

Living Jewish



Tell your Children

Fixated on Chicken Wraps

In the summer of 2022, one of our sons was going to an overnight camp in Canada via New York City. We had plans to drive him there—about an 8 hour trip from Chautauqua, NY, where we [Rabbi Zalman & Esther Vilenkin] direct the local Chabad center—but had to re-schedule when we received an update that luggage drop-off necessitated that we arrive a day earlier.

Since we had a pre-existing obligation until 2 p.m. on the afternoon of our departure, our goal was to be all packed and ready to leave immediately afterward. My husband arrived home and when he noticed that we had a lot of leftover chicken, he suggested that we make chicken wraps for everyone to eat on the way.

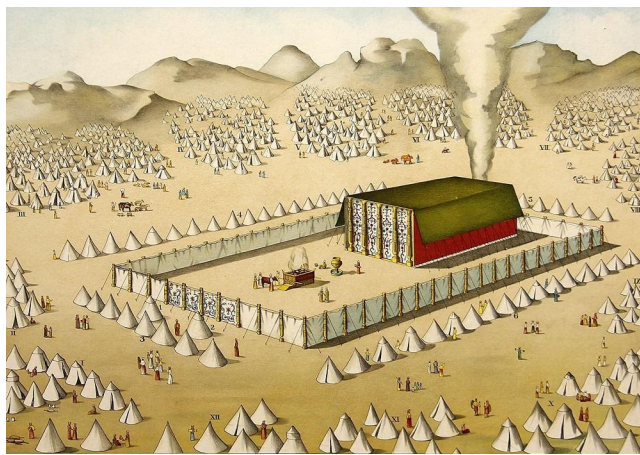
After a quick poll, I saw there was no interest; everyone was already set with their favored packed food. (I also noted that one of my sons was remaining at home and would figure out what to do with the chicken.) Still, for some inexplicable reason, my husband, the one who was most concerned that we leave right away, decided that he really wanted to make those chicken wraps and was certain that later the children would appreciate them.

I was incredulous watching him carefully making them and proudly putting each one neatly in a plastic container. He did a great job, but now we were almost an hour behind schedule.

Cuba, N.Y.

As we got into the car, my husband asked if I could drive as he felt exhausted. After driving an hour or so, his phone rang. Someone we didn't know was calling us and asking how far we were from Cuba, N.Y. The caller said he had searched to find the nearest Chabad and Chautauqua popped up.

My husband quickly tried searching for Cuba, a small town we had never heard of before. The caller had a sister who had just been in a car accident on the highway near Cuba, and he was looking for someone to help her.



The Mishkan (Tabernacle) in the Desert

To our amazement, Cuba was on our way; in fact, it was the very next exit—seven minutes away! This just blew our minds! We weren't late at all. Rather, our timing turned out to be perfect; we were absolutely meant to travel a day earlier, an hour later, and approach the exit where we could help a fellow Jew!

We found the woman, and I was able to drive her to Elmira, the closest city with a proper hospital, where she could get appropriate care and evaluation. I stayed with her for a few hours until her family arrived from Cleveland.

G-d's Fingerprints

As her family pulled into the hospital parking lot, my husband greeted them and asked them if they had something to eat. Hospital waits are unpredictable, and there would be a return trip for them ahead with little chance of finding kosher food. The family was in such a rush to get to the hospital that food wasn't a priority. They figured they would just make do with whatever kosher items they could buy at a local gas station or grocery.

My husband went back to our car to get them food, and, of course, beaming with pleasure, gave them the chicken wraps. To me, those wraps had G-d's fingerprints! The chicken wraps didn't just affect our timing, so that we would be just seven minutes away from the site of the crash, but also provided nourishment and comfort.

A few days later, we were back in Chautauqua hosting a Friday-night Shabbat meal for a large group. The Torah portion of the week was Matot-Massei, recounting the journeys the Jews made in the desert during their 40 years of wandering before entering the Land of Israel.

With a Torah message about journeys and the purpose of each encampment, we thought

our story of Divine Providence was a perfect example and excitedly shared our experience.

The Perfect Story

The next morning, a woman came over to me, visibly moved and full of gratitude that my husband shared our story at the Shabbat meal because it meant so much to her family, especially her daughter.

It so happened that the previous Sunday, she and her husband were driving to visit their nine-year-old daughter at camp on visiting day. It was the girl's first experience at an overnight camp.

