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IS THIS REALLY A TIME FOR HAPPINESS?

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

“**Z**man *Simchateinu* – The Time of Our Happiness” is the way we describe the Festival of Succot in our holiday prayers.

Does the present condition of our post-9/11 world, threatened by international terror and by nuclear weapons development by the surviving members of the “axis of evil”, really make this a time for happiness?

The answer, of course, lies in how we define happiness.

If happiness is only the gratification of physical appetites, then it is indeed difficult to be truly happy when the consistency of such gratification is threatened by the suicidal terrorist and the weapons of mass destruction in rogue states.

If the only synonyms for happiness in our vocabulary are “fun”, “thrills” and “pleasure” then such joy is certainly overshadowed in human life by illness, grief and poverty.

What then is true happiness?

This is the question raised by the wisest of man, King Solomon, in his Divinely inspired *Kohelet* which we publicly read in the synagogue during this Succot “Time of Happiness”. The answer is alluded to in the “bottom line” with which he concludes this monumental investigation of the meaning of life. In it he urges us to “fear G-d and observe His commandments for that is what man is all about”.

Happiness, this wise man is telling us, consists of enjoyment of the greatest pleasure and can only be attained through fear and service of the Creator. Here is how the great ethicist Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto expresses it in his classical *Mesillat Yesharim* (Path of the Just):

“Our Sages of blessed memory have taught us that man was created for the sole purpose of rejoicing in G-d

and deriving pleasure from the splendor of His Presence — for this is true joy and the greatest pleasure that is possible. The place where this joy may truly be derived is the World to Come, which was expressly created to provide for it. But the path to this destination of our desires is this world... Therefore man was placed in this world first — so that by these means which were provided for him here (the *mitzvot* which G-d commanded) he would be able to reach the place which had been prepared for him — the World to Come — there to be sated with the goodness which he acquired through them.”

Happiness in its fullest sense is attainable only in the hereafter, where there are no limitations of time or opportunity. Happiness here on earth is the knowledge that one is involved in preparing for that goal.

In His great kindness G-d has given us opportunities for happiness in material terms. The joyful harvest which took place in agricultural society at Succot time is representative of the kind of happiness which Heaven has granted us in this world as a small foretaste of the real thing. But there is perhaps a deeper meaning to singling out the harvest happiness as the “Time of Our Happiness”. Man rejoices in the harvest because he sees the fruit of his labors. This reminds him that one important dimension of the happiness he will enjoy in the eternal harvest of the World to Come is the knowledge that he earned that happiness through his efforts in this world and is not receiving a simple handout. Just as we were instructed to do *mitzvot* on Succot with agricultural products such as the Four Species and the covering of our Succah so that our harvest happiness will be channeled towards the service of G-d, so too should our reflection on this earthly “Time of Happiness” lead us to directing our lives towards the ultimate Time of Happiness which will last forever.

IT'S MY PARTY!

“The Rock – perfect is His work... righteous and fair is He.” (32:4)

Last year was a difficult year for the Jewish People. May it be His will that the one that has just commenced will be easier for us! The following might help to put the events of the past year in their true perspective.

Once there was a rich man whose son fell ill with a bizarre and unknown malady. Try as they might, none of the doctors could fathom the boy's deepening sickness. In desperation, the rich man sent for a world-famous professor to check his son. The professor arrived and immediately set to work. He diagnosed a rare dietary sensitivity that precluded the son from ever eating meat. Such was the sensitivity of the son to meat, that to consume even a small amount could jeopardize his life. (No, this is not an advertisement for vegetarianism, it's a mashal, a parable. If you hadn't guessed...)

Slowly the boy's condition improved, and eventually he was cured. Accompanied by profuse thanks — and a large check — the professor returned to his ivory tower. Not long after, the rich man went abroad on business. Before he left, however, he gave strict instructions to his household that his son was to be given no meat whatsoever.

A week passed, then two. One day, the son was passing the dining room. A delectable smell of roast beef wafted up from the table and played around his nostrils. The warning of the professor started to evaporate in the aroma of the roast beef, and, unable to resist, he peeked around the door. Seeing that no one was there, he made his way furtively to the table, wrapped up a large slice of juicy beef in a napkin, placed it pocket and whistling nonchalantly, he sidled from the room. Once outside, he devoured the beef with relish.

Needless to say, before you could say, “I told you so,” he was prostrate on his bed in a total relapse. The rich man was summoned from abroad and he returned to find his son hovering between life and death. He begged the professor to try and save his son. On the spot, he promised him that never again would he venture abroad on business, that he himself would be the constant guardian of his son's health. Under these terms, the professor agreed to return once more and do what he could for the boy.

With enormous care and diligence on the part of the professor, the boy slowly returned to health.

The father decided to make a large meal to celebrate his son's recovery. He invited all of his family and friends and rented a suite at the finest hotel. On the night of the meal, his son arrived at the party beaming from ear to ear. All the guests were seated at the tables in deep communion with their main course. The father arose, and as his son was making his way to his place, the father told him to leave the hall immediately. The clink of china and cut glass gave way to an embarrassed hush. In spite of the son's requests to be allowed to stay, the father was adamant and the son left the hall. Slowly, the conversation resumed. And of course, the topic was the bizarre behavior of this cruel father.

Only the father knew the reason for his actions.

Similarly the Master of the World “runs” His creation. Sometimes He expels the most righteous people first from this earthly dining room. However, it is always for their own good. And if we, the guests, fail to understand His conduct, we must know with total clarity that it is always for their good.

For “righteous and fair is He”.

• Based on the Chafetz Chaim

PARSHA OVERVIEW

HA'AZINU

Almost all of Ha'azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons the heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation — that Hashem “pulls the strings” of world events so that *Bnei Yisrael* can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world. Hashem's kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance and for defeating their enemies. But this physical bounty leads the people to become over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty idols and powerless gods and indulge in all kinds of

depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental — that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were His own enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

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HOUSE AND TENT

The longest period of the Sanctuary location before the construction of the *Beit Hamikdash* in *Yerushalayim* was the 369-year era of the Mishkan in Shiloh.

Rabbi Yochanan called