

LIVING JEWISH

Tell Your Children

"No Farbrengen? Why Not?"

It was late November, 1974. Outside 770 Eastern Parkway, Chabad headquarters, crowds milled about, buzzing with casual conversation after the completion of the morning service. The synagogue attendant arose to make the usual announcements. The congregation at 770 waited perfunctorily, already expecting what to hear.

According to system, the attendant would look to the Rebbe while making the announcements. If the Rebbe walked away before the time for mincha, the afternoon prayer, was announced, it was understood that a farbrengen would take place, with mincha following afterward. If the Rebbe remained in his place, there would be no farbrengen that afternoon and the usual time for mincha would be announced.

Although many years earlier the Rebbe had conducted farbrengens frequently, the gatherings eventually dwindled to either the monthly Shabbat before the New Moon or a special day on the Jewish or Chabad calendar.

Mincha at 4pm

That particular year, 5735, the Rebbe had farbrenged more often than usual, which was why the chassidim assumed a farbrengen would take place, and especially since this Shabbat was the 9th of Kislev, both the birthday and yearzeit of the Mit-teler (Second) Lubavitcher Rebbe, and the following day, Sunday, the 10th of Kislev, would mark the commemoration of his release from prison.

The attendant, too, was certain. He began making his usual announcements— mitzvah tanks that would go out Sunday to Manhattan—expecting the Rebbe to walk away from his place, the signal to announce that day's farbrengen at 1:30. But instead the Rebbe remained in his place.

The attendant, still certain of a farbrengen, continued making announcements. He urged people to participate in all the Rebbe's mitzvah campaigns, mentioning those the Rebbe had initiated over the years.



"And he dreamed, and behold! a ladder set up on the ground, and its top reached to heaven..." (Gen. 28:12); painting by Yechiel Offner

But after he had drawn out saying anything he could, he saw the Rebbe still standing there. The hint was clear: the Rebbe was not going to farbreng. The attendant gave one final look, then announced, "Mincha at four." The chassidim groaned in disappointment. Quietly the Rebbe went up to his room, followed by his chief secretary, Rabbi Chadakov.

Groups of students gathered, trying to find the reason why they didn't merit a farbrengen on that special Shabbat. Perhaps the Rebbe wanted to announce a new mitzvah, which he would save for the farbrengen that would surely take place the next day and could be broadcast the world over.

The Kiddush at Franklin Shul

At the same time the Chassidim were leaving 770, the morning service ended in the Franklin shul on the edge of Crown Heights. As kiddush was being prepared, a young and somewhat different-looking boy sat excitedly at the head of the table. It was his bar mitzvah, the day he was "now a man" and would be religiously responsible. Around him adults chatted about the farbrengen that day for the 9th of Kislev, urging everyone to finish before 1:00 so they could walk over to 770.

As guests hurried past the boy and wished him mazel tov, the boy nodded and smiled back, yet sighed, resigned to a short cere-

mony. This significant event in his life would be finished in less than an hour.

Just then a neighbor who prayed at 770 walked in. "Sorry, folks, no farbrengen today." The Franklin congregants were both shocked and disappointed. Nevertheless, now free of any rush, they raised their glasses in toast to the boy, and the Kiddush turned into a mini-farbrengen that lasted almost until mincha. The bar mitzvah boy was delighted.

A Wondrous Story

The next day, Sunday, was the 10th of Kislev, so the Rebbe went as usual to the Ohel (burial place of his father-in-law and predecessor) that morning. The chassidim eagerly awaited his return. Naturally the Rebbe would go to his office for the afternoon prayer, then speak to Rabbi Chadakov about a farbrengen. To their dismay, the Rebbe returned in the late afternoon and went straight to the afternoon service. He left his office afterward without a word to Rabbi Chadakov. It was clear: no farbrengen that day, either.

Rabbi Nachman Yosef Twersky, a young student at the time, just knew there had to be a reason behind all this. He managed to contact someone "in the know," who related the most wondrous story.

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Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	4:00	5:14
Tel Aviv	4:15	5:16
Haifa	4:04	5:13
Beer Sheva	4:18	5:17
New York	4:12	5:14

Shabbos Table



The Meaning of Prayer

Our Torah reading, Vayetze, relates that as Jacob our Patriarch left Eretz Yisrael to journey to Lavan's home where he would marry and establish his own household, he "encountered the place."

Our Rabbis interpret this as referring to Mount Moriah, the site of the Temple in Jerusalem. There Jacob prayed.

