

Living Jewish



Tell your Children

The Helpful Hitchhiker

"The Toldos"[1] by nature had a quick temper. He sought counsel from Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk-Horodok (even though the latter was younger than he by 20 years, he admired his humility). He asked him what he could do to overcome his anger.

Rebbe Mendel didn't respond. It didn't take long, though, before the Toldos learned the answer.

The Toldos, together with a group of chasidim, was traveling on a wagon. A poor person stood by the road, and asked for a lift. The Toldos helped him aboard, but explained to him that there wasn't much room. "If you want to ride with us, you will need to sit among the packages." The man agreed. It was still better than walking.

The Toldos was concerned that the guest wasn't comfortable. As they were traveling, the Toldos turned to him and asked, "are you alright? Are you comfortable?"

"Everything is fine," the man assured.

The Toldos was still concerned about the guest, so soon afterwards, he turned to the guest and asked, "are you sure that you are comfortable?"

Once again, the guest told him that he felt fine.

When the Toldos inquired about his welfare a third time, the man replied: "we say, 'ashrei ha'am shekachah lo' [2]. This can be translated, 'fortunate is the nation that whatever happens to it,' they say, 'let it be that way.' No matter what happens, they say, 'let it be so. It is good the way it is.'"

The chassidim on board laughed when they heard the pauper's witty response, but the Toldos turned white. He realized that he had just received the answer to his dilemma.

How can one overcome anger? By saying that the way things are, it is



*The International Conference of Chabad Emissaries Gala Melaveh Malkah
This year's conference: 26th - 30th, MarCheshvan (Nov. 27th—Dec. 1st)
photograph from kinus.com*

good that way. Perhaps someone said something that insults you, perhaps someone did something that upsets you, but you accept life as it comes. Fortunate is the nation that can do so.

With this perspective, the Toldos realized that he could overcome his negative trait of anger.

When the Toldos came to the Vitebsker another time, Rebbe Mendel remarked, "I sent you Eliyahu Ha-Navi (Elijah the Prophet) to answer your question."

Internalizing the Message

Rebbe "Yankeleh" (Yaakov) of Pshevorsk was once walking with his gabbai (administrator) through a scenic park, and throughout their walk, the Rebbe was saying "Ashrei ha'am shekachah" - "fortunate is the nation who [knows that] whatever happens to him, lo - it is for his benefit."

The Rebbe repeated this thought many many times during their walk, as he sought to engrave on his heart and mind this fundamental lesson. To

know, and to believe, and to trust, that whatever happens to a person, it was destined that way because this is best for him.

When they were ready to get back into the car to return home, the Rebbe asked the gabbai, "so now do you know the meaning of 'ashrei ha'am shekachah lo'?"

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Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	3:55	5:14
Tel Aviv	4:16	5:16
Haifa	4:04	5:13
Beer Sheva	4:18	5:17
New York	4:12	5:14

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Clean Speech

The Torah tells us that Yitzchak was blind in his old age. According to one explanation provided by Rashi, G-d caused this to happen “in order to enable Yaakov to take the blessings.”

Now, to say that blindness is debilitating is an understatement, as Rashi comments, “because Yitzchak’s eyes had become dim and he was confined to his house... he was as though dead.” (Rashi, Bereshit 28:13) Nevertheless, because Yitzchak planned to bestow the greatest blessings upon Eisav, not knowing the full extent of his wickedness, G-d caused him to become blind in order for Yaakov to successfully disguise himself as Eisav and receive the blessings instead.

Why not Inform Yitzchak

Consider this: Yitzchak was 123 years old at the time of the blessings, and he lived until the age of 180. So for 57 years Yitzchak suffered from blindness, confined to his house, “as though dead,” all because he was unaware of Eisav’s wickedness and therefore desired to bless him. Was this really necessary? Why didn’t G-d simply inform Yitzchak that Eisav wasn’t worthy of the blessings, just as He communicated many other things to him?

Moreover, Yitzchak already had suspicions about Eisav. He disapproved of Eisav’s wives [Bereshit 26:35] and he was aware

that Eisav did not have the praise of G-d at the tip of his tongue [see Rashi, Bereshit 27:21]. So why did G-d not reveal the whole truth about Eisav instead of causing Yitzchak to be blind for the last 57 years of his life?

From here we see the extent to which one must be willing to go in order to avoid speaking negatively about another Jew. G-d deemed it preferable to cause Yitzchak to be blind for over five decades rather than to tell him lashon hara about the wicked Eisav!

