

Celebration!

Shavuos Guide

6-7 SIVAN, 5770 / MAY 18-20, 2010

**The Practical & Soulful
Meaning of the Holiday:**
The Torah, The Mitzvos
and their purposes.

| | |
|---------|---------|
| לא תרצח | אנכי ה' |
| לא תנאף | לא יהי' |
| לא תגנב | לא תשא |
| לא תענה | זכור את |
| לא ת | כבוד את |





SOME SHAVUOS THOUGHTS

My Dear Friends, **Wisconsin Jewry,**

This year's Shavuos marks the 250th Yahrzeit anniversary of the founder of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (see page 22 for a brief biography).

It is no accident that the passing of the Baal Shem Tov was on Shavuos. Indeed the Baal Shem Tov's teachings and life mirror the very essence of what the Torah and the purpose of Torah is all about.

The Torah and its mitzvot (commandments) are to affect the unification of our physical and material world with the Divine.

The experience at Mount Sinai, where G-d revealed Himself to humanity, was the first breakthrough that opened the door for us, creatures of this universe, to take it and continue affecting that relationship.

This is what we have been doing ever since. By studying Torah — internalizing G-d's wisdom — and observing G-d's commandments — living a life in accordance with His will, we affect the bond between G-d and us and the entire world we live in.

The ultimate unity of G-d and the world will be with the coming of Moshiach, when, as the prophet Isaiah says, "The world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed."

As a last preparation to this end, the "soul of the Torah" — the esoteric and mystical part of the Torah — was revealed to the masses by the Baal Shem Tov.

With it, the Baal Shem Tov also reached out to and touched the soul and essence of the Jew, as well as uncovering the inner essence of the world — the G-dliness within the world.

This is what Torah is all about, and this is what began with the revelation at Mount Sinai when G-d gave us the Torah

• • •

This Shavuos let's allow ourselves to take advantage of the Baal Shem Tov's offerings – the study of Chassidus. In today's world it's easy. With a click of a button you can access the vast treasure of the wells of the Baal Shem Tov and energize your soul.

Best wishes for a very happy Shavuos.

Rabbi Yisroel Shmotkin

For holiday schedule, candle lighting times & blessings see page 39.

Celebration!

Shavuos 5770 / 2010

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Celebration!

Volume 41 #5 May, 2010

Published 6 times a year by:

Lubavitch of Wisconsin

3109 N. Lake Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53211

Phone: (414) 961-6100 • FAX: (414) 962-1740

E-mail: info@chabadwi.org

www.chabadwi.org

*Dedicated to the Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M.
Schneerson, OBM,
whose boundless love and
teachings are an
endless source of inspiration
and guidance.*

THE REBBE'S MESSAGE

The Voice That Never Ends

Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, OBM

When the Ten Commandments are repeated in the Torah as part of Moses' review of the Israelites' 40 years in the wilderness, Moses describes how G-d spoke those words in "a mighty voice that did not end" (Deuteronomy 5:19). One of the explanations offered by Rashi is that Moses is contrasting G-d's voice with human voices. The finite voice of a human being, even a Pavarotti, will fade and falter. It cannot go on forever. But the voice of the Almighty did not end, did not weaken. It remained strong throughout.

Is this all there is to teach us about the voice of G-d? That it was a powerful baritone? That it resonated? Is the greatness of the Infinite One that he didn't suffer from shortness of breath, that He didn't need a few puffs of Ventolin? Is this a meaningful way for Moses to motivate the Jews to accept the Torah?

Moses was the greatest of all prophets. He foresaw what no other prophet could see. Perhaps he saw his people becoming caught up in the civilization of ancient Greece, in the beauty, culture, philosophy and art of the day. And they might question, is Torah still relevant?

Perhaps he foresaw Jews empowered by the Industrial Revolution, where they might have thought Torah to be outdated. Or, maybe it was during the Russian Revolution that faith and religion were positively primitive.

Perhaps Moses saw our own generation with its satellites and space shuttles, television and technology. And he saw young people questioning whether Torah still speaks to them.

And so Moses tells us that the voice that thundered from Sinai was no ordinary voice. The voice that proclaimed the Ten Commandments was a voice that was not only powerful at the time, but one that "did not end." It still rings out, it still resonates, it still speaks to each of us in every generation, in every language and in every part of the world.

Revolutions may come and go but revelation is eternal. The voice of Sinai continues to proclaim eternal truths that never become passé or irrelevant. Honor Your Parents, revere them, look after them in their old age instead of abandoning them to some decrepit old age home. Live moral lives; do not tamper with the sacred fiber of family life, be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Dedicate one day every week and keep that day holy. Turn your back on the rat race and rediscover your humanity and your children. Don't be guilty of greed, envy, dishonesty or corruption.

Are these ideas and values dated? Are these commandments tired, stale or irrelevant? On the contrary. They speak to us now as perhaps never before. The G-dly voice has lost none of its strength, none of its majesty. The mortal voice of man declines and fades into oblivion. Politicians and spin-doctors come and go, but the heavenly sound reverberates down the ages.

Torah is truth and truth is forever. The voice of G-d shall never be stilled.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Chabad.org.



The Holiday of Shavuot

The holiday of Shavuot celebrates G-d's rendezvous with the Jewish People 3,322 years ago at a humble mountain called Sinai. It was the first and only time the Creator communicated with an **entire nation**.

It took place fifty days after leaving Egypt, when G-d gave the Jews the Torah, entrusting them with the cosmic mission of bringing Divine light to the universe. Shavuot marks the beginning of the Jewish people as a nation.

This moment and mission are celebrated on Shavuot, as we rededicate ourselves to our spiritual task.



Shavuot

Shavuot means "weeks," referring to the seven weeks our ancestors counted between the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah. It is the culmination of the "birth" of the Jewish people which began at the exodus on Passover.

Shavuot also means "oaths". The name indicates the oaths which G-d and Israel exchanged on the day of the giving of the Torah to remain faithful to each other forever.

What happened at that great encounter? What does it mean to us today? And how do we celebrate it? All this and more you will find in this guide.

A Brief History of the Giving of the Torah

On the first of Sivan, the third month after the exodus from Egypt, in the year 2448 on the Jewish calendar, the children of Israel reached the Sinai desert and camped near the mountain.

During the preceding weeks of traveling in the desert under Divine protection, experiencing daily miracles, such as the manna and the quail, the miraculous sweetening of the water, the crossing of the Red Sea and more, the Jewish people had become more conscious of G-d every day that passed.

Moses ascended Mount Sinai, and G-d spoke to him the following words: “You have seen what I did to Mizrayim, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own treasure from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and you shall be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.”

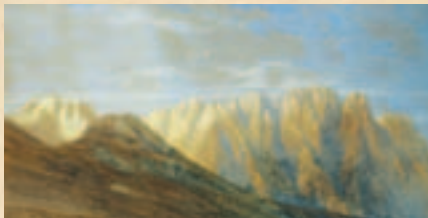
Moses returned from Mount Sinai and presented the words of G-d before the Jewish people. Unanimously, with one voice and one mind, they responded: Naaseh Venishma, “Everything G-d has said, we shall do and we shall listen.”

Thus they accepted the Torah outright, with all its precepts. When Israel had voiced its eagerness to receive the Torah, G-d spoke to Moses again: “Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready by the third day: for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.”

On the sixth day of Sivan, G-d pronounced the Ten Commandments before the entire Jewish people.

Following the receiving of the Ten Commandments, Moses ascended Mount Sinai and was there for forty days and nights. He learned every aspect of Torah with all its levels of application. This includes all the details of the 613 Mitzvot and how they would be applied in Torah guidance throughout the ages.

Finally, G-d gave Moses the two stone Tablets of Testimony, containing the Ten Commandments, written by G-d Himself.



Where Can I Receive the Torah Today?

Wednesday, May 19

Each year on the holiday of Shavuot this historic event is reenacted, as G-d offers us His gift of the Torah with greater and more intensified love.

Every Jewish man, woman and child should make every effort to be present in the synagogue as the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah.

Don't miss this one!

THE SHUL

Morning Service – 9:00am
Ten Commandments – 10:15am
Second reading of
Ten Commandments – 5:30pm
383 W. Brown Deer Rd. • (414) 228-8000

MEQUON

Morning Service – 10:00am
Ten Commandments – 10:45am
2233 W. Mequon Rd. • (262) 242-2235

THE SHUL EAST

Morning Service – 10:00am
Ten Commandments – 10:45am
3109 N. Lake Dr. • (414) 961-6100

MADISON

Morning Service – 10:00am
Ten Commandments – 10:45am
1722 Regent St. • (608) 231-3450

KENOSHA

Morning Service – 10:00am
Ten Commandments – 11:15am
6522 - 87th Ave. • (262) 359-0770

WISCONSIN DELLS

Morning Service – 10:00am
Ten Commandments – 10:45am
409 Broadway • (608) 231-3450

For other services, check your synagogue schedule.



The Ten Commandments, the Torah, & the Mitzvos

AT MOUNT SINAI, the entire Jewish nation, millions of men, women and children, witnessed the revelation of G-d as He spoke the words of the Ten Commandments. It is this event, the revelation of G-d Himself, without a mediator that established for all of the people, the truth and eternity of the Torah.

After the giving of the Ten Commandments, Moses ascended to the peak of Mount Sinai, and stayed there for forty days and nights. During this time, G-d taught him the entire Torah, as well as the principles of its interpretation for all time. He also gave him the two precious stone tablets, in which He engraved the Ten Commandments.

Upon his descent, Moses taught the Torah to the Jewish people. The Torah was then taught and transmitted from generation to generation, until this very day.

About The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments (listed on page 9) concern both laws between man and G-d (such as Shabbat), and laws between man and man (such as not to steal). Laws concerning action and speech (do not utter My Name in vain) and even concerning thoughts and feelings (do not covet that which belongs to another). The Ten Commandments function as a summary of the entire Torah.

The Sages point out that the text of the Commandments contains 613 letters, corresponding to each of the 613 Mitzvot.

What Is the Torah?

The word “Torah” is popularly referred to as the 5 books written by a scribe on a parchment scroll. Originally transcribed by Moses as he heard it from G-d, it has been copied thousands of times in every generation in the exact same words and script. It is this Torah scroll that we read in the synagogue.



“Torah”, however, represents much more. In addition to the Five Books of Moses, the Torah includes *Nevi'im* (The Prophets) and *Kesuvim* (The Holy Writings), all of which form the “Written Torah.” The Torah includes as well the Oral Tradition.

While the written law forms the “constitution,” of the Torah, its interpretation, the oral law, was also given to Moses at Sinai. Both were simultaneously transmitted from generation to generation.

The word “Torah” means instruction or guide. It contains 613 commandments of which 248 are positive (do’s) and 365 are negative (don’t’s).

The Five Books of Moses

In *Genesis*, the first book, we learn of G-d’s creation of the world and humanity; the life story of the founding fathers and mothers of the Jewish people – Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah and Rachel, and their families.

In the book of *Exodus* we learn of the enslavement of their descendants in Egypt; their miraculous deliverance and exodus; G-d’s revelation at Mount Sinai, the giving of the Ten Commandments, followed by particular instructions.

