

Living Jewish



Tell your Children

Non-Stop to Bangkok

Rav Shalom Schechter, an elderly Rabbi, was on a return flight to Israel with a stopover in Athens where he would board a connecting flight.

It was two days before Rosh Hashana, and his past few days in New York had been exhausting. Fundraising, selling Torah books, packing, and preparing for his trip home had all taken their toll on his seventy-year-old body. Exhausted, he fell into a deep sleep as the plane traversed the Atlantic.

He had asked someone to wake him when the plane landed in Athens, but evidently his request was forgotten. Seemingly, it didn't strike anyone as unusual that the Rabbi with the long beard remained asleep even as the plane landed in Athens and people disembarked. He remained asleep throughout the stopover and awoke only as the plane roared down the runway, taking off to its next destination.

Lebanon!

The captain greeted everyone and detailed the flight plan. Their next stop was Lebanon! Rabbi Schechter blinked his eyes a few times in disbelief. Lebanon? What happened to Athens? He realized he had slept through Athens, and unlike a bus, he couldn't just get off. His baggage was probably on its way to Israel, but he most certainly was not.

This obviously Jewish man would be in danger in Lebanon. He discussed his predicament with the flight attendant, who discussed it with the captain. They suggested that he stay aboard the plane in Lebanon, and disembark at their next destination - India!

Rabbi Schechter knew that there were Jewish communities in Bombay and Calcutta, but enroute the captain informed the passengers that due to civil disturbances in India, only those people holding Indian passports would be permitted to disembark.

Rosh Hashanah was only a day off. Checking plane flights and schedules,



May we be signed and sealed for a sweet new year, with the ultimate blessing, the coming of Moshiach!

Rabbi Schechter realized that he had no chance of getting back to Israel on time for the holiday. He couldn't help but wonder where in the world this incredible journey might take him. He would have to get off at the next stop after India, wherever it may be. He soon found out: Bangkok, the capital of Thailand.

Only A Few Hours

By the time the plane taxied to a stop at Don Muang Airport and Rabbi Schechter was cleared through customs, it was only a few hours before Rosh Hashana. After some desperate inquiries, he was told that there was indeed one synagogue in Bangkok, and it was in the center of town. He made his way there, hoping that someone would be kind enough to invite him home. The people turned out to be more than kind.

He had no trouble conversing with the congregants, for most of the men who attended the synagogue spoke English. He was invited by the president of the synagogue, Mr. Atlas, to be a guest in his home, and it was there that Rabbi Schechter stayed for the next few days.

At the Atlas' table, Rabbi Schechter ate only some cake, fruit, and vegetables that his daughter had packed for his trip, and matzah, which his host provided. He was introduced to Mr. Atlas' children, two of whom were brilliant young scholars studying at Oxford University in England.

When he came to the synagogue the next morning, a surprise was waiting for him: not only was there no mechitzah (partition) separating the men from the women, but the congregants were all sitting together.

Rabbi Schechter decided to pray alone in a side room, where he could still hear the prayers of the congregation.

After Shacharit (morning prayer), he asked the Rabbi if he could address the congregation.

An Amazing Transformation

"My dear Jewish brothers and sisters," he began, "I am grateful to G-d Almighty who has granted me the privilege of being with you this Rosh Hashana. Many of you probably know that my original intention was to be in Eretz Yisrael with my family, but G-d in His wisdom decided I be here with you in Bangkok.

"I deeply appreciate your hospitality and friendliness, and I feel I owe you an explanation why I did not pray together with you this morning.

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Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting Rosh Hashana	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	5:42	6:58
Tel Aviv	6:04	7:00
Haifa	5:53	6:59
Beer Sheva	6:04	7:00
New York	6:17	7:11

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Spiritual Growth

The Tzemach Tzedek, the third Rebbe of Chabad [whose birthday is erev Rosh Hashana], was raised by his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe. Once, the Alter Rebbe told him: "I want to give you all the Torah knowledge I possess as a present."

The Tzemach Tzedek declined, saying that he preferred to gain his knowledge through his own labor and toil.

Years later, however, he regretted the decision. "I should have taken the present from my grandfather," he remarked, "and then begun to toil. I could have achieved far more if my initial base of knowledge had been broader."

Rain and Dew

In the second verse of this week's Torah reading, Haazinu, Moses tells the people: "Let my teaching drop like rain, let my sayings flow like dew."

With these metaphors, he is informing the people of two dimensions of Torah. Dew flows at all times. Rain, by contrast, is dependent on the evaporation of moisture from the earth. Only when there is a sufficient amount of moisture that has risen from the earth is it possible for rain to descend.