Jacob had lived in his father's home and afterwards had studied under Shem and Ever, the spiritual luminaries of the age. Now he was going to Charan, an idolatrous environment, where he would labor, not study.

Faced with such an awesome transition, Jacob turned to G-d, asking for success in the new phase of activity he was undertaking.

More Than Our Own Efforts

There is no way a person can insure success on the basis of his own efforts alone. Material reality reflects only one dimension of our existence.

Prosperity is a multifaceted Divine blessing and cannot be guaranteed through mortal efforts alone. Even when

all the fundamentals add up, there are times when a business deal doesn't work out and other situations, where for no apparent reason, one's efforts bring him success.

This is not mere chance. The Baal Shem Tov taught us that even a leaf turning in the wind is directed by G-d's will.

Certainly it is true when speaking of what happens to man. In every phase of our lives, there is an Eye watching over us and a Hand directing our future.

Therefore, particularly when we set out on a new road, we ask G-d's assistance through prayer.

Looking to G-d

On the surface, however, such prayers are self-serving. Man is asking G-d for something for his own self. He is not praying for G-d's sake; he is praying because of his own needs or wants.

Is that spiritual? And is this what G-d desires?

Yes. G-d's intent in creating our world was to have a dwelling place in the lower worlds; that His presence be revealed within the realm of material things.

He didn't create angels to inhabit this

physical world. He wants a world where man interacts with the physical and in so doing, understands that it is controlled by G-d.

That is precisely the awareness generated when a person prays for his material well-being.

He is concerned with everyday things, and He is asking G-d to grant Him success in this realm. Instead of relying on his own resources, he is looking to Him.

The Purpose of Creation

These prayers are extremely sincere. When a person asks for spiritual things, his requests may not come from his inner core.

But when he prays for his material well-being, he puts his whole heart into his prayer. He is turning to G-d with all of his attention and asking for His help.

In doing so, he consummates the purpose of creation, connecting G-dliness with the most mundane dimensions of worldly existence.

Based on the teachings of the Rebbe, from Keeping in Touch, reprinted with permission from Sichos in English

From Our Sages

Livelihood

According to One's Needs

"And He will give me bread to eat and a garment to wear" (Bereishit 28:20). Bread to eat—not to store up; clothing to wear—not to fill the closets. Yaakov asked that Hashem give him only according to his needs.

(Rabbi David of Lelov)

Luxuries Are Dangerous

When a Jew has his essential needs—"bread to eat and a garment to wear"—he remains attached to Hashem and behaves as a Jew should. But when he begins to live a life of luxury, very often it comes at the expense of a proper way of life.

(Kli Yakar)

Livelihood and then Repentance

This is what it says in Tehillim (90:3): "You bring man to the crushing point, and You say, 'Return, O sons of men.'" How can one ask a Jew to repent when he is, Heaven forbid, in a state of being crushed down, crushed into the dust? Provide, please, Master of the Universe, the needs of the Jewish people, and then they will return in repentance.

(Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli)

Trust Opens the Gates

One who prays for livelihood is included in, "One who comes to purify himself is assisted from Above," because by praying to Hashem for his livelihood and believing and trusting that only Hashem gives him his sustenance, he thereby causes the gates of livelihood to open.

(Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin)

The Power of Happiness

The Mittlerer Rebbe's kapelia had chassidic musicians and chassidic horse riders, who would enliven occasions. The Rebbe's son, Reb Nachum, was a horse rider.

One ordinary day, the Rebbe called for a performance. Reb Nachum was flung from his horse and was badly hurt but the Rebbe motioned that the performance should continue. A doctor examined him, concluding, "he has only broken his leg."

Chassidim asked the Rebbe why he had ordered that the performance continue, despite the accident. "Why don't you ask the reason for calling for a performance on a regular day?" responded the Rebbe. "I became aware of a harsh decree being issued in Heaven on my son, and since joy sweetens stern decrees, I called for the kapelia. The joy helped, for his fall turned out much less harmful than what had been planned for him. Then, to ensure a complete recovery, I instructed that the festivities continue. With Hashem's help, he will recover completely."

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Chassidus Page



The Warmth of Chassidus

The 9th and 10th of Kislev are days associated with the Mittlerer Rebbe, Rabbi Dovber, the second Chabad Rebbe.

The Mittlerer Rebbe was born on the 9th of Kislev 5534 (1773). Imprisoned on false charges of slander against the government, he was released on the 10th of Kislev, a date celebrated today as the "holiday of redemption." He died the following year on the same date of his birth.