In the third book, *Leviticus*, G-d instructs us concerning the services at the Temple (first during the forty years in the desert and later on in Jerusalem); laws concerning proper conduct between man and his fellow and man and G-d.

In *Numbers* we learn of the census of the Jewish people; their trials and tribulations during their forty year travels



The Sinai Revelation and the American Revolution

Are there differences?

Just a few...

- The former was G-dly; the latter was human.
- The revelation was supernatural; the revolution was natural.
- The revolution took place 234 years ago; the revelation took place 3,322 years ago.
- The revolution was fought by 290,000 Americans and 50,000 Britons; the revelation was experienced by two to three million people.

The historical veracity of any event – be it as recent as the first or second World War or as long ago as the wars of Alexander the Great – is established by the fact that from its very origin it involved and was witnessed by a great multitude of people. It would be utterly irrational to suggest that someone dreamt up a story of world magnitude, recorded it, and “sold” it to a people who accepted it as fact, especially when told that it happened to them.

The more outlandish the story and the longer the period of time it claims to have taken, the less it would be accepted, especially when the implications of the story is a total change of lifestyle and the acceptance of restrictive rules, by a people – who, as recorded in the same Torah – keep questioning and rebelling from the very beginning.

No right-thinking person questions whether or not the Jewish people inhabited the land of Israel, had numerous kings, two temples, went

into exile, etc. These are all unquestioningly accepted as historical fact. Why? Because these details are part of a story that was experienced by the millions of people who told it. This same story is traced further back in time – without interruption – through the enslavement in Egypt, the miraculous redemption and the following revelation at Mount Sinai.

To put it simply, it is the very existence and continuous presence of the Jewish people that absolutely establishes the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai 3,322 years ago as an undeniable historical fact.

If the passage of time does not invalidate the truth of a historical happening, why then do some people question the validity of the story of the giving of the Torah? Is it possible because they are unaware of the full story, or could it be because to accept it would mean to accept that which it obligates of us?



in the desert.

In *Deuteronomy* Moses offers the Jewish people inspiration for years to come, including the promise that G-d will never forsake them and will continue to relate to the Jewish people through His prophets; the book includes the setting of the Torah judicial system and Moses’ foreseeing of the future.

The Prophets

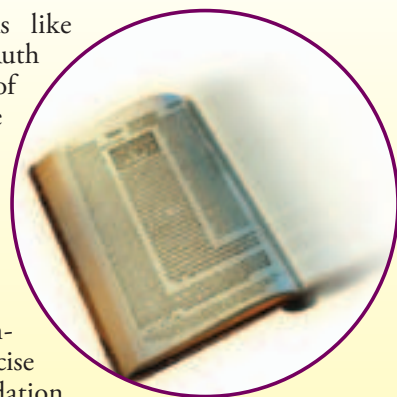
Following the passing of Moses, G-d revealed himself, as promised, to individuals of great piety and spirituality. These are the prophets who recorded G-d’s instructions and messages. There are 19 books of prophets. In all, we had forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses whose prophecies were recorded for their everlasting importance.

The Holy Writings

These include the books like Psalms, Song of Songs, Ruth and Esther, eleven in all, all of which were written by one or another of our prophets by *ruach hakodesh* (divine inspiration).

The Oral Law

The written Torah, its narratives and laws are conveyed in an extremely concise fashion demanding elucidation



by way of the Oral Law which contains details of the Commandments, their meanings, and general principles for interpretation.

It is the study of these principals and the interpretations derived thereby that has been the occupation of the Jewish people throughout the ages.

The Revealed and Hidden Parts of the Torah: The Kabbalah

The Torah in its origin and essence is G-d's infinite wisdom and will. It is this infinite G-dly wisdom that is concentrated in the practical laws of the Torah addressing mundane worldly matters that may be comprehended by human logic.

The Torah, as it deals with practical laws, is the revealed part of the Torah. The esoteric and mystical element of the Torah focuses on the G-dly dimension of the Torah and metaphysical significance of the Mitzvos which are the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidus. They are, as referred to in Jewish tradition, the *nesboma* (soul) and essence of the Torah. Both the hidden and revealed are inseparable parts of the Torah, received from Sinai and transmitted from generation to generation throughout history.

Significance of the Torah

In addition to being a guide for a Jew's life, the inner significance of the Torah is the fact that it

Continued on page 8

Kabbalah

What Is It?

KABBALAH. The mere mention of the word conjures up images of magical and mysterious otherworldly dimensions, of spiritual secrets that are profoundly miraculous and deeply inspiring. Nowadays it seems everyone—Jew or non-Jew, famous or nameless—is discovering and uncovering the divine truths of Kabbalah. Or are they?

That question raises three, more pointed ones: What is the essence of Kabbalah? Will opening the exploration of Kabbalah to the masses demean and distort this extremely difficult and highly spiritual subject, reducing it to the level of pop culture? If Kabbalah is not appropriate for popular study, is it somehow still relevant to our lives?

Kabbalah literally means "receiving"; in Israel today, the receipt you get when making a purchase is called a kabbalah. The Bible, or Written Law, is given by G-d and is available to anyone who can read it. The Oral Law—which includes the Kabbalah—is received, passed directly from teacher to pupil.

Most of Torah is considered Torah haniglet—revealed Torah, to be studied by all Jews. Kabbalah, however, was designated *chochmah nisteret*—hidden wisdom. In truth, Kabbalah was never literally hidden, but was not widely, or even publicly, studied.

The reason for restricting the study of Kabbalah relates to its subject matter. Kabbalah encompasses two general themes: *ma'aseh bereishit*—the theory or description of creation—and *ma'aseh merkavah*—Ezekiel's description of the Heavenly Chariot, which teaches us about the relationship between humans and the Almighty.

When I discuss matters that are tangible and open for all to see and appreciate, things that are already "revealed," it is simple for others to verify the truth of what I say. But if I am talking about angels, for example, I must be very careful. If I speculate from ignorance, what I say will be nonsense. And it may become dangerous nonsense if I fail to realize the power and meaning of what I am saying and end up defiling the Majesty of G-d.

Equally as esoteric as its subject matter is the language of Kabbalah. It is presented as a stream of abstract formulas, conveyed in Kabbalah's own unique jargon, understood only by a select cadre of scholars trained to decipher it. To avoid misunderstanding, Kabbalah had to be taught

one-on-one by a master teacher singularly attuned to the capabilities and receptivity of each student. One cannot simply open the classic Kabbalistic texts and glean their truths in a vacuum.

Unfortunately, today Kabbalah has been commercialized by those who pretend to grasp its innermost secrets. These pretenders purport to teach—and to sell—what they do not understand, to people who are not equipped to receive it. Kabbalah's mystifying formulas become nothing more than intoxicating mantras to those who mindlessly repeat them. This is like trying to cure an illness by chanting the chemical formula of the remedy.

This is not to say that Kabbalah should not be studied and learned. In fact, it is incumbent upon Jewish scholars to understand the whole map of Torah from beginning to end, the Hidden Law no less than the Revealed Law.

Throughout history, there have been those who, very quietly, achieved extensive knowledge of the Hidden Law.

But today, most of us are simply incapable of comprehending Kabbalah. For us the question is, "Is there some way we, too, can 'receive' the remarkable teachings of Kabbalah in a meaningful way, without treading upon its divine essence?"

One answer lies in the Chassidic approach to Kabbalah.

It is a basic Kabbalistic concept that the human soul is, in a manner of speaking, a spark of Divine revelation

within the world and that each human being is a microcosm of the entire universe. Chassidism shows how the rarified teachings of Kabbalah, which speak to the macro-universe, can be adapted into a structure with ethical and practical meaning for our individual lives.

In this way, Chassidism is a form of applied Kabbalah. Just as the Revealed Law frames the behavior of our bodies, the internalization of Kabbalistic notions of the Hidden Law can attune us to our soul, educating it to connect with the Divine. In this model, the power of Kabbalah is harnessed not to serve our own desires but to align them with the wishes of the Almighty.

One of the most important Chassidic books is called *Zohar Chai*, "the living Zohar." That is what Chassidism does: It gives the Kabbalah life by translating it into something meaningful in one's relationships with others and, most important, something that can quell the strife within one's own soul and calm the struggle of one's inner being.

By Rabbi Adin Even-Yisrael Steinsaltz



is G-d's wisdom. By learning and internalizing the Torah, a person's mind becomes united with G-d's wisdom and through it "embraces" G-d Himself.

The Mitzvos

There are six hundred thirteen divine commandments embracing every facet of our lives, both the duties to fellow men and the way to worship G-d. The positive commandments, numbering two hundred forty-eight, equal the number of organs in the human body, implying that a person should serve the Creator with every part of his being.

The three hundred sixty-five negative commandments are equivalent to the number of blood vessels in the human body, indicating that when we guard ourselves from transgressing these prohibitions – as we might be tempted to do by desires inherent in the blood – each one of our blood vessels, remains "unblemished" and pure. The negative commandments also equal the number of days of the year.



Significance of the Mitzvos

Mitzvah literally means commandment. However, it also means companionship, from the Aramaic *tza-va* (companionship). Upon fulfilling a commandment, one becomes united with G-d, who ordained that precept. For, regardless of the nature of the commandment, the fulfillment of G-d's desire, creates a relationship between the creator and the human who executed it. By fulfilling His wish, a person accomplishes an infinite purpose and is in G-d's "company."

This is the interpretation of our Sages' statement (Avos 4:2): "The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah," indicating that the mitzvah itself is the greatest reward, for this sets us in a companionship with the eternal and infinite G-d. All other rewards are secondary in comparison to this great merit.

Seven Noachide Laws

In the Torah there are also instructions for gentiles. Generally described as the Seven Noachide Laws, which include universal civil laws as given to Moses at Sinai. ●

The Torah Is...

THE TORAH IS A MANUFACTURER'S MANUAL. Valuable things come with a book of instructions on how to properly and optimally use them. Lawn mowers, mp3 players, minivans have a guidebook. The same applies to the valuable (and complicated) thing we call life--the Manufacturer accompanied it with an instruction book.

THE TORAH IS A CONTRACT. When two parties enter into a partnership, binding their financial futures to a joint destiny, they draw up a contract that spells out their respective duties and commitments. When two people marry, a marriage contract, called a ketubah, is drawn up that does the same. The Torah is our marriage contract with G-d, the document that details the commitments and duties we assumed toward each other when G-d chose us as His people and we chose Him as our G-d at Sinai.

THE TORAH IS IDENTITY. What connects the red-bearded chassid in Moscow with the black-skinned Ethiopian Jew? What does the West Coast Jewish filmmaker have in common with his peddler grandfather or his olive-growing ancestor? Nothing. They share no common language, facial features or diet. Any two Jews can be as culturally or even genetically diverse as any other two members of the human race. But the Shema recited today in a Canadian synagogue is the same Shema that was proclaimed in Egypt 3,500 years ago; the criteria for the mikveh built at Masada is the same as for the one in Brazil and Milwaukee. Torah bridges continents and de-gaps generations to serve as our single common expression of our Jewishness.

