not. But although I did not understand the dynamics, the positive effect on my self-esteem was not diminished.

One can admonish and chastise without crushing another's ego. Sternness need not be cruel to be effective. Similarly, correcting another's

mistake need not be done in a demeaning manner.

We had an instructor in Yeshiva who would stimulate students to challenge him. He clearly relished their arguments, and when it was necessary to correct them, he would try to preserve their sense of triumph while pointing out a fallacy or oversight in their reasoning. In his broken English he would say, "You right! You a hundred prozent right! Now I show you where you wrong." This was not at all an internal contradiction. The student had presented a very cogent argument, and that needed to be acknowledged. The fact that the argument was not valid did not detract from his achievement.

Incidentally, this is a truism which I have used many times. You may be one hundred per cent right, yet I can show you where you are wrong...

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski o.b.m., was a psychiatrist, rabbi, and founder of the the Gateway Rehabilitation Center in Pennsylvania. He wrote over 90 books on Judaism and self-help topics, including several books with Charles M. Schulz's Peanuts comic strips used to illustrate human interaction and behavior.

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Dealing With Insensitivity How I Empower Myself

by Chana Margulies

"Hey Sara, I can't believe how amazing this kiddush is. Can I get you anything from the buffet?"

Sara was a friend who got married the day after I had an invasive fertility treatment that had left me hopeful. Since I wasn't able to make it to her wedding the next morning, Sara had thoughtfully called me to give me a blessing. And now, her growing stomach was a constant reminder of the nine months that had passed since our hopes had been smashed.

"Chana, I was thinking about you all morning. Listen, I have a solution for you. I heard that there is something special that a woman who cannot get pregnant can do in order to grant her more spiritual merits..." She proceeded to instruct me on a new practice that I should undertake.

I had chosen to be happy for her pregnancy and be a good friend, but her comment broke the dam of my emotions.

"No!" I responded too forcefully. Her brown eyes opened wide, as my eyes began to tear. It looked like I had startled a baby doe. But I didn't care. How dare she!

"I see how that was insensitive," she responded. "I'm sorry."

I thought of bottling my emotions like I have a thousand times before, but as I was busy debating, I heard my own voice speak, almost on its own accord. "Really? Because it isn't the first or second time I have asked you not to comment on my fertility."

Her eyes filled with tears, and I could see the bags under her eyes. Her frame looked so tiny under the weight of the pregnancy. She excused herself to grab a

with the beautiful, safe you that's here at this moment?" Ariel's voice was soft but serious. He had been through the same mental loop so many times and was determined to help me break out of mine.

And yet, I still couldn't let go of the conversations that were playing themselves out. "But what do I answer the people in my mind?"

"Why don't you talk to G-d about them?"

I grabbed a book of Psalms and I found a quiet, shady spot overlooking the mountains.

G-d, I need your help. I can't continue like this. I want out of this toxic merry-go-round. While Sara's insensitive comment left a scrape, what is bothering me now is how insensitive I was to her. I don't want to be a victim anymore. I am allowing these comments to make me into someone I don't want to be.

If I had it my way, everyone would be sensitive to me. But I can't control that. I need to focus on what I can control: Being a sensitive person to myself and to other people.

Her business is how she treats me. My business is how I treat her. When I spend hours in everyone's business trying to make them be more sensitive to me or mad at them for being so thoughtless, I suffer deeply.

I want to feel empowered. I want to be able to trust myself and have healthy self-esteem. But this has to come from me taking back control of my life.

My realm of control is my ability to be sensitive to others, including those who are insensitive to me. This is not for their sake; it's not to educate them. It is for my own sake because I care about myself. It's actually hurting me not to be the loving, sensitive person that I feel good being.

It's almost like I received a free Ph.D. in sensitivity training. Thank you for teaching me so clearly what not to do! Now I can become an expert at treating people with that same sensitivity that I would like in return.

Here's what I can learn from my experiences in how to treat others:

1. G-d, I wish people would just give me the space to set the tone of vulnerability in the conversation. I hate how people bring up my sore spot.

Oh no, just yesterday, I brought up Chava's divorce to her. We had been speaking about it the week before, but she didn't mention it yesterday on the phone. I brought up her vulnerability. OK, that

will be my first skill in my sensitivity training. Next conversation I have with her, I don't need to bring her vulnerability into the conversation. I can just listen and ask genuinely how she is doing. Then she knows if she wants to share she has a loving space to feel held.

advice.

Uh oh, just yesterday, I offered Rivka dating advice without even asking her if she was interested in hearing. I wonder if she just held her breath and waited for the conversation to be over, like I so often do.

The next time I feel the overpowering urge to give someone unsolicited advice, I will remember how demeaning it feels. Instead, I will say: "I have a suggestion that may or may not be helpful, if you are ever interested, let me know and I would be happy to share." This isn't just a polite line, I want to mean it genuinely, as I know that with or without my advice, G-d is guiding them on their journey and their destination does not need to match my expectations. They are the experts on their own life, not me.

4. G-d, I would love for people to stop giving me blessings and just see me as blessed. But if I am being honest with myself, don't I do the same thing?

When I know someone is waiting to meet their soulmate or has a hard financial situation, I often zoom in and only see them through that lens. It is hard to enjoy just being with them as I am hyper-focused on seeing them through that lens of lack.

Then I make it worse. Out of my own discomfort, I give them a blessing. This is often to elevate my own discomfort. When I give someone a blessing, I want to leave the person feeling blessed not lacking.

When I see someone for their lack, I am missing out on seeing them the way G-d sees them: as a beautiful, whole, abundant, free and perfect human being, in this moment, in this breath.

Rather than give a blessing, I want to allow myself to feel what a blessing it is to be with this blessed individual. When someone sees me as blessed, that is how I feel. I want to see myself the way I am. Blessed beyond belief. And the best blessing is to feel blessed.

•Continued on page 12

**I want to feel empowered.
I want to be able to trust myself and have healthy self-esteem.
But this has to come from me taking back control of my life.
My realm of control is my ability to be sensitive to others, including those who are insensitive to me.**

2. G-d, I would love for people to ask me how they can "be here for me" instead of guessing.

The best friends I had throughout my cancer treatments weren't the ones that walked on eggshells around me trying not to say the wrong thing or the ones that did grand gestures. They were those few who were humble enough to say, "I have no clue how to be a good friend right now. Please teach me how to be here for you."

I want to start being brave enough to admit to my friends that I don't automatically know how to be there for them, that I need them to teach me. When a friend opens up to me I don't want to just react. I first want to understand how I can offer support by asking, "How can I be a friend to you right now? Do you want me to just listen, give compassion or coach you through it?"

3. G-d, I would love for people to genuinely ask me if I am interested in listening before offering unsolicited



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The Profundity Of Pointedness A Hamantash Parody

by Israel Rubin

Although the hamantash has been around for thousands of years¹, it was considered a moot point in higher academic circles. Other than being a tasty snack, it seemed to hold no special significance. Scientists found nothing in the hamantash but poppy², prune and other kinds of jam. Unfortunately, the hamantash's association with Purim³ festivities prevented it from being studied seriously.

New research, however, has recently discovered heretofore unknown angles of the hamantash. Hamantashologists now utilize these discoveries to serve mankind and improve the way we live.

The problem began when a comparative study on food design showed that there was no point at all in eating many of the foods around. Eggs, apples, falafel, latkes, blintzes, tzimmes, matza balls, muffins, rugelach, and meatballs are all round. If there is no point at all in eating, how to survive?