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Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	5:11	6:27
Tel Aviv	5:33	6:29
Haifa	5:22	6:28
Beer Sheva	5:33	6:29
New York	6:51	7:51

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Everyone Can Be Sanctified

In this week's Torah reading, Vayakhel, when the Torah summarizes the contributions to the Tabernacle, it describes the donors with the words: "And everyone whose spirit inspires him" (Exodus 35:21). Maimonides uses this phrase when defining those who dedicate themselves to serving the Creator:

"Not only the tribe of Levi, but everyone of the inhabitants of the world whose spirit inspires him and he understands with his wisdom, to set himself apart and stand before G-d, to minister to Him (לשרתו) and serve Him (לעבדו).... he is sanctified as holy of holies."

Maimonides' wording in all his legal writings is precise. This law, too, contains profound ideas, which are revealed when one carefully analyzes its wording.

Everyone can Serve Hashem

Maimonides begins by saying: "everyone." Humanity is generally divided into two categories: people of thought and people of action—those who dwell in study halls and those engaged in business. Here, Maimonides emphasizes that not only Torah scholars are capable of serving G-d, but also individuals involved in business and worldly affairs.

He then emphasizes: "from among all the inhabitants of the world." This phrase is borrowed from the Mishnah in Tractate Rosh Hashanah, which states: "On Rosh Hashanah, all the inhabitants of the world pass before Him like a flock." The term includes both Jews and non-Jews. Maimonides thus introduces a revolutionary idea: not only Jews can serve G-d with the spirit of the Levites, but even the nations of the world.

Near and Far

However, to attain this level of holiness, a person must "set themselves apart." This does not mean complete withdrawal from the world but rather developing an awareness of separation from worldly distractions. A person must not be immersed in the vanities of the world.

Once this condition is met, they can "minister to Him and serve Him." The terms "ministers" and "servants" represent different modes of divine service. Ministering is not necessarily associated with toil but rather with closeness, similar to Joshua, who is called "the minister of Moses" and who "never left the tent."

In contrast, service does not require closeness, as Rashi explains in the Talmud in the tractate Menachot: Slaughtering is not considered ministering but service, and

therefore a non-priest may perform it.

Service can be performed by a non-priest, much like a servant serving their master despite the social distance between them.

Engaging the Heart and Mind

Every person can serve G-d and minister to Him in these two ways: ministering to Hashem in a manner of closeness and simultaneously serving Him as a servant who surrenders their will to the will of the Master.

However, to implement this service in actuality, the requirement is: "whose spirit inspires him and he understands with his wisdom"—engaging both inner soul faculties, the intellect and the emotions, so that one's entire being is devoted to this purpose.

The spirit of generosity expresses emotion, the attributes of the heart, for generosity stems from the heart. Understanding and knowledge, on the other hand, originate in the mind. When both intellect and emotion are engaged in the endeavor, one's resolution can be fully realized.

(from the teachings of the Rebbe, Torat Menachem, Vol. 40, p. 225, translated and adapted from Sichat HaShevua)

From our Sages

"You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day" (Exodus 35:3).

Throughout the week, a person must ignite their heart with the fire of devotion and love for G-d. Then, when Shabbat arrives, the flame of their soul will rise on its own. This is the proper way—rather than allowing oneself to become immersed in material pursuits during the week and grow spiritually cold, only to struggle to rekindle the fire from smoldering embers once Shabbat begins.

(Chatam Sofer)

Rest for Rest

On Shabbat, Gehinnom rests. Therefore G-d says: "My fire, the mouth of Gehinnom, rests for your sake—therefore, your fire must also rest on Shabbat."

(Baal HaTurim)

A Time for Disputes

Many disputes among Jews arise on Shabbat because it is a day when people are free from work and gather together. This creates an opportunity for argu-

ments. The Torah warns us not to ignite the fire of conflict on Shabbat.

(Akeidat Yitzchak)

"Six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have sanctity, a day of complete rest to the Lord" (Exodus 35:2).

When a person's conduct during the six weekdays is in a manner of "it shall be done" (תיעשה) as something incidental and happening naturally, then they will be able to fully devote themselves to spiritual matters on Shabbat, without distracting thoughts.

(the Rebbe)

Two Aspects of Shabbat

There are two aspects to Shabbat:

1. The Shabbat whose holiness comes from above—a gift from G-d to the Jews.
2. The Shabbat that a person counts six days and observes. This is the Shabbat where one adds sanctity to Shabbat.

(the Previous Rebbe)

The Revolving Wheel

In the year 1904 (5664), a major economic crisis struck Russia.

One of the chassidim of the Rebbe Rashab was a prominent contractor, and the crisis completely destroyed his business.

He entered the Rebbe's room and burst into bitter tears. "For twenty years, I was a successful contractor, providing a livelihood for dozens of Jewish workers. Now, I feel that death would be better than life," he said.

The Rebbe responded: "In the city of Vienna, there is a giant Ferris wheel. Some carriages rise, while others descend.