If this is true concerning Eisav, how much more careful must we be when speaking about our fellow Jews, the most sinful of which are certainly not nearly as wicked as Eisav was! (*Likutei Sichot, Vol. 15*)

Beneath Eisav’s Surface

Yitzchak was not entirely oblivious to Eisav’s unrefined character and conduct (see Bereshit 26:35; Rashi on Bereshit 27:21), yet he intended to bestow upon him the most powerful blessings. Surely, his desire to bless Eisav was not based only on what he did not know about him, but also on what he did see in him.

The Torah relates that Yitzchak devoted a great deal of energy to digging water wells, restoring old wells and searching for and developing new sources of fresh water.

Chassidus explains that this hobby was not a meaningless detail in Yitzchak’s life, but a reflection of his distinctive nature, and his unique path in the service of G-d.

Where others saw dirt and gravel, Yitzchak dug deeply to reveal springs of life-giving water that ran beneath the earth. This means, in spiritual terms, that Yitzchak devoted himself to refining the unrefined, unearthing and cultivating the potential within all creation to recognize its G-dly source.

Seeing the Potential

Accordingly, we can understand why Yitzchak desired to bless Eisav. Despite Eisav’s disreputable behavior, Yitzchak had the ability to see the great spiritual potential associated with Eisav’s soul. Yitzchak therefore hoped that his powerful blessings would successfully excavate the spiritual treasures that lay hidden in his child.

Nevertheless, despite Eisav’s immense potential, his actual lowly state was such that in reality the blessings would not have had the desired effect on him. Rivka therefore deemed it necessary for Yaakov to receive the blessings instead of him.

Today, there are no Eisavs, but like Yitzchak, who labored to reveal the connection to G-d buried even within the wicked Eisav, we too must endeavor to draw near even those who seem distant from the life-giving waters of the Torah. With toil and effort, we can reveal within them their innate connection to the Source of Life. (*Likutei Sichot, Vol. 15*)

Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, reprinted from Ohr HaChassidus

From our Sages

And these are the generations of Yitzchak...and the first came out...and they called his name Esav (Gen. 25:19;25)

Esav is symbolic of the forces of evil and impurity, which were created for the purpose of the Jew transforming them into goodness and light. (It is due to this inner, positive reason that the Torah refers to Esav as “the generations of Yitzchak.”)

The name Yitzchak is related to the word for laughter. When “Esav” is changed into good, G-d “laughs,” as it were, and derives great pleasure.

(the Rebbe)

That my soul may bless you (Gen. 27:4)

Why did Isaac want to bless Esau instead of Jacob? Jacob was “a pure man, a dweller in tents (of Torah),” and even without a blessing he would stay away from evil. Esau, however, was very likely to fall into bad ways, and needed the assistance of his father’s blessing.

(Ohr HaTorah)

And one people shall be stronger than the other (Gen. 25:23)

Rashi comments: When one rises, the other falls.

Jacob and Esau symbolize the struggle between the G-dly soul and the animal soul, between a person’s good and evil inclinations. When a Jew’s G-dly soul is dominant and exerts itself, there is no need to combat the animal soul—it “falls” by itself. Light does not have to fight darkness to illuminate—as soon as it appears, the darkness vanishes. So too, does the light of holiness dispel all evil.

(Sefer Hamaamarim)

Esau and Jacob

The name Esau is derived from the Hebrew word meaning done or completed. Esau felt whole, satisfied and comfortable with his spiritual status, and was thus lacking any desire to elevate himself. Jacob, by contrast, is derived from the word meaning heel. No matter how high a spiritual level Jacob achieved he considered it as nothing, and was consistently motivated to elevate himself further.

(Shem MiShmuel)

From our Sages reprinted from LchaimWeekly.org - LYO / NYC

The Power of a Promise

Rabbi Yisrael Deren, long-time shliach to Stamford, Connecticut, received many direct instructions and words of encouragement from the Rebbe over the years, but there was one response that motivates him every day.

Rabbi Deren relates, “at one point in my shlichut I wished to undertake a new initiative. I wanted to write to the Rebbe of my new decision, but I was worried that I may not follow through on my commitment. In my quandary, I decided to share these deliberations with the Rebbe in a letter.

“The Rebbe responded, ‘by remembering that you promised me, that itself will be inspire you to fulfil it!’”

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Chassidus page

Kislev—A Chassidisher Chodesh

Kislev is a month teeming with chassidisher Yomim Tovim. Indeed, many are familiar with the maxim said in regard to Kislev — “A Chassidisher Chodesh.” At the root of the various special dates within the month of Kislev lies the principle: they each have a firm connection with the spreading of chassidus.

