

# Living Jewish

**חב"ד**  
כל הלב לכל אחד  
צעירי אגודת חב"ד

## Tell your Children

### Shmuel the Water Carrier

The year was 5594 (1834), and there was much joy and celebration among the followers of the Tzemach Tzedek. On the 2nd of Iyar, a seventh son (the future Rebbe Maharash) had been born to their beloved Rebbe. Many of the chassidim who had come to spend Pesach in Lubavitch decided to stay for the brit (circumcision), scheduled for the ninth of Iyar, the eighth day of the child's life.

Early in the morning of the appointed day, all was ready for the brit: the tables were set, the Chassidim had assembled, and the mohel (circumciser) had laid out his instruments. All awaited the appearance of the Rebbe. But the Rebbe's door remained closed. An hour passed and then another, and the Chassidim began to wonder if the brit was perhaps going to be postponed.

### The Brit will be Today

Soon word came from the Rebbe that "the brit, G-d willing, will be held today." But no more was said.

Morning passed. At about 2:30pm the Tzemach Tzedek emerged from his room. Seeing his countenance made the chassidim shiver. His face shone radiantly and his eyes were red from tears, and the Rebbe was dabbing them with a handkerchief that was already moist from tears.

Addressing all the assembled, he announced: "The brit will take place today. Just wait a bit longer." He then returned to his study.

Another half hour passed, and the Rebbe came out of his room a second time. The change on his face was immediately apparent; this time it displayed joy and good spirits. Turning to the chassidim, he said, "Rejoice; the brit will be today." He then returned once again to his room.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the Tzemach Tzedek came out of his room a third time. He instructed the guests to wait before davening Minchah, as the brit would take place momentarily. He then approached his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, and discussed with her



*A Jewish water carrier standing in street in Vilna, 1922, picture from COLlive*

the naming of the child.

### Ay... the Polotzk Burial Society

Finally, late in the afternoon, the Rebbe emerged from his room and instructed that the brit commence. The only clue to his delay was the mysterious sentence that passed his lips, "Ay... the Polotzk burial society..." No one dared ask for further explanation.

The Tzemach Tzedek himself served as the sandek. As commonly occurs at a brit, the baby began to cry. The Tzemach Tzedek lifted his left hand from under the pillow and placed it on the child's head. Immediately the crying ceased and was replaced with a content cooing sound.

Another mystery was the name given to the newborn – Shmuel. No one knew of a Shmuel in the Rebbe's family.

When one of Tzemach Tzedek's older children, Reb Yehuda Leib (the Maharil) asked his father after whom the child was named, the white Russian town was again mentioned. "A water-carrier from Polotzk," was the Rebbe's reply.

Among the Chassidim present at the brit were several from Polotzk, who proceeded to investigate the matter when they returned home.

It turned out that on the day that the brit was held, two townspeople had passed

away: a rich and influential resident, as well as a simple, impoverished water-carrier by the name of Shmuel.

The burial society devoted its attention solely to the departed "pillar of the community"; only after his heavily attended funeral was over did they begin taking care of the water-carrier's body, which was finally brought to burial late in the day.

### "Seeing" from a Distance

One of the Chassidim noted that the Zohar instructs not to name a child after one who has passed away before the departed has been buried.

The Rebbe had delayed the brit so that he could name his youngest child and ultimate successor, the Rebbe Maharash, after a water-carrier from Polotzk.

Everyone present understood that the water carrier must have been a tzaddik nistar (a hidden tzaddik).

Sources: Chabadinfo.com and Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon

### Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	6:35	7:53
Tel Aviv	6:57	7:55
Haifa	6:47	7:56
Beer Sheva	6:56	7:53
New York	7:28	8:31

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## Eighth Day of the Dedication

In this week's Torah reading, Shemini, we learn that on the eighth day of the dedication of the Tabernacle, at the height of the joyous inauguration, a tragic event occurred: Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, died. As the Torah states: "And Aharon's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his pan, put fire in them, and placed incense upon it, and they brought before the Lord foreign fire, which He had not commanded them. And fire went forth from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord." (Vayikra 10: 1,2)

Moshe then instructed Mishael and Elzaphan, Aharon's cousins: "Carry your kinsman away from within the Sanctuary, to the outside of the camp."

### Why the Levites?

The Torah's detailed account of this episode calls for explanation. Is it not obvious that the bodies of the deceased could not remain in the Tabernacle, as it would have been improper to leave this source of ritual impurity there.

