

Soul Sisters Sharing

REKINDLING THE FLAMES

Esther Malka Margaretten

#18

Our vision is to create a connected group of spiritually seeking, Torah-committed women who continue to learn from, share and support one another in their lifelong journey to deepen their relationship with Hashem.



My journey to connect to Hashem and the Eternal People has been a winding one, with many challenges. When I look back upon the long road I've traveled, leading from Moline, Illinois, all the way to Tzfat, in the Holy Land, I can see Hashem's Hand so clearly— even though in the midst of the story that was unfolding, there were many moments that seemed complicated, confusing, and sometimes sad.

Once, three years ago, when alone on the roof of my building (then in Jerusalem) I turned my face to the sky and cried out, "Hashem, thank You not only for bringing me close, but It's my dearest wish that my own flesh and blood recognize Your Oneness— but they don't understand me and have never been interested to learn about Your Ways," I ended plaintively. "Hashem, why only some, and not others?"

Almost half of Latin America is full of people who want to return Home!

"So many lost Jewish souls are finding their way back home to You. Almost half of Latin America is full of people who want to return Home! But why, Hashem, can't my own family also come back? Why can't the descendants of our ancestors, Jews who crossed over from Spain to France—why can't they come back to You too?"

"But why, Hashem, can't my own family also come back?!"

But Hashem always hears our prayers, even if it may not seem so at first. He is watching, listening, and guiding all events, for the ultimate good. We just have to keep our eyes open and be patient. Because... Hashem did hear. It was almost as if He was waiting for that cry. And events began to unfold after that.

Meanwhile, backtracking a little, our family had lived in Tucson, Arizona, as the managers of a Hasidic resort for people who came to Tucson to escape the cold of the eastern winter. After my kids had grown and left home for yeshivas in larger cities, I made the big decision, following my divorce, to move to Monsey.

When I converted to Judaism in 1972, at the age of 19, our family consisted of my father, my stepmother, two half-brothers, two half-sisters, and myself, (the only child of my mother, who passed away before I was two). I was told after my conversion that I shouldn't see my father and stepmother— or even speak to them

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Lining Up for Redemption

“Rus vs Yisro”

Editor Note:

From the examples of Yisro (Jethro) and Rus (Ruth) we learn there are two opposite paths that a convert to Judaism could follow, regarding how to interact with their family:

Rus took no chances of being weakened by going back to her family, and left them all behind.

Going forward, she threw all of her focus into connecting and strengthening herself in her new, monumental feat of becoming a solid Jewess of par excellence!

Yisro, on the other hand, took his leave of the Jewish camp, in spite of Moshe urging him to stay. He departed for his country and people, hoping to persuade them of the new truths he had found. We are told he was not successful in this endeavor.

A Rav facing a new convert has a choice to make. He thinks, “Should I advise him to follow the path of Rus, with perhaps, a greater chance of succeeding in his own Jewish journey? And by doing this, effectively dash his hopes of bringing his family aboard?

“Or, should I gamble with the future of this ‘spiritual newborn’ by saying that’s its okay to take a chance at being weakened or even spiritually wounded by the non-Jews in his ‘past’?”

But just maybe, there is a middle road that could be taken, accompanied by continuous, ongoing consultation with a Rav or other mentor. (As an example of this, see page 17 for the amazing story of Liorachai, who was able to keep a connection with her family, and yet remain strong in her journey.)

Each convert’s journey and interaction with his family is unique. In the best case scenario, each ger would ideally consult with a Rav initially, keeping open an ongoing line of communication, for the best possible chance at growth and interaction with his family.

“I found the gold mine!” I said, proclaiming ecstatically to my family—and spent a whole summer carefully writing a 17-page letter.

Later I demonstrated so clearly, over and over, to my closest sister in a restaurant—as she tried to defend her position, with two salt shakers.

“No, J.” I said, “One is one, and one plus one is two. Two is not one.” This was our last time together.

Thirty years later, about all I had accomplished in the end, was to create an even a greater chasm between myself and almost every member of my family circle, when maybe, if I had just left them alone or kept things superficial, it might have gone better.

This article by Esther Malka shows a turning point for two members of her family. After many years of separation from her family, two of her cousins are showing an interest in things related to Torah, or the Jewish way of living.

One of the deepest wishes of every convert is, that their family members, as well, will find the greatest “gold” of our life—The One G-d Creator of the Universe, Torah and the Jewish people!

on the phone—since there was a concern that my non-Jewish family might have a negative influence on me. Sometimes, looking back on this whole episode, I second-guess myself, thinking that if only I had acted differently, such as calling my Rav all along, as I gained strength, he would have advised me differently—and I could have sooner tried to renew the connection with my family.

But these musings are all without bringing Hashem into the picture. In truth, the fact that things turned out the way they did—this was all Hashem’s Plan. The outcome of all this was that many of my family members cut off contact with me, including my aunt Elizabeth (wife of my mother’s brother Edmund) who was Catholic and very much opposed to my conversion. Her three sons Rob, Josh, and Charlie—my first cousins—simply went along with this. My only contact with anyone in my family from this point on, was with my father, who never got angry at me because of what had happened, and secretly supported me in my choice to become Jewish, maintaining constant contact by mail throughout this whole time period, during which I got married and moved to Tucson, Arizona.

Years later, my father asked if I could please come and see him, because he felt his time was drawing near. I called my Rav, who informed me that yes, definitely, I could call him. When I got him on the line, my hands were shaking! What a moment! Again I called my Rav, who informed me that yes, definitely, I could and should go to see my father. In the end, I actually got to make two trips to see my father before he passed on, and the healing and peace it brought to everyone in the family, cannot be imagined. My father died two years later, happy in the fulfillment of his request that I come to him, which effectively ended a period of time when our family relationships had been held in “suspended animation” the entire time.

Now that I had reconnected with my parents, my older sisters (who were 15 and 16 years older than myself) also reconnected, and we kept up a steady phone relationship, based on our shared past of long ago, when they had helped care for me following my mother's passing. Many years have gone by since then, and although they can't really relate so much to my life, now that peace was restored, they are respectful and tolerant of my choice to live as a Jew, and this is a huge improvement on how things used to be.

Right before I moved, I got a phone call out of the blue from my cousin Josh (the aforementioned son of my aunt Elizabeth, who as I said before, was Catholic and opposed to my conversion, and whose family I hadn't heard from in ages). For some reason, which I couldn't figure out, Josh was suddenly calling me to update me on his current life. He was married with a family, and had become a Quaker minister in Indiana (now, North Carolina). His older brother Rob (who remained Catholic) was also married with children, and was a professor of English literature, and their youngest brother Charlie also had a family and had become a math teacher. Understandably, our conversation was a bit awkward because, honestly, we had nothing much to talk about. Our lives were just too different, and the gap between our two worlds seemed unbridgeable. When the conversation wound down, we said our goodbyes cordially—but it “was what it was”.

Not French but Jewish

Fast forward 14 years. I was now happily living in Monsey NY, with dreams of making Aliyah to Israel. Our family decided to trace our ancestors, and suddenly we discovered that my supposedly French great grandmother Emilie was really descended from Jews of Spain and Portugal. This was, of course, like a bombshell, and my life took a whole new turn at that point. I even took the time to write a few stories about these discoveries, which were posted on Chabad.org.

Two years later, Baruch Hashem I was able to make Aliyah, and it was amazing. After one year of living in Jerusalem, one night I had a strange dream. I dreamt that I was on an errand to take care of a detail in the Israeli government's Aliya office. There, I happened to meet someone who was supposed to be “my first cousin”, who was likewise taking care of something related to his Aliyah. In my dream, I was thinking that, if he was there, he must have been making Aliyah, and if so, he must have become Jewish! This was a very interesting dream. I didn't know what to make of it. Somehow it made me feel happy. The next day, I received an email that had been originally sent to Chabad.org by my cousin Rob (Josh's older brother) who wished to contact me. He had googled my name and found my stories about our Spanish and Portuguese ancestors there on Chabad.org, and he told the Chabad editor that he was my first cousin, and that he had never had the slightest idea before about our Jewish ancestry— but now that he did, he wished to explore his family's Jewish past—and to that end, he was asking to be put in contact with me. Chabad.org provided me with his email address.