THE TORAH IS VISION. Why are we here? Where are we going? "An architect who builds a palace," cites the Midrash, "has scrolls and notebooks which he consults to know how to place the rooms, where to set the doors. So it was with G-d: He looked into the Torah and created the world." Torah is the divine blueprint for creation, the vision that illuminates the foundations of existence, its purpose and its significance. To study and live Torah is to understand and experience the soul of reality.

From Chabad.org, by Yanki Tauber

like fine
GOLD

How many Mitzvos are there? 613, of course.

A great many Mitzvos are associated with the service in the temple in Jerusalem. Until such time when Moshiach comes and the temple is rebuilt, how many Mitzvos are applicable today?

King David – whose Yahrzeit is on Shavuot – declares in Psalms, "They [Mitzvos] are more desirable than **טפ**, find gold." In Hebrew, the letters **טפ** - *paz* - have the numerical value of 87.

Eighty-seven is the number of Mitzvos which can possibly be performed nowadays. They include the observance of the holidays, performance of a Bris, weddings, etc. There are relatively few Mitzvos which are observed regularly – loving a friend, giving charity, reciting the Shema, putting on tefillin, grace after meals, observing Shabbat, studying Torah and a few others.

Shavuot is a good time to upgrade one's observance of these common Mitzvos.

The Children Are The Guarantors

Before G-d consented to give the Torah to the Jewish people, He requested guarantors, who would guarantee the Torah's continuity in Jewish life.

The Jewish people offered several possible guarantors, from the patriarchs to the prophets, but G-d was not satisfied until the little children were suggested.

Only children can be the guarantors and transmitters of Torah; our commitment to their education is the best assurance of our continued commitment to Torah and mitzvot.



The Children

*Who secured the deal with G-d at Sinai?
The kids did.*

**When we read the Ten Commandments in the synagogue on Shavuot, we make every effort that the children – even the smallest kids – should be there,
*right in the front row.***

Join in the ice cream party immediately following the reading.

(See page 4 for locations and times.)



THE TABLETS: Squares or Arches?

Ask anyone – What was the shape of the tablets that Moses received at Sinai? – and they'll tell you: They were longer than they were wide; a couple of inches thick, and, of course, round on top.

Wrong! Actually, the tablets were two equal square blocks, six handbreadths tall and wide and three handbreadths thick (approx. 2 ft x 2 ft x 1 ft). They were perfectly placed in the rectangular Ark whose wooden walls were covered in a thick gold casing (*Talmud, Bava Basra 14a*).

(The well spread notion of an arch shaped top seems to have originated centuries ago with inaccurate portrayals by artists).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. I am G-d your L-rd who took you out of the land of Egypt.
2. You shall have no other gods before me.
3. Do not take the name of G-d your L-rd in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. Do not murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not bear false witness.
10. Do not covet.



of Moses), Prophets, and the Holy Writing (TeNaCH). It was given to Israel, comprised of Kohanim (priests), Levites and Israelites, through Moses, the third child in the family, after three days of preparation, in the third month (Sivan).

Three Knots

The Zohar declares “Three are interlocked together: Israel, the Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He.”

49 Days of Counting

Upon their leaving Egypt, when Moses related to the Jewish people that G-d will give them the Torah, the Jewish people were extremely eager and impatiently counted the days. Hence the Mitzvah of counting the 49 days between Pesach and Shavuot.



As One Man, with One Heart

Our Sages relate that when the Jews camped before Mount Sinai, they were “as one man, with one heart.” Many of their other journeys were characterized by differences of opinion and even strife. However, when they prepared to receive the Torah, the Jews joined together with a feeling of unity and harmony. This oneness was a necessary prerequisite to the giving of the Torah.

Ladies First

To assure that the Torah would be well received and perpetuated, G-d told Moses to first address the women: “Say to the House of Jacob” (referring to the women) was followed by “Tell the sons of Israel” (Exodus 19:3) (referring to the men).

Women should be knowledgeable in Torah, to learn how to fulfill the Mitzvot in a full Jewish life.

The woman influences and affects her home and environment. It is the mother who primarily instills values in her children, encourages her husband to observe and study Torah, and affects others through her hospitality, warmth and teaching.

Sight and Sound

The Book of Exodus relates that when G-d gave us the Torah at Mount Sinai, “The people saw the voices.” “They saw what is ordinarily heard,” remark our sages, “and they heard what is ordinarily seen.”

As physical beings, we “see” physical reality. On the other hand, G-dliness and spirituality is only something that is “heard”—it can be discussed, perhaps even understood to some extent, but not experienced first hand.

But at the revelation at Sinai, we “saw what is ordinarily heard” – we experienced the Divine as an immediate, tangible reality. On the other hand, what is ordinarily “seen” – the material world – was something merely “heard,” to be accepted or rejected at will.

FROM OUR TRADITION

About the Torah and the Giving of the Torah

The Lowest Mountain

We all know that the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai. Why Sinai? Say the Sages: Sinai is the lowest of all mountains, to show that humility is an essential prerequisite to receiving the Torah.

Why then on a mountain? Why not in a plain - or a valley? The Code of Jewish Law states at the very beginning: “Do not be embarrassed by mockery and ridicule.” For to receive the Torah you must be low; but to keep it, sometimes you must be a mountain.

Purpose of the Torah

The Midrash relates that when G-d was about to give the Torah the heavenly angels argued that He should offer it to them! Upon G-d’s request Moses replied, “Have you been in Egypt? Do you have an evil inclination?”

This implies that the Torah was given in order to elevate humanity as well as the world in general. Precisely for those who have an evil inclination and need to be refined, was the Torah given.

Kesser - A Crown

The Ten Commandments consist of 620 letters, equaling the number of the 613 Mitzvos and the 7 Rabbinical Mitzvos (such as Chanukah, Purim, etc.). 620 is the numerical value of the Hebrew word “Kesser”- a crown. Each mitzvah is considered a part of G-d’s crown. When fulfilling a mitzvah a person offers a crown to the Almighty.



A Triple Torah

Everything connected with the giving of the Torah was of a triple nature: the Torah consists of Chumash (the five books



Blueprint

The Torah is the blueprint by which the world was designed. Everything that exists can be found in the Torah. Furthermore, “In any one concept of Torah you can find the entire world.”

Mitzvot

The 613 Mitzvos (Commandments) are compared to a thick rope woven of 613 thin strands. They parallel the “rope” of the downward flow from G-d that connects the *neshama* (soul) invested in a human body with G-d. (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

A Scale

A person should view himself, and the entire world, as being equally balanced between good and bad... By doing even a single mitzvah, he could tip the scales for himself and the entire world for the good, and bring himself and everyone else redemption and deliverance. (Maimonides)



The Torah — G-d Given

Rabbi Akiva said: Was Moses an expert hunter (that he knew so much about animals)?! Rather, the Torah recorded this (the detailed names of different species of animals, fowl and fish,) in response to anyone who might claim that the Torah is not from Heaven.

Given in the Desert

The Torah was given to us in the barren, ownerless desert to emphasize that no man may claim any superior right to the world of G-d. It is equally the heritage of every Jew, man, woman and child, equally accessible to the accomplished scholar and the most simple of Jews.

Daily Heavenly Echo

Our Sages declare: “Every day an echo resounds from Mount Horeb (Sinai) and proclaims: ‘Woe to those who insult the Torah...’”

Asked Rabbi Israel Baal Shemtov: Has anyone heard this echo? To what purpose, then, is this proclamation if no one hears it?

But often a person is seized by a feeling that has no identifiable source or cause. He may be struck by a sudden joy, or fear, or regret. He may suddenly resolve to better himself, to rectify a deficient past and turn a new leaf in his life. He may be suddenly driven to embark on a new initiative in his spiritual development. From where do these unprovoked awakenings come?

Every day an echo resounds from Mount Horeb. ●

NA'ASEH V'NISHMAH Everyone Had a Chance

The day drew near when G-d desired to give the Torah to His chosen people, the children of Israel, whom He saw now cleansed of the impurities that had filled their lives in the slavery of Egypt.

But G-d decided that it would only be fair to offer the Torah to the other nations of the earth (although He knew that they would reject it) before offering it to the children of Israel. And so, He first approached the Edomites, descendants of Esau, and offered them the Torah with these inviting words:

“Ye, Edomites, sons of Esau, I bring you a gift – My holy Torah. Accept it and ye shall be blessed with long life, you and your children also.”

“What is written in Your Torah?” questioned the Edomites.

“It is written in My Torah: ‘You shall not murder!’”

“But that is ridiculous!” protested the Edomites.

“We are soldiers, men of war who live by the sword! How do you expect us to accept a Torah that preaches against our chosen way of life? No, thank you. Your Torah is no use to us at all.”

G-d then took the Torah to the children of Ishmael and offered it to them:

“Children of Ishmael, accept the Torah which I bring you this day, and if you keep its commandments you shall be blessed with all good!”

“What does Your Torah demand of us?”

the Ishmaelites asked cautiously.

“My Torah says ‘You shall not steal!’” replied the Almighty.

“That wouldn’t suit us at all,” replied the sons of Ishmael. We are men of commerce, and such a law would interfere with our business transactions. We are sorry, but we have no use for Your Torah.”

The next people that G-d approached were the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon and all the people of Canaan, to whom He said:

“I bring you a most precious gift – My Torah. Take it and you shall all be blessed with many days upon your land!”

The Canaanites spoke up, saying: “First tell us what is written in Your Torah.”

“In My Torah it is written: ‘You shall have fair scales, correct weights, and give full measure,’” replied the Almighty.

“We do not want to accept Your Torah which is so finicky about such matters. Your Torah is not for us!” answered the Canaanites emphatically.

And so, after G-d had taken the Torah to all the other nations of the world, who lacked sufficient understanding to estimate its worth, He went to the children of Israel. He was confident that His chosen people would appreciate the Torah and accept it eagerly.

When G-d offered His Torah to the Jewish people, they responded, “Na’aseh V’Nishmah” “Yay! We shall do whatever you ask of us. Now, please tell us what to do.”



THUNDER ON THE MOUNTAIN

G-d did not make a quiet, subtle appearance at Sinai.

The mountain shook, thunder crashed. The divine voice reverberated through the galaxies. The world was shocked into stillness. And the people present, those who were supposed to receive this great revelation, were actually overcome by the first intimation of His presence. They were revived shortly thereafter, only to be knocked out again by commandment number two.

I can assure you that I would be happy to drop dead myself if G-d made a personal visit. But He's not making a personal visit, and He doesn't want me to die. G-d started the whole thing with a big bang, but He's kind of disappeared since then. Yes, there have been selected appearances: a cloud on the tabernacle, a fire on the altar, a something here, a something there. But it seems that the grand appearance, where we heard G-d's voice, felt G-d's presence, was only a one-time thing.

So, here I am, three thousand years later, and I'm left with this Torah and its

many, many instructions, but none of the instructor. I'm left with a G-d who doesn't want me to drop dead at the sight of Him, but wants me to live with Him – in His absence. So, the question I'd like to put to this G-d of mine is, What are You thinking?