The quest for the proper food pointed researchers in the direction of hamantash. It surpassed all their expectations. Not only did the hamantash have a point, it had three points - a 200 percent increase of points - all at no extra cost. Three for the price of one! Among all foods known to man, only one, the hamantash is endowed with this unique configuration.⁴

So there's more than one side to the hamantash. But let's not go off on a tangent. From this point on, we will

limit the scope of this thesis on hamantashology to three basic points: mathematics, education and psychology.

Mathematics

The hamantash is a recognized symbol in higher mathematics. An upright hamantash means "therefore", and an upended hamantash means "because." It is only logical that the versatile hamantash has more than one meaning, depending on the viewer's perspective. Therefore, its three points represent "therefore", and "because", because whatever your point of view, up or down, the hamantash makes its point.

The hamantash makes all the difference. In set theory it marks the difference between two sets, and in calculus it is the gradient providing direction up or down, left or right on many surfaces. Modern architecture uses the hamantash principle to build the Geodesic dome - the strongest structural arrangement known to man. The architect Buckminster Fuller became famous with his Geodesic domes, but actually, "Geodesic" is just a fancy name for dozens of hamantashen pressed together.

Education

I don't want to point fingers, but I know schools whose regular point system has failed, and in which abstract concepts come out half-baked in students' minds. The hamantash, by contrast, is fully baked and converts difficult geometry

into a piece of cake, making it as easy as pi.⁵

As part of the curriculum, the hamantash will add flavor to dull classes, and give students something real to sink their teeth into. Instead of forcing it down students' throats, they will now enjoy every bit of it. Furthermore, hamantashen are an invaluable teaching resource and educational tool. A refreshing substitute for those hard, inedible plastic protractors, hamantashen are available in all kinds of triangles, isosceles, equilateral even right triangles.

The hamantash can thus serve a dual purpose, both as a handy triangle in the classroom, and a hearty snack in the cafeteria. In any case, it's food for thought.

Psychology

Psychologists have found that life is one long series of appointments and disappointments. Disappointments, in turn, are caused by going around in circles, the result of which is that people fail to see any point in life. Without a point in life, people wander aimlessly. This in turn leads some to contemplate poor choices including points of no return.

The hamantash poignantly demonstrates that there is a point to life. It points us towards a definite aim and goal. It drives the point home, providing us with a sense of purpose and direction. Then there is also a very fine point, which psychologists refer to as the point of pointlessness.

Question:

Why do we eat hamantashen on Purim? I have heard that they are the same shape as Haman's hat. But Haman was the man who wanted to wipe us out. Why would we immortalize him by eating cookies that bear his name?

Answer:

This may be a case of mistaken identity. These Purim cakes were originally called mohntashen, which means "poppy-seed pockets." Today most hamantashen are filled with jam, but poppy seed used to be the more popular filling. It was a short linguistic jump from mohntashen to hamantashen, as people assumed there was a connection between the food eaten on Purim and the villain of the Purim story.

The real reason for eating hamantashen is that they symbolize the very nature of the Purim miracle. If you read the story of Purim, you notice that it was a string of seeming coincidences that saved the Jewish people from annihilation. There were no open miracles, no seas split, no plagues, just some twists and turns of history that, when viewed as separate events, seemed quite natural. Only at the end of the story was it revealed that a miracle had occurred.

Jews can always find a food to tell a story. In this case, it is the hamantash. The outside of the hamantash is just plain dough. The true flavor is concealed underneath the dough. Beyond the very ordinary veneer is the heart of the hamantash, bursting with sweetness.

Our lives are much the same. At times it seems that we are being pushed and pulled by accidental forces. Things happen to us that seem haphazard and random; there seems to be no system in place, no direction to this cold and harsh universe. This is not true. There is a system. But it is hidden. Below the surface there is a sweet hand and a warm heart that directs the universe.

Rarely do we get to see this hand. Purim is one day when it was revealed, when a crack opened in the outer shell of nature and we glimpsed what lies beyond. Purim reminds us that all those coincidences are no coincidences, and nothing is random.

We are still in the middle of our story, so it is hard to see the full picture. But in the end we will see that it's all one big hamantash.

Aron Moss

As the Talmud points out, "A person should rejoice on Purim to the point of not knowing the difference between Haman and Mordechai."

You are probably wondering. "So what's the point of all this nonsense? Isn't this stretching the point a little too far?" You have a very good point there. But we are not here to just to score points. The primary point of this treatise is to point out the main point of hamantashen - to use them in the Purim observance of Mishloach Manot, sending food gifts to friends. This is such an important mitzvah, that we have no alternative but to stress the point over and over again.

So without belaboring the point any further, let me give it to you point blank: Share the holiday spirit and promote unity by sending a food gift of at least two edibles, preferably including a hamantash, on Purim day!

FOOTNOTES

1. The story of Purim occurred in 355 b.c.e. The exact date when the hamantash was introduced is not known. However, the author finds it highly improbable that the temptation of hamantashen would be resisted for very long.

2. Etymologically, the word hamantashen comes from the Yiddish, *mohn tashen*, "poppy pockets." According to other sources, the triangle figures resemble Haman's hat or ears.

3. Purim is a joyous holiday marking Jewish survival from annihilation in Persia. It is celebrated by reading the Megillah scroll, merry making, exchanging food gifts, a festive dinner, and special prayers. The pursuit of pseudo academics and parodies is also practiced.

4. Kreplach used in soup are also triangular. However, they started out originally as hamantashen, evolved, and after many years, learned to live in water.

5. Knowledge of geometric design was so commonplace in ancient Persia that the biggest idiot could give it to you right off the top of his head.



Purim Holiday Guide - Wednesday



Once Upon A Time...

It all began in the city of Shushan of Ancient Persia in the 4th century BCE. The reigning King Achashverosh hosted a series of lavish royal feasts in his palace that went on for 180 days - six months! Every citizen living in Shushan was invited. The Jews, too, participated in the great party.

Intoxicated with the excitement of the festivities and days of endless drinking, King Achashverosh commanded his queen, Vashti, to appear before his guests wearing only her crown. Vashti refused. Enraged, the king consulted with his ministers and had Vashti executed.

The Beauty Contest

The king now needed a new queen. Achashverosh had all the beautiful women of the country brought to the palace so that he might choose a wife. The king chose Esther (Hadasah), the cousin of Mordechai, who was one of the leaders of the Jewish people. Heeding Mordechai's advice, Esther did not reveal her identity as a Jewess, and observed Jewish law secretly in the palace.

Mordechai To The Rescue

Mordechai would spend time at the palace gates every day, waiting for word from Esther. One day Mordechai overheard two of the king's chamberlains discussing a plot to assassinate the king. He told Esther of the plot and she informed the king. The plot was foiled, and Mordechai was credited with saving the king's life.

The Anti-Semite

Meanwhile, Haman, a descendant of Amalek - the implacable enemy of the Jewish people - became Prime Minister of the king's court. The king had issued an order commanding everyone in the palace to bow down in deference to Haman, but Mordechai refused because Haman wore an idol around his neck. This so enraged Haman that he devised a scheme to annihilate all the Jews in the kingdom on the 13th day of the Hebrew month of Adar.

Mordechai's Request

Hearing of the evil plan, Mordechai donned sackcloth and ashes and told Esther that she must go to the king and intercede on behalf of her people. To appear before the king without being summoned meant risking her life. Esther requested that all the Jews undertake a three-day fast of prayer and repentance. Mordechai gathered the Jews of Shushan - especially the children, 22,000 of them - and they fasted, repented and prayed to G-d.