I answered him, and this began a correspondence that has been going on for three years now. Rob has been fascinated to read of our family's life, our customs, about everything we do; about Shabbat, kashrut, the holidays, our concept of Hashem and Emuna, everything. When I would use a Hebrew word in an email, he would look it up. He has learned quite a lot of Hebrew and Yiddish words. He told me that he uses the name “Hashem” when speaking to the Creator. In spite of all this, Rob has no plans to divest himself of his Catholic beliefs. This is a source of a great angst on my part, but I never debate with him about religion. I try to nudge him gently toward awareness of the One Hashem, without ever acting like I'm trying to convert him or arguing or debating about anything. Everything is discussed with utmost respect on both sides.

He even made Latkes

Over the past three years, Rob has surprised me a few times—such as by making latkes on Chanuka, lighting a yahrzeit candle for his family members, and he sometimes mentions to me what he's currently eating and wonders if it's kosher. I've told him everything I know about our ancestors. He goes onto our genealogy site, has seen it for himself, and is happy and appreciative of his Jewish ancestry. (This is in contrast to my half-siblings. If I mention any hint at all that my father may have had Jewish ancestry as well, they become very uncomfortable and change the subject.) When Rob himself discovered a re-written copy of an old letter in French that told our family's story, this kind of sealed things for him.



A Teacher of Gerim

Rabbi Chaim Coffman

Ask the Rabbi

Q-

What is the Jewish approach to making decisions based on the things that we fear?

A-

Is a Jew allowed to be afraid or is that a lack of emunah? The reality is as the Talmud tells us that the only thing we are allowed to be afraid of is forgetting Torah! We have to realize that whatever G-d does is for the good but we have to do our *histadlus*.

That being said, if the fear is real and a person could be damaged by doing something, then we have a mitzvah to guard ourselves. Even if a person is afraid of something, it doesn't mean that it is something forbidden but something we need to deal with in a rational way. People have all kinds of fear that may in fact be something that is deep rooted which may need therapy to deal with.

We have to make decisions based on what is best for the person even if it means they must leave their comfort zone. That means they feel uncomfortable even afraid of what possibly could happen but if they are doing G-d's will and *daas* Torah behind them, they have nothing to fear.

The Real Deal
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Also Teaching B'nai Noach

A Recent Shiur

Q/A #356 Collective Jewish punishment and the war in Ukraine, a Jewish perspective

Not going to get into politics ...

We view things the way the Torah wants us to view things. Tragedies, war, the pain, to be sure its all judgment. G-d judges every nation on a scale.

Do we know exactly Hashem's judgement? This is judgement. Maybe payment for what they did Jews. This place is drenched in Jewish blood.

Hashem wants someone to be close to Him. No one else wanted this except the Jewish people. The world was created for this purpose.

Anyone else who doesn't want pays the price. People, towns, countries even continents pay the price. Where this exactly will all wind up we don't exactly know. Everyone has a scale. The world now is a powder keg.

When we see wars, famines, natural disasters, its collective punishment...people that need to be saved will be saved.

Egypt had its day with the Jews...it was destroyed, England had its day, & Portugal. Europe the whole place is filled with Jewish blood. Communism, atheism, destroyed Judaism. A lot of Jewish blood is on the hands of the Ukrainians. This is judgment against Ukraine! They are definably guilty of horrendous crimes— 100% they are getting punished!

No one goes through this world without sinning. Everyone get paid back one way or another. We do not believe in innocent victims. Everyone who ever started up with the Jews went down. Europe will be hit first because they are
* The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuvah drenched in Jewish blood.*



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Inspiration and a Guide for Purim

By R' Mordechai Marcovitz

In the year 1556, Rav Moshe Isserles, better known by his acronym “the Rema”, found himself and his community forced to leave their homes due to a plague.

Their temporary quarters were ill-equipped for living, and even water was hard to attain. Understandably, they were unable to fulfill the mitzvot of Purim as they would under normal circumstances. The Rema writes “In order to remove the anguish, let me stand up and use my craft. My wisdom should stand for me, for the ‘statues of Hashem are just, gladdening the heart’. I put my heart to plunge the depths of the Megillah.”

From these dire conditions, the Rema composed a beautiful explanation¹ on the Megillah, using it as a parable to every person’s personal journey of life. He named the *sefer* “*Machir Yeyin*” (The Price of Wine), to testify that in place of the actual wine that they normally enjoyed on Purim, he was able to produce his *sefer*, though the kindnesses of Hashem, Who bought the Rema into the inner recesses of the Torah (known as the “House of Wine”).² He then proceeded to send the *sefer* to his father, as “*mashaloch manos*”. Perhaps this could serve as an encouragement for each of us, to take each circumstance and turn it into sweet “wine”.³

“Take each circumstance
and turn it into sweet ‘wine’”.

The Sages (*Chazal*) instituted the reading of four additional *parshiyos* before and after Purim, read in place of the standard maftir of the weekly *parsha*. The first *parsha*, *Parshas Shekalim*, is read before or on Rosh Chodesh Adar.⁴ The second *parsha*, *Parshas Zachor*, is read the Shabbos before Purim.⁵ This is the only *parsha* required to be heard both by men and women.⁶ The third *parsha*, *Parshas Parah*, is read on the Shabbos after *Parshas Zachor*.⁷ The fourth and final *parsha*, *Parshas Chodesh*, is read before or on *Rosh Chodesh Nisan*, the first month in the Hebrew calendar.⁸

The day preceding Purim is the Fast of Esther (*Taanis Esther*). On the thirteenth of Adar, the Jews gathered together in order to defend themselves, which required that they be fasting. Therefore, we fast on this day to remind us that Hashem sees and hears anyone in his time of need. When one fasts and returns to Hashem with all of his heart, Hashem performs miracles, as in the time of Mordechai and Esther.⁹ Specifically those that are physically fit for fasting should do so.¹⁰

1 Based on reviews of others; I myself have yet to learn this *sefer*.

2 Makir Yeyin (introduction by the author)

3 Rav Fishel Shachter

4 In the times of the Bais haMikdash, beis din would announce the collection of the half-shekel, which were used to pay for the communal sacrifices.

5 This is done in order to connect the obliteration of Amalek to the downfall of Haman, a descendent of Amalek.

6 Halichos Bas Yisroel (page 296, footnote 4) in the name of HaRav Moshe Feinstein

In regards to Parashas Parah, the Mishnah Berurah (685:15) concludes that the obligation is only rabbinical.

7 By reading this *parasha*, we pray for the purifying waters of the *parah adumah*, which will enable us to offer the Paschal Lamb on Pesach.

8 Mishnah Berurah (685:1)

9 Mishnah Berurah (686:2)

10 Rema (686:2)

Additionally, on *Taanis Esther* there is a custom to give three coins that are referred to as “half” of the local currency, to remind us of the *Machzichs HaShekel* that was given to the Bais HaMikdash.¹¹ The custom includes everyone, even an unborn fetus.¹²

On the day of Purim, there are four obligatory mitzvos:

The Megillah is read twice, as a remembrance to the Jews pleading day and night,¹³ once in the evening, and a second time during the day.¹⁴ It is a good custom to bring even children to the readings,¹⁵ provided that the children do not disturb the reading.¹⁶

Gifts to the Poor, known as *Matanos l'evyonim*, are distributed to two eligible people.¹⁷ Either this can be an actual meal itself or an amount of *tzedakah* (money gift) equivalent to a basic meal in that specific location.¹⁸ Of course, it is best to give more *tzedakah* (money gift) than the amount spent collectively for the meal and *Mishloach Manos*, for there is no greater and astonishing simcha than to make happy the hearts of the destitute; one is even comparable to the Shekinah by doing so.¹⁹

The sending of food packages, known as *Mishloach Manos* or *Shalach Manos*, is fulfilled by giving two separate edible items to one person.²⁰ The items need not be separate *brachos*.²¹

The mitzvah of the meal of Purim is fulfilled specifically by day.²² The drinking of intoxicating beverages should only be used to enhance the festive mood, and not be a cause of any light headedness or laxity in the performance of *mitzvos*.²³

11 Rema (694:1)

12 Mishnah Berurah (694:5)

13 Mishnah Berurah (687:2)

14 Shulkan Aruch (687:1)

15 Shulkan Aruch (689:6)

16 Mishnah Berurah (689:17)

17 Shulkan Aruch (694:1)

18 Teshuvos v'Hanhagos-

Purim (Rav Moshe Sternbauch,

19 Mishnah Berurah (694:3)

20 Shulkan Aruch (695:4)

21 Kovetz Halachos-Purim

(Rav Shmuel Kamentsky, page 163)

22 Shulkan Aruch (695:1)

23 Mishnah Berurah (695:4)

“Hakol kol Yaakov” The Voice of Yaakov

“If you find children there who make their voices heard, you will have no power over them”!

