

# L'Chaim! Weekly



## Living with the Rebbe



פרשת ויקהל, כ"ט אדר א' תשפ"ד

PARSHAS PEKUDEI

15-16 March 2024 - 6 Adar II 5784

TIMES FOR SYDNEY

Candle Lighting: 6.55 pm

Shabbat Ends: 7.49 pm



This week we read the portion of Pekudei. We read about how the artisans made the clothing of the Kohanim (priests), and several vessels of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). After every item was completed, it says, that they made it, "as G-d commanded Moses." Moses was so impressed by this, that he blessed them.

Later in the portion it tells of how Moses erected the Mishkan and placed all its vessels in it. After every job done, the Torah records that he did it "as G-d commanded Moses."

Why is it so important for the Torah to repeat this over and over again? Artists and craftsmen have a creative spark in them. They have their way of seeing things and that influences the outcome of their work. It takes a special kind of person, who can listen to another person, and create the others vision, completely ignoring his / her inner creative spark. It is truly difficult to do what another asks, the way they want you to do it. The fact is, "I know better." And because of this, it is amazing that by the Mishkan, every step of the way was done "as G-d commanded Moses." Therefore Moses feels that they should be blessed.

How were they able to do it? In the case of the Mishkan, the artisans took it to a whole new level. It was not that they ignored their creative spark, rather they were so in tune with G-d, that their creative spark was totally in line with His will. When you are one with G-d, you find it easier to do what He wants.

The book of Exodus ends with this story, telling us that when the Mishkan was completed, G-d's presence filled it.

We too are all blessed with our own dispositions, natures and creative sparks. We all have our own unique way of thinking.

However, when people start thinking "Everyone else is wrong and I am right," the world becomes a dark place. When ego takes over, you are alone, because your ego leaves no space for anyone else.

When you bring humility in to the picture, you find value in others. When you begin to see and feel the other's way of thinking, you open the door to friendship, closeness, love and oneness.

The same is true when it comes to our relationship with G-d. We all have ideas of what G-d wants of us. However, through studying Torah, especially the esoteric, and Chasidic teachings, we get to know G-d in a more intimate way. Slowly we transform and align ourselves with Him and His will becomes our will.

Soon we will merit to see G-d's presence fill our actions, our Temple and our lives. May we come to see how our difficulties accomplished the transformation that brings Moshiach.

*Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.*

# SLICE OF LIFE

## Clear as Mud

BY CHAVIE BRUK

### *Chaya's Bat Mitzva*

I want to start off by saying what a big milestone this was for Chaya, me, and my husband.

I have a wonderful and gorgeous (inside and out) seventeen-year-old daughter yet being that we adopted her after she turned twelve, we didn't have the privilege of celebrating her Bat-Mitzva as a family. Chaya is our first child (not the oldest) it makes for a unique family where the oldest isn't the first and the first isn't the oldest.

I remember it like it was yesterday, in a parking lot a few blocks away from the adoption agency, waiting to get that phone call that would finally make us parents. That feeling is not something you can put into words. So now, 12 years later, looking at this sweet, funny, sensitive, complicated, human, takes me right back to that moment.

About six months earlier we had asked Chaya if she had any ideas or thoughts on how she wanted to celebrate her Bat-Mitzva. Of course, she had quite a lot of opinions. One thing she was very sure about was that she wanted it to be an event exclusively for women and girls. After exploring different ideas and options, we landed on a Challah Bake. I was supposed to do a community Challah Bake right when COVID-19 started and that, obviously, it didn't happen, so it felt like the perfect opportunity to make Chaya's special day also Bozeman's first community Challah Bake, which we called Chaya's Challah bake.

I think it's important that I address the realities of putting on a big event, especially when you live in a small town with no access to a caterer, where all the Challah bake prep, all the décor and room prep and all the food was on me. It is hard! The other very significant thing was that our family, my son was not (and still not :) in a great space. We were at the end of a challenging summer; kids were home with camp being over and school still three weeks out. It didn't allow me to prep and be organized in the way that I usually am. Which basically mean that all the prep for the Bat-Mitzva basically took place the day of the celebration. It was a huge miracle! And I am so grateful for my

family and amazing friend Chevee who flew into celebrate with us and basically helped make it happen in a big way.

It was a beautiful memorable evening. Thank you, Hashem!

### *A Ten-Year Saga Lands a Bright Ending*

Occasionally, we just get lucky and can visibly see the hand of G-d. Though I know that everything is orchestrated by Hashem (G-d), sometimes it's nice to see it, even if it takes 10 years to come to fruition.