The First Feast

At the end of the three days of prayer, Esther stood uninvited before Achashverosh. Upon seeing her, the king immediately extended his scepter. "What is it?" Achashverosh asked. "What is your request?" "I would like to invite the king and Haman to a private party," Esther responded.

During the feast, the king again asked Esther whether she had any request. "Yes," Esther responded. "I would appreciate if tomorrow, again, the king and Haman would join me for a feast."

Haman left the party a happy and proud man. Oh, the honor he was being accorded! But standing at the king's gate was Mordechai - who still refused to bow to Haman - and Haman was enraged. When he arrived home, his wife and wise advisors counseled him to erect a gallows, and then to go to the king and request permission to hang Mordechai. Haman excitedly went ahead and put up the gallows.

The Beginning Of The End

Sleep eluded the king that night, so he asked his servants to read for him from the Royal Chronicles. When they reached the episode where Mordechai saved his life, he realized that Mordechai had never been rewarded. Just at that moment, Haman appeared in the courtyard, planning to suggest to the king to hang Mordechai.

When he entered Achashverosh's chambers, the king asked Haman, "What shall be done to a person whom the king wishes to honor?" Haman, who was certain that the king wished to honor him, responded: "Bring royal garment and a royal horse. And let one of the king's nobles dress the man and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'So is done for the man whom the king wishes to honor!'"

"Great idea," Achashverosh responded. "Now go get the garments and the horse and do so for Mordechai the Jew!" Haman had no choice but to comply. On the next day he went and honored Mordechai as the king had ordered, and then immediately rushed to join the king and Esther for...

The Second Feast

"What is your request?" a curious King Achashverosh asked Esther at the feast. "If I have found favor in your eyes, O' King," Esther replied. "Spare my life and the lives of my people." Surprised, Achashverosh asked Esther who had threatened her. She replied that it was none other than the wicked Haman. Haman was immediately hanged on the gallows he had intended for Mordechai.

The Tables Are Turned

Although Haman was dead, his cruel decree remained unchanged. According to Persian law, once a king had issued a decree it could not



be rescinded. A new decree was issued, granting

the Jews permission and the means to defend themselves against their enemies. The Jews experienced a stunning victory.

In Commemoration

At that time, the 14th day of Adar was consecrated as the festival of Purim, to celebrate and commemorate the great miracle of our people's salvation and the downfall of the wicked Haman. This holiday, called "Purim", is the most joyous holiday on the Jewish calendar.

Then & Now

The Talmud tells us that "whoever reads the Megillah backwards does not fulfill his obligation." Our Sages explain that "backwards" does not only mean in reverse order; it also means that whoever reads the Megillah merely as ancient history has missed the point. The Purim story is directly relevant to our contemporary world. As the Megillah itself tells us, when we celebrate Purim each year, the miraculous events of Purim - G-d's protection and the victory over our enemies - are "remembered and reenacted" in our lives.



Smile! It's Purim!



Sarah calls the Rabbi. "I was just notified that my husband, Abe, won the 250 million lottery. I am afraid he will faint when he hears the news. What should I do?"

"Let mel speak with him," says the Rabbi.

"Abe, what would you do if you won the lottery?"

"Ha Rabbi, me? Never! I don't have mazal."

"But who knows maybe you will win. What would you do?"

"Rabbi, stop making jokes with me, it is not happening."

"Abe, let's talk theoretically. If you would win what would you do?"

"Rabbi, If I won the lottery I would give you half!"

The Rabbi fainted...



Wife texts husband on a cold winter morning: "Windows frozen."

Husband texts back: "Pour some lukewarm water over it."

Wife texts back: "Computer completely messed up now!"



Moe Levine, owner of a movie theater chain passed away

The newspaper obit read:

"The funeral will be held on Thursday at 2:10, 4:20, 6:30, 8:40 and 10:50."



The painters finish painting Myron's home and they hand him the bill.

Myron notices that next to the item "Paint" it says "\$0."

Myron says, "You guys did such a good job, why aren't you charging me for the paint?"

The head painter looks at Abe and says, "Don't worry about the paint, it's on the house."



Joe and Mike were applying for the same job. The boss said, "Boys, you need to take a written test before you can get this job."

So they took the test and the next day they came back to see who the boss chose. "Well, he said, "Both of you got the same score except I'm going to choose Joe."

Mike complained, "Don't you think that's unfair?"

"Well," the boss said, "Let me tell you what happened. Both of your papers were right all the way through but at the last question Joe answered, "I don't know," and then when I looked at your paper, you answered, "Me too!"



A congregant comes up to her rabbi and says: "Rabbi that was the worst sermon I ever heard. You insulted our intelligence and rambled on and on." A congregant who overheard then approaches the rabbi and says: "Oh don't listen to her. She has no mind of her own! She just repeats what everyone else is saying."



Joey is emptying out a box of animal crackers and his mom asks him why. Joey replies, "On the box it says that you should not eat it if the seal is broken, so I'm looking for the seal."



One day, Moishe goes up to his boss and says, rather timidly, "Boss, is it OK if I take tomorrow off? It's my golden wedding anniversary."

"What," replied the boss, "Is this what I will have to put up with every 50 years?"



Moishe went to see his doctor because he was suffering from a miserable cold that wouldn't clear up. His doctor prescribed him some pills, but they didn't help. On his next visit, the doctor gave Moishe an injection, but that didn't do any good, either.

On his third visit, the doctor told Moishe to go home and take a hot bath. Then, as soon as he got out the bath, he must open all the windows and stands in the draft.

"But doctor," protested Moishe, "I'll get pneumonia."

"I know," said his doctor, "I can cure pneumonia."



Friday & Thursday, March 16 & 17



long journey until the coming of Moshiach - speedily in our days.

Mishloach Manot Gifts Of Food

On Purim we treat our friends to... treats. Send a gift of at least two kinds of ready-to-eat foods (for example, pastry, fruit, beverage), ideally by messenger, to at least one friend - men to men, women to women, kids to kids. The ideal messenger? A child, of course - they love it.

Being nice is always right. But, Mishloach Manot is more than nice, it's a Mitzvah that we're obligated to perform. It gives expression to our desire for Jewish unity and friendship. It enables us to bypass our "body" - our differences, and give expression to our Neshama (soul). In fact, it's a great opportunity to reconnect with someone from the past. Allowing our soul to overflow with joy and generosity can be contagious. Sharing food that can be enjoyed immediately does wonders to shore up friendships, heal old wounds, and make us each a part of one another.



Matanot Le'evyonim Gifts To The Needy

Tzedakah (charity) is synonymous with being Jewish. And we don't need a special occasion to give charity. Nevertheless, Purim day is a special time when we must give material help to at least two people in need. The Mitzvah is best fulfilled by giving directly to the needy. If, however, you cannot find poor people, place at least several coins into pushkas (charity boxes).



Tzedakah on Purim is special, because it goes beyond mere generosity toward a needy individual. On Purim, Tzedakah becomes Jewish unity in action. It motivates us to transcend our complacency by bonding with a fellow Jew who is totally outside our social and economic orbit. We give to (at least) two needy people in order to reinforce our kinship with different types of people, even people for whom we lack an instinctive empathy. On Purim we share what we

have, because we've achieved that pure sense of oneness that is so elusive at other times.