(Bilham says to the nations of the world about the Children of Israel)

(Midrash-The Call of the Torah Bereishis, pg.363)

Last week in Beitar, little 9-year-old girls came home and excitedly announced throughout the week, “We get to daven *Shemoneh Esrei* for the first time on Thursday and we’ll have a big party.” For the first time in their little young lives they have joined the most powerful movers in the world—The voice of Yaakov! Its highly doubtful if it was newsworthy enough to grab even one brief line out of our little town, but in heaven?!!!

This Rosh Chodesh Adar II, early in the morning thousands of *Beis Yakov* girls arrived by busloads to the Kotel, filling up the whole plaza even overflowing, backing upward on the steps. Whispering their *Amidah*'s—siddurs pressed against their faces, overwhelming any opposition, their efforts also thundered into the highest heavens!

It may seem to the man of the earth that Esav’s “weapons of...brute strength” will overwhelm the earth. The Children of Israel’s 2000 years of the purest of all the world lips continue to stockpile Torah & Tefilla's. From the littlest to the greatest they continue their outcry to Him...Soon He will leap over the mountains toward us His beloved. So swiftly we will see how “exceedingly exalted above all powers”* is the Master of the Universe!

(T.97:9)



Secrets of The Happiest People On Earth!

The entire world seeks happiness—it has been referred to as the “elixir of life”. Let’s try to examine briefly what true Jewish happiness is meant to be according to our Sages .

The Ramchal, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto, the *Chovot Halevavot* (Duties of our Heart) and the Baal HaTanya, all have the same answer. At our core, in the “seat of our emotions”, we were created to seek pleasure. Doesn't sound so Jewish, you say? Or does it...

Let’s examine this further: What is true pleasure, anyway? What can bring us our deepest simcha?

The answer is “-” השם על התענג finding delight in doing Hashem’s will.

In the upcoming *parshiyot* connected with the *Mishkan*, we are taught timeless lessons about giving. Every Jew was commanded to give—it was not negotiable. Why?

Because a Jew must emulate Hashem, the ultimate Giver.

Giving Brings Simcha

Hashem created us for the purpose of bestowing goodness upon us—and so, we are commanded to emulate Hashem and be “givers” as well. Giving is our Jewish source of simcha. And we give pleasure to Hashem as well by emulating this essential trait of His.

Create a Reservoir of Positive Thoughts

When we fulfill Torah and mitzvot we are showing our delight in Hashem. This is truly our most profound purpose of existence and must remain at the forefront of our minds independent of any of the obstacles that we are experiencing. We are charged with the task of creating a reservoir of positive thoughts to call upon and savor, particularly during these challenging times. I am not suggesting that this is easy, nor does this replace longing for a family—but as Jews we have this built-in reservoir of inner strength.

To quote Rabbi Akiva Tatz, who echoes the words of Rebbe Nachman: “Happiness is derived from being aware of our mission, our purpose in life, and working toward that goal”, and “*Lo alecha hamalacha ligmor*”—completing the task is not always in our hands.

Developing an appreciation for our spiritual pleasure and our efforts to connect to Hashem, should be a tremendous source of happiness for a Jew. We often discount our efforts and focus only achieving our goal. However, our chassidic masters place great importance on the journey itself.

Remove Those Doubts

Adar is the month to remove the influence of Amalek from our thoughts, and pursue “simcha”. “Amalek” as we know, equals “*safek*” or doubt.

We must embrace the thought, which lies deep within each Jewish soul, that there is no *mikrah*-“מקרה coincidence”, only *rikmah*-“ריקמה embroidery”—precisely tailored events in our lives .

Hashem is truly behind all events of our lives and If we can fortify ourselves with this knowledge and commend ourselves in our efforts every time that we pick up that “mental bat” to bat away the self doubt and negativity that might come our way. We must smile and comfort ourselves in the knowledge that Hashem is looking down at us and applauding our efforts.

How do we know this? Lets look into *Sefer Devarim, Parshat Ki Tavo*, where the Torah speaks of “Unspeakable tragedies that will befall the nation”. For what reason will they happen? “Because you did not serve Hashem your G-d amid gladness and goodness of heart when all was abundant”. Lets take stock of our gifts from Hashem and stay connected to our true purpose in this world .

We are commanded to bring a 1/2 shekel, *machzis hashekel* (מחצית השקל) for the construction of the tabernacle. Lets examine the word *machzis* מחצית. The middle letter is צ, surrounded by a י and a ... which spells chai, life—and the two outer letters spell -מת death. The message is “give Tzadaka and you are granted life—and the further you distance yourself, the closer you come to death -.” As our sages teach: —תצדקה תציל ממות— *zedaka tatzil mimaves* (charity saves from death).

"As we go thorough nisyonot, (tests) our task is not to fear!"

I would like to conclude with a very beautiful thought from Rav Usher Freund, who lived in *Yerushalayim* and passed away about 40 years ago. Rav Usher explains that everyone must go thorough *nisyonot*, tests, but our task is not to fear. Our only “fear” should be our fear that we might disconnect from *Hashem Chas veshalom*.

He explains that a person should look at all challenges as opportunities to strengthen their *Emuna*—reminders that we must cling to Hashem as suckling child does to his mother, as David Hamelech teaches in Tehillim 132: *Kagamul alei imo* (אמו-אני) as a suckling child on the bosom of his mother).

By focusing on giving to others and to Hashem, we create a dwelling place for Hashem in this world. That’s our mission, and each and every one of us is charged with that goal. It takes work to keep that at the forefront of our minds— but the result is worthwhile -“true Jewish simcha”!

Rav Asher Weiss recounts a beautiful question that his Rebbe asked him when he was a young boy: “In Song of Songs we see mentioned “דבש בחלב תחת”

(honey and milk are under your tongue)—whereas in the Torah we read “ארץ זבת חלב ודבש” -“A land flowing with milk and honey.

Why does the Torah list milk before honey, and the Song of Songs places honey before milk? Rabbi Weiss answers: When speaking of the physical Land, milk must come first, since it’s basic sustenance for man and mammals.

"Find Your Unique Sweetness of Torah!"

However, the Song of Songs speaks of Torah learning. When it comes to Torah learning, honey must precede milk because Torah must be derived through sweetness. When it comes to studying Torah, one must be careful to put the sweetness first.

Find the Torah teachings that talk to your heart, inspire you, that connect to your *neshamah*— and with that sweet soul connection you will connect to Hashem and thirst for more!

My *bracha* to all of us is that in this month of Adar we all merit to search out and find the Sweetness of Torah that talks to each one of us uniquely and thereby acts as a springboard to True Jewish Simcha that we so long for!

משנבנס אדר מרבים בשמחה

As we bring in Adar, our joy increases

Warmest regards, *Esther*

Rebbetzin Esther Hochstadter
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SKID ROW TO PURIM

W

Walking among scattered cigarette ends and the nastiest sidewalk I had ever seen, a bent over, dirty coated man scanned the tobacco discards in hope of finding one long enough to re-use. Feeling this eeriest moment I clutched my Father's hand even tighter, feeling more secure as we continued walking on Skid Row, Los Angeles, California.

In a world devoid of even a basic concept of middos, so when they emptied the bottle, their darkest essence spewed forth—a cesspool of foulness, anger and violence. This was my introduction to the havoc this chosen path wreaked on those around even those closest to them, as my father continued to attempt to rehabilitate them—but eventually, just gave up...

Fast forward to about twenty-five years later, and I had just made Aliyah from Baltimore to Beitar. I arrived single, with nine children still at home, no job, no money, no degree, and no work experience. We came believing that it was better to live in a tent at the edge of the Jewish people than to live among the palaces of the goyim!

Months later, a new day dawned upon us, our first real Purim—and in Eretz Yisroel. A neighbor on our street had invited us to their seudah and with great salesmanship skills, eloquently convinced me that it's the greatest opportunity to say the whole book of Tehillim on Purim. Even though it sounded to me like climbing Mount Everest—this "Whole Book of Tehillim"! But I decided it was a good idea as I was at the time feeling a very heavy load load of responsibilities.

So on Purim day, getting an early start, I arose to say my little Book of Tehillim and donned my apron to begin cooking my contributions for the neighborhood seudah.

After the Megilla reading, the "hectivities" began: the doorbell would ring, a smiling neighbor would deposit a grandiose basket of unbelievable goodies, and my little angel would thank them, google-eyed. The instant the door shut, the basket was scrambled and shaken and the goodies pulled into individual piles. Maybe it would have helped if I had known that it's a very, very good idea to feed the children a good breakfast Purim morning.