Dew is thus an analogy for the revelation of Torah that comes from Above. Thus, it is interpreted as a reference to the Written Law which is G-d's word, made known to us by the prophets on His initiative. And in a personal sense, it refers to the awareness of G-d that is, from time to time, granted to a person as a gift from Above, as an expression of G-d's kindness.

Rain, by contrast, refers to that dimension of Torah associated with man's labor. Of course, its source is also Above, for the Torah is G-d's truth, not man's. But this facet of Torah requires man's input. Therefore it refers to the Oral Law which is revealed as a result of man's study.

Effort and Striving

In that vein, our Sages teach: "Every new insight developed by an experienced sage was given to Moses at Sinai."

The insight was developed by the scholar through his effort and striving. And yet, it is not an entirely new insight — for then, it would be merely a human truth. Instead, it is part of the Sinai revelation.

The scholar, through his diligent work was able to align his understanding with G-d's truth and reveal an aspect that was previously unknown.

In the personal sense, this refers to the awareness of G-d that comes from a per-

son's efforts. He labors to appreciate spiritual concepts, not as they can be appreciated by the soul as sparks of spiritual truth, but as they are internalized and understood by the human dimensions of our being.

Real Change

Now both of these dimensions are important. Revelation from above is always more refined and pristine than truths realized by man. But the truths man realizes on his own are more lasting and have a greater effect on his own spiritual development.

To go back to the analogy, any farmer will tell you that dew is useful, but if you really want crops to grow, rain is necessary. To generate sincere and real change, it is necessary that a person work on himself.

Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, from Keeping in Touch, reprinted with permission from Sichos in English.

Non-Stop to Bangkok

continued from page one:

"Every Jewish synagogue is a micro-model of the Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple that stood in Jerusalem. Thus, its sanctity is to some degree comparable to the sanctity of that most holy site. In order to ensure that there be no frivolity or diversion of attention from the sanctity of the Temple, the Rabbis decreed that men and women should not mingle there. Similarly, a synagogue in which men and women sit together loses some of its sanctity. With all due respect, this is why I did not join you."

Rabbi Schechter's words were eloquent, and moving, yet respectful. He did not talk down to them nor criticize them. Afterwards, he encouraged them to create Torah-study groups so that they could become more knowledgeable about the traditions and customs of their forefathers.

When he finished speaking, an unbelievable thing happened: a Dr. Frankel, one of the members, walked up to the front and began speaking spontaneously. "I'm sure many of you feel, as I do, that it is an honor to have such a distinguished guest in our presence. In deference to Rabbi Schechter, may I suggest that we separate before we continue with the Torah reading and shofar blowing, so that he can pray with us."

In an instant, two hundred people were on the move. The men stationed themselves on the right side of the synagogue, and the women went to the left.

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From our Sages

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; O earth, hear the words of my mouth (Deut. 32:1)

How did Moses, the most humble man to ever walk the face of the earth, dare to demand the attention of the heavens?

Because the more insignificant a person considers himself, the more right he has to ask that the heavens pay him mind.

(The Kotzker Rebbe)

He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the Children of Israel (Deut. 32:8)

G-d established the borders of all the countries of the world so the Jewish people, by living in those lands and observing Torah and mitzvot, could elevate the sparks of holiness they contain. The purpose of the Jews' exile among the nations is to illuminate the world through "the candle of mitzva, and the Torah, light."

(the Rebbe)

I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be (Deut. 32:20)

G-d assures us: "Even though I will hide

My face and subject the Jewish people to the laws of nature, it will only be a temporary situation. For even in their exile I am mindful of their 'end', and will always protect their eternity."

(Shem Mishmuel)

He was corrupted; the blemish is not to his children (Deut. 32:5)

No matter how corrupt and degraded a person may be, he always wants better for his children. He does not want them to continue in his sorry ways...

(Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshutz)

The Eve of Rosh Hashana

As a young boy, the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, asked his father, the Rebbe Rashab, what he was supposed to be doing on the day before Rosh Hashana.

"We recite Psalms the whole day long and feel remorse for our misdeeds of the past year, so that by the time evening falls and the new year begins, we are free of all our bad habits," his father replied.

(the Book of Chabad Customs)

Chassidus page

Crowning Hashem as King

Like a Soldier

"It was Sunday, erev Rosh Hashanah 5631," the Rebbe Rashab relates. "My father [the Rebbe Maharash] had just returned from a visit to the Ohel of my grandfather [the resting place of the Tzemach Tzedek], and I went into his room to ask him what is the service of Rosh Hashanah."

The Rebbe Maharash explained to his son: the service of Rosh Hashanah is *kabalat ol*, to accept upon yourself the yoke of Torah and mitzvot. Much like a soldier accepts the command of his superiors who tell him how to behave.