It is said about the Mittlerer Rebbe that if his flesh was cut, Chassidus would stream forth. The Mittlerer Rebbe lived and breathed Chassidus, and imbued his Chassidim with the warmth and depth of Chassidic teachings.

A Lesson Everywhere

The Baal Shem Tov and his students were once passing over a frozen river and noticed peasants carving out crosses in the ice. The Baal Shem Tov gave orders to stop the wagon and he watched the peasants at work. The students were astonished and one of them mustered the courage to ask for an explanation.

The Baal Shem Tov explained that everything that a person sees or hears should serve as a lesson in his or her service of Hashem. Now, the peasants were able to carve out their avoda zara (idol worship) in the river only because it had frozen. The lesson: Holiness must be approached with warmth and vigor.

Warm Us Forever

It was a bitter cold night, but the soldier did not leave his guard post. He stood

motionless until his feet froze. When his superiors told this to the Czar, they were sure he would reward the soldier for his outstanding dedication. Instead, the Czar ordered he be whipped twenty-five lashes and explained, "the oath a soldier makes to serve the Czar faithfully ought to warm him and prevent him from freezing."

The chassid, Reb Nechemia of Dubrovna, saw the lashing and said: "This experience invigorated my service of Hashem for twenty-five years. We too took an oath at Har Sinai, and it must warm us forever..."

Can't Be Passionless

The Rebbe teaches: the plagues in Egypt were not simply a punishment, but a process of refinement. In the first plague cool water was replaced with warm life-sustaining blood, since in order to leave Egypt, literally and in everyday life, we must develop a passion for holy matters.

One may ask: Why must I be passionate about holiness? Isn't it enough that I drop my passion for negative things? A person must realize that it is impossible to be passionless. If one is impassionate about holiness he will automatically gravitate to negativity. This is why the evil inclination invests so much energy that a person should not be excited by G-dliness.

The Rebbe also notes that true warmth and passion exist only in the realm of holiness. Impurity is essentially of a cold nature, and was given an artificial passion just so that man would have free choice.

The Power of Happiness and The Warmth of Chassidus adapted from The Weekly Farbrengen by Merkaz Anash, on-line at TheWeeklyFarbrengen.com

"No Farbrengen? Why Not?"

continued from page one:

It began a few months earlier. The mother of a boy in a Chabad school in New York sent the Rebbe a letter complaining about her son who, because of his unusual appearance, was being teased mercilessly by his classmates.

The Rebbe advised the woman to speak to the principal, who would certainly intervene. A few weeks later, the woman wrote back. Apparently, the principal did little and the teasing continued.

The Rebbe called for Rabbi Chadakov. He asked his secretary to contact the school and ask, on the Rebbe's behalf, why this painful situation had not been corrected. "What are they waiting for?" the Rebbe demanded. "That I myself visit the school and handle this?"

Rabbi Chadakov phoned the school. After hearing the Rebbe's instructions, the principal immediately took action, and the bullying stopped.

That Shabbat, parshat Vayetze, the 9th of Kislev, after the Rebbe finished mincha and went to his room, he again summoned Rabbi Chadakov and explained that the boy's bar mitzvah was taking place that Shabbat afternoon.

"The boy must not feel cheated that his farbrengen ended earlier than usual because of mine," the Rebbe insisted. It was for this reason that the Rebbe chose not to farbreng. The next day, continued the Rebbe, would be the boy's bar mitzvah celebration.

Had the Rebbe conducted his usual farbrengen, the hasty departure of so many guests would have ruined the boy's celebration. So, on the 10th of Kislev 5735, there was no farbrengen either.

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the Avner Institute.

Rabbi Tilles of Tsfat is co-founder of ASCENT. His email list for stories is in its 29th year. To join the list a/o his WhatsApp group for Saturday night Audio, Video and Zoom stories, go to AscentOf-Safed.com or WhatsApp +972-526-770-137.

Moshiach Now

Everyone's Responsibility

It is the task of every Jewish man, woman and child, from the greatest of the great to the smallest of the small, to bring about the Redemption. This mission is unaffected by distinctions of prayer rites (*nusach*), ideological circles, or parties: it is the concern of the entire House of Israel.

(the Rebbe, 5747—1986; reprinted from From Exile to Redemption, with permission from Sichos in English)



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Human Interest

Chief Rabbi of Quintana Roo

The State of Quintana Roo on the eastern side of the Yucatán Peninsula in Southeastern Mexico announced that it will recognize a “Chief Rabbi of the State.” Rabbi Dudi Caplin, who directs Chabad in the tourist city of Cozumel, will be registered in the State Directory of Religious Groups and Associations.