I was most determined to finish my entire book of Tehillim. After all, it seemed this whole wonderful little family's future rested on my shoulders alone.

So I hovered in between the kitchen and my bedroom, where I tried to say the little book with all my heart.

Going back to check on the hot pots and pans while passing through the "lively room", I tightened up my lips with a closed little smile.

Now it seemed there were other little interruptions on this "mountainous" new-goal-of-my Purim. Quick-knuckled knocks rapped on my bedroom door. In split seconds a flying child would hand me an envelope. I nodded my thanks, while stuffing the envelope into my pocket and in a few exuberant leaps the child would rejoin our Purim balagan.

With open hands our neighbors welcomed us into their home bursting with guests and a festive table laden with food. The wine was poured... and poured... and poured. The men sang and danced and I'll never forget—for the first



time in my life—I saw how a “Yiras Shamayim Yid” handles his drink. It was such a far cry from those Skid Row folks I’d seen from another world. A whole new dimension was added to my life, as I took in an experience that I would have never believed.

The secret depths of these men’s hearts were unleashed in a flood of love and yearning for Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Seeing my sons and others compete with lengthy Torah dissertations and reaffirming total devotion to their fellow Jew, arms around each other’s shoulders, swaying as they sang, tears gushing in simcha to their Creator in the purest of joy—is certainly a sight never to be believed, and it never ceases to amaze me year after year!

And even when I see a lad who seems to have gone a bit too far with the schnapps—but the strength and insight he must take from this experience is still worlds apart from that other world of Skid Row. Hundreds of boys don’t choose downing bottles as a permanent path, but rather, its “straight back the next day” to their Yiddisher routine.

* * *

As a Friday Purim ended one year at a neighboring shul, the men sang and danced their Kabbalos Shabbos for hours—I know, because I was one of the wives waiting at home.

To me, the Purim experience has become one of the most prominent signs of Jewish Greatness!

“Mi k’kamcha Yisroel — Who is like our people”!!!

* * *

Back to the experience of our first Purim—after all was finished, we happily returned home.

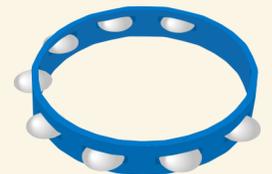
I remembered to look in the filled apron pockets, and once again, on this unforgettable day, my breath was taken away... What generous gifts of tzkadah: checks, change and so much cash!

Wow, do the Jewish people really keep the mitzvah of loving the converts... Look how the hearts of these people opened up to my little family of on that day!!!

BUT THE WOMEN SANG & DANCED!

Many people sinned at the *Egel HaZahav* (Golden Calf) but the women didn’t sin. What protected them? Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Beltz, zy’a explains that it was because of simcha!

Some weeks earlier, the women danced and rejoiced with Miriam in the miracles of *kriyas Yam Suf*, even more than the men. As it says, “Miriam the prophetess.. Took the drum in her hand, and all the women went after her with drums and dancing’... (Shemos 15:19).



The men sang Az Yashir (The Song of Moses, at the sea), but the women also sang and danced.

Their extra degree of joy safeguarded them!

(Torah Wellsprings– Ki Sisa)

Maybe I am...



**I love people!
I love to talk with old friends
and to meet new people!**

And so it was that, one fine day, not so long ago, I met a wonderful new person. Well ... she is older than I am, so I can't rightly call her a 'new person' ... but, she was 'new' to me.

We got to talking and found that we had much in common... of course.

We related bits and pieces of our childhood, our adult life, our careers, our families, our hobbies and special interests. It was a pleasant visit.

A few weeks later, I stopped by for an afternoon visit, and was happy to meet her extended family. She introduced me ... and told them that I am a book keeper, among other things.

Wow. That's news to me. I don't know the slightest thing about bookkeeping!

So I politely said, "Well, I haven't studied bookkeeping yet... or ever worked in it ... but I have been a teacher."

At the next visit, I was again introduced as her friend, the book keeper. Hmm. Once again, I mentioned which jobs I had held ... and that I had not yet studied book keeping.

At the next visit, ... you guessed it. I was introduced as her new friend, the book keeper!
So, there you have it.

Just who am I to say that I'm not a book keeper?

Maybe I am... and I just don't know it!

So I decided to give my home a quick perusal ... to see if there's any evidence that I am a book keeper.

And you know what? It turns out that I am definitely a... "book" keeper! Walking through my home, there's hardly a room without bookcases filled with the most wonderful books. There are books in every single room... even in the bathroom. I truly love reading and absolutely love books. They are my good friends... and good friends are for 'keeping'. So I keep a lot of books in my home.

And, as my friend said, I really am a ... book keeper!

* * *

Now... flip back to my decision to become observant of the Torah laws. I was introduced to the Orthodox world via exemplary role models, happy Shabbos meals with religious families, and beautiful Shabbos and holiday observances within a warm community.

"This is good!", I thought. "I want to be part of all that!"

So, I joined up.

And then, WHAM! The zillions of rules and regulations ...and the new 'lingo' that surrounded it all ... began to flood into my life.

"WHOA!", I said. "What have I gotten myself into?!"

Furthermore, since I was attending much of what our synagogue had to offer and was now 'dressing the part', I was being introduced to fellow congregants and was being fully absorbed into the community.

Jackie

**An imaginative, positive,
out-of-the-box thinker...**

Her parents were holocaust survivors and she is determined to let nothing in her life dampen her spirits. A retired teacher, mother of four and a grandma of many (all of whom live in Israel), she is originally from North Carolina and Atlanta and now happily resides in Ramat Beit Shemesh, where she sees miracles daily!

But... I thought, Wait...please, wait! I'm new to all this. In fact, I feel as if I'm even 'before being new' to observant life. I don't quite know what y'all are talking about, I don't know all those Hebrew and Yiddish phrases, and I don't know what's expected of me... so I have to sit quietly and just listen. I'm brand new to all this. I feel awkward, shy, out of place, bewildered, overwhelmed, and just plain strange.

So I go to my rabbi and tell him all this. He's not at all surprised. He just gently smiles and gives an unexpected message:

"Just fake it !"

WHAT?!? Live a lie? Let my integrity go out the window?

"No", he explains. "That's exactly the right approach to take, at this time. Just 'pretend' that you are a very observant Jew ... and keep on pretending ... and then keep on pretending some more ... and... before you know it...or at least eventually, little by little, and one tiny step at a time... a Torah observant life will begin to fit you very nicely, and you will discover that you really ARE a Torah observant Jew, after all!!

So there you have it.

So then I said to myself, "Who am I to say that I am not yet an observant Jew? Maybe I am... and just don't know it"!

Thinking through my day, there's not an hour when the Torah isn't a part of me in some way.

So, as my rabbi rightly knew, I really am a Torah Jew...

(and a bit of a 'book keeper', too)!

Jackie

"Then the lame man will skip like a gazelle..."

Good News! Hope for those Paralyzed!

Behold, your G-d will come...

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and...

The ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

Then the lame man will skip like a gazelle" ...

Isa. 35:3-6

Israeli scientists from Tel Aviv University say they have engineered 3D human spinal cord implants to treat paralysis, which if successful in clinical trials in human patients, could help people stand up and walk again.

The study, conducted on mice and led by Prof. Tal Dvir of the Sagol Center for Regenerative Biotechnology, showed an 80 percent success rate in restoring walking ability. The results were published in the peer-reviewed journal *Advanced Science*. Dvir noted that millions of people around the world are paralyzed due to spinal injury caused by traffic accidents, falls and sports-related accidents — with no effective treatment for their condition.

Following the implantation, 100 percent of the group with acute paralysis and 80 percent of those with chronic paralysis regained their ability to walk, the researchers said. Following the study, the researchers are preparing for clinical trials in human patients.

The Dangers of Denying Physical Enjoyment

Ch. 3 - Excerpts



Rediscovering the Lost Self

A Guide to Healthy, Stable,
and Sensible Teshuvah

Rabbi Dan Tiomkin - FELDHEIM

Since it is so very important to find a proper balance between spiritual growth and physical satisfaction and there are so many who would deny the need for the latter, we find it necessary here to expand on this point, based on numerous proofs from classic Torah sources.