Seudat Purim The Festive Purim Feast

Of course, we eat on Purim. Can you imagine a day of Jewish rejoicing that doesn't include a festive meal? The Purim Feast is an occasion for every member of the family - immediate, extended, and friends - to celebrate with food and wine.



Other Purim Observances Ta'anit Esther The Fast Of Esther

Purim is a day of unbridled joy. Yet the day that precedes it is one of fasting. Why? Because the Jews of Persia - aware that there can be no victory without Divine help - fasted and prayed on this very day.

Fasting is very effective in moving us from our material routine into a more refined, introspective state. It enables us to reach an inner dimension and achieve a higher consciousness.

Machatzit Hashekel

When the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, every Jew was obligated to contribute a half shekel at this time of the year. We commemorate this by giving three half-dollar coins to charity - usually in the synagogue - either on the day of the Fast of Esther or just prior to the Megillah reading.



By contributing a half shekel we declare that as individuals we are incomplete, merely one half of an entity. The other half is G-d, with whom we bond. As we are all merely halves - incomplete beings - we achieve wholeness only by bonding with other Jews, and together we bond with the A-mighty. The Machatzit Hashekel reminds us that we are not alone and, indeed, cannot be alone.

Special Prayers

Al Hanissim is recited during the Amidah (Silent Devotion) of the evening, morning, and afternoon prayers, as well as during the Birkat Hamazon (Grace After Meals.) During the morning service, there is also a special reading from the Torah.



Parshat Zachor

On the Shabbat before Purim the Torah portion, "Zachor" (Remember) is read in the synagogue, and we are all enjoined to be present at that moment. The Torah commands us to remember the deeds of the nation of

Amalek, Haman's ancestors, who sought to destroy the Jews at their very birth upon the exodus from Egypt.



Amalek is not just a nation, it is a mindset of implacable hatred for the Jewish People. Even as we first tasted the sweetness of freedom immediately following our Exodus from Egypt, the Amalekites declared war. They made another attempt as we entered the Land of Israel forty years later, and on numerous occasions throughout our history.

There is a spiritual aspect to Amalek as well; an insidious toxin within us that invades our Jewish soul, a moral virus that attempts to derail us by pouring "cold water" to dampen our enthusiasm as we try to emancipate ourselves from our inner constraints and move onwards in our Jewishness. We counter this Amalek by reaching into our soul for that eternal bond with G-d, to that deepest space where doubt does not exist, where faith bonds us with the A-mighty.

Hamantashen Recipe

Hamantashen, a traditional Purim delight, is a three-cornered pastry filled with "mohn" (poppy seed) or other sweet filling.

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup oil
- 1/2 cup margarine
- 3 eggs
- 4 cups flour
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 3 tsps. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 lbs. "mohn" filling



Cream sugar, oil and margarine. Add eggs and juice and mix well. Blend with dry ingredients and roll into a ball. Divide into four parts. Roll out each piece very thin (approximately 1/8 inch) on a floured board. With the rim of a cup or glass (depending on desired size) cut into the dough to make circles. Place 1/2 to 2/3 teaspoon of filling in the middle of each circle.

To shape into triangle, lift up right and left sides, leaving the bottom side down, and bring both sides to meet at center, above the filling. Lift bottom side up to center to meet other two sides.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Brush dough with beaten egg before baking. Place on greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 20 minutes.

Yields 4 dozen Hamantashen.



Celebrating Purim Body & Soul

The observance of the different Mitzvot and customs of Purim, each representing a perspective of the festival, as well as the spirit of the holiday, are to help us capture and experience what Purim stands for.

Listen To The Megillah

Ancient history? Not for us. The Purim saga is something we must experience for ourselves. How? By listening to the reading of the Megillah (The Scroll of Esther) on the night Purim begins and again during the daytime. When Haman's name is mentioned, we twirl graggers and stamp our feet to "drown out" his evil name. Tell the children Purim is the only time when it's a Mitzvah to make noise!



The Megillah is unique among the books of the Bible. G-d's name does not appear, even once. All the same, G-d is constantly present, His name hidden amidst the words. Yes, it is easy to delude ourselves into believing that the Purim saga and the ultimate deliverance of the Jews was a natural occurrence. It is only by looking deeper, that we see the hand of G-d, like a master puppeteer, weaving disparate elements, disconnected plots, and subplots together toward an inexorable finale. In fact, this is one of the reasons for disguising ourselves on Purim - for G-d "disguised Himself within nature.

The Megillah is a sensational story. It's such a powerful reminder that G-d is always looking out for His People; sustaining us, giving us the courage and the energy to forge ahead against all odds. This has been true from the very birth of the Jewish people and throughout our

Why do we disguise ourselves on Purim? Because on Purim nothing is as it seems. Was the banishment and execution of Vashti simply one of those things that happen when a debauched Persian emperor gets drunk? Was it just coincidence that Mordechai happened to overhear a plot to kill the king? Did Achashverosh choose Esther to be his queen because she happened to be the most beautiful woman in the empire? Was it plain bad luck for evil Haman that he happened to visit Achashverosh just when the

king was having Mordechai's heroic deed read to him? Was it Esther's charm and Achashverosh's flippancy that made the king suddenly hang his favorite minister?

Purim was instituted because the Jewish people, at that time, understood that it was G-d Himself who did all of the above to save His people. He was just disguising Himself within a Persian palace soap opera.

When G-d took the Children of Israel out of Egypt on Passover, the entire neighborhood, from Giza to

Gaza and from Memphis to Mesopotamia, resonated with the miracles wrought by the G-d of the Hebrews. When a small jug of oil burned for eight days on Chanukah, the most skeptical Hellenist saw that it was an act of G-d.

Purim is unique in that the most miraculous of salvations was shrouded in the garments of nature, luck and coincidence. G-d was hidden and remained hidden. His name does not appear once in the entire Scroll of Esther! Purim is a masquerade in every way. The poppy-

seed filling is barely peeking out of the folds of dough of the Hamantash (or is it prune?). Not to mention the meat (chicken?) filling in the kreplach is completely concealed.

Not paradoxically, Purim is also the most joyous festival on the Jewish calendar. It's great to celebrate miracles, but how often does a miracle come your way? Far more exhilarating is the realization that nothing is as it seems, that G-d is always pulling the strings, even when things seem to be "just happening."



THE SHEMA PRAYER: EXPRESSING ONENESS

by Tali
Loewenthal

It is a mitzvah to make the declaration of the Shema - the most famous of Jewish prayers - both morning and evening. There is also the reciting of the Shema before going to sleep at night. The Shema accompanies us throughout the journey of life.

The key statement in the first line of the Shema is that "G-d is One." The Talmud speaks about "lengthening" the way one says the word "One": *Echad*. "Anyone who lengthens *Echad* has his days and years lengthened." Chasidic teachings explain that this means thinking about, or meditating on, the inner meaning of the word.

The idea that "G-d is One" means not only that there is one G-d, but that G-d and the whole of creation are only oneness. There is nothing apart from G-d. Nothing exists outside of Him; everything that we perceive, every particle of existence, is nothing but a veiled manifestation of G-d.

For this reason everything in the universe is totally dependent on G-d at every moment. G-d created the universe a long time ago, but He also continuously keeps it in existence. The Sages speak of a stream of energy emanating from the infinite essence of G-d, making the universe exist. Were He to remove this life-giving force from the world, it would no longer be there. As Maimonides puts it: G-d can exist without the world, but the world cannot exist without G-d.

With this idea in mind, one declares the Shema with all one's being.

Oneness

Hebrew letters have numerical values, which help us understand the meaning of the Torah and the prayers.