"Our Sages teach that the world operates like a revolving wheel. Those at the top laugh and rejoice, but in truth, they are fools—for the wheel continues to turn. Likewise, those at the bottom who cry must remember that the wheel keeps moving.

"Banish despair!" the Rebbe told him. "Continue with your business, and with G-d's help, the wheel will turn, and you will regain your standing."

Chassidus page

The Red Hefer and Moshiach

According to Maimonides in the Laws of the Parah Adumah (red hefer): "Nine red hefers were made from the time this commandment was given until the destruction of the Second Temple. The first was made by Moshe, the second by Ezra, and seven from the time of Ezra until the destruction of the Temple. The tenth will be made by the King Moshiach, may he be revealed quickly, amen, so may it be His will."

Maimonides' last words raise a question: after all, Maimonides' book is a halachic text, not a book of prayers. Every word of his is weighed and measured, and many halachot are learned through the precision of his language. So what place does the addition "may he be revealed quickly, amen, so may it be His will" have in his halachic work?

Constant Expectation

One might say that Maimonides is teaching us that a Jew should pray for the coming of the Moshiach. However, this explanation is insufficient, because this halacha—about the need to pray for the coming of the Moshiach—should seemingly have been written in the chapters that discuss the laws of the Moshiach, not here, where Moshiach is mentioned in passing.

Rather, the explanation is, as the Rebbe explains, Maimonides wants to teach us an important halacha about the depth of expectation and prayer for the coming of the Moshiach. Even when the matter of the redemption arises incidentally, it should evoke such deep feelings of longing in the Jew that immediately he will pray: "May he be revealed quickly."

In the matter of belief in the Moshiach, Maimonides rules (Hilchot Melachim, Chapter 11, Halacha 1): "Anyone who does not believe in him or does not wait for his coming... is a heretic... in the Torah and in Moshe our teacher." Thus, it is not enough to believe Moshiach will come; one is also obligated to hope and expect his arrival. Someone who believes in the coming of the Moshiach but does not expect him—his belief is lacking.

At all times, a Jew must live with hope and anticipation, that Moshiach is coming any minute. This is also reflected in our prayer three times a day: "For Your salvation, we hope all day long"—we hope for redemption at every moment of the day.

Even in an Incidental Mention

A Jew's longing for redemption arises from recognizing that fulfilling the Torah and commandments is incomplete without the Moshiach. Our efforts remain partial until redemption arrives, leaving a constant sense of lack and longing.

Maimonides teaches that a Jew awaiting the Moshiach should feel intense desire for redemption, even in incidental mentions, prompting immediate prayer: "May he be revealed quickly." Thus, he places the prayer for redemption in the laws of the red heifer, not the laws of Moshiach, to teach that the prayer for redemption should burst forth from the Jew's heart even when he is engaged in other matters.

Adapted and translated from the teachings of Menachem Brod, Sichat HaShevua

Fixated on Chicken Wraps

continued from page one:

Unfortunately, the parents had a flat tire that delayed them for three or four hours. Their daughter watched and waited as her bunkmates went off with their parents. They had promised her they would visit, but hours passed and they weren't showing up. By the time they arrived, she was very emotional, upset and hurt. Even when camp ended and she was back home, it remained a sore subject that lingered in the air.

After hearing the story told by my husband at the Shabbat meal, the girl told her mother, "Now I know why you came late on visiting day!" She went on to explain to her mother that her parents' delay was part of G-d's plan for her to help another person.

"You see, there was another girl in my bunk whose parents couldn't come. While you were fixing your tire, it was just the two of us, but we had each other. G-d wanted my friend not to be alone and the only one without parents or visitors the whole day. For all those hours of waiting, we played together."

She recognized the bigger picture with her important role, and her resentment and hurt were gone. Her mother was so proud and inspired by her daughter's perceptive reaction, and so relieved her daughter processed this all in a manner that calmed her emotionally.

These were the events and details I felt so privileged to witness and be a part of. It seems like an "ordinary story" (no splitting of the sea or amazing phenomena), yet upon scrutiny, Divine Supervision is so evident—every piece masterfully orchestrated with precision.

Dedicated to my dear mother, Rebbetzin Tzivia-Miriam (Gurary) bat HaRav Yizchak Hacohen, of blessed memory.

Source: Compiled and supplemented by R. Yerachmiel Tilles. Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles of Tsfat is cofounder of ASCENT. His email list for stories is in its 28th year. To join the list a/o his WhatsApp group for Saturday night Audio, Video and Zoom stories, go to AscentOfSafed.com or WhatsApp +972-526-770-137.

Moshiach Now

The Truth will Surface

This physical world hides the Divine light which it harbors; it hides the Divine power which at every instant gives every created thing renewed life and continued existence ex nihilo. Indeed, the Hebrew word *olam* ("world") shares a root with the Hebrew word *he'elem* (concealment).