The Shlah (*sukkah 25*) writes that Hashem joined a celestial soul to a coarse physical body with deliberate intention, in order that they function in partnership. Therefore, man must fulfill the needs of both parts of his being. His spiritual side must be given the opportunity to pray, study Torah, and perform mitzvot, while his physical side must be allowed to eat, drink, and enjoy the activities permitted to it. If a person does not satisfy both aspect of his being, he challenges a basic premise of his creation, as the verses state, "Go, eat your bread with joy," and "See life" The Metzudos explains: (*Koheles 7:9*, The verse, "See life," is a general instruction, that one must see to it that he really lives his life by enjoying that which is good, since a life of hardship is not considered living.

Rabbeinu Yonah, in his commentary on *Mishlei*, offers the following on the verse, "A man of kindness deals kindly with himself, but he who afflicts his own flesh is cruel":

A man of kindness nurtures himself with good habits and a well-balanced character....If he afflicts himself with hunger or pain he is considered cruel, just as if he had harmed someone else. By afflicting one's physical body, one damages his spiritual powers, rendering them unfit to complete their task. Ultimately, such a person will fail to achieve wisdom or success in the service of Hashem.

"ITS WAYS ARE PLEASANT"

By performing *mitzvos* in a way that brings physical gratification and satisfaction, one invites his subconscious heart, and the animalistic aspect of his being, to participate in his quest for spiritual growth. This is such a basic principle in our understanding of Hashem's *mitzvos*....

For this same reason, the holiest days of the year, Shabbos and Yom Tov, are marked not by solemn fasting but by joyous feasting and celebration (*Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 242, 529:2*). This even applies to Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgment.

"REJOICE, YOUNG MAN, IN YOUR YOUTH"

In *Alei Shur (III, Da'as Torah, ch. 3)*, Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt"l also addresses the need to placate the body. (In this context, the term "body" refers to man's feelings, his character traits, and the deep-seated emotional needs, which pose a threat to spiritual advancement if they are not properly dealt with.)

How destructive it is what a servant of Hashem ignores his physical needs. He stands in prayer, and extraneous thoughts disturb his concentration. He tries harder to focus, shakes his body, forces his mind to pay attention, and yet just a few words pass, and again his mind begins to wander into the realm of fancy. What is it that disturbs his thoughts? Is it his bodily needs that have not been appeased? Is it his haughty ego, which will not be subdued? Let him consider this for a moment, and try to locate the deep point of conflict within his own nature. Let him not ignore his own inner calling...

LIGHTHEARTED BANTER

Among the forty-nine conditions for advancement in Torah, Chazal list "limited conversation and limited banter" (*Pirkei Avos 6:5*). In order to properly understand one's studies, he must converse with others from time to time.

The same is true of "limited banter." A healthy soul must be able to laugh from time to time. Our Sages tell us that the Shechinah (Divine Presence) rests only amidst joy (*Shabbos 30b*). In a similar vein, the Talmud Yerushalmi states that *ruach ha-kosesh* (Divine inspiration) can only be achieved by a joyous heart (*Sukkah, beginning of ch. 5*). For this reason the prophets would have musical instruments played before them, in order to achieve a spirit of prophecy (*Melachim II 3*).

In the Beis HaMikdash, the Levi'im sang while the wine libations were poured onto the *Mizbe'ach* (*Arachin 11a*). The *Sefer Ha Chaim* (by the brother of the Maharal of Prague) explains this as a parable for our own service of Hashem. We can sing to Hashem with joy and love only when our bodily needs are satiated, as the verse states, "How beautiful, and how pleasant, is love amidst delight" (*Shir HaShirim 7:7*).

The *Sefer HaChaim* expounds:

After a person has enjoyed pleasure, his love for Hashem becomes beautiful and pleasant, and he is able to extol Him with songs and praises. Not so when he fasts, and his flesh and blood are diminished, nor when he drinks only water, but only when his heart is gladdened by wine.

So too, one must feed his proverbial animal, his physical body, before the soul can enjoy the delights of Torah and mitzvos.

She Remembers Purim...

Leah Kaufman

My Mother began her Purim preparations making hamantaschen of nuts and honey, “flooden” —a nutty cake and “kuchen,” a sponge cake.

I don’t know how she mixed up all of the egg whites—there were no mixers in those days. She probably mixed them by hand. After being baked, they were put down in the cellar to keep until Purim.

We had no refrigeration in those days, so we put things like fruits and vegetable in boxes of sand down in the cellar. I remember pulling the rose petals off of the bushes to make jam. She made lots of jam of these rose petals, and also of prunes, cherries and other berries that she set up in glass jars.

On Purim the whole city went into Purim costumes. The Megillah reading was serious business, while we chapped and maybe stomped.

My Mother sent us out with slices of her baked goods on a glass or China plate covered with a cloth or white linen napkin and one by one I took them to a neighbor.

For the suda we baked a large challah called, “koilech,” and ate “holishkes” —stuffed cabbage with meat and grilled peppers...with lots of guests.

There was a lot of singing maybe they were a little tipsy, but that’s all...

* * *

And Pesach

Afterwards, we began our Pesach preparations. The major thing was moving everything out of our houses. All the furniture was moved outside and fixed and the whole house was re-painted by the family.

This was a very happy time—new home, new food-time to start over again—everyone participated. We put a ladder up to the attic and brought down the Pesach dishes.

The chickens and geese we had raised in a coop in the backyard were now taken to the Schocket to slaughter—back home the feathers were plucked, cleaned and kasher...

Matzos were crushed in a brass cylinder to make matzah meal. Mother went to milk the neighbor's cows and made our own buttermilk..

For the seder we made our own grape juice as well as “*Vishniak*,” a liquor made from sour cherries. I remember grating the horseradish on a thing we called “*reebize!*” I hated it, but I did it with tears running down my cheeks—I wanted to feel the pain and the joy of being Jewish.

My mother and sisters cooked everything up in large pots...And on Seder night, *Tatte* sat in his kit-tel in front of us—How I remember *Tatte* singing (he had a beautiful voice) and learning—it made me develop my love for Torah and went straight into my soul!

We all had new garments, there was a lot of singing—everyone participated.

I had a silver goblet with my name on it I waited the whole year to use. It was good to be a Jew!

The difference between Pesach then and now is like the difference between heaven and earth—with washing machines and dryers and food processors—life is much easier now—still not easy but easier.

Even on the Death March as I watched the goyish children playing I didn’t envy them.

Baruch Hashem, I survived!

This Peach will again be a Pesach of “*Hodayah*,” (thanksgiving) enjoying my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren—most of whom live Eretz Yisroel—a Pesach of gratitude to Hashem!

A child survivor of The Holocaust, Leah Kaufman raised her family of three sons in Montreal, while teaching and now lives in Beitar, Israel. She has written a book of her life called...

“Live, Remember, Tell the World”

ArtScroll & also available on Amazon

Cont. from page 3- Rekindling The Flames- Esther Malka

Eager to share his news, he mentioned his discovery to his brother Josh, (the Quaker minister who had called me a few years previously). But to his disappointment, this information didn't seem to register even a blip on Josh's radar.

But that lasted only until Josh himself discovered the original of that selfsame letter. Josh was so blown away by this discovery that he went out and took a DNA test, that confirmed this ancestry for him, and now he was forced to admit that there was something to our Jewish past. It's funny to observe what happens when people discover that they descend from Jews. There are exceptions—but most of the time, they try to find out more about what it means to be Jewish. So, quite a while after this, I got an email from Josh where he recounted how he had been on a recent zoom conference with his fellow Quaker ministers, and they were all complaining about "how hard it is to come up with material for sermons every week."

He stated that he himself has been reading many subjects on Chabad.org, and then commented that he thinks that "if other Quaker ministers would just take the time to learn more about Judaism, it would be very beneficial for them!" I was so blown away by this new development that I ran quickly downstairs to tell my son's family and contacted all my other children, who are very aware of the long and challenging history of my relationship with my non-Jewish family. This was a "breakthrough" of sorts, the likes of which I never could have imagined when I first began my journey.

I was beyond excited. Now I never know any more what surprise to expect from Josh. He says that he just finished reading "The Essential Talmud" by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, and it was very informative but left him hungering for an English Talmud text. I warned him that the Talmud is very difficult and complicated to learn. I wonder what will happen from this. The last I recently heard, my Quaker minister cousin has taken to reading the Weekly Parasha on Chabad.org, with related commentary articles, and then he uses this material to teach his congregation! I don't even know how to assimilate this information. As I said, it's beyond anything I could ever have imagined.