Nothing doing. G-d is not available for comment. He's already given that comment, and all the commentaries along with it.

So I open the book. "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was bare and empty, and darkness covered it." I read, read[,] and read. I read about how G-d created the world as an extension of Himself and why He did it. I read about a world, just a few centuries later, alienated not just from this purpose, but from the creator Himself. I read about a little boy, Abraham, who defied conventional wisdom with the assertion of G-d's existence. I read about his descendants, sure in their identity, proud of their heritage, but barely clinging to the memories in a strange and hostile land. I read about their struggles to retain that shard of elusive G-dliness in their lives – elusive because they could talk and communicate with G-d, but no matter what they did, they themselves were not touched, their souls and surroundings remained unchanged. And I read about a nation in Egypt, six hundred thousand strong, raised and saved as it was about to slip into oblivion.

And then I read about the mountain and the thunder, the Revelation at which this book was given. That not-so-subtle revelation.

And I read in the commentaries that indeed G-d shook the world's foundation with His appearance, changing the very nature of existence. That, indeed, was for us an out-of-body experience, in which G-d took each of our souls and altered its make-up, changing forever who we are and what we could do. That G-d rewrote the code words of creation, enabling us to be receptive to a different type of revelation – a revelation so subtle, that although it is earth shattering, I feel only the slightest tremor.

I read on. How after Mt. Sinai, the Children of Israel settled into a different type of existence. One in which their Torah could speak to them, and their actions to G-d. An existence that was enabled by that earth-shattering event, and that empowers us, to this day, to do our own earth shattering.

I understand finally that G-d made the most unsubtle revelation so that afterwards His presence should become so subtle that it could fit in my mind, my heart. So subtle I could live with it.

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SHAVUOS Customs

Pull an All-Nighter

Our Sages relate that our ancestors slept late the morning they received the Torah. How could that have happened? They so anxiously awaited that occasion. They sincerely, but mistakenly thought that they would be best able to receive the Torah if their souls were not constrained by the physical body, and able to tap into subconscious realms beyond the normal human mind.

They didn't realize that ultimately G-d wants us to utilize the mundane, everyday experience, the physical, in order to make this world a holy place where He can "reside".

To compensate for that mistake we stay up the entire first night of Shavuos and study Torah, ready to receive the Torah once more when G-d again offers it to us, this Shavuos, with renewed vigor.

Dairy Foods & Blintzes

It is customary to eat dairy foods on the first day of Shavuos. One of the reasons given for this custom is because the Torah is likened to nourishing milk.

Also, on Shavuos, immediately after receiving the Torah, the Jewish people were required to eat kosher. The only foods available for immediate consumption were milk products.

The Hebrew word for milk is "chalav". When the numerical value of each of the Hebrew letters in the word "chalav" are added together – 8; 30; 2 – the total is 40. 40 is the number of days Moses spend on Mount Sinai when receiving the Torah.

The custom to eat cheese blintzes on Shavuos is based on a play of Hebrew words. The Hebrew word for cheese is Gevinah, reminding us of the "controversy" of the taller mountains, each claiming to be worthier than Sinai for the privilege of receiving the Torah. They were, therefore, called Gavnunim - "humps," because of their conceit, while Sinai, small and humble, was chosen for its humility.

Ruth

In many synagogues the book of Ruth is read on the second day of Shavuos. There are several reasons for this custom: A) Shavuos is the birthday and yearzeit (day of passing) of King David, and the book of Ruth records his ancestry. Boaz and Ruth were King David's great grandparents. B) The scenes



of harvesting, described in the book of Ruth, are appropriate to the Festival of Harvest. C) Ruth was a sincere convert who embraced Judaism with all her heart. On Shavuos all Jews were converts having unconditionally accepted the Torah and all of its precepts.

Go Green

It is customary on Shavuos to adorn the synagogue and home with fruits, greens and flowers. The reason: **Fruits** - In the time of the Temple the first fruits of harvest were brought to the Temple beginning on Shavuos. **Greens** - Our Sages taught that on Shavuos judgment is rendered regarding the trees of the field. **Flowers** - Our Sages taught that although Mount Sinai was situated in a desert, in honor of the Torah, the desert bloomed and sprouted flowers.



Additional Names of Shavuos

Shavuos is also called **Atzeret**, meaning – The Completion, because together with Passover it forms the completion of a unit. We gained our freedom on Passover in order to receive the Torah on Shavuos.

Another name for Shavuos is **Yom Habikurim** or the Day of the First Fruits. In an expression of thanks to G-d, beginning on Shavuos, each farmer in the Land of Israel brought to the Temple the first wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates that grew in his field.

Finally, Shavuos is also called **Chag HaKatzir**, the Festival of the Harvest, because wheat, the last of the grains to be ready to be cut, was harvested at this time of the year. On Shavuos two loaves of wheat bread from the new harvest were offered at the temple in Jerusalem. ●



G-d's Wisdom *Where can I get it?*

Torah is G-d's wisdom, an expression of His essence. G-d created the universe so that the Torah's ideals could be actualized. The Torah, as we experience it, is Divine wisdom distilled for consumption by the human mind. By studying Torah's laws, logic and stories, it becomes possible to wrap our rational human mind around Divine concepts.

Torah is the soul's best nourishment. So study whenever you have time, ideally twice a day: morning and evening. The Web is a great place to begin.

For starters, check out www.chabad.org. (More information about Chabad.org on page 27.)

Classic Cheese Blintzes

Blintzes are a traditional dish for the holiday of Shavuos. Top with sour cream, apple sauce or cinnamon and sugar.

BATTER

4 eggs
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup water
1 cup flour
1/4 cup sugar
1 package vanilla sugar
Pinch of salt
1 Tbsp. oil

CHEESE FILLING I

1/2 pound farmer cheese
4 ounces cream cheese
4 Tbsps. honey or maple syrup
juice of 1/2 lemon
1 egg yolk

CHEESE FILLING II

1 pound cottage cheese, strained
2 egg yolks
2 Tbsps. flour
2 Tbsps. sugar
1 tsp. vanilla sugar
1/4 cup raisins (optional)

USE: 7 inch skillet

YIELDS: 12 blintzes

BATTER: In a large mixer bowl combine eggs, milk, water and blend well. Gradually add flour, then both sugars, salt and oil. Beat well until there are no lumps in the batter.

FILLING I: Combine all ingredients in a bowl and beat well. Or combine all the ingredients in a blender container and blend until smooth.

FILLING II: Combine all ingredients, except raisins, in a bowl and beat well. Or all the ingredients can be combined in a blender container and blended until smooth. Then add raisins.

TO ASSEMBLE CREPES:

1. Prepare batter and filling of your choice. Using a paper towel or basting brush, apply a thin coating of oil to a 7 inch skillet. Place skillet over medium heat until skillet is hot but not smoking.
2. Ladle approximately 1/3 cup of batter into the skillet. Tilt pan to swirl the batter so it covers the bottom of the skillet.
3. Fry on one side until small air bubbles form, and top is set. Bottom should be golden brown. When done, carefully loosen edges of crepe and slip out of skillet onto a plate..
4. Repeat the above procedure until all the batter is used. Grease the skillet as needed..
5. Turn each crepe so that golden brown side is up. Place 3 tablespoons of filling on one edge in a 2 1/2 inch long by 1-inch wide mound..
6. Roll once to cover filling. Fold the sides into the center and continue rolling until completely closed..
7. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in the skillet and place each crepe seam side down in the skillet and fry 2 minutes on each side, turning once.

VARIATION: Whole wheat pastry flour can be used instead of white flour.

Excerpted from Spice and Spirit, The Complete Kosher Jewish Cookbook, published by Lubavitch Women's Cookbook Publications.

Eggplant Rollatini

A delicious dairy Shavuos dish.



EGGPLANT AND CHEESE STUFFING:

3 medium eggplants, about 3 lbs.

Olive oil

16 oz Ricotta cheese

2 cups of your favorite prepared marinara sauce or create your own.

1/2 cup shredded Mozzarella cheese

2 garlic cloves, minced

5 basil leaves, shredded

1 egg, lightly beaten

Salt and pepper to taste

For the eggplant and stuffing: Preheat broiler to high. Remove the tops of the eggplants. Cut into 1/4 to 1/2-inch thick slices vertically, from top to bottom. Brush a large baking sheet with a little olive oil. Place the slices, in batches, on the sheet. Season lightly with salt and

pepper, drizzle with a little olive oil. Place on rack 4-inches from broiler and broil until lightly browned and softened, about 4 minutes per side. Remove and let cool slightly.

Meanwhile, prepare the cheese stuffing. In a medium bowl, mix together the ricotta and mozzarella cheeses. Add the garlic, basil, eggs, salt and pepper. Mix well to combine.

To assemble: Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Lightly grease a 13x9x2-inch baking pan with spray or olive oil. Spread about 1/4 cup of the sauce in the bottom of the pan. Spoon about 2 tablespoons of the cheese mixture on the short end of an eggplant slice and roll. Place in baking pan, seam side down. Continue with the remaining eggplant slices and cheese. Spread 1 cup of the remaining sauce on top and bake until hot and bubbly, 20 to 30 minutes. Remove from oven and let rest about 5 minutes before serving.

For additional Shavuos recipes visit www.chabadwi.org/shavuos.

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(on the eve of his 16th Yahrzeit, the 3rd of Tamuz/June 15th, 2010)

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On the occasion of the upcoming 16th Yahrzeit anniversary of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of blessed memory, on the 3rd of Tammuz (June 15, 2010), and in gratitude of his gift of love, we present the following riveting story.

THE REBBE, THE PSYCHIATRIST, AND THE OPERA SINGER

The following fascinating story was related by Rabbi Jacob Biderman, Chabad-Lubavitch emissary to Austria. Enjoy.

I Am the First Emissary

Marguerite Chajes walked into my office. Marguerite, an 85-year-old stylishly dressed woman, appearing youthful and energetic, said to me, “Perhaps you think you are the first emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe to Vienna, but that is not entirely the case. You see,” she continued, “I performed an important mission here on the Rebbe’s behalf long before you arrived in Austria.”

From the Chassidim to the Opera

Marguerite’s mother’s maiden name was Hager, an heiress to the famed Chassidic Vizhnitz dynasty. Marguerite spent her childhood in Vienna. As a young girl, she discarded the ways of her ancestors in favor of pursuing the life of culture that Vienna offered. Eventually she became an opera singer.

Marguerite performed during the 1930s in the Salzburger Festspiele – The Salzburg Festival – a prominent festival of music and drama held each summer in the Austrian town of Salzburg, the birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

The last time she performed

was at the end of August 1939, just a few days before Germany invaded Poland and unleashed the Second World War. On the very night after her performance at the Salzburg Festival, close friends smuggled her, her husband, and her daughter to Italy. From there, they managed to embark on the last boat to the US before the war broke out just a few days later. Marguerite and her family settled in Detroit.

Marguerite’s daughter married Dr. Stallman, a prominent Jewish doctor. In 1959, he was honored by the United Lubavitch Yeshiva in New York. In conjunction with that occasion, Marguerite, his mother-in-law, had an audience arranged for her with the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, of blessed memory.