For chassidim, the month of Kislev boasts the most Yomim Tovim throughout the year and, in truth, the entire month is one long Yom Tov! The Rebbe teaches that during Kislev chassidim - men, women and children - should gather together on each day of Kislev and learn an additional portion of chassidus that they would not have learned until then. Primarily, one should focus on the three forefathers of chassidus: the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezritch, and the Alter Rebbe. And, if able, he should also learn [a little] from all the Rebbes.

We should spend extra time throughout the month sharing chassidus with those who haven't yet been fortunate enough to learn it. Additionally, a chassidisher month must come with an increase in farbrengens - a stable in a chassid's growth.

Complete Clothes and Torn Hearts

Reb Menachem Mendel Horodoker (also known as Reb Mendel Vitebsker) was a great student of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch. Initially charged by the Maggid with the task of spreading Chassidus in Russia, Reb Mendel later accepted leadership of the chassidim in White Russia after the Maggid's passing.

Two years after the Maggid appointed Reb Mendel to spread Chassidus in Russia, Reb Mendel visited the Maggid. The Maggid asked, “what did you achieve with the Jews of Russia?” Reb Mendel replied, “I found their clothes torn and hearts complete; I worked on making their clothes complete and their hearts torn.”

The poverty stricken Jews in Russia struggled to make a living, hence the torn clothes. Yet their hearts were complete, unaware of their true purpose. Reb Mendel helped them significantly increase their wealth, and cause their hearts to tear from the work of repairing their spiritual lives. [Similar to hard earth, once it is tilled and softened, plants can sprout.]

Chassidus is Far Beyond That!

Reb Yitzchak Aizik of Homil, was one of the greatest Chabad chassidim ever to live. A Jew once came to Reb Aizik and asked him to teach him chassidus since he had heard that chassidus can counter machshavot zarot (unwelcome thoughts).

Reb Aizik replied, “the king's treasure houses contain a collection of all sorts of vessels made of pure gold, even a manure shovel. Now, if someone tried to take that gold shovel to clear manure, he will be the subject of ridicule. The same is true of chassidus. To use it against machshavot zarot is like using the king's golden shovel for manure. It works, but is that what it's for? Chassidus is far beyond that!”

Adapted from Derher and The Weekly Farbrengen by Merkaz Anash, on-line at TheWeeklyFarbrengen.com

Internalizing the Message

continued from page one:

The gabbai replied, "of course I know. (How wouldn't I know, the gabbai thought, after hearing it so many times.) It means to know that G-d leads us in the very best way..." and then quickly repeated the Rebbe's lesson.

The Rebbe said, "no, you didn't understand. *Ashrei ha'am shekachah lo* means..." and the Rebbe repeated the idea once again. He could hear that the gabbai was just repeating his words, that he hadn't yet internalized the message.

Source: Freely adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Torah Wellsprings* (Noach 5777 - the teachings of Rav Elimelech Biderman of Lelov).

Rav Biderman adds: We should also review this truth over and over again, until we know and believe and accept that every issue of our life is exactly the way that G-d wants it. Everything is part of the Divine Plan and has a purpose. When one believes this, he will remain calm and tranquil with everything that happens to him; he will always be happy with his lot, and then, he will also find grace before the Almighty.

Footnotes:

[1] Rabbi Yaakov Yosef HaKohen of Polnoye was one of the closest disciples of the Baal Shem Tov. He was the first person to author a book of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings, titled *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, which, besides having a revolutionary effect upon publication, led to his popularly becoming known as 'Ba'al HaToldos' or "the Toldos", as above.

[2] "*Ashrei ha'am shekachah lo* [*ashrei ha'am sh'Hashem Elokav*]" - (Psalms 144:15) is the second verse of the famous '*Ashrei*' prayer, recited 3 times a day.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles of Tsfat is co-founder 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

Moshiach Now

Rashi writes: “Yaakov Avinu desired to reveal the end [of the exile].” A Jew should desire and should ask that the Redemption become manifest. Moreover, this request in itself — together with his contemplation of this subject — grants him help and encouragement in his service of the Creator.

When a Jew is told, “Moshiach is just around the corner,” or “We want Moshiach now,” this energizes and intensifies his divine service, making him ever more vigilant that he should not do anything that will (G-d forbid) hinder the coming of Moshiach.