Mexico is made up of 32 states, and



Cooking Tip of the Week

Cabbage Schnitzel: Shred 680 grams of cabbage. Boil pot of water, add the cabbage and cook for 3–4 minutes. Drain and let it cool for 10 minutes. Grate ½ of a small onion and beat 3 large eggs. Once the cabbage has cooled, squeeze out any excess liquid and combine it with the egg-onion mixture, ½ cup of bread crumbs, ¼ cup of flour, salt and pepper. Form the mixture into patties. Fry until golden brown on both sides.

Alizah Hochstead,
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Quintana Roo is known as the most visited and touristic state in the entire country. The state will also view him as the “Representative of the Jewish Communities established in the municipalities of Cozumel, Cancún, Playa del Carmen, Puerto Morelos, Tulum, Bacalar, and Chetumal.”

“This recognition is granted in view of your distinguished career of more than fifteen years of service and spiritual leadership, dedicated to strengthening Jewish life, promoting religious values, fostering interfaith dialogue, and building bridges of peace, understanding, tolerance, and respect among the various communities of the State,” the letter said.

Adapted from Collive

Halacha Corner – Giving Tzedaka

Question: Is giving maaser (a tenth) to charity an obligation, and is it permissible to use that money for other mitzvot?

Answer: Regarding maaser kesafim (tithing of money), the halachic authorities express three different opinions: 1. Maaser kesafim is a Torah obligation. 2. It is a Rabbinic obligation but a full and binding one. 3. It is neither a Torah nor a Rabbinic obligation, but rather a custom of a mitzvah.

According to the view of the Alter Rebbe, maaser kesafim is a Rabbinic mitzvah. Therefore, it is permissible to use maaser funds for a mitzvah that a person is not obligated to fulfill—such as expenses for the education of his older children, if he cannot afford it. Similarly, one may use the money for publishing holy books. This permissibility applies even if the person has already set aside the maaser funds; (for if it were a Torah obligation, the poor would already have legal ownership of the money, and it would be forbidden to redirect it for these purposes). However, for mitzvot that are an absolute obligation upon a person, he must fulfill them from his own funds and not from maaser.

It is best to give charity with joy and a generous heart, and in any case of doubt, use ordinary (non-maaser) funds. Afterward, one may call upon G-d to fulfill His promise (Malachi 3:10): “And test Me therewith...” and the giving will bring increased blessing even in material matters, literally.

Adapted from Rav Yosef Simach Ginzberg, Sichat HaShevua

Farbrengen

Question: I liked the C.A.L.M.E.R.S. Method to avoid anger and how you fit the practical techniques into an acronym. Do you think it would be possible to create an acronym for techniques related to Shalom Bayit?

Answer: Below are several guiding principles that have been discussed in various columns over the years. The general thrust is for each person to do their inner work so as to create a more peaceful and harmonious marriage. The techniques are organized with the acronym, The H.A.R.M.O.N.Y. Method©.

Home. Put the marriage—the home—first; do what is best for the marriage, beyond individual wants and needs. When both partners prioritize the “us” over the “me,” there will be fewer arguments and greater closeness. When conflict arises, reframe it as “us” facing a challenge together. Ask: “How can we solve this together in a way that works for both of us?” Remember: don’t be right, be married.

Aim for your goal. Keep your ultimate objective clearly before you: to maintain a close, caring, and loving marriage. Before speaking or acting, pause and ask yourself: will this bring me closer to my goal or further away?

Replace defense with understanding. When your spouse shares a concern, resist the knee-jerk reaction to defend yourself. Instead, truly listen. Put yourself in their shoes and seek to understand their perspective. Defending creates distance; understanding creates closeness.

Mindfully focus on the good. Avoid tunnel vision—that tendency to focus exclusively on what frustrates you. Consciously redirect your thoughts toward your spouse’s positive qualities. This shift will strengthen your relationship and bring out the best in them.

Open acceptance. Accept your spouse as they are. We all have imperfections and are growing. Attempts to change another person breed resistance and resentment. Acceptance creates closeness; lack of acceptance creates distance.

Nurturing Dialogue. Avoid accusing; rather describe how situations and behaviors make you feel. Also, use collaborative language, i.e., how can we resolve this situation in a way that works for both of us.

Your soul mate. You and your spouse are two halves of one whole, brought together through Divine Providence. Your spouse helps you to grow, step out of your “comfort zone”, and realize your deepest potentials.

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