Also puzzling is why Moshe assigned this task specifically to Mishael and Elzaphan, who were Levites. Surely, as Levites, they would have preferred to participate in the

sacred service of the Tabernacle's inauguration rather than become impure.

This question becomes stronger in considering the burial of Yaakov. His sons carried his coffin — all except two: Yosef and Levi. Yosef was excused because he was a king. Levi was excluded because in the future his descendants would carry the Ark of the Covenant.

So, Levi refrained from carrying his own father's coffin because, generations later, his descendants would carry the Ark of the Covenant. Why then did Moses command Levites to defile themselves for more distant relatives, and during such a joyous occasion — the very day when the Divine Presence rested upon the Tabernacle? Wouldn't it have been more fitting for Mishael and Elzaphan to take part in the celebration, rather than bear the bodies of Nadav and Avihu out of the sanctuary?

### Part of the Service

Rashi explains that removing their bodies was not merely for burial but "like someone telling his friend: remove the dead from before the bride so as not to disturb the joy." Taking the bodies out of the Tabernacle on its inauguration day was meant to preserve the joy, and this act was considered part of the sanctuary service.

The Tabernacle also included tasks that involved removing things that interfered

with its proper function, like taking the ashes outside the camp. These acts, too, were considered holy work. Therefore, the command given to Mishael and Elzaphan to remove the bodies "so as not to disturb the joy" was part of the Tabernacle's service — and rightly assigned to the Levites.

### Incumbent on Every Jew

Maimonides writes that any Jew who dedicates himself to serving G-d is like a member of the tribe of Levi. From this, we derive a personal spiritual lesson: A Jew might think that since he has reached a level akin to that of the tribe of Levi — elevated and sanctified for divine service — he should only be involved in Torah and holiness. When there's a need to reach out and rescue fellow Jews from sin, he might feel that such work is beneath him, that it's a task for "ordinary Israelites" who are already engaged with worldly matters.

But Moshe teaches us that even "removing the dead from before the bride" is a sacred duty. So too, preventing spiritual downfall is part of divine service, and is incumbent on every Jew. By doing so, a Jew helps prepare the world to be a dwelling place for G-d — where G-d will dwell openly in the complete and ultimate redemption.

*(From the teachings of the Rebbe, Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 17, p. 100, translated from Sichat HaShevua)*

## From our Sages

*"And Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his pan, put fire in them, and placed incense upon it, and they brought before the Lord foreign fire, which He had not commanded them. And fire went forth from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord." (Vayikra 10: 1,2)*

Nadav and Avihu died from the intensity of their desire to draw near to G-d. They could not restrain themselves from approaching closeness, delight, sweetness, intimacy, love and spiritual ecstasy—even to the point of their souls expiring from it.

*(Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh)*

### Wine of Torah

Our Sages said Nadav and Avihu died because they entered the sanctuary under the influence of wine. Wine symbolizes the revelation of Torah's inner secrets, as we learn: "When wine enters, secrets emerge." They delved so deeply into the secrets of the Torah that they reached a state of kelot hanefesh—the soul yearning to the point of leaving the body.

*(the Rebbe)*

### The Mitzvah Protects

A tzaddik, whose soul clings to G-d, fulfills the mitzvah with such fiery passion that he nearly expires from the experience. Yet, the mitzvah itself revives him—it gives life, as it is said: "And you shall live by them." The mitzvah itself gives life. But Nadav and Avihu brought a strange fire, an offering not commanded, and even though they acted with self-sacrifice, there was no mitzvah there to restore their vitality—so they died.

*(Sfat Emet)*

### The Command is Central

The essence of fulfilling a mitzvah lies in it being a Divine command. Therefore, even though Nadav and Avihu were great spiritual figures with lofty mystical intentions, they still died—because they had not been commanded. From this, we learn that one who fulfills a mitzvah in order to fulfill G-d's command, even without understanding its mystical meanings, is greater than one who performs an act with deep intention but without a Divine command.

*(Chiddushei HaRim)*

## Strongest Army!

A few weeks after arriving in America [in 1940, ed.], at a Shabbat farbrengen in the Greystone Hotel, the Previous Rebbe said: "There is an army that is very famous during times of peace, but when war breaks out, it falls apart and surrenders immediately. Then there is an army that in peacetime you never hear about, but in war, it holds strong." [This was referring to the French army, which was very technologically advanced, yet surrendered almost immediately to the Nazis, and the army of Finland, which, while being unknown and low-profile, managed to retain its independence.]

"The Chassidim of previous generations were glorified and respected soldiers, but they never fought a war. Today's Chassidim are not as famous, but they are on the front lines."