“I walked into the Rebbe’s room,” related Marguerite, “I cannot explain why, but suddenly, for the first time since the Holocaust, I felt that I could cry. I, like so many other survivors who had lost entire families, never cried before. We knew that if we would start crying, we might never stop – that in order to survive, we couldn’t express our emotions. But at that moment, it was as though the dam guarding my inner waterfall of tears was removed. I shared with the Rebbe my entire story: innocent childhood, leaving home, becoming a star, escaping to



the US, and learning of the death of my closest kin.

“The Rebbe listened. But he not only listened with his ears, he listened with his eyes, with his heart, with his soul, and he took it all in. I shared everything and he absorbed everything. That night I felt like I was given a second father,” she concluded.

Two Requests

“In the course of my meeting with the Rebbe,” Marguerite continued, “I mentioned that I had a yearning to go back and visit Vienna for some time now. The Rebbe requested that before I make the trip, I visit him again.

A short while later, en route to Vienna, I visited the Rebbe. He asked me for a favor: to visit two people during my stay in the city. The first was Viennese Chief Rabbi Akiva Eisenberg, to whom the Rebbe sent his regards and asked that I deliver a publication. The second person was a professor, head of the Vienna Policlinic of Neurology, named Dr. Viktor Frankl.

You Will Prevail

“Please send Dr. Frankl my regards,” the Rebbe said. “Pass on to him, in my name, that he should not give up. He must remain strong and continue his work with vigor and passion. If he continues to remain strong, he will prevail.”

Marguerite traveled to Vienna. Her visit with Rabbi Eisenberg was simple. Meeting Viktor Frankl proved far more difficult. When she arrived at the clinic, she was informed that the professor hadn’t shown up in two weeks. After a few more failed attempts to locate him at the clinic, she decided to throw caution to the wind and violate common protocol. She looked up the professor’s private home address, traveled there, and knocked on the door.

“May I see Herr Professor Frankl please?”

“Yes, please wait,” replied the woman who opened the door.

“The first thing that caught my eye was a cross hanging

“...this must be a mistake. This can’t be the person who the Lubavitcher Rebbe would want to encourage.”

prominently on the wall. [In 1947, Frankl married his second wife, Elenor Katarina Schwindt, a devout Catholic.] I thought to myself,” related Marguerite, “that this must be a mistake. This can’t be the person whom the Lubavitcher Rebbe would want to encourage.”

Viktor Frankl appeared a few moments later. After ascertaining that he was the professor she was looking for, she said she had regards for him. He was extremely impatient, and looked quite uninterested. It felt very awkward.

“I have regards from Rabbi Schneerson in Brooklyn, New York,” Marguerite told him. “Rabbi Schneerson asked me to tell you, in his name, that you must not give up. You ought to remain strong and continue your work with unflinching determination and you will prevail. Do not fall into despair. Carry on with confidence and you will achieve great success.

“Suddenly, the hitherto uninterested professor broke out in tears. He could not calm down. I did not understand what was going on. After composing himself, in the ensuing short conversation, he said something, explaining about plans to give up fighting for his theory and leave Vienna to move to Australia where his sister lived. But now, he would reconsider. He thanked me and I left.”

...

Dr. Victor Frankl, the famed psychotherapist who spent three long years in Nazi concentration camps, and lost his parents, brother, and pregnant wife, developed a unique vision of human dignity.

It was due to his and others’ suffering in these camps that he came to his hallmark conclusion that even in the most absurd, painful and dehumanizing situation, life has potential meaning.

Even before the war, Viktor Frankl developed ideas which

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differed radically from Freud's. His colleagues, all staunch Freudian scholars, derided him, referring to his idea as pseudo-science.

Freud believed that humans are vulnerable, selfish animals, governed by past, subconscious frustrations and haunted by neuroses, complexes, and psychoses.

Viktor Frankl disagreed vehemently. "If Freud were in the concentration camps," he later wrote, "he would have changed his position. Beyond the basic natural drives and instincts of people, he would have encountered the human 'capacity for self-transcendence.' Man is also that being who entered those chambers upright, with Shema Yisrael on his lips.

"We, who lived in concentration camps, can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing – the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. There is a dimension of the human self, the essence of human identity, which nothing and no one can control." A person, Frankl taught, was not a son of his past, but the father of his future.

After the war, Frankl returned to Vienna where he lectured about his own approach to psychological healing. But in the psychiatric professional circles of the 1940s and 1950s, they defined Frankl's ideas as fanatic religiosity – unscientific notions of conscience, faith and obligation. It was even unpopular to attend his lectures.

The pressure against him was so severe, that he decided to give up. It was simply too much for him to bear emotionally. He stayed home. He was drained, exhausted, depressed. One day he began drafting his immigration application papers to move to Australia, where his sister, the only surviving family member, lived.

Then came the Rebbe's message. Viktor Frankl became a transformed man. Someone believed in him, his work, in his contributions, in his ideas about the infinite transcendence and potential of the human person and in his ability to prevail.

At that very moment he knew that he would not surrender. He tore up the application papers.

...

Forever Grateful

I was intrigued. Marguerite's story, indeed, solved a mystery I could never solve. My wife, Edla, and I arrived in Vienna as the Chabad emissaries in 1981. Every year, with the approach of Rosh Hashan-

"Of course I remember. I will never forget it. I will forever be grateful to the Rebbe. He helped me in a professionally difficult time in my life."

nah, the Jewish New Year, I would publish a Jewish calendar and mail it to the entire Jewish community. In response, we would, without fail, receive a contribution from Dr. Viktor Frankl. I never understood why Dr. Frankl, who never stepped foot in the Chabad House and was unaffiliated with the Jewish community, would contribute to Lubavitch.

But I wanted to hear the story firsthand. I called him immediately and asked to meet him.

But it was difficult for him to meet me in person. By now, 1995, Viktor Frankl was 90 years of age, and was an international celebrity. He had written 32 books, some of which were translated into 20 languages. Dr. Frankl lectured all over the world, held 29 honorary doctorates, and received 19 national and international awards and medals for his work in psychotherapy.

So, we spoke over the phone. "Do you remember Marguerite Chajes?" I asked Dr. Frankl. Naturally, he did, she became a friend of the family. He was impatient.

"Do you remember a regards she gave you from Rabbi Schneerson in Brooklyn?" I asked him.

Suddenly, a change in his voice. Dr. Frankl warmed up.

"Of course I remember. I will never forget it. I will forever be grateful to him. He helped me in a professionally difficult time in my life."

...

Viktor Frankl remained in Vienna and continued his practice as a psychiatrist. Soon after Marguerite's visit, in 1959, his book *Man's Search for Meaning* (under the name *From Death-Camp to Existentialism*) was translated into English and became a best seller. His fame took off, and his career began to soar. *Man's Search for Meaning* sold over ten million copies during his lifetime and was deemed by the Library of Congress one of the ten most influential books of the 20th century. His school of thought inspired thousands of seminars, workshops, new-age and spiritual groups, and books; and helped many millions to improve their lives. The once scoffed-at professor became one of the most celebrated psychiatrists of a generation.

But why was it so important for the Rebbe to seek out Viktor Frankl, a secular and inter-married Jew, encourage him, and be interested in his success?

I could not help but marvel at the Rebbe's wide reach, far vision, and remarkably broad approach. Viktor Frankl's doctrine essentially represents the principle of the superiority of spirit over matter – that the material is subservient to the soul, which



Dr. Viktor Frankl

can be in total control of life and the body, in spite of physical hardship or suffering. This idea is an essential point in one's personal service of G-d, and it is the ultimate goal of creation – that “the material and lowly become an abode to the Divine.”

Nothing barred the Rebbe from advancing an idea which fosters spirituality and G-dliness, making it his business to seek out Viktor Frankl at a pivotal point in his life.

In fact, Viktor Frankl himself mirrored that idea.

• • •

More Details Come to Light

In 2003, Dr. Shimon Cowen, a student of Frankl from Australia, went to visit Frankl's non-Jewish widow, Elenore, in Vienna. She showed him a pair of tefillin (phylacteries). “Every day my husband would put these on,” she said. She also took out and showed him a pair of tzitzit (garment with ritual fringes) which her husband had made himself and wore. “At night, while in bed,” she continued, “Viktor would recite chapters of Psalms.”

Indeed, Frankl's non-Jewish son-in-law confirmed this fact to me, “My father-in-law would close himself off in a room every day for a little while. Once, I opened the door and saw him with black boxes on his head and arm. He was annoyed at my intrusion on his privacy.” When he was taken to the hospital, however, his practice of donning tefillin became public. ●

In a rare letter dated June 19, 1969 (3rd Tammuz, 5729), the Rebbe writes (free translation):

...I would like to take this opportunity to add another point, that the medical condition of proves (if proof is needed in this area) the awesome power of faith – especially when applied and expressed in practical action, community work, observance of mitzvos, etc. – to fortify a person's emotional tranquility [and to affect the] minimizing and even eliminating of inner conflicts, as well as complaints one may have to his surroundings, etc.

This is in spite the theory that faith and religion demand the discipline to restrain and suppress natural instincts and drives, and is, therefore, generally undesirable, and particularly in the case of a person who requires treatment for emotional issues.

I particularly took interest in the writing of Dr. Frankl (from Vienna) in this matter. To my surprise, however, his approach has apparently not been appropriately disseminated and appreciated. Although one can find numerous reasons as to why his ideas are not widely accepted – including the fact that [such treatment] is related to the personal lifestyle exemplified by the treating doctor – nevertheless, the question [as to why it is not appreciated] still remains...

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LIFE AFTER LIFE

*On the occasion of the forthcoming sixteenth yahrzeit of the Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, OBM, on the 3rd of Tammuz, 5770/June 15, 2010.*

LIFE NEVER ENDS

*Translation of a letter by the Rebbe, written
to a war widow in Israel.*

*And Jacob finished commanding his sons,
and he gathered up his feet into the bed, and
expired, and was gathered unto his people*

GENESIS 49:33

The Torah does not state “he died,” and the sages declared, “Our father Jacob did not die... just as his children are alive, so is he alive.”

What forms the basis for the love and communion between two dear friends, between husband and wife or between children and their parent? Not the physical body, which is flesh and bones and guts, but the characteristics of the spirit, the true essence of man. It is only that man communicates with his fellow through the body and its limbs. Through his eyes, ears, hands, organs of speech, etc., man gives expression to his thoughts, feelings, and the characteristics of his spirit, and (obviously) it is they, not the bodily tools of expression, that constitute his true essence and being.

It follows that in the World of Truth (the spiritual hereafter) the soul of the departed has particularly great pleasure on seeing the members of his family recover from the tragedy, come to themselves, make every effort to set their lives in good order, and act as an inspiration and encouragement to others.

A bullet, a shell-fragment or a sickness can damage the body, but they cannot hurt or affect the soul. They can cause death, but death is only a separation between body and soul.

MY MAN!

By Aron Moss

I want to share with you, dear readers, the following letter exchange I enjoyed with one of my students.