In the days of Moshiach the truth will surface that the real existence of the world is no more than a vessel for the Divine light that animates it. It will become apparent that, "there is nothing else apart from Him"; apart from G-d, nothing else in the world has any real existence.

the Rebbe; adapted From Exile to Redemption, reprinted with permission from Sichos in English

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Human Interest

Unshakeable Faith

During his time in captivity, former hostage Omar Shem Tov, found unexpected strength from a Dvar Malchus booklet (a compilation of Chumash, Chassidus, Rambam, Gemara and more), which had been left behind by an IDF soldier.

His parents shared in an interview that the book was among several items given to him by his captors, originally belonging to a soldier named Yoel Elbaz. Now, the Shem Tov family is searching for Elbaz so Omar can personally thank him.

Throughout his 505 days in captivity



ity Omar clung to his faith, his source of strength. Despite the unimaginable hardships—being held in a cramped tunnel, deprived of food and water—he never lost hope. His father described him as “an incurable optimist” who lived each day with absolute certainty that he would return home.

Even in the darkness of captivity, Omar remained connected to his Judaism. For months, he and fellow hostages made kiddush on a single bottle of grape juice. On Yom Kippur, he desperately wanted to fast but had no way of knowing the exact date. His parents credit Omar’s unshakable faith for helping him endure. “We never lost hope, and neither did he,” his father said. “That belief is what kept him strong, knowing that one day, he would come home.”

adapted from Chabadinfo

Cooking Tip of the Week

Crispy Gefilte Fish

For a twist on gefilte fish, slice a partially defrosted roll, dip in honey mustard sauce, and coat with breadcrumbs or cornflakes. Bake at 180°C (350°F) until crispy. Serve at room temperature—perfect for a first course!

*Alizah Hochstead
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Halacha Corner – Importance of a Mikvah

Taharat Am Yisroel, the purity of the Jewish Nation, is one of the highest priorities in Jewish life. A person may not live in a city where there is no mikvah for women. According to halachah, the mikvah is of utmost importance, and upon arriving in a city with no Jewish establishments, it should be the first institution to be built—even before a shul or yeshivah.

One may not close down or demolish a mikvah, even with the intention of replacing it with a more beautiful one, until the new mikvah has been completed. If there is no other choice, one may sell a shul, and even a Sefer Torah to ensure that there is a mikvah for women in their town.

If there is a mikvah in a neighboring town, but not close by, or even in the same big city, but far away, many poskim say that if there is a concern that some women would not use the mikvah due to the distance or because it is inconvenient, the same halachah applies.

In today’s day and age when everything is expected to be convenient, it is important to ensure that the mikvah be convenient and comfortable as well. A mikvah should be beautiful and attractive in a way that women would want to use it.

Rav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, shlita, Mara D’atra & member of the Badatz of Crown Heights, 1 Minute Halachah, #246, crownheightsconnect.com

Farbrengen

Question: My sister attends a parenting class and shares what she learns about boundaries. I struggle with this. I love giving freely to my kids and the giving avoids tantrums. Is it bad to give kids what they want?

Answer: It’s natural to want to make our children happy and avoid tantrums. However, parenting isn’t just about the present—it’s also about preparing children for the future.

Giving in to every request may feel easier, but it can lead to difficulties down the road. Children who learn they can get what they want may struggle in life when faced with disappointment or challenges. They may have difficulty managing frustration, developing resilience, or maintaining relationships.

That being said, parenting is a balance—knowing when to give and when to hold firm. Here are a few guiding principles:

1. **Boundaries provide security.** Children need confident parents who know how to set limits. The world is big and unknown and children rely on parents for support and guidance. Boundaries provide a sense of security and belonging, a feeling that someone cares. So too, children will learn how to apply boundaries to their own behavior, providing them with inner strength and confidence.

2. **Connection.** Setting boundaries goes hand in hand with nurturing a strong parent-child relationship. Spending one-on-one time fosters emotional security, connection, and reduces the likelihood of power struggles.

3. **Teach self-regulation, not just obedience.** Instead of simply saying “no,” help children understand why limits exist. Empathize with their feelings while staying firm. “I know you’re upset that you can’t have another cookie, but too much sugar isn’t healthy. Let’s pick a fun snack together for later.”

Balance is key. Giving brings joy and shows generosity, while enforcing limits teaches responsibility. Consider whether granting a request is beneficial in the long run. If it won’t undermine important lessons, there’s nothing wrong with saying “yes.”

Parenting is rewarding and challenging. While the quick and easy road may seem tempting, balancing love with structure will ultimately help children grow into independent, responsible, and emotionally resilient adults.

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