Meanwhile, what was his brother Rob up to? Recently I got an email from him saying he was busy reading "History of the Conversos" by a Jewish author. This got me going. I asked him why in the world, as a Catholic, would he want to read about what the church did to the Jews? He said he's interested from an ancestral standpoint, and also because he can't figure out the mechanism by which the Jewish customs that the conversos kept, (such as lighting candles on Friday nights, etc.) survived and got passed down from generation to generation for 500 years until today. What kept it going?

The Neshama Sparks

I answered him that it's the power of the Jewish soul, trying to preserve what fragments of the mitzvot they still possessed. It's the spark of the *neshama*, the drive to keep alive and pass on their Jewish identity, even if they didn't really understand what they were actually doing. They just knew they must pass it on, and even risked being burned at the stake for doing so. I told him that it's the same spark, the same drive, that has preserved Am Yisrael for 2,000 years amidst hostile nations that have tried to wipe us out. In a way, the same spark that has kept the Jewish nation going all this time, is perhaps a similar power of the soul which also kept the conversos going strong, passing on their customs. It's the power of the Jewish soul's connection to Hashem.

And Rob had no words. He didn't know what to respond. And I knew I had scored a victory of sorts, in his heart.

May all the Lost Ones of Am Yisrael return to their Father in Heaven, and bring Mashiach very soon, Amen.

Esther Malka

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Building Connections Within the Jewish Nation

Our 2nd International Zoom Forum

Osnas (Asenath))

As we come to the Jewish people, one of the most awesome highlights we are privileged to observe are the outstanding role models from both the past and present!

Yes, from the past also, because even though some of us were raised within the “Bible Belts,” the great patriarchs of the Torah were always portrayed as kind of ancient sheepman-types. As we came to learn at the feet of the actual descendants of Avraham, these Bible personalities were upgraded in our eyes. Never were they “the lowliest,” as we had been taught; to the contrary, the Torah proclaims them as the ultimate role models of the Jewish people and of the world!

Centuries ago, a beautiful little Jewish girl was dropped down into a most evil place, Egypt. This is where her great-great-grandmother, Sara, years earlier, was tested for a short time (three months). (The Call of the Torah - Munk, Bereishis- Lech Lecha [pg. 165,2 Rashi]) In comparison, Osnas lived in this same challenging environment for at least thirteen plus years!

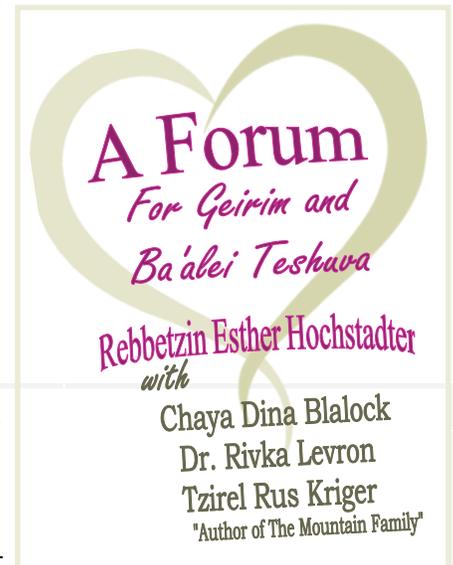
As Osnas is adopted by Potiphar and his wife, for the most part it seems she was just a quiet, insightful observer; but when faced with injustice in her family’s scandal, she zealously arose to speak out for truth. Slowly, she ascends to an almost unequalled star of greatness. But she started out rejected, thrown out by her own family, a little child all alone...

In an ominous beginning, her mother, “Dina, a young girl of eight years old,” is lured out of her tent by Shechem, who sends “dancers and musicians to the door of her tent.” (The Call of The Torah- Bereishis—Munk, pg 459) He then kidnaps, forces her; out of this unsavory union, Osnas, daughter of Dina bas Yaakov and Shechem the lowly goy, is born.

As we watch this awesome story unfold, we are again struck by the depth of Torah wisdom. We often find extreme examples that most of us can relate to somewhere in the middle. We can then say to ourselves, if this person was able to endure such suffering and yet hold on climbing steadily upward toward such greatness — I’m inspired!

Osnas’s inauspicious beginning— immoral and violent, the one who fathered her is killed by her uncles. And yet, as we take a closer look at her journey, many of us can probably relate to her life in some parallel ways, as with the similarities of family rejection and the soloing of the soul with the seemingly unending eternal moments of uncertainty.

Such zealots are these sons of Yaakov! Two of them rise up to destroy the whole city of Shechem in retaliation for this atrocity committed against Dinah, and these same men will also go on to condemn their brother, Yosef, kidnapping him and selling him. But before this incident, they are ready to kill Osnas, the child of this seemingly ill-fated union.



Before we judge them, as Rebb. Esther Hochstadter said in one of her recent shiurim, “We can’t even begin to understand the *cheshbon* (calculation) of the tribes of Yaakov's sons in their decisions.” We do know, however, that the family mission of Yaakov and his sons was to build a perfect foundational group for the future of Am Yisroel. Abraham had Ishmael, Yitzchak had Esav, and this family needed desperately to succeed in this mission from on high with all righteous giants. They believed Dinah's daughter was a threat. This little girl’s genetic inheritance was considered half good and half bad, and they feared there was a chance that she would grow-up leaning toward the bad.

So they wanted to do away with her, but Zadie Yaakov intervened, rescuing her. ‘He attached (an) amulet to a chain which he placed around her neck.’ (ArtScroll Tanach Series– Bereishis [Genesis] pg.1800) ...Engraved it with Hashem’s Name... Indicating “she was the daughter of Dinah, daughter of Jacob, grandson of Abraham.” (Ibid) She was then taken out of Yaakov’s house and placed under a bush” (bid) Her other name, Asenath ('אסנתאסנא'), means thorn bush. (Ibid pg. 1492) In addition other sources tell us it was inscribed, “Whoever marries this girl marries one of Yaakov’s family” Hashem’s angel carried Osnas to Egypt” ... (The Midrash Says-Benei Yakov Publications –Beraishis pgs 393)

Can we imagine this separation scene? This young mother, Dina, already traumatized by her abduction, discovers that her brothers want to kill her child and then her very own father comes and takes her away. Has there ever been a Jewish mama that hasn’t intensely loved her child? Can we even fathom the emotional upheaval this incident must have been for her and maybe even more so for this child who has done no wrong?!

In a parallel episode, Yosef -- Osnas’s zivug—is also cast away, and the memory of this time couldn't be erased from his brothers’ minds; it would haunt them for years: Yosef’s “cries from the depths,” “screaming from fright, begging them to take him back” as he is being sold—falling down in front of them sobbing , “Why do you do this to me? I am innocent!” (The Midrash Says-Benei Yakov Publications –Bereishis pgs 354-356)

This long stretch in the life of Osnas, twenty some years of a dark cloud of uncertainty hanging over her head (we don’t know the exact proportion of time she spent in either of her two homes), she is disconnected from her first family, all alone, isolated from all morale support, no friends, no Bais Yaakov support, *sefarim* (books), or *shiurim* (Torah lectures) to listen to— where was her strengthening input? Who soothed the pains of her heart??

I’m sure many of us can relate to some of this—not knowing where we were going, and a lot of confusion. For myself, it just seemed I was almost forgotten living in a long tunnel unending tunnel. Then boom! At forty years old, coming to the Jewish people, and for the first time looking back and seeing I did not have a senseless life. It was all the Yad Hashem— the hand of Hashem guiding and protecting me each step of the way!

At least Yosef had years of preparation before his excruciating years of challenges. His father had given him a crash course in Torah (jam-packed with all of Yaakov’s years learning with Zadie Avraham and then fourteen years at the northern yeshiva of Shem and Ever), and Yosef also had his powerful dreams secreted away—a quiet hope lying in wait, anticipating their explosion into reality.

But what did Osnas have tucked in her pocket? Maybe a short memory of her mother, aunts and cousins, living in the home of Yaakov. Or maybe remembering she had, had this incredible encounter with the angel, Gabriel. She also carried around her neck the amulet with the precious inscription written by her Zadie --one solid memory souvenir from home.

Some of us even as we intermingled among the people of the earth were lovingly provided with this invisible inner camera. On the outside we appeared a certain way, but on the inside, through this little peek hole, this little inner rudder of the soul seemed to guide us, as we peered out and made inner choices maybe not apparent to maybe anyone else in our life...

“I will not believe this even if I have to hear it a thousand times.”

“This is the right moral choice for me.”