Question:

Many thanks to you and your wife for Friday night dinner. We had a great time. I just had one question. I noticed you have a huge picture of your Rebbe, Rabbi Schneersohn, on the wall. I don't mean to be rude, but is this type of reverence for a human being appropriate?

Answer:

I do revere the Rebbe, but not because he was superhuman. On the contrary.

Here was a man that received up to one thousand letters a day and answered them all; advised concerned parents of unwell children and singles searching for life-partners with the same love and attention as he advised presidents and prime-ministers on world affairs; had the vision to set up a web of institutions around the globe in order to rebuild Judaism after the war; promoted values and morals for the non-Jewish world; was as comfortable in the sciences as he was in Torah wisdom, and found G-d in both; healed the sick with his blessings, and answered people's questions before they even asked them; took the responsibility of the world on his shoulders, but had time for every individual.

These are just a sample of his qualities. But above all this, why I revere him was because he was human. For a superhuman to achieve all the above is no big deal. They don't have to work hard to become heroes. But for a human being



The soul continues to live (eternally); it continues to have a connection with the family, especially with those who were especially dear and beloved. It shares in their distress, and rejoices at every joyous event in the family. It is only that the members of the family, living in this earthly world, cannot see the soul's reaction with their flesh-and-blood eyes, nor can they touch it or feel it with their hands—for the physical connection has been broken.

The soul of the departed derives especial satisfaction from seeing his children being reared in the proper Torah-spirit, free of any feelings of despair or depression, G-d forbid, but rather (as the traditional expression goes) '...to raise them to Torah, to matrimony and to good deeds.'

of flesh and blood it is nothing short of amazing.

That's why I have a picture of the Rebbe on my wall. It always reminds me of what a human can achieve, and that I can always do more to better the world.

I only saw the Rebbe once. But it is due to his influence that I am today an active and proud Jew. His teachings inspired me to become a rabbi - otherwise, who knows? I may have been a B-grade trapeze artist or struggling assistant. The very fact that I am writing these words and you are reading them is thanks to the Rebbe's vision.

From the Rebbe's teachings I have learned what G-d is. From his life I have learnt what humans can be.

Rabbi Aron Moss teaches Talmud and Kabbalah at the Education Foundation in Sydney, Australia.

MY EXPERIENCE AT THE OHEL

A few days before Rosh Hashanah, a teacher in our school in Kiryat Ata, Israel, walked into my office, presenting me with an envelope containing letters of New Years greetings and blessings for the director, written by the children in her class. I thanked her. However, being extremely busy before the High Holidays, I put the envelope aside.

As Rosh Hashanah neared, I remembered my experience on the day before Rosh Hashanah, some 25 years back, and I could not believe that I would take so lightly the letters sent to me by these precious children.

As it is customary to visit gravesites of *tzadikim* (righteous people) before Rosh Hashanah, to beseech to G-d for a good and sweet year, I visited the resting place of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yoseph Y. Schneerson, OBM, in the Montefiore Cemetery in Queens, NY. As I was standing there, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, OBM, walked in. He brought along with him a number of big bags filled with letters and requests he had received from people all over the world.

It was a rare experience to see the Rebbe's demeanor and attention at this occasion, pulling out letter after letter from the numerous bags, carefully reading each one; leaving most of them at his father-in-law's, the previous Rebbe's resting place, and putting some aside to take back with him. From time to time the Rebbe would wipe off

tears streaming down from his eyes.

I watched the Rebbe for two hours – two precious hours on the day before Rosh Hoshana. At one point he opened a manila envelope, pulled out some colored papers containing drawings and writings of little children. The Rebbe looked over each one of them separately with the same intensity and seriousness as had done with all the rest of the letters containing people's requests for health, sustenance, children, and the whole gamut of the human experience.

I remembered that, and was ashamed of myself for not making the time to even open the envelope and glance at the nine greetings sent to me by these precious children.

And then I remembered one more episode. A member of our community approached me for advice. His seven-year-old son wrote a letter to the Rebbe. In it, he wrote that it dawned on him that the Rebbe was never in Israel; and, therefore, he is sending the Rebbe the gift of earth from Eretz Yisrael. The father asked me what he should do. After some contemplation I advised him to forward it as is to the Rebbe.

Now, you can imagine what happened with the sand when the Rebbe opened the envelope. But a few weeks later the Rebbe responded to the child, thanking him "for the attention he paid and taking the trouble to send him that gift."

*By Rabbi Chaim Diskin,
Chabad of Kiryat Ata, Israel*



The Rebbe wiping away a tear at the resting place of the previous Rebbe



BAAL SHEM TOV

TWO HUNDRED FIFTY YEARS

THIS YEAR, SHAVUOS MARKS THE 250th Yahrzeit (Anniversary of the Passing) of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic Movement.

The following is a brief history of the Baal Shem Tov and his doctrine, which changed the landscape of the Jewish world to this day.

UPLIFTING THE SPIRIT OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

For ordinary Jews in 17th century Europe, life was harsh under the best of circumstances. Most could barely eke out a meager living. The threat of pogroms and displacement was constant. They were materially devastated and spiritually depressed. As part of the “People of the Book,” yet themselves ignorant of Torah learning, these impoverished masses viewed themselves as inferior to Torah scholars.

In many ways the situation then mirrored what we have today, when so many Jews are unlettered in their heritage, and spiritual alienation is rampant.

Fifty years after the Chelmnicki massacres destroyed and ravaged Jewish communities throughout Europe, the Baal Shem Tov was born. (See opposite page – A Brief Biography).

An outstanding leader and monumental Torah scholar with a heart to match, he turned the tide around. He taught that the simple heart-rending prayer of an illiterate wagon-driver might pierce the gates of heaven more readily than the intellectual achievements of a great scholar. Even a profound intellectual insight is confined to the limitations of the scholar, but prayer from the heart, the Baal Shem Tov taught, is as unlimited as the G-dly soul from which it springs.

SERVICE WITH JOY

The Baal Shem Tov taught that true service of G-d is joyful. The joy of a mitzvah is accessible to anyone. This joy can find external, valid expression through song and dance, and connects one to the Creator more readily than through self-mortification and self-denial.

UNITY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

For the Baal Shem Tov, the unity of the Jewish people was inseparable from the unity of G-d. Unity means an absolute interdependence of the parts. Just as all the limbs of a body are entirely dependent on one another, likewise the existence of each Jew, however humble, is vital to the well being of the whole.

The role of the Jew in creation is to bring the world to its ultimate purpose, the recognition of G-d’s unity and the awareness that there is not existence independent or outside of Him. This, the Baal Shem Tov taught, cannot be accomplished unless every single Jew does his or her part.

LOVE FOR ONE’S FELLOW

The natural consequence of his approach was a renewed and revitalized emphasis on *Ahavat Yisrael* – love for one’s fellow Jew. After all, we are all utterly dependent on one another. We are to love our fellow as we love ourselves, because each one of us is so uniquely important, because we are all G-d’s children, and because we complement each other.

G-D’S CONSTANT PRESENCE

Finally, the Baal Shem Tov taught that G-d, is not an absent, once-upon-a-time Creator. Indeed G-d continually recreates the world each and every moment. Hence, he emphasized the idea of *hashgacha pratit*, G-d’s constant awareness of every detail in the world, and in our lives. In fact, he stated, no leaf is blown, no stone rolls, without a purpose ordained by the Master of the Universe.

Indeed, each of us is being lovingly observed. Each of us has a right and an obligation to connect directly with G-d through prayer, study, observance of a mitzvah, and everything we do. Which is why our every action counts, for it



is our task to discover G-dliness in the world. Each of us should rejoice, even in the face of adversity, for there is a Divine message in all that happens, if only we are receptive to it.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that G-d can be found everywhere, inside the synagogue, in the home and outside in the street, in the meadows and the mountains – wherever one may find himself.

The Baal Shem Tov uncovered the “soul” of Judaism, he restored excitement, enthusiasm and joy in the observance of *mitzvot* and brought people back to a personal relationship with G-d and His Torah.

• • •

AND TODAY...

In our own day and age, we have all witnessed a giant leap forward in the dissemination of the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings. The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, has dramatically drawn together a Jewish world that had been decimated and fragmented by the Holocaust.

Like the Baal Shem Tov, the Rebbe defied despair, apathy and ignorance of Torah and Judaism on the one hand, and rejected a sense of separation from and disdain toward the unaffiliated on the other. With an acute sense of the depth

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov was born on the 18th of Elul in the year 5458 on the Hebrew calendar (August 25, 1698), in a little city named Okup, in the Ukraine. He acquired his popular name, Baal Shem Tov, meaning the “master of the good name”, when he became known as a great and pious leader.

At the age of five the Baal Shem Tov lost his father, Eliezer, and soon thereafter his mother, Sarah. His father’s parting words to him were, “My dear son, fear no one and nothing, but G-d alone! Love every Jew with all your heart and soul.”

Being cared for by the kind village Jews, little Israel followed his father’s last will. Thoughtful and fearless of all but G-d, at a very young age he went on his own and found his father’s friends, the *Tzadikim Nistarim* – hidden pious and scholarly Jews who mingled with and appeared as ordinary people. In secret they would carry out their mission of lifting up the spirit of the downtrodden and hardworking masses, and encourage them in their personal lives and the service of G-d. The *Tzadikim Nistarim* raised him and taught him Torah, including the esoteric and mystical parts.

At the age of fourteen, young Israel became a member of the legion of *Nistarim*.

When the Baal Shem Tov was eighteen, he introduced a new kind of service for the *Nistarim* to perform. They were to devote themselves to the education of Jewish children. There were many

Jewish settlements and tiny communities where there were no Torah schools to educate their children and the *Nistarim* were to provide teachers from their own ranks.

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov himself became an assistant to a teacher of a Cheder. Later, he set up a Cheder of his own in a little town called Tioști, in Galicia.

The Baal Shem Tov became the spiritual leader of the legion of *Nistarim* and directed their activities. When countless Torah schools and *Cheders* (Hebrew schools) had been established in various Jewish communities, the Baal Shem Tov introduced a new campaign. They were now to devote their services primarily to the adults, who also needed a good education and training; they had to raise the plain folk from the swamp of ignorance to a place among the learned.

At the age of thirty-six it was realized that the Baal Shem Tov could no longer remain disguised, and could no longer carry on his work in secret. He had to come out into the open and carry out his mission to the fullest extent.

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov settled in Miedzyboz. He began teaching his doctrines in public, and immediately began to attract unusual attention and numerous followers. Many venerable scholars became ardent disciples of the Baal Shem Tov, and were called Chassidim – meaning pious Jews.

Thus began the Chassidic movement, in the year 1734, or 5494 on the Jewish calendar.

The Baal Shem Tov passed away on Shavuot, 5520 – May 22, 1760.



of the Jewish soul, with a passionate love for each Jew and all of the Jewish people, and with a vision of a perfected and united world, the Rebbe brought the loftiest ideas into actual realization.

Where the Baal Shem Tov taught the value of every earnest act of Jewish expression as a connection to G-d, the Rebbe brought it to fruition through an intensive mitzvah campaign, to encourage these connections.