From the teachings of the Rebbe, reprinted From Exile to Redemption, with permission from Sichos in English

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

Tzfat Women: Bringing Geula and Shalom Bayit Amid Sirens

As the Arizal taught, the women of this generation are reincarnations of the righteous women who left Egypt. Today, in the holy city of Tzfat—where Moshiach is prophesied to arrive first—15 women, a team of marriage coaches, are stepping up to answer that call. Amid sirens and disruptions to daily life, their shalom bayit (marital harmony) program, the GeulaWives circle co-founded by Roni Pasternak and Chana Margulies three years ago, is going strong.

Not only are they bringing shalom bayit to Tzfat, their homebase, but globally.

Rooted in the teachings of Chayei Sara, where we learn of Sara's profound prophetic voice, Geulawives, a transformative movement designed solely for wives, has developed a program to empower women through deep soul work inspired by the sefirot.

Cooking Tip of the Week

Winter Days: With short winter days it is time to pull out your crock pot and come home to a hot meal. Crumble 500 grams ground meat into your pot, add 200 grams broken spaghetti, 800 grams frozen spinach and one jar spaghetti sauce. Fill jar with water and add. Spice it with 3 cloves garlic, salt, pepper and red pepper flakes. Cook on low for 6-7 hours.

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Halacha Corner – Havdalah on Coffee or Tea?

The preferred beverage for kiddush and havdalah, or other such mitzvot, is wine. In fact, according to a number of Rabbis, only wine (or grape juice) may be used for some or all of these mitzvot. Nonetheless, according to halachah, chamar medina, a local beverage which is considered important enough to be served socially instead of wine, is also acceptable when necessary.

Therefore, in a place where wine is not available, chamar medina may be used as a substitute for wine. In great need, or people who are not well and cannot drink wine, even if wine is available, one may make kiddush and havdalah on coffee or tea, which in our times is considered chamar medina.

Rav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, shlita, Badatz of Crown Heights, One Minute Halachah, #144, reprinted from crownheightsconnect.com



Drawing from Sara Imeinu's strength in malchut-feminine leadership and binah yetera (enhanced understanding), this method helps women elevate their beliefs about Hashem, themselves and their husbands.

It offers online support, group coaching, workshops, chassidus classes, one-on-one coaching, geula dancing on Fridays, and an array of written and digital resources. Countless women have seen miracles happen in their marriages.

The vision? To spark a geula (redemption) movement from the "bottom up," bringing the Shechinah into even the darkest moments.

Through Geulawives, these women are choosing to thank Hashem for geula in their lives and marriages, and focus on the miracles that surround them, knowing with a clarity that we can already start celebrating geula here and now. A clarity Sara exemplified through living every day of her life equally filled with joy. The countdown to Geula has begun: 3...2...1...

To join the program and learn more visit geulawives.org; to sign up for private coaching visit geulawives.org/coaching or for more information and/or questions reach out to admin@geulawives.org.

Question: My wife says I am a mess. I try and clean up but she doesn't notice and just complains how I do not clean up after myself. I am busy working 10 hours a day to support the family and even if I do forget to put the milk away, to put my clothes in the laundry, etc., she can cut me some slack. I don't know why everything has to be so tense. I feel I am walking on a narrow bridge and I can't veer the tiniest bit to either side without falling off (getting yelled at). How can I get her to calm down a bit?

Answer: Wouldn't it be great if your wife acted as you want: more understanding, more accepting and more appreciative. After all, when she sees the kitchen a mess and your dirty laundry on the floor, she could just say, "it's alright, he works so hard, I don't mind cleaning up after him."

Most likely, though, she also has her side. Perhaps she is thinking, "things would be so much better if he would realize how hard I work to take care of the house and family and help out more. Why does he have to be so sensitive when I ask him to clean up?"

It is always easier to look outward for a quick solution, "if he/she would just..." Yet, the only person we can directly change is ourselves. Pointing the finger at our spouse only creates resentment, with each side blaming the other. It doesn't promote change.

On the other hand, our feelings and actions create a reciprocal response in our spouse. As King Solomon states in Mishlei 27:19: "As water mirrors the face to the face, so does the heart of man to man." Chassidus explains that love reflects love - when one loves his fellow, his fellow will be aroused to love him in return.

So too, your positive behaviors will arouse a corresponding response in your wife.

Examples of things you can do:

1. Show your appreciation; give compliments—even several times a day.
2. Do things that would make her happy, including, to clean up after yourself.
3. Show her you are in this together—ask a couple times each day if there is anything you can do to help.
4. Create closeness—take her out once a week and buy her a gift from time to time. Show her she is your first priority.

You might ask—why do I have to do all these things. The answer: because you want a better marriage and you can only change yourself. The more you come to meet her, the more she will come to meet you.

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