The word "one" in the Shema, *Echad*, is made up of three letters: *Aleph*, *Chet* and *Daled*. *Aleph*, which has the numerical value "one," refers to G-d Himself. *Chet*, numerical value "eight," signifies the seven heavens and the earth, i.e. 'up' and 'down', the vertical plane, including all spiritual dimensions. The third letter is *Daled*, numerical value "four," which denotes the four directions of the horizontal plane: north, south, east, and west.

Now we can understand what the Talmud means by "lengthening" the way we say "Echad." It means spending time thinking about the meaning of the word: that the world in all its dimensions - the spiritual and the physical, the entire universe and cosmos - is really an expression of the infinite oneness of G-d.

The Jewish people is itself described as *Echad*, "One nation in the world." This implies not only that we are unique in the world, but that we are the nation which communicates to all humanity the concept of the oneness of G-d. Furthermore, by keeping G-d's commands in our daily lives, we draw the Divine Oneness into the world, into every detail of our physical existence. And as the Talmud says, G-d rewards us by granting us long and fulfilling days and years.

IN THE LAND OF BECAUSE

by Yanki Tauber

Try to imagine life without the word "because". You got paid this week because you came to work each workday morning. They let you walk out of the store with a bag of food because you paid for it in coin, paper or plastic. As a rule, you are loved by those whom you love, are cared for by those for whom you care, are treated nicely by those whom you treat nicely.

Can we rise above this tight little world of "because"? Maimonides speaks of a kind of person who "does the truth because it is true," meaning that there is no "because." There is a place, Maimonides is saying, where things are real by virtue of what they are, not as a means for something else.

Indeed, we encounter glimmers of this world of truth in our utilitarian lives. A parent loves and cares for their child "because he/she is my child" - i.e., for no reason. Yet by and large we live our lives in the land of "because," so that even when we talk about the world-of-truth aspects of our lives, we still find it hard to avoid the terminology of our natural "because" reality ("lives the truth because it is true"; "I love her because she is my

child").



The Shema is a collection of 20 biblical verses enumerating the fundamentals of Judaism. When a Jewish baby is born, we bring children to recite the Shema at his crib side. On his deathbed, the Jew recites the Shema. In between, we say these verses twice every day, morning and evening.

The Shema consists of three sections. The first two sections - Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21 - declare the oneness of G-d and our duty as Jews to love Him, to study



the Torah and teach it to our children, bind tefillin on our arm and head, and affix mezuzot to the doorposts of our home. (The third section - Numbers 15:37-41 - speaks of the mitzvah of tzitzit and of the Exodus.)

The interesting thing about the Shema's first two sections is that the second is basically a repetition of the first. However, there is one primary difference. In the first section of the Shema we are simply told to love G-d and perform these mitzvot as our affirmation of G-d's oneness. In the second section we are also



informed of the rewards of fulfilling the mitzvot ("I will give the rain of your land in its due season . . . and you shall eat and be sated . . . In order that your days be multiplied . . . upon the land") and warned of the consequences of transgression ("He will stop up the heavens . . . you will soon be lost from the good land"). Other than that, however, the second section repeats the verses of the first, with only minor differences in wording and syntax.

If being a Jew meant breaking free of egotism and temporality of our "because" world, we would have only the first section of the Shema. If the essence of Jewishness were the development and perfection of the "because" reality into which we were born, we'd have only the second section. We have both, because our mission in life is both.

G-d wants us to rise above the narrowness of our humanity, and at the same time remain trapped within it. He wants us to touch Truth, and at the same time remain enmeshed in the needs and machinations of our selfhood. G-d wants to be one - He wants to be everywhere.

A PSYCHOTHERAPIST IN AUSCHWITZ

by Chana Weisberg

Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad ... Listen Israel, G-d is our L-rd, G-d is One.

Yes, these words are a highlight of our daily prayers, expressing powerful pearls of faith.

Yes, these words have been whispered throughout the ages, in times of grave challenge, in dark hidden cellars, by those breathing their last breath, at an auto da fé in Spain or a gas chamber in Nazi Germany.

Yes, these are also words of hope and happiness, sung in joy while celebrating significant milestones.

But I didn't expect to read these words in a timeless best-selling classic, a psychology book that has been touted by the Library of Congress as one of the ten most influential books in America.



"Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl has sold more than twelve million copies worldwide. Frankl describes his experiences in the Nazi concentration camps, but more than his travails, he writes as a psychologist about what provided him and others with the strength to survive.

Frankl poignantly describes how prisoners who

gave up on life and hope for a future were inevitably the first to die. They died less from lack of food than from lack of something to live for. By contrast, Frankl kept himself alive by thinking of his wife, and dreaming of lecturing about how his experiences reinforced what was already a central part of his thesis before entering the camps - that the primary motivational force of every person is a search for meaning.

Frankl's autobiographical memoir is followed by an outline of his therapeutic doctrine of curing the soul by finding meaning in life. His theory gains credence from the backdrop of his personal experiences in the concentration camps and how he found meaning while confronting his suffering.

•Continued on page 12

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The Hidden Manuscript, The Grave and The Tree

by Menachem Posner

In the old cemetery in Cracow, right near the burial place of Rabbi Moshe Isserles, stood a great tree. Its large branches seemed to have borne the weight of centuries, and were laden with the heaviness of time.

Come listen, and I will tell you the story of that tree, as it was told on Lag BaOmer, the day when Rabbi Moshe, known by all as the Ramah, passed away in the year 1572 (5332).

Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher (1269 - 1343) was a great Talmudist whose most lasting contribution to Jewish life may have been his *Arba Turim* (Four Towers), an encompassing compendium of Jewish law and tradition as applied to all areas of life in his day.

As the centuries wore on, more questions were asked and more answers were provided. Circumstances continued to evolve, and scholars dug yet deeper into the well of Torah.

Two great scholars took it upon themselves to compose commentaries on the *Arba Turim*. In Poland, Rabbi Moshe Isserles wrote a commentary known as *Darkei Moshe* (Ways of Moses). Faraway in the mystical city of Tzfat, nestled in the hills of northern Israel, Rabbi Yosef Karo wrote a commentary, which he named *Beit Yosef* (House of Joseph).

The commentaries were well-received, but Rabbi Moshe felt there was room to do even more. The time had come for a new work, a text that would provide guidance for Jewish people all over, encompassing the works of Rabbi Yaakov, but incorporating other voices and traditions as well, all in a concise and clear manner, eliminating the meandering conversation that sometimes obscured the *Arba Turim* and its commentaries.

Without fanfare, Rabbi Moshe set to work on the monumental text.

One day, after the work had neared completion, he received a prominent visitor from the Jewish community in the Holy Land.

In those days, there was precious little industry in Israel, and the Jews there relied on their brethren in the diaspora for crucial financial support.

Only the most special individuals were entrusted with the task of raising funds. The roads and waterways were fraught with danger, and the traveler needed to be resourceful and hardy. In addition, as a representative of the residents of the holiest place on earth, he needed to be learned and pious, a stellar example for all. And last but not least, he needed to be trustworthy and honest.

As soon as Rabbi Moshe learned of the visitor's arrival, he called for a sumptuous feast to be prepared for him, and the two men soon found

themselves deep in Torah discussions.

"Since you have set out such a fine table for me," said the visitor after the meal was concluded, "I wish to leave you with a 'set table' as well. Here is a set of *Shulchan Aruch* (literally "Set Table"), which was recently completed by Rabbi Yosef Karo."