Where the Baal Shem Tov revealed the depth and greatness of the Jewish soul, and demanded brotherly love, the Rebbe actually reached out to the most remote corners of the globe to find and resuscitate a single lost soul, while raising Jewish pride throughout the community.

The Baal Shem Tov discovered G-dliness in every detail of creation. The Rebbe sought to actualize this by using every means for the dissemination of Torah, Judaism, goodness and G-dliness.

The Rebbe inspired legions of his *Chassidism* to act as *shluchim* (emissaries), subordinating their personal lives to the task of nurturing Jewish life and spreading Jewish values everywhere.

The Rebbe encouraged the use of every scientific and tech-

nological breakthrough as a tool to unite “heaven” and “earth.” He harnessed every innovation in travel and communication for actualizing the spiritual unity of the Jewish people and the unity of G-d. He viewed the arts, sciences and languages as means for communicating Divine ideas, and interpreted and translated them in ways which all people might understand and adopt.

The Rebbe taught that no matter where a Jew may find himself, he should never be severed from a source of Torah and spirituality. No matter how alienated a Jew might feel, he or she should always have access to the joy of a *mitzvah*.

Each act of lighting Shabbos candles or putting on tefillin, or making the blessing over an etrog, is part of the process of unity which works toward a single goal – the perfection of G-d’s creation through the spiritual uplifting of all mankind, concluding ultimately with the advent of Moshiach, when the “Earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d like water covers the ocean.”

In conjunction with the Baal Shem Tov’s teaching that you find G-d everywhere, we bring you the following story.

MY EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

by Dr. Yakov Brawer

There are Chassidim who relish davening on airplanes. Immediately after takeoff, a Chassid of this breed stands up in the aisle (the farther forward, the better), intones a thunderous *bracha* (blessing), and with a great sweeping motion, envelops himself in a tallis (prayer shawl), causing nearby passengers to flinch as flying tzitzis (fringes) miss their eyes by millimeters. He then prays with an ardor rarely seen in synagogue, blocking the aisle and attracting the attention of everyone on the plane, and that, of course, is precisely his intent. He is, after all, a chassid, charged with the mission to reveal G-d’s presence

within whatever niche of creation he happens to occupy at any given moment. Although the airline is under the impression that it has staged the flight in order to make money, and the passengers think that they are on the plane in order to actually arrive somewhere, the chassid knows better. The chassid understands that the objective of the flight is to sequester 150 souls, 50,000 feet above sea level so that they can watch him pray and learn that there is a G-d in the world. When finished praying, any chassid worth his salt works the cabin, entwining Jewish men in Tefillin, reminding Jewish women to light Shabbos candles, and exhorting non-Jews to keep the 7 Noahide commandments.

Although my admiration for these stalwarts knows no bounds, I am most definitely not one of them. I just do not have the genes. I abhor public display and I cannot bear to make a spectacle of myself, no matter how worthy the cause. It goes without saying that I am useless on mitzvah campaigns, except in those instances in which an adult is simply needed to drive the getaway car.

Thus, some years ago, while en route to LA, my stomach knotted up as I realized that I would have to pray on the plane on my return trip. The homeward flight left too early to say the Morning Prayer beforehand and because of the time change, it would not arrive until well past noon. The fact that the flight was scheduled for the tenth of Teves on the

Jewish calendar, a fast day on which the morning service is unusually protracted, didn't help.

While pondering my predicament, I recalled that, when my kids were small, my wife always asked for the bulkhead seats when we traveled. As I remembered, the bulkheads were partitions that separated the last 5 or so rows of seats from the rest of the plane. I looked down the aisle and confirmed that there were indeed panels partially isolating the back end of the cabin, just as I had remembered. If I could secure a seat immediately behind a panel for the return flight, I could stand facing this partition and pray in relative privacy. Such an arrangement was not ideal, but I could live with it, and I began to relax. Immediately upon my arrival I rushed to the ticket counter and procured a boarding pass for a bulkhead seat for my homeward flight. Thus assured of a reasonable place to pray, I left for LA with a light heart.

When I arrived at the departure gate for my return flight, I glanced at my precious ticket to semi-invisibility and noted, with some unease, that the seat number seemed quite low for a position at the back of the plane. My uneasiness ballooned into anxiety when I caught a glimpse of the plane. It was much larger than the one on which I had arrived and it had an upper deck. I approached the agent at the gate who examined my boarding pass and assured me that I did indeed have a bulkhead seat. However, when I boarded the plane and showed my pass to the flight attendant, she indicated a seat right at the doorway, facing the cavernous entry to the plane. I stared at her in disbelief and explained to her that I had been assigned a bulkhead seat. Just so, she replied, and pointed to the same seat. It began to dawn on me that the airline personnel and I did not speak the same language. Another brief exchange with the attendant set me straight. The "bulkhead", as the term applied to this particular aircraft, was nothing other than the door to the plane, behind which were endless rows of seats all facing forward. A captive audience of about 300 people would grace my prayer that morning. Pavarotti could have wished for no better.

The plane took off and soon the captain switched off the seat belt sign indicating that we had arrived, and I had no choice

Suddenly I froze with the dread realization that Providence was not about to let me off so easily.

but to pray as best as I could. As I stood up and donned tallis and tefillin, I soon discovered that the doorway area afforded plenty of space in which to stand and I found that if I positioned myself hard by the door, I was visible only to a few forward rows. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad after all. However, the revelation that it would be so bad after all was

not long in coming.

Just as I began praying, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned to confront two very impatient flight attendants standing by a mammoth mobile bar. "Sir, you can't do that here. This is the bar area." "See here young lady, it so happens that I am a servant of G-d and a chassid of the great Rebbe of Lubavitch, and I intend to sanctify this spot by reciting my morning prayers here. So take yourself and your bar elsewhere." This is precisely what I did not say. In fact, I didn't say anything because I was at a point of the prayer in which speech is not permitted. I couldn't have spoken in any case because my stomach had lurched up against my diaphragm, and I began to wheeze and hyperventilate. I raised my eyebrows, which had become decorated with fine beads of sweat, and shrugged hoping that the attendants would understand this gesture as an appeal for sympathy, help and understanding. Unfortunately, they were unreceptive. They were clearly annoyed that this apparition from the biblical era had not only commandeered their bar area, but wouldn't even speak to them. "Sir, you can do whatever you are doing at the back of the cabin near the rear gallery."

So there was a place at the back of the plane where I could do whatever I do. A sense of relief surged through my distraught brain, and my stomach let go of my diaphragm, allowing me to take a couple of normal breaths. I nodded vigorously at the flight attendants, utilizing the opportunity to shake a drop of perspiration from the tip of my nose, and

I began untying the strap of my tefillin in preparation for my escape to the refuge at the back of the plane.

Suddenly I froze with the dread realization that Providence was not about to let me off so easily. This was simply one of those schlock disaster-movie interludes, the moment of false hope, in which the poor suckers about to be decimated by an inevita-



ble and inescapable catastrophe, are deluded into believing that salvation is at hand.

I would remove my tallis and tefillin and walked to the rear of the cabin, but what then? Would I need to recite a bracha on donning tefillin or not? Just two weeks before I had listened in on a complicated debate on just this subject at the yeshiva, and the situation was far from clear. What should I do? My frenzied cogitations were cut short by the flight attendants, now openly hostile, who insisted that I must move at once. There was no way out. I picked up my tallis bag, took my siddur (prayer book) and walked the full length of the plane, resplendent in tallis and tefillin. My trek down the aisle electrified the entire cabin. "What the...?" "Mommy, what's that?" "Hey look Lucy, Moses is back" "bizarre man" "What's that box on his head?" From the corner of my eye, I caught images of bewilderment, shock, and amusement. As for me, the death of a thousand cuts would have been preferable. Somehow I made it to the semi-secluded haven at the back of the cabin and tried to collect myself. I started to pray but the only prayerful thought that I could muster was a fervent hope that the rear emergency door would blow open, and I would be mercifully sucked out of the aircraft.

This would never do. I had to pull myself together and pray properly. After all, the brain, by virtue of its innate superiority, rules the heart, right? I thought of R. Mendel Futerfass (O.B.M), who managed to perform mitzvos and pray with zeal in a Siberian labor camp surrounded by the dregs of humanity. I reminded myself of the parable in Tanya (a Chassidic book) of the heathen who's efforts to distract a Jew from praying were really a Divine gift, intended to elicit from the afflicted individual hidden spiritual strengths. I told myself that this episode presented a golden opportunity to transcend my own personal limitations, and that I should be overjoyed. None of it worked. The emotional turbulence and the effects of caffeine withdrawal as a result of the fast had dissipated whatever inner resources I might have had. My brain, despite its vaunted innate superiority, did not rule my heart, nor, for that matter, any other part of me. I recited the prayers like a zombie and removed my tefillin and tallis. I cringed at the thought of walking back up the aisle to my seat, and I briefly considered crawling, until I realized that everyone would be able to see me anyway.

I hunched my shoulders, stared at the floor and quickly preceded up the aisle. The cabin was quiet and fairly dark. It was obvious that the in-flight movie had begun. I glanced up at the movie screen and the marvel that met my eyes stopped me dead in my tracks. There on the screen were Jews, dozens

"Mendel, I will give you a penny if you tell me where G-d is." The little boy answered, "I will give you two if you tell me where He is not."

of them, all wearing tallis and tefillin, and all praying. I couldn't get over it. I stood and watched until this extraordinary tableau faded to another scene, and I then continued up the aisle. The movie, which as I later discovered, was "The Jazz Singer", had also apparently made quite an impression on the other passengers.

As I made my way, I attracted considerable attention, but it was of a totally different kind than that which I had received an hour earlier. The looks were those of admiration and respect. People nodded knowingly to each other and smiled. I saw one woman pointing to me and explaining something to her small child. People in aisle seats wished me good morning and one man even stood up. When I arrived at my place the erstwhile testy flight attendants deferentially inquired after my comfort. I was aglow with wonder, gratification, and thankfulness. I was also more than a little ashamed of myself. The Almighty did not produce and direct this magnificently orchestrated comedy of errors only in order to apprise 300 people of his eternal and all-encompassing presence. It seems that the 301st passenger, namely myself, was also in need of some serious instruction in this ultimate truth. I thought of the story of a Chassidic Rebbe. When he was a child someone jokingly told him "Mendel, I will give you a penny if you tell me where G-d is." The little boy answered, "I will give you two if you tell me where He is not."

Dr. Brawer is a professor of neuro-endocrinology at McGill University.

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What They're Saying About CHABAD AT UW - MADISON

Excerpts of selected letters from participants in the Sinai Scholar Torah Study

I grew up in a Reformed Jewish household, so discussing the practices and beliefs of Orthodox Jews was fairly new to me. But, **I found the Sinai Scholars discussions to be so compelling because we were all able to sit down debate, converse, and relate, all the while maintaining an incredible level of respect for each other.**

This was the first time that I had ever really had the proper forum to discuss my faith and beliefs without fear of judgment and stereotype. **I really began to realize as the class went on that Sinai Scholars goes above and beyond the course curriculum in that I always felt welcome and comfortable and left feeling respected and intellectually stimulated.**

This was also the first time I could really discuss Jewish issues having been able to form my own well-thought out and mature opinions on my own faith...