"These few words were sufficient for me," the Rebbe Rashab later said. "I requested his blessing and left the room to begin saying Tehillim..."

From the time he was young, the Alter Rebbe would spend the entire first day of Rosh Hashanah reciting Tehillim; from after mincha of erev Rosh Hashanah until maariv of the second night. This conduct he observed by his father, Reb Baruch. He continued this practice into adulthood as well. The Alter Rebbe taught his children and grandchildren to do the same, and this is how our Rabbeim conducted themselves throughout the generations. (Sefer Hasichot 5702, p. 1)

Our Service on Rosh Hashana

Our Sages tell us that on Rosh Hashanah we crown Hashem as King. With our ser-

vice, Hashem becomes "Melech Yisrael," King of the Jewish people, and with that He becomes, "Melech al kol ha'aretz," King of the entire world.

The way to crown a king, the Rebbe explains, is by accepting his leadership and submitting to his will—through *kablat ol*. For this reason the service of Rosh Hashanah, even for the greatest and most accomplished people, is all about the "simple" act of reciting Tehillim. One should also refrain from sleeping too much on both nights of Rosh Hashanah, and avoid speaking *dvarim b'teilim* (idle speech) at all costs.

We behave like slaves who don't have even one moment's rest from their master's work; or like a child who is preoccupied with the joy of greeting his father.

Joy and Trembling

Rosh Hashanah, like every Yom Tov, is a time for joy; except that on Rosh Hashanah the joy is coupled with solemnity. Once, the Tzemach Tzedek and Reb Nachum (the Mittler Rebbe's son) came into the Alter Rebbe's room and asked, "if the service of Rosh Hashanah is supposed to be carried out with joy, why are you crying?" The Alter Rebbe explained, "these are tears of joy!"

The Rebbe describes in the *reshimot* (his writings): "Chassidim [in Lubavitch] would break out in a dance even on the first night of Rosh Hashanah!"

reprinted from Derher

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continued from page two:

And so they remained for the entire holiday.

The next morning, Rabbi Schechter was asked to speak again. The Atlas boys were present. The older of the two, Morris, possessed an inquisitive mind, and was taken with Rabbi Schechter's speech. They had subsequent discussions, and a strong bond was forged between the two.

Morris had never been to a yeshiva, and had little idea what Judaism was about. Yet here was an Orthodox man who touched his heart. By the time Rosh Hashana was over, Morris had made a decision. He was going to interrupt his studies at Oxford and transfer to Ohr Somayach (a yeshiva with a program for men with minimal Torah background) in Jerusalem.

After much negotiation, Mr. Atlas agreed that his son could try it for one semester. The young scholar went off to Israel, and the one semester ended up lasting for three fruitful years. During those years he became a true knowledgeable Torah-based Jew, and was the catalyst for his younger brother to come to study in Ohr Somayach as well. Subsequently, both Atlas brothers became Orthodox Jews living in London, strongly committed to Torah and mitzvot, and deeply indebted to the Rabbi who slept through his stopover in Athens.

Back in Bangkok, the classes which Rabbi Schechter organized also bore fruit; some women are now observing family purity laws for the first time in their lives.

Source: Lightly edited and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from one of the books (The Maggid Speaks) in the famous "Maggid" series of collected stories by Rabbi Paysach Krohn.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles of Tsfat is co-founder of ASCENT. His email list for stories is in its 27th 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

Chassidus - the Vessel for Moshiach

The Baal Shem Tov wrote that on Rosh Hashana of the year 5507 (1746), his soul ascended to the heavenly realms, where he was granted the privilege of entering the palace of Moshiach. "I asked the King Moshiach, 'Master, when are you coming?' And he replied: 'When your wellsprings [teachings] will be disseminated outward.'"

From this reply it is apparent that the Baal Shem Tov's teachings, Chassidus, are closely connected with the coming of Moshiach. Chassidus is the vessel for the great light of Moshiach.

the Previous Rebbe, Likutei Dibburim. From our Sages & Moshiach Now! reprinted from LchaimWeekly.org - LYO / NYC

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Notes in the Kotel

Ahead of the new year and following tradition, the prayer notes placed between the stones of the Kotel over the past six months were recently cleared. The clearing was carried out according to halachic guidelines, using gloves and disposable wooden tools, with the aim of making space for new notes from worshippers and visitors expected to arrive at the Western Wall in the coming months. The notes were collected in special “genizah” sacks and will be buried together with worn out sacred books transferred to a designated burial site for sacred texts.