Meanwhile, the tree under which the manuscript was buried continued to grow. Its strong arms spread in all directions, and it produced lush leaves year after year. Before he passed away, Rabbi Moshe asked that he be buried under the tree's ample branches. And so it was.

Rabbi Moshe eagerly perused the books. He could hardly contain his emotions as he realized that his peer from the Holy Land had done almost exactly what he had set out to do, creating a terse and easily applicable Code of Jewish law.

He spent the entire night poring over the work. By morning he concluded that although it was similar to his work, there were many critical differences. While Rabbi Yosef relied chiefly on the great Sephardic decisors of previous generations, he did not cite the more recent rulings, particularly those of the leaders of Ashkenazic Jewry.

What was he to do? Should he publish his work, competing directly with the already-published treatise by the sage from Tzfat? That would not do. No, he would need to hide his work, ensuring that it would never see the light of day.

The following night, after the town was asleep, Rabbi Moshe crept out of his house and made his way to the Jewish cemetery, which was not far away. There, under a tree, he buried his manuscript, and stole back to bed.

No one knew of his noble deed, except for the caretaker of the cemetery, who had seen the rabbi bury the manuscript.

Rabbi Moshe then began a new task, writing glosses that would accompany the *Shulchan Aruch*, allowing all of Israel to study a single, unified code, which he called the *Mappah* (Tablecloth). The Sephardim could rely on the words of the original author, and Ashkenazim could study the glosses that Rabbi Moshe artfully inserted.

Years later, the same visitor from the Holy Land once again visited Cracow. This

time, Rabbi Moshe joyously presented him with his latest work.

"Please take this back with you to Tzfat and present it to Rabbi Yosef Karo," he asked the guest. "Tell him that the tablecloth had been prepared before the table, but it was then tailored to fit after the table had been crafted."

When the unified work made its way to the holy city of Tzfat, Rabbi Yosef Karo, who was then elderly, was pleased by what had been done. Full of gratitude to his humble, junior peer in far-away Poland, he purchased 100 dinars worth of parchment and wrote a Torah scroll to be given as a gift to Rabbi Moshe.

Meanwhile, the tree under which the manuscript was buried continued to grow. Its strong arms spread in all directions, and it produced lush leaves year after year.

Before he passed away, Rabbi Moshe asked that he be buried under the tree's ample branches. And so it was.

Years passed, and the tree grew ever bigger, and closer to the grave. One year, on Lag BaOmer, when thousands of pilgrims would stream to the resting place of Rabbi Moshe, the space got so tight, that there was talk of uprooting the tree to create more room for visitors.

Despite the caretaker's objections, men arrived with



their tools and were about to set to work. Suddenly, a great storm began brewing, and the men felt themselves being blown in all directions. It was then clear to all that the tree was special, and no one dared touch it again.

Years turned into centuries, and the Nazis swept into Poland, bringing destruction and devastation in their wake. In the ancient Jewish cemetery of Cracow, the Nazis tore down the walls and hauled away tombstones to be used as paving stones.

The tombstone of the

Rabbi Moshe was one of the few that remained undisturbed. It's said that the tree's boughs bent down to shelter the tomb from the Nazis and their henchmen.

When the city's few, broken survivors returned home from the concentration camps, they made their way to the desolate cemetery, and there they were greeted by a lone tombstone, that of Rabbi Moshe Isserles, sheltered by the tree that had borne witness to the rabbi's magnanimity and sacrifice.

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DEALING WITH INSENSITIVITY
Continued from page 6



I get ready to go to shul for the Kiddush of Sara's baby girl.

"Chana, are you nervous about the kiddush today?" Ariel asks sweetly. "We can leave early, if you want."

"Thanks, I am actually excited. I have a game plan." Ariel raises a curious eyebrow. "And what might that be?"

"To raise my self-esteem by being the person I want to be," I respond.

"But what if people make insensitive comments?" Ariel asks.

"I am actually kind of looking forward to an insensitive comment, so I can try out my new game plan. I am not going to bury my emotions. If someone hurts me, I will feel my feelings and be there for myself and set boundaries, if I need to. But I am no longer putting my focus on that."

"So what is your focus?" Ariel probes.

"To learn to be sensitive and kind to whoever I am speaking with, even if they make a stupid comment," I share. "For six years, I was in a boxing ring, just waiting to be punched and then defend myself. It's no wonder that I have social anxiety! But now, I am stepping out of the ring. I don't want to feel abused anymore."

"But how can you control people throwing punches?"

"I can't," I acknowledge. "But what I did to myself was more abusive. I was spending all my time trying to figure out how to protect myself, living hyper-vigilantly. Being on guard like that has taken a toll on my nervous and immune system. It is kinder to myself to be present and support myself when a punch comes my way, rather than always having to be ready for battle."

Ariel's face looks shocked. For years, he has watched me defend myself or bottle my emotions. I think he had accepted that this was something that was always going to be a struggle for me.

"I'm proud of you," he says softly, looking off into the distance.



"Sara, mazel tov, she is so adorable."

"Thank you, it's so nice that you are happy for me considering... well, you know. Anyways, any good news by you?"

Will she ever understand how her words cut like

knives? Why did I even bother coming?

Wait, no. I came for a reason. I came for myself. What she says is her business. What I say is mine. Nothing, not even the most insensitive comments can take away my ability to be the person that I want to be. G-d, give me strength. Please, help me be the person you know I can be.

"Yes!" I hear myself answering. "Lots of good news in my life! None in that department, but don't worry, I am happy."

Nice, I tell myself. I didn't make her cry this time. And that surprisingly felt natural to say. It is true. I have so much good news in my life. My book just came out; my students are amazing in class; my idea of good news doesn't need to match anyone's expectations.

"It's nice to hear that you're happy," I could hear the crack in her voice. "I need your help," her whispers were unnecessary. The kiddush was so packed, no one would have heard us. "I know you coach couples, and, well, we are having a hard time." Her face muscles looked tense and her grip on my shoulder said it all. "The last months of pregnancy and now with the baby, it has been a huge stress on our marriage. And well, I don't know, I was just thinking..."

Really? Sara, is coming to me for advice? I was so busy defending myself from her comments that I never realized she was struggling. It must have been intense getting married and having a baby right away. It's no wonder she needs support.

"Sara, thanks for trusting me." I say. "How can I be a friend? Do you want someone to listen or for me to coach you through it?"

"No one ever asked me that before. Honestly, I really just need someone to listen. Everyone is giving me advice, and it would be amazing just to be able to hear myself think."

"I would be honored to be your sounding board." Her hand let go of my shoulder, and her sigh of relief filled me with a deep satisfaction.

Ariel gave me a nod from across the room. As always, he was checking in if I needed to be saved from the conversation. I gave him a reassuring wave.

He raised his glass of wine in the air, toasting to my victory.

Thank you, G-d, for helping me realize that regardless of what other people say, I can be the person that I want to be.

PSYCHOTHERAPIST
Continued from page 10

A strong underlying thread throughout his book is the strength, fortitude and love that he drew not only from thinking of his wife, but from his faith.

As Frankl asserts in his book: "G-d is not dead, not even 'after Auschwitz.' For belief in G-d is unconditional or it is not belief at all. If it is unconditional it will stand and face the fact that six million died in the Nazi Holocaust; if it is not unconditional then it will fall away if only a single innocent child has to die... There is no point in bargaining with G-d, say by arguing: 'Up to six thousand or even one million victims in the Holocaust I maintain my belief in Thee; but from one million upward nothing can be done any longer, and I am sorry but I must renounce my belief in Thee... A weak faith is weakened by predicaments and catastrophes, whereas a strong faith is strengthened by them.'"