Story time: about 10 years ago we bought a 5-acre property that's about a 15 minute walk from our home. This property was to become the home for our soon-to-be-built Chabad Center. We had some really grand plans and dreams.

We envisioned building a huge center, almost like a JCC with a pool, classrooms, a magnificent sanctuary, a social hall, I mean, you name it, it was all included in our plans.

A few years later we decided to downsize a bit, still planning to build and create a beautiful center just on a smaller scale. So, no pool, smaller spaces, a more of a condensed version of what we had originally planned.

We met with our architect and we started to draw up some concrete plans. We spent a lot of time, and money, tweaking and perfecting it, till we had what we thought was the perfect balance of our needs.

Bozeman is a beautiful place to live, yet, as more people discover its beauty, the cost of living (taxes, real estate, services, insurance) goes up. Our construction costs, I can safely say is one of the highest in the country. In turn we were not getting anywhere near our fund-raising goals, as the more we raised, the less it was worth with prices skyrocketing.

Back to the drawing board we go. Revise, condense, reevaluate, repeat.

A little while before COVID we felt pretty stuck, construction costs were just so unfeasible, we decided to put the project on temporary hold and wait for the

market to drop a bit.

Enter COVID, not only did the market prices not drop, but it shot up even more. Bozeman (like many other small towns in the west) became a very appealing place to live during a pandemic and we could feel the effects of that in a very real way.

A few months ago, one of our building donors decided that he wanted his money back. It's been a while, nothing doing, and he lost confidence in our project. Honestly, I didn't blame him, I kinda did too. Nevertheless, it was very hard to lose the money and it forced us to have a reality check. With a lot of thought and the blessings of our donors, on the first day of Chanuka, we decided to put our property on the market. Long story short, a few days before Purim we sold our property for more the double our original investment. And on Purim day we closed on a 4,000 square foot unit fully finished, walking distance from our home and closer to Main Street. We did not have a mortgage on our property, so the sale was all profit. Those funds, along with the money we had fund-raised previously and a late infusion from a few gold hearted souls, allowed us to buy our current space all cash, mortgage free.

It hit me like a ton of bricks. This piece of land we had, was never meant to be the home of our Chabad Center. Hashem knew all along that this was an investment property, this is what allowed us to now own a home for Judaism, debt free.

Of course, this was a total Dream Detour. I always dreamed of creating a space from scratch, I have a passion for design, and I was itching to put it to use. Buying an existing space, forces me to work with what we have, give up on a lot of things (like a commercial kitchen) that I thought were essentials and will probably challenge my skills and force me to grow. But after all is said and done, this is what was supposed happen, this is what our community needs. G-d had a plan and I'm just so grateful that after 10 years He shared it with us!

*Chavie and Chaim Bruk founded and direct Chabad -Lubavitch of Montana in Bozeman.*



# It Happened Once



Shortly before the Jews were to enter the Promised Land G-d appeared to Moses, His beloved servant, and informed him that he would not be permitted to enter the Land with his people, but instead would die in the desert as a punishment for having struck the rock at Merivah. These bitter words were unacceptable to Moses. Could it be that he would be denied his supreme wish – to serve his Master in the holiness which is found only in the Land of Israel?

The day of Moses' death approached, but when the people heard of the decree, they cried out and said, "We will not allow it." Even the sun came before G-d, saying, "I will not set today so that your servant Moses will not have to die." G-d would not be moved. He sent the Angel of Death to bring Moses' soul to Him, but Moses forbade the angel to approach, and the angel fled in fear.

G-d Himself then came to Moses and consoled him, saying, "If you live longer than the usual number of years, people will turn you into a god and worship you. Furthermore, you know that even Adam, whom I fashioned with my own hands, had to die." But Moses continued to plead his cause. "Please, allow me only to cross the Jordan River, if not as a leader, then as a plain Jew; if not as a plain Jew, then as a servant." But G-d replied, "I have made two oaths: one that you will not enter the Promised Land; and the second, that I will never destroy the Jewish people. If I break the one vow, I will have to break the other."

When Moses heard this, He recoiled in fright. "I would rather die a thousand deaths than allow You to destroy even one Jewish soul. But don't I deserve to witness the triumph of my people whom I led faithfully throughout all these forty years?" G-d replied only: "Moses, do not fear, I Myself will take care of them, but you must allow the Angel of Death to approach you, for it is Joshua's turn to lead the people."