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, the Rabbi of the Western Wall and holy sites, personally oversaw the clearing as he does every year, and he offered prayers for the safe return of the kidnapped and missing, for the well-being of IDF soldiers and security forces, for the healing of the wounded, and for peace and security for the people of Israel, as well as for the multitudes of visitors and worshippers who placed their prayers between the stones.



Rabbi Rabinowitz said, “this year’s notes are filled with tears from bereaved families, families of the hostages, wounded soldiers, evacuated civilians, soldiers’ families, and more. ‘May the year and its curses end, and may the year and its blessings begin’ – grant peace in the land and unity among us, this is the request of all of us.”

The tradition of placing notes in the Kotel dates back about three hundred years to the time of the holy Or Ha-Chaim. Thousands of notes are sent to the Western Wall throughout the year, each with its own story behind it. This past year, there has been a significant increase in the number of prayer notes sent by Israeli citizens, including notes sent from hospitals where IDF soldiers are hospitalized, expressing their heartfelt wishes and personal requests for the success of IDF soldiers, the return of the hostages, and the healing of the wounded.

Individuals, groups and organizations from many countries send notes to the Kotel. On average, about 3,000 notes are sent each month via the website of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of notes placed personally by worshippers and visitors.

adapted from chabadinfo.com

Cooking Tip of the Week

Slow Cooked Brisket:

Sear meat in a pot or oven. Take out and put 3 cups sliced onions in the pot and sauté. Spice with a bay leaf, basil and thyme. Put the meat back and cover with red wine. Cook slowly for 3 hours. Cool, slice and cook in the sauce.

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Halacha Corner – Hearing the Shofar

Before the shofar is blown, ready yourself spiritually, mentally and emotionally and consciously intend to fulfill the obligation of hearing the shofar. Prepare yourself during this time to serve Hashem throughout the entire coming year. This intention is an overall readiness to fulfill Hashem’s will rather than the thought of specific acts. A child who has reached the age of chinuch, education, is obligated to hear the shofar. It is customary to bring children to hear the sounding of the shofar. Do not bring young children who will disturb the adults around them during the blowing of the shofar to the men’s section of the shul. Do not speak until the conclusion of all one hundred blasts (towards the end of Musaf), unless it is critical to the prayers or the blowing of the shofar. Look at the individual blowing shofar after he concludes blowing.

Day-To-Day Halachic Guide, Rav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, shlita, member of the Badatz of Crown Heights, reprinted from crownheightsconnect.com

Question: Last year when we heard the shofar on Rosh Hashana, we had no idea of the nightmare that awaited us on Simchat Torah. How can we fully trust that the coming year will be good, when we see what happened last year.

Answer: Your feelings are understandable and no doubt others have the same question.

In truth, we do not know what the next year will bring. However, if our trust is based on logic and reason, it is more fitting to believe it will be a good year. After all, the vast majority of years do turn out good. Our distorted mental filter forgets the good and zeroes in on the bad. Yet, thank G-d, there is much more good than bad.

Yet, our trust that the coming year will be good is not based on logic or historical evidence. The Baal Shem Tov teaches: G-d’s love of each and every Jew is infinitely greater than the love of elderly parents to their only child born to them in their later years. G-d’s love for each Jew is not based on the Jew’s accomplishments, but simply because he is a Jew. So too, our love for Hashem parallels Hashem’s love for us. It is an unconditional love rooted in the essence of our soul—as natural as a child’s love for his parent.

On Rosh Hashana, the cry of the shofar mirrors the cry of our heart. It is a cry of returning to our Source, returning to our Father in Heaven. It is a cry from the essence of our soul, from our deepest truth; a cry of humble submission that whispers, “Hashem, you are my King and I am your servant.”

Our belief, our faith, that the coming year will be good, is rooted in our essence. Our faith is not based on reason or past experience, but on our essential and timeless bond with our Creator. Like a child who truly believes their parent will generously provide for their needs, we sincerely trust that Hashem will fulfill our needs with kindness, mercy and abundance.

In addition, our deep trust that Hashem will provide us with a good and sweet new year creates a vessel for it to be manifest in our lives.

As Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher writes in his famous halachic code known as the Tur: Normally, a person who knows he is to be judged dons black clothing, lets his beard grow unkempt and doesn’t cut his nails. He does so because he is overcome with anxiety over not knowing the outcome of his judgment. Yet before Rosh Hashanah, we don’t do so. We don white clothing, trim our hair and cut our nails. On Rosh Hashanah we eat, drink and are happy, for we know that *the Almighty will perform miracles with us...*

May we be signed and sealed for a good and sweet new year!

Aharon Schmidt, marriage & individual counseling, coachingandcounseling1@gmail.com



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new year**

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