With this, the Previous Rebbe paused, looked at every person in the room, and concluded: "Un der front halt zich — and the front is holding up."

*(Kfar Chabad Magazine Issue 897, reprinted from A Chassidisher Derher)*

# Chassidus page

## A Person Judges Himself

Chassidic teachings place great emphasis on the importance of judging a fellow Jew favorably. While the Talmud and Midrashim present many sayings and stories about the need to judge every Jew positively, Chassidic thought reveals a deeper dimension: by judging another person favorably, one is essentially judging oneself favorably.

In the midst of the horrors of the Holocaust, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe Rayatz, said that the current time demanded strengthening the fulfillment of the mitzvah of Ahavat Yisrael—love for every single Jew: "One must judge every Jew favorably. There must not be division. This does not mean that one may never rebuke another, but rather that it must be done in a way of closeness, without 'piercing' or harming."

### Be Careful when Judging

A well-known Chassidic interpretation of the Mishnah's phrase, "They exact payment from a person with or without his knowledge" explains that one way a person is held accountable is by being led to pass judgment on another's actions—unaware that he is, in fact, judging himself. Later, it is said to him: "According to the very judgment you passed, so shall it be done to you."

From this we learn the great importance of judging others favorably—it is very possible that in doing so, one is judging oneself favorably as well.

The Baal Shem Tov teaches: Anyone who says, "Because of so-and-so's good deeds, he deserves that G-d help him," or conversely, "Because of someone's bad actions or traits, he deserves such-and-such," should know that he is passing judgment on himself—both for good and for bad. One who justifies Divine judgment against another, and does not empathize or feel compassion for that person's suffering, is in fact accusing himself—causing his own deeds to be scrutinized. But one who shares in another's pain and arouses mercy for them will be rewarded.

### Revealing their Inner Strength

The Rebbe reveals an even deeper layer: when a person judges another Jew favorably, they help that person overcome their struggles. When friends view someone positively, they uncover and awaken the "merit" within that person—their pure and lofty inner strengths—which in turn empowers them to withstand their trials. Eventually, the person's negative traits will fall away.

The Rebbe explains that this is what the Alter Rebbe accomplished in Tanya, when he judged favorably even the "kal sheb'kalim", the spiritually weak person, walking in the marketplace, exposed to all kinds of temptations. By judging him favorably, he empowered him to reveal his inner goodness and to overcome those trials.

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## A Person Judges Himself

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The Alter Rebbe once praised the way Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, judged Jews favorably.

He said: "The favorable judgment of the angel Michael does not come close to that of my mechutan (relative by marriage—the Alter Rebbe and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's grandchildren were married).

"From his favorable judgments, G-d created a new 'Heichal Zechut'—Hall of Merit—on high. Any Jew who judges a Jewish soul favorably, no matter the body it is in, and says a chapter of Psalms on their behalf with proper intent, merits entering this hall. Both are saved—each in the way they need."

### Receiving a Pidyon

The Rebbe Maharash, the fourth Rebbe of Chabad, said: "People think that receiving a 'pidyon' (a request for blessing) is something difficult and reserved for a Rebbe.

"But in truth, every Jew can accomplish it—by speaking favorably of another. It must be sincere, though. Hundreds of angels wait on Rosh Hashanah for a Jew to praise another Jew, because they know how much G-d desires the praises of Israel."

The Previous Rebbe said: "When a person judges another (whether this judgment is public or only within their heart), they must, as much as possible, enter into the inner life of the person being judged—take into account their circumstances and environment, and deeply consider the reasons that brought them to live their life as they do.

"Only when the judge places themselves in the other's situation, and lives their challenge, and fully considers all these factors—only then is the judgment true."

## Moshiach Now

### G-d's Building

The Zohar describes the First and Second Temples as "the building of mortal man which has no lasting existence," whereas the Third Temple, since it is "the building of the Holy One, blessed be He," will endure forever.

The First Temple corresponds to Avraham; the Second Temple corresponds to Yitzchak; the Third Temple corresponds to Yaakov. And since the dominant characteristic of Yaakov is truth, which can be neither intercepted nor changed, the Third Temple will stand forever.

*the Rebbe, From Exile to Redemption, reprinted with perm. from Sichos in English*

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*\*To receive Living Jewish each week visit <https://chabadisrael.co.il/alonichabad/>*



## Human Interest

### Chabad in the Algarve: A Coastal Community Reborn

Pristine beaches, world-class golf courses, and a sun-drenched coastline — Portugal's Algarve region is a place people come to escape. But for Rabbi Menachem and Chana Wagner, it's home. Millions visit yearly, yet few realize a new chapter of Jewish life is unfolding.