Shortly after arriving at Auschwitz, Frankl was stripped of his most precious possession - the manuscript that was his life's work, which he had hidden in his coat pocket. Realizing that the odds of his survival were small, "no more than one in twenty-eight," he had what he describes as "perhaps his deepest experience in the concentration camps."

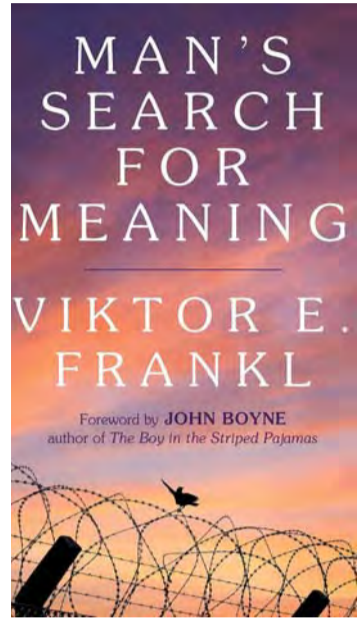
"I had to undergo and overcome the loss of my mental child. And now it seemed as if nothing and no one would survive me; neither a physical nor a mental child of my own. So I found myself confronted with the question whether under such circumstances my life was ultimately void of meaning."

"Not yet did I notice that an answer to this question with which I was wrestling so passionately was already in store for me, and that soon thereafter this answer would be given to me. This was the case when I had to surrender my clothes and in turn inherited the worn-out rags of an inmate who had already been sent to the gas chamber... Instead of the many pages of my manuscript, I found in a pocket of the newly acquired coat one single page torn out of a Hebrew prayer book, containing the most important Jewish prayer, Shema Yisrael. How should I have interpreted such a "coincidence" other than as a challenge to live my thoughts instead of merely putting them on paper?"

And then in the concluding sentence of this best-selling book that has been trans-

lated into twenty-four languages, Frankl again draws on this timeless proclamation of faith.

"Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know man as he really is. After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright with the Shema Yisrael on his lips."



What is it about the Shema Yisrael prayer that has inspired so many through the most trying of times and has provided such meaning and purpose to help us survive even the most despairing circumstances?

I think aside from its simple assertion of belief in a single Higher power and the deep mystical meaning hidden within the words of this special prayer, there are four key psychological elements that have made it our bedrock of faith:

1) **Relevance:** *Listen, Israel* - A religion or way of life cannot start and end with theories; it must also address the humanness within us. The Shema does not begin in the realm of ideology, in the heavens, with a depersonalized statement of faith. It speaks by addressing each and every one of us. Listen, Israel, listen to this message, and make it a part of your being, because this is not speaking above you, not at you, but calling to you.

2) **Belonging:** The Shema prayer is in the plural ("our G-d" and not "my G-d"), spoken as a collective group, addressing us all as Israelites. Human beings have a need to identify with one another. We gain strength from one another and fortitude from being a part of something greater than ourselves. More attractive than ideology is a sense of belonging to one extended family - despite barriers. That sense of com-

munity is one of our strongest assets.

3) **Personalization:** G-d is *our* G-d. G-d is "ours." G-d who is transcendental and infinite is also our personal G-d who is with us at every moment in time, holding our hand in times of celebration as well as times of despair. G-d is not just an objective ruler, who created and regulates the cosmos. He is "ours," near to us, subjectively understanding the deepest part of ourselves, more than we do; He is with us in times of need, joy and pain.

4) **Individuality:** As much as we all need a sense of belonging and community, we must not negate our individual differences. The Shema statement ends with the words "G-d is one" (rather than G-d is "singular" or "alone"). The oneness of G-d is present within the diversity of the world. As the Chassidic masters have said, "There is nothing other than Him." While conformity stunts growth, the "oneness of G-d" should empower us to discover and cultivate the G-dly oneness and uniqueness within each of us.



A basis of Frankl's theory is that forces beyond our control can take away everything we possess except one thing - our freedom to choose how we will respond to the situation.

After describing the anguish of his experiences in Auschwitz, Frankl concludes his personal memoir: "The crowning experience of all, for the homecoming man, is the wonderful feeling that after all he has suffered, there is nothing he need fear any more - except his G-d."

That can become our most empowering credo.

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Dear Chabad

Enclosed is a donation to the Shirley and Moe Diamond Fund in memory of our dear friend, Shirley. Please send an acknowledgement to the family of Shirley Diamond Rhoda & Jack Azar



Hope you and your entire family are in good health and are happy. We think of you all often. Fondly,
Elaine & Harold Isaacson



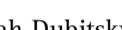
Please accept the enclosed check in memory for the wife of Moe Diamond, Shirley Diamond - my sister-in-law of many years. Please notify the family through their daughter, Susan Luxenberg. A Yasher Koach to the Chabad Family,
Rose Merzel Lichtman

To thank you for your wisdom.
Anita Calderon



I am sending a donation in memory of my special friend, Shirley Diamond.
Esther Miller

Enclosed is a check to sponsor the kiddush on Shabbos Parshas Shemos 21st Tevet - 25 Dec. in memory of Yaacov Berger whose yahrtzeit is on 25 Tevet - Wed. Dec. 29. Could you arrange for someone to say kaddish for him? Thanks & be well,
Yehudah Dubitsky



Thank you for your work.
Bruce Katz



Editor's Note: Shirley - Shaindel - Diamond o.b.m. passed away on 26 Kislev, 2nd Night of Chanukah, November 29, 2021. From Chabad of Rochester's earliest days in 1981 Mrs. Diamond together with her husband, Moe o.b.m., became dedicated and loyal friends, supporters, volunteers and surrogate Bubby & Zaidy.

Enclosed is a contribution to help support all of the wonderful things Chabad does for our community. You help bring light and warmth into a cold and dark Rochester winter. Our best to you and your wonderful family.

Amichai, Michelle, & Ed Sassaman



Please use this small gift toward your programs to help others. Talking to the Rabbi about my life certainly helped me focus on the positive blessings my late mother bestowed. Sincerely,
Robin C. Levitt



Please accept this personal gift from us to you. We appreciate the strength of faith and service you both bring to this community and



One of her proudest accomplishments was running Chabad's Erev Shabbat Flower Visitation for area hospitals & nursing homes for many years. Like the Chanukah candles she spread light and warmth. May her memory be a blessing to her family, friends and all who had the privilege of knowing her.

Chabad Lubavitch is pleased to introduce "The Moe & Shirley Diamond Community Fund"



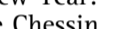
Morris - Moe - and Shirley Diamond o.b.m. were genuine and modest people, compassionate and generous. In their special unassuming way they became pillars of the Rochester Jewish Community. Dedicated to family & Klal Yisrael their honorable lives continue to make a positive impact in Rochester and beyond.

The Moe & Shirley Diamond Community Fund will sponsor special community projects and will address unique Tzedakah needs of families and individuals. For more information call 585-271-0330 or email info@chabadrochester.com.

to every individual that crosses your paths. You are both in our thoughts and prayers daily. Be well - we wish you and your entire family all the best. Fondly,
Barbara & Sid Sobel



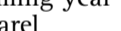
Extending the best wishes for the New Year!
Margie Chessin



Thank You! For all you do!
The Spivaks



Wishing you good health in the coming year & always.
Dan Harel



Thank you so much for the beautiful calendar, which I enjoy so much. Wishes for a Happy New Year.
Faye Herr



You were very kind to attend my Father's daily Shiva prayers & I'll be forever grateful.