One of the tremendous challenges for Abraham's family coming into the land of Egypt beginning with Sarah was how they stood out in this country risking their lives because of their beauty. "All other women in comparison to her (Sarah) were as monkeys compared to humans". (The Midrash Says-Lecha Lecha-pg. 131)

Also a colossal challenge given to "Yosef was (he also) was so exceptionally handsome [which made him more conspicuous in Egypt where as Rashi notes... the people were ugly]" (ArtScroll Tanach Series-Bereishes-b-pg.170). We do know Osnas also was beautiful as Rabbi Yishmael said, "All Jewish girls are beautiful... not only external physical beauty but also the internal beauty that is inside every Jewish daughter." (The Merit of the Righteous Women— Biala Rebbe, Shlita Pg. 5) This made the test even greater as they were coveted by the Egyptians because of their beauty.

Did Osnas remain unscathed? We know she did. For a few reasons: First of all, Zadie Yaacov had bestowed upon her divine insurance when he engraved Hashem's name upon her amulet. Secondly, "Just as Sarai guarded herself from immodest conduct in Pharaoh's palace, the Jewish women in Egypt would guard themselves from stooping to immorality." (The Midrash Says - Benei Yakov Pub. pg 133) Thirdly, she merited Yosef HaTzadik who had passed the tests of morality and fourthly, she merited to have two of the finest sons, moral upright sons who equaled all of the tribes of Yaacov!

One of our themes is balancing our lives...The common definition of balance is "different things occurring in equal or proper amounts." (Merriam-Webster) So yes, we may do well in organizing our days, weeks and months, setting our objectives and aiming for every thing in the proper proportions and much of the time, we may even achieve our goals. But what about our "life balance"? Do we know how to target and make plans to accomplish our life's mission? Many times we found ourselves taking a totally different direction than we planned as Hashem designed our lives finding ourselves stuck in a "mode of life" that just didn't seem to make any sense.

Some of us were born very blinded, completely unaware of the "life designs" Hashem had in mind for us. We were zoomed off on a roller coaster of life that Hashem had designed uniquely for us. As the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, at some spots they found they hardly had a chance to set their suitcases down and other places they stayed for years. We see that our greatest role models did not experience their lives in equal or balanced amounts.

Yaakov spends fourteen years with Shem and Ever and years of tending sheep, He grieves for Yosef for twenty-two years, losing during this time his clarity, as the *shechina* (divine presence) departed from him. Is this what we would normally think of as a balanced life? Yet Yaakov's spiritual grandeur was *Tiferes*, the splendor of perfect harmony -- He became the embodiment of the ideal human being...and his image is engraved on G-d's throne of glory.

Yosef spends twelve years locked away in prison. Osnas spends twenty-two years, at least thirteen of them, stuck in the same place in Egypt. The end result for all of these was unprecedented greatness!

This child is adopted by Potiphar and his wife, Zulaicha... a solitary Jewish girl comes to reside inside a home of idolatry and immorality, and surrounded by all of the wickedness of Egypt. This should be an impossible test for any adult to pass, let alone a little girl?!

At 17 years of age, Yosef also comes to the house of Potiphar, the wealthy aristocrat—and a dwelling with many slaves. He becomes Potiphar's manager of his home in the winter and in the summer outside over his slaves in the fields. Osnas at this time is about nine years old, but as their lives run parallel for a year, Yosef doesn't suspect her origins. (ArtScroll Tanach Series -Bereishis-1801}

Quietly she observes the interaction of her adopted mother pursuing him, in the climaxing episode where Zulaicha grabs him and he runs away— her father Potiphar on coming home and hearing his wife's version, explodes with rage against Yosef and wants to kill him.

This ten year old girl quietly informs him of the truth: Yosef is innocent. Her adoptive mother is the aggressor. Potiphar listens and takes the case to court, and the judges side with this young witness. As Rebbetzin Devorah Fastag writes, “It was great courage on the part of Osnas to stand up for Yosef against her mother, who must have been furious with her.” The sages say, “It was in this merit that she married Yosef.” (Ibid Pg. 1801}

As Yosef is thrown into prison, this girl of ten will have to live for the next twelve years with this mother whom she embarrassed. Yosef’s prison sentence ends in one day and he is vaulted to the top as viceroy of Egypt. As he is paraded through the streets, “All of the Egyptian girls and women... stand on the walls and rooftops, and throw their jewelry into the carriage... hoping to elicit a look from him... but {he} would not at glance at any of them.” (The Midrash Says-Benei Yakov Publications –Beraishis pgs 392)

“Asenath, who had nothing else with her, pulled off her necklace and threw it to him. He opens the amulet, read her name and knew then she was his niece. Thus when Pharaoh wanted Joseph to marry, he chose he chose Asenath” (ArtScroll – Call of the Torah-Bereishis-Mikeitz -Munk pg. 551) This was his “reward for having refrained from sinning with Potiphar’s wife.” (The Midrash Says-Benei Yakov Publications –Beraishis pg. 393)

Even though she lived in a house of idols sitting in the home of her adoptive parents (Ibid pg. 373). All of these years, Osnas has patiently waited connecting to the G-d of her ancestors. As she becomes the wife of Yosef, the viceroy of Egypt, this unsung heroine has no need for using her position for outer acclaim. Osnas, in spite of being raised as the daughter of aristocracy and wealth, becomes a young woman excelling in introverted refinement. Despite all of her suffering, she emerges to build as a tent of the matriarchs within her “marvelous palace whose construction took three years” (Ibid pg 392) and closes the doors of her home. She rises confidently giving *kovod* (honor) to her husband.

“Rabbi Hirsch points out that, despite her upbringing, Asenath raises her children in the spirit of her husband” (Munk- Mikeitz pg 553). As “The wise among women, each (she) builds her house” (Pro. 14:1) ... in spite of all of her upbringing deficiencies she realizes and seizes the most treasured opportunity to build a precious Jewish home!

Yosef and Osnas became the ultimate Jewish couple of leadership for all who would make a home in *galus*!

As Yosef will later greet his brothers and say to them that they shouldn’t be angry because it was Hashem who brought him down to Egypt, Osnas too was hand-picked to go ahead of her family, as maybe you also were. We don’t find that she spent her days looking back— stuck in the mud. In the one of last glimpses we get of her greatness, we hear of her telling Yosef, “Take our sons to Zadie Yaakov to get a *bracha* (blessing), for getting a *bracha* from him is like getting a *bracha* from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Himself!” {Ibid pg 441} Lesser ones than her would have spent a lifetime blaming her Zadie for sending her away.

Osnas was chosen for a special mission...there was something very supernatural about not only her survival but also her protection and how seemingly all alone she climbs to toward the peak of greatness. She is *zochah* (merits) to raise two of the most refined sons who become tribes —pillars in the house of Israel!

To all of us solitary souls who staggered uncomprehendingly through the jungles of the world— the path of light obscured -- we can be re-inspired by this little Jewish child who in spite of her ignoble lonely beginning becomes totally connected; the ultimate torch-bearer, an epitome of an embodiment of a Jewish wife and mother par excellence!

Liorachai

"I come from a family of believers. They believe in one G-d. So as I was making my journey my Mother said, "Well I guess you know if you get married in a synagogue— I'm not coming to your wedding!"

I replied, "Well I guess you won't see your grandchildren then."

Later she came around somewhat saying, "I don't know why you would want so many rules but as long as you believe in One G-d I respect your decision."

Some people are subtle in their new changes they are making...I was not. I was very big on making my boundaries known and being very firm.

And my parents caught on...

For me the biggest thing was letting my family know that I still wanted to connect in every way possible.

I acknowledged my parents were good people they raised me to be a good person and believe in one G-d. As they gave us a life of helping people giving *tzedakah* and teaching us *chessed* when we were little.

With those healthy happy values and wanting a connection with my family I just needed to redefine how to interact. I work with my family when we want to have get-to-gathers. (Where there's a will there's a way.) Sometimes I'll use our kosher barbeque outside—we can sit outside together as birthdays we don't do their religious holidays.

Now twenty years later... My Mother has glass plates for us, reads the hechshers, orders from Costco—its hysterical how much she knows and has accumulated in our homes for us. She has accommodated us we see a progression but it only came because I created boundaries."

* * *

Rebb. Esther Hochstadter

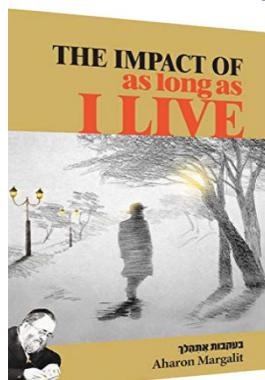
"You don't always have to throw the baby out with the bathwater." To accomplish such a relationship that Liora has achieved you have to know...