In January, the Wagners moved to the Algarve to establish Chabad of South Portugal, under the leadership of Rabbi Eli Rosenfeld, Chabad of Portugal.

The Algarve's Jewish community includes locals, retirees, young



(picture from Chabadinfo)

families, a good amount of Israelis, and countless tourists. The Wagners have connected with them in a variety of ways — over coffee and pastries, through Friday night meals and holiday events.

Sophie Bibi Roubi, a local resident, shared that previously they had to drive nearly three hours to go to the closest Chabad center. Now, they have that connection locally.

Maital Katar, who's lived in the Algarve for five years, shared that without Chabad something was always missing. The Wagners sparked excitement in my heart. They make things happen.

The Wagners plan to open a permanent Chabad center but are currently based in Alvor. "Wherever we establish a permanent Chabad house," says Rabbi Wagner, "it will be a home for Jews from all over the Algarve."

### Cooking Tip of the Week

#### Carrot Side Dish

Thanks to my friend Galia, I made this for Shabbat—and there wasn't a single carrot left! Toss 1 kilo of peeled, chopped carrots with 3 tbsp olive oil, 1 tbsp soy sauce, salt, pepper, and Italian spices. Roast at 180°C for 40 minutes. Cool and serve. Simple, flavorful, and addictive!

*Alizah Hochstead*  
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### Halacha Corner – Qualifications of a Shochet

The halachah is that for a shochet to receive kabbalah, be authorized to work as a ritual slaughterer, he must be a G-d fearing person, unyielding in his observance of Torah and mitzvot, proficient in Gemara and Rashi, and a person who will always act in a manner befitting his position. Unfortunately, these days many shochtim manage to receive kabbalah, a formal license to shecht, even if their standards are not up to par. Therefore, poskim say that we should only eat fowl and meat shechted by a shochet whom we know personally to be a G-d fearing person, or if we know that the Rabbis of the city who provide the hechsher are G-d fearing, and would only hire a shochet who answers to the highest standards.

The description of a shochet in halachah and in poskim is that he should be a "G-d fearing meirabim". The word meirabim has three meanings: 1) He has been known to be a G-d fearing Jew for many years. 2) Many people say about him that he is G-d fearing. 3) He appears to be much more G-d fearing than the majority of people. One should ensure that all three interpretations apply to the shochet.

*Rav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, shlita, Badatz of Crown Heights, 1 Minute Halachah, #268, reprinted from crownheightsconnect.com*

## Farbrengen

**Question:** After Pesach, I want a vacation, but my husband isn't enthusiastic. He'll go if I want to, but I prefer he's excited. I'm exhausted from preparing for Pesach and caring for the kids. He likes to stay home to learn and relax. This situation is frustrating for me.

**Answer:** It sounds like you're feeling drained after Pesach and need a break, while your husband prefers home. This dynamic is common, where each spouse unwinds differently. The key is communication, compromise, and creativity in finding solutions that work for both of you.

Spouses often assume their partner understands their needs, leading to frustration. One of the most important steps is sharing your feelings clearly and empathetically. For example: "I know how hard you work and I really appreciate it. At the same time, preparing for Pesach was exhausting for me—I feel like I need time away to recharge." This invites him into your world without placing blame. It helps him see why a vacation is essential for you while acknowledging his needs. Tone matters - avoid being accusatory or resentful, as this can make him defensive.

Husbands are often not aware how much work the wife and mother does during the day (and night). Share what your day looks like—the many tasks, emotional labor, and desire for renewal—and how a vacation could help restore balance. Staying home for you is like suggesting a picnic in his office—unrestful.

If your husband isn't excited about it, suggest ways to make it enjoyable for him: choose a destination where he can find quiet spaces for learning; plan mornings for relaxation and learning and afternoons for other activities; if he's hesitant about being away too long, consider a weekend instead.

Even if he's not enthusiastic but willing to go, take him up on it! His willingness shows care for your needs, and he may enjoy the trip. Staying home could lead to resentment, affecting your marriage and family interactions.

Marriage is about understanding and adapting to each other's needs. By opening up an empathetic dialogue and finding ways to make the vacation enjoyable for both of you, this could be an opportunity not only for relaxation but also for strengthening your bond.

*Aharon Schmidt, marriage & individual counseling: [www.aharonschmidt.com](http://www.aharonschmidt.com)*

**\*Shalom Bayit seminar beginning after Pesach. To register and/or receive more information, please contact the above website.**



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