Moses still was not reconciled to his fate. He appealed to the heavens and the earth to intercede for him, they replied, "How can we pray for you when it is written 'the skies were like smoke' and of the earth it is said, 'and the earth like a garment shall wear out'?" Moses then asked the sun and the moon to pray for him, but they answered, 'We can't pray for you since it is said, 'The moon was put to shame and the sun was disgraced.'"

The stars and the mountains and the seas likewise were not powerful enough to help. Moses continued to plead

for himself: "The Jews sinned many times, and yet You always forgave them. Am I worse than they that You cannot forgive me also?" But G-d replied to him, "Justice for the many is not the same as justice for one. I could forgive the sins of an entire people, but I cannot forgive yours."

Moses realized that nothing would avail, and that G-d would not retract His decree. He wrote out 13 Torah scrolls, one for each Tribe and one to remain in the Holy Ark. Moses and Joshua, the new leader, went together to the Tent of Meeting, where the Divine Presence always spoke with Moses. After they entered, a pillar of cloud descended separating Moses from Joshua. When it departed Moses turned to his former pupil and asked, "Master, what did G-d say to you?" Joshua replied, "I am forbidden to tell you." This was the first time that G-d had communicated with Joshua instead of Moses, and Moses was deeply pained. He cried out, "Better one hundred deaths than envy even once!"

Now Moses was ready to die. G-d showed him all the sights of Israel, present and future, even until the time of the Final Redemption. Then, commanding the angels to lock up the gates of prayer, lest Moses' heart-rending pleas penetrate, G-d Himself descended to take Moses' pure soul, telling it: "My daughter, leave his body immediately and I will allow you to rest under My Throne with the angels." G-d then kissed Moses, took his soul and brought it up to Heaven where even the angels wept.

Moses was born on the seventh of Adar and passed away on the seventh of Adar. On the day that he died a Heavenly Voice announced: "Moses was awarded the crown of Torah, the crown of the priesthood, and the crown of royalty, yet the most important crown he earned was the crown of a good name."

Moses' body never degenerated, nor does anyone know the place of his grave, lest they see the light shining from there. When the Holy Moshiach redeems his people, Moses will be together with us once more.

# Smile, it's Shabbos!



Reaching the end of a job interview, the manager asks a young engineer fresh out of Harvard, "And what starting salary are you looking for?" The engineer replies, "In the region of \$150,000 a year, depending on the benefits package."

The interviewer says, "Well, what would you say to a package of five weeks' vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every two years, say, a red corvette?"

The engineer sits up in his chair and says, "Wow! Are you kidding?"

The interviewer replies, "Yeah, but you started it."



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## Can I Quit Judaism?

By Rabbi Aron Moss

### Question of the Week

Although I was raised in a traditional home, was had a Bris and had a Bar Mitzvah, I have never had any faith or "religious" belief. I am now aged 34, and would describe myself as an atheist. I have no wish to be buried in a Jewish cemetery (and my Will will also make this clear) and have married a non-Jew in a civil ceremony.

My question is, can I consider myself officially non-Jewish, by my effective opting-out, or do I need some sort of form or dispensation to be officially no longer Jewish?

Many thanks for your help with what is perhaps an unusual question.

Best Wishes,  
Edward

### Answer

Dear Edward,  
I would like to help you, but I feel there's nothing I can do. According to your question, you have done everything possible to negate your Jewishness: in practice you do not keep Jewish tradition; in belief you are an atheist; in family life you have married a non-Jew and thus won't have Jewish children; and even in death you are determined not to be buried in a Jewish cemetery.

One would think that all this would be enough to confirm your un-Jewishness.

But no! For some reason, you are still unsatisfied: you still feel Jewish! So much so, you feel you need official dispensation! And so, being an atheist, who do you turn to to solve this problem? A doctor? A psychiatrist? The civil celebrant that married you? No. You turn to a rabbi!

I'm reminded of the child who ran away from home, but ended up just going around and around the block because his parents told him never to cross the road by himself.

I'm sorry, Edward. There is nothing more you can do. You are as Jewish as Moses, Ariel Sharon and the Chief Rabbi of Wales! In fact, it seems that being Jewish is the most dominant factor of your personality. It is even influencing the place you want to be buried! (Why would an atheist care about where they are buried?)

Edward, Jewishness is not a belief, a feeling, a conviction or a lifestyle. It is a state of being. We can either celebrate it or fight against it. But it will always be there. So why not celebrate it?

**Good Shabbos,**  
**Rabbi Moss**