- 1) It takes time.
- 2) You have to have your bottom line.
- 3) You can always share goodness & kindness!"

Aharon Margalit

THE IMPACT OF
as long as
I LIVE

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Sharing stories of people who dropped the excuses and said "I can".

Also it is said his sequel to this, "Is even better!" The title is the same. It just says 2 next to it and the cover background is red.

Available from Feldheim & Amazon

Once, when he was visiting the home of Rabi David Abuchatzzeira shlita in Nahariya, he said to him, "Reb Aharon, your book does more for people than 20,000 of my derashot!"

"Never to Late"

Read the story of Yehuda who spent his life beaten and bruised. Without family or friends a tall husky man but whose shoulders were bent from the heavy loads of bitterness and criticism he carried with him at all times. As Reb Margalit met with him on numerous occasions he spewed his overflowing bundles of negativity, which took endless patience and required the thickest of skins.

He complained endlessly about his six older brothers who had raised him after his Mother & Father died as inhuman monsters... He many times greeted Reb Margalit with the nickname he'd coined for him, "The Clown from Kiryat David".

As Yehuda lies on his death bed, Reb Aaron Margalit, reunites this loner with all of his six brothers as gift to his parents he will soon see in Shomayim! Not only do they overcome the broken bridges of the past but with tears and every gift of *chessed* they can think of coming to a never before state of an ultimate steel bonding of seven brothers!

Twist endings, for seemingly dead end situations...only one of Hashem's giants, such as Reb Aaron can achieve!

In *Parashat P'kudei*, the *Mishkan* is built. No, it's not a permanent home; you haven't reached that goal yet. But here, in the middle of this vast, terrible wasteland, where you walk for days on end without knowing what's next or why, and עֲנַן עֲדָמָה pillar of cloud – a cloud of fear looms overhead at night. Flashes of fire appear above during daylight⁶, but then the *Humash* ends with: you have a home. That's nothing less than redemption.⁷

Just this week I realized that 5782, ב"תשפ, stands for Homes Here! Be happy – פה בית – תהיי שמחה.

So once Adar enters, step outside your home and stand in the doorway. Say to yourself, – מִשֶׁנִּכְנַסְתָּ אֶדְרֹמֶיךָ בְּיַבֹּשֶׁת – "increase joy. I have a home to enter."

It's true that each of us has her own pain; this child (whether or not we have one); this marriage (whether or not we have one). Still, you have a home, hot water, food, relative security – and there's no greater joy.

The Rothschild family, my late father's family, hosted a hundred war refugees during the *Shoah*. His whole life he'd walk around on this land, in Y'rushalayim, and wouldn't stop saying, "You have no idea what it means that we have a safe place to be, that we have a home." He never stopped thanking and praising. That itself is enough for joy.

Adar Bet – Adar Bayit. May it be Hashem's will that this Rosh Chodesh brings good news and the true home, the third Bayit. That's it – Redemption.

6 Cf. Sh'mot 13:21. gain us let us gain strength! And! strong Be! strong Be – זָקַקְנוּ זָקַקְנוּ זָקַקְנוּ Translated by Rav David Swidler

7 From the Ramban's introduction to his commentary on the book of Sh'mot.

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<http://www.RabbanitYemima.com>

**UPDATE - MOTZEI SHABBOS March 5TH
10:00pm EST 5:00am Ukraine**



On Friday night we got another 53 people over the border at costs well in excess of over \$100,000.

On Shabbos we got over 5 additional buses thru the border. 3 from Kiev, 1 from Odessa & 1 from Lviv at costs of nearly half a million dollars!

We are working on evacuating an additional 300 people tomorrow from Kharkiv which is one of the most dangerous places in the country. Sundays rescue efforts will cost us astronomical sums!

At the same time, people keep arriving at the border on their own & we are helping them get over.



In addition to efforts and logistics inside Ukraine, we have a team of people working on the other side, finding more hotels, more buses & cars to help the influx of people who are constantly coming through the border.

Motzei Shabbos - Update directly from Rabbi Moshe Fhima: Reb Moshe Fhima, was working right through Shabbos once again saving over 350 desperate Yidden from certain danger. This was NOT chillul shabbos - Real Pikuach Nefesh - Saving Lives!!

To date, thanks to your generosity close to 2500 Yidden have made it out ALIVE Many more are desperate to be saved. Please continue to generously support our Jewish Rescue Missions by clicking here on the link

thechesedfund.com/kiev/kievement...



Esther Hamalka's Fruitcake

Can make a week before Purim!

Ingredients:

3 1/2 cups of flour

2 t. salt

1 t. baking powder

1/2 t. cloves

1/2 nutmeg

1/2 cinnamon

Or 1 t. of all three

1 1/2 cups sugar (or brown)

1/4 cup dark molasses (or corn syrup)

1/2 cup orange juice or (1 cup applesauce)

1/2 cup oil

1/4 cup liquor (brandy, rum, red wine...)

4-5 eggs

Whole or chopped: 2 cups shelled nuts and 6 cups dried fruit.

Directions: Preheat oven to 275°. Mix all ingredients to make batter. Fold in nuts & fruit. Line 2 - 8x4 loaf pans with baking sheets, smaller pans, or cupcake holders, if you are making for *Shalach Manos*. Bake at 275°F (low heat for 2 1/2 hours) until test done. To prevent excessive darkening cover with foil. Cool on racks. Leave baking paper on or wrap in cheese cloth. Double wrap with foil (over paper or cheesecloth) Encase in plastic bags when cool. Store in a a cool dry place.

Don't unwrap until ready!

If you prefer...

Light Fruitcake-

Use the light colored ingredients as white sugar, golden raisins, apricots almonds, etc.

Dark Fruitcake-

Use whole wheat flour, molasses, brown sugar and darker-colored fruits.

IT'S PIKUACH NEFESH!

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Chief Rabbi of Lvov

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Yavne'el

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Rabbi Chaim Coffman
Mon. & Wed. 5:00

Reb Yosef Blalock Rabbi Chaim Coffman
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projectgalilee@gmail.com rabbichaimcoffman@gmail.com

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- 2) In next world- Eternal Youthfulness!

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer ch.48
Rabbi Ellie Munk -The Call of The Torah
Shemos- Vayakel-pg. 510

"Homecoming"!

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International Purim Shiur

Rebb. Esther Hochstadter

This Upcoming Wednesday-
Mar 9th/ 6 Adar II

North America 1:30
Israel 8:30pm
Europe 7:30pm
Portugal 6:30

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8033355130>

Password: holyland

Weekly Goals for These Upcoming Weeks--

5 Adar II
7
8 Mar/ Apr
2 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Shabbos
					Rosh Chodesh Adar II Mar 4	Shabbos 1 Pekudei Mar 5
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Mar 6	Mar 7	Mar 8	Mar 9	Mar 10	Mar 11	Mar 12 Vayikra
10	11	12	13 Taanis Esther/ Fast of Esther	14 Purim	15 Purim	16 Shabbos Tzav Mar 19
Mar 13	Mar 14	Mar 15	Mar 16	Mar 17	Mar 18	Mar 19
17	18	19	20	21	22	23 Shabbos Shemini Mar 26
Mar 20	Mar 21	Mar 22	Mar 23	Mar 24	Mar 25	Mar 26
24	25	26	27	28	29	
Mar 27	Mar 28	Mar 29	Mar 30	Mar 31	Apr 1	

5 Nissan
7
8 Apr/ May
2 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Shabbos
						Shabbos 1 Tazria Rosh Chodesh Nissan Apr 2
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 Shabbos Metzora Apr 9
Apr 3	Apr 4	Apr 5	Apr 6	Apr 7	Apr 8	Apr 9
9	10	11	12	13	14 Erev Pesach Seder Tonight	15 Shabbos Pesach Apr 16
Apr 10	Apr 11	Apr 12	Apr 13	Apr 14	Apr 15	Apr 16
16 Pesach	17 Pesach	18 Pesach	19 Pesach	20 Pesach	21 Pesach	22 Shabbos Acharei Apr 23
Apr 17	Apr 18	Apr 19	Apr 20	Apr 21	Apr 22	Apr 23
23	24	25	26	27	28	29 Shabbos Kedoshim Apr 30
Apr 24	Apr 25	Apr 26	Apr 27	Apr 28	Apr 29	Apr 30
Rosh Chodesh Iyar May 1						