I feel so lucky to have spent time with Mendel, Henya, my classmates. During these past few months my view on the history and practices of Judaism haven't changed but become much more intense and revered in my own life. It has been so incredibly wonderful to get to know so many different people, from so many different backgrounds, all able to come together over one common thread.

I have so much respect for this program in that it accomplishes so many important goals. **In college, it is often hard to feel at home in a place that is so far away from home. Sinai Scholars has helped me feel comfortable in my own Jewish skin, even so far away from my family,** and in doing that alone, it was worth it.

– H.G.



I am so thankful for the incredible warmth that we have received from you and your entire family and I really wish to express how happy I am to have participated in Sinai Scholars and with the Chabad House. I thoroughly enjoyed coming to discuss and debate every week and I definitely feel like I have gotten a rare and very valuable new lease on the Jewish religion and on my own Jewish identity. I have gotten so much out of those 8 weeks and I hope that you enjoyed your time with us as much as we did with you.

I wish you the very best in everything and hope you truly understand the impact that you continue to make on students every single day. I could never have guessed how awesome and intellectually stimulating this experience was going to be. But, this is not good bye! I will be back next semester, stuffing my face with Henya's cooking! Be well!

– B.F.



As a young child, like most kids my age, I saw Hebrew School as more of a punishment from my parents than a chance to learn about my religion and heritage. Because of that, little of what I was taught was absorbed. Looking back now, I am most ashamed of the period between Hebrew school and Sinai scholars where my religious identity rather dropped off the face of the earth.

If I was asked about my perspective of Jewish learning during that period of time, I would have responded with a simple comment like, "Who cares?" or "It's useless." Sinai Scholars has provided me the opportunity to step back into the light of being Jewish. I am at an age now where I can appreciate my religion and heritage, and am interested in learning about it. Learning about the pillars of Jewish life has provided a new, and proud, outlook for me on Judaism.

Additionally, Sinai Scholars has changed the way I live my life. Prior to my Sinai Scholars education on the 10 commandments, I lived somewhat of a reckless life, never really abiding closely to rules or thinking about my actions or my family.

Learning the 10 commandments and the background information behind each commandment has provided me with the means to restructure my life. I no longer engage in some of the activities I would beforehand and I am finding that I am more proud of myself and enjoying life a lot more. I am now living a more honorable life to myself and my family.

– M.B.

... Through the discussions our class engaged in, the lectures on each commandment, and experiencing new insight led me to put more emphasis on my Jewish thinking. **Each thought provoking class made me examine my deep connection to Judaism.**

The discussions would continue past the two hours as my fellow Sinai scholars would reflect on what we had talked about in class. **The classes ignited us to broaden our thinking** of the topics that we had discussed; Topics so deep that it was essential to elaborate on them. I did not always agree on some of the perspectives that we had learned about, but **the overall scope of Jewish learning that was covered made me proud to be a Jew.**

... I still think about some of the topics that we covered each Monday night. **By looking into the deepest of life's questions, my connection to Judaism remains stronger than ever.** – C.L.

From the very first day of class I automatically felt a sense of belonging and comfort. Rabbi Mendel creates an atmosphere that is open to everyone, **enabling anyone to speak his or her mind and feel comfortable in doing so.**

In the past I attended Hebrew school and even in college I took Jewish courses, **while these classes offered great knowledge, none offered me the same sense of belonging as Sinai Scholars.** As the classes came to an end, I began to realize that Sinai Scholars had awakened a spiritual side of me that was unknown to me before.

Besides learning about the Jewish religion, there is something else that came out of this class, that is to me just as important: I now have gained a Jewish family while I am away from home. **Coming to such a big university, like Wisconsin, it is likely to feel a bit lost; however, Rabbi Mendel and his family have now offered me a safe place where I can feel comfortable with who I am.**

My favorite experience was going to Shabbat dinner at Rabbi Mendel's home. **Seeing so many people come together to celebrate Shabbat was eye opening for me.** While I did not know so many of the people that were there I automatically felt right at home. **This dinner was the true turning point for me as I realized that I was genuinely proud to be Jewish and so fortunate to be able to have this kind of family to share it with...**

– D.M.

Sinai Scholars was an eye opening experience to my Jewish heritage as it broadened my Jewish education, enhanced my pride in my religion, and created opportunities for me to reflect on my values.

Experiencing this in college has certainly been a highlight of my education. Hearing the opinions of my peers further expanded my perspectives and listening to their reflections made me a better person. This opportunity has developed my perspective on Jewish living significantly.

These classes bring Jewish living closer to my heart. And though I still may not be as observant as I could be, mentally, I feel more connected to my Jewish ancestry and the values and principles Judaism teaches. My perspectives on Jewish living developed by helping me realize that Judaism is a part of my life that can help me with whatever questions I face and that Judaism is an important part of my day-to-day life.

– B.M.



... In all honesty, I knew bits and pieces of certain aspects of Judaism, but not enough to take a point of view without mixing up my ideas. I have always wanted to learn about contemporary topics such as euthanasia and abortion, and it was right at my disposal with Sinai Scholars.

Rather than just telling me what the Torah says on these issues, Rabbi Matsuf keeps it unbiased and shows both sides of the issue and where it occurs in the Torah.

This really changed my perspective in terms of my Jewish living, and I believe it will be reflected in the way I act and portray myself in the future.

– E.S.

Before I began the Sinai Scholars course, the bulk of my adult Jewish learning was secular, and stemmed mostly from the Jewish Studies classes I'd taken in college. A few of my close friends participated in Sinai Scholars already, and **while they told me it focused on the Ten Commandments, what I remember most are their positive comments about the its discussion-based structure.** At that point, the only other Jewish learning I'd experienced was through the... program at..., which consisted of listening to speakers and included very little time for students to verbalize their own opinions. Since... was my only basis of comparison, I assumed Sinai Scholars would be somewhat similar.

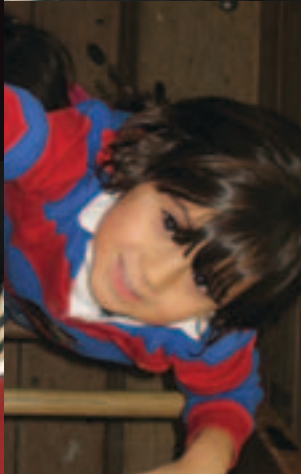
Within a half hour of our first Sinai Scholars class, I could already tell it would be different. In many small classes, it seems a few people always dominate the discussion. However, I felt our tradition of beginning each lecture with a question for everyone helped the entire class feel comfortable voicing their own thoughts on different relevant issues. I felt the class struck a great balance overall between lecture and discussion, and **I considered the environment to be open and safe for a diversity of opinions.** In particular, I thought the classes on death (murder, abortion, and assisted suicide) and love (sex, marriage, etc.) were handled in a way that **encouraged honesty and maturity all around.** These topics easily could've been awkward, but they were both facilitated so that everyone was able to learn and participate openly.

Overall, my Sinai Scholars experience was a highly positive one, **and it also helped me realize how much I like attending other Chabad events like Shabbat dinner.** Great job!

– R.D.



*What's
Happening!
Recent Events
at Lubavitch of
Wisconsin*





From Our Mailbox

Dear Rabbi,

I wish to express my thanks for all you do.... I can never forget how you helped me arrange my mother's funeral/burial at the last moment.... It was a mitzvah of the highest sort, and will always stand alone as one of the greatest things people have done for [me] (at such a trying time). – D. H.

Dear Rabbi,

This edition of Celebration! is outstanding. I wish I could express myself as eloquently as Marilyn Scheuer did at the Sweet Tooth event. I will try. Your personal message to the Milwaukee Jewish community really gets the point across in a most inspiring manner. I have read it several times and each time it excites and motivates me more. G-d willing I will indeed strive to and succeed in going beyond myself, and tossing out old and negative habits that act as barriers and restrictions that only prevent me from making the ultimate connection with the Divine. . . .

On page 14 the explanation of the B'racha step by step is especially enlightening. The last 2 paragraphs speak volumes with only a few sentences! . . .

Thank you for this Pesach publication. It is a most necessary and much appreciated guideline for pushing me and propelling me in the right direction. – J. M.

For many years you have been sending me the Lubavitch Magazine even though I couldn't pay for it. I appreciated that very much. Now I'm in a position to make a donation. Enclosed please find.... – P.K.

Hi. I just want to say thank you for sending us the Lubavitch Pesach guide. I love it. I love all that stuff talking about your soul and it's just helping me to prepare to have such a wonderful Seder. So... oh my. As my sister says, a lot of times we have that G-d-sized hole and only G-d can fill it. And this guide is really filling my G-d-sized hole. So thank you... – D.C.



Jewish Beginnings





Friendship Circle





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SHAVUOS CALENDAR • 5770/2010

CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

| | Blessing | Milwaukee | Madison | Kenosha | Green Bay | La Crosse | Beloit | Superior | Wausau | Eau Claire |
|--------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------|----------|--------|------------|
| May 18 | #1&2* | 7:53 | 7:59 | 7:51 | 7:57 | 8:08 | 7:56 | 8:21 | 8:05 | 8:12 |
| May 19 | #1&2** | 9:04 | 9:10 | 9:02 | 9:08 | 9:19 | 9:07 | 9:32 | 9:16 | 9:23 |

* If lighting after sunset, light only from a pre-existing flame. ** Light only from a pre-existing flame.
A pre-existing flame is a flame that has been burning continuously since the onset of the festival such as a pilot light, gas or candle flame.

CANDLE LIGHTING BLESSINGS

1. BA-RUCH A-TOH ADO-NOI E-LO-HEI-NU ME-LECH HA-OLAM ASHER KID-ESHO-NU BE-MITZVO- SOV VETZI-VONU LE-HAD-LIK NER SHEL YOM TOV

*Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Kind of the universe,
who has sanctified us with His commandments,
and commanded to kindle the Yom Tov light..*

2. BA-RUCH A-TOH ADO-NOI E-LO-HEI-NU ME-LECH HA-OLAM SHE-HECHI-YO-NU VE-KI- YE-MO-NU VE-HIGI-O-NU LIZ-MAN HA-ZEH.

*Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Kind of the universe,
who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled
us to reach this occasion.*

SHAVUOS SCHEDULE

Tuesday, May 18

- We light the Yom Tov candles (at the time indicated in the candle lighting schedule) and say both blessings.
- Like every Shabbos and Jewish festival, we sanctify the day and welcome the festival with the Kiddush, and the family is treated to a festive meal.
- At night we stay up and recite *Tikun Lail Shavuos* (see page 13).



Wednesday, May 19

- We attend services in the morning and hear the reading of the Ten Commandments.
- After nightfall, we light Yom Tov candles from a pre-existing flame (at the time indicated above in the candle lighting schedule) and say both blessings.
- Once more, we recite Kiddush in the evening and the family is seated to partake in a festive meal.



Thursday, May 20

- *Yizkor* is recited during the Yom Tov morning services, in remembrance of the deceased.



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Celebration!

SHAVUOS GUIDE

5770 / 2010



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