Mr. & Mrs. Steve Sessler
P.S. Your brother visited him in Wilmington his last couple years. Many thnx.



Enclosed please find a small donation to Chabad. Thank you for being visible in the community. You always brought joy to my mother and husband in the Jewish Home. I also enjoy reading the Chabad Times. Sincerely,
Cypora Teigman



Enclosed are funds for the calendar - thank you very much for reminding me, it means a great deal to me to see my parents' yahrzeits on the calendar - and to fulfill my annual pledge.

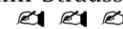
I've been wanting to tell you that I think you're a really great speaker and storyteller. I'm sure you've told the story of Abraham and Isaac many times but when you told it during the last High Holidays, for some reason, it struck a chord and really resonated, and I've come to see

it in a whole new light... Finally, thank you for the Rebbe's "Seeds of Wisdom" - what a giant of a human being he was, and in so many ways, still is.

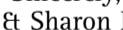
Thank you and Chabad for all that you do for the community, and all that you've done for my parents and I through the years. I'm so very grateful to all of you.

I hope that Mrs. Vogel is feeling better these days. I was joyful seeing her during the holidays. I was glad that she was able to be there, her presence means so much to so many of us.

Please stay safe and well. Sincerely,
Adryann Strauss



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Cold Soup

by Manis Friedman

If you ask someone coming out of church on a Sunday, "Do you believe in G-d?" the worshipper is shocked. "What type of question is that? Of course I do!" If you then ask him, "Do you consider yourself religious?" what will the answer be? "Certainly. That's why I'm here!"

If you go to a mosque on Friday and you ask the average person there, "Do you believe in G-d?" what will the answer be? "Definitely." "Do you consider yourself religious?" "Well, obviously."

This is normal. These conversations make sense.

Now go to a synagogue on Yom Kippur. Ask the Jew sitting in the synagogue on Yom Kippur, fasting, "Do you believe in G-d?"

You cannot get a straight answer. "Umm, it depends on what you mean by 'G-d'." That's if they're the philosophical type. Otherwise they'll simply say, "What am I? A rabbi? I don't know."

So then ask them, "Do you consider yourself religious?" Have you ever asked an American Jew if they're religious? They crack up laughing. And they assure you that they're the furthest things from religious. "Are you kidding? Do you know what I eat for breakfast?"

Then every one of them will say, "I had a grandfather, on my mother's side, oh, he was a religious man. But me...?"

So you ask what appears to

be a logical question. "Then why are you here?"

For some reason, this average Jew, who doesn't believe in G-d and is very not religious, will look at you like you're crazy and say, "What do you mean? It's Yom Kippur!"

This is not normal.

Let's analyze this for a moment. What is this Jew actually saying?

You asked him if he believes in G-d, and he said "No." Or "When I was younger, I used to." Or "When I get older, I'll start to."

"So you don't believe in G-d?"

"No. I don't."

"Are you religious?"

"Furthest thing from it."

"So why are you here?"

"Because it's Yom Kippur!"

What he's saying is this: "Why am I here? Because G-d wants a Jew to be in the synagogue on Yom Kippur. So where else should I be?"

So you say: "But you don't believe in G-d."

He says, "So what?" and he doesn't understand your problem.

He is saying: "Today is Yom Kippur even if I don't have a calendar. This is a synagogue even if I don't like it. I am a Jew even if I'm not religious, and G-d is G-d even when I don't believe in Him. So what's your problem?"

Now that can be dismissed, and unfortunately many of us do dismiss it, as sheer hypocrisy. We say, "You don't believe in G-d and you're not religious - don't come to the synagogue. Don't come here just to show how Jewish you are."

The Rebbe has a different approach. This insanity is what makes us Jewish. This is what shows how special we are in our relationship with G-d.

That's called truth. It's not about me. I don't want to be religious. I don't want to believe in G-d; I don't want to hear about this. But He wants me here, so here I am.

Ask the average Jew at a Seder, do you believe in G-d? Leave me alone. Are you religious? He chokes on the matzah laughing. So you're celebrating the Exodus from Egypt 3300 years ago? History is not my subject. Then why are you here? Where should I be? It's Passover! That's what's so magnificent about the Jew.

The same thing happens on Passover. Every Jew sits by a Seder. Ask the average Jew at a Seder, do you believe in G-d? Leave me alone. Are you religious? He chokes on the matzah laughing. So you're celebrating the Exodus from Egypt 3300 years ago? History is not my subject. Then why are you here? Where should I be? It's Passover! That's what's so magnificent about the Jew.

Now, let's put it all in context. Three thousand, three hundred and thirty-four years ago, G-d asked us if we would marry Him. We had an extraordinary wedding ceremony, with great special effects - we were wowed. After the wedding He said, "I have a few things I'd like you to take care of for Me, so, please... I'll be right back." He hasn't been heard from since. For more than three thousand, three hundred years. He has sent messengers, messages, postcards - you know, writing on the walls... but we

haven't heard a word from Him in all this time.

Imagine, a couple gets married, and the man says to his new wife, "Would you make me something to eat, please? I'll be right back." She begins preparing. He comes back 3300 years later, walks into the house, up to the table, straight to his favorite chair, sits down and tastes the soup that is on the table. The soup is cold.

What will his reaction be? If he's a wise man, he won't complain. Rather, he'll think it's a miracle that the house is still there, that his table and favorite chair are still there. He'll be delighted to see a bowl of soup at his place. The soup is cold? Well, yes, over 3300 years, soup can get cold.

Now we are expecting Moshiach. The Rebbe introduced this radical notion that Moshiach is going to come now. What makes that so radical? It means he's going to come without a two-week notice. We always thought there was going to be some warning, so that we could get our act together before he comes. Moshiach, coming now? But now I'm not ready. I don't want to be judged the way I am. I need a little bit of a notice.

If Moshiach comes now, and wants to judge, what's he going to find? Cold soup?

If Moshiach comes now, the Rebbe tells us, he will find an incredibly healthy Jewish people. After 3300 years we are concerned about being Jewish, which means we are concerned about our relationship with G-d.

Yes, if Moshiach comes today, he'll find that our soup

is cold. We suffer from separation anxiety. We suffer from a loss of connection to our ancestors. We suffer a loss of connection even to our immediate family. The soup is cold. The soup is very cold. But whose fault is that? And who gets the credit for the fact that there is soup altogether?

We are a miracle. All we need to do is tap into it. We are the cure. Not only for ourselves, but also for the whole world. Through us the healing is holistic, it's natural, it's organic. Our relationship with G-d is organic. It's not a religion that we practice - it's us, it's who we are, it's what we are.

So the Rebbe tells us that the way to go is straight to G-d. Skip all the steps, skip the Kabbalah, go straight to G-d and be in touch with your purpose. The purpose is not Kabbalistic. The purpose is personal. G-d needs you to do a mitzvah. He sent you into this world to be who you are, because only you can do this particular kind of mitzvah. True, the mitzvot are the same for all of us. But when you do it, it's different, because it's holistic. It's with your emotions, with your past problems, with your family background, with your knowledge and with your ignorance. All that comes together and makes your mitzvah holistically unique.

So, let Moshiach come now and catch us here with our cold soup, because we have nothing to be ashamed of. We are truly incredible. When G-d decided to marry us, He knew He was getting a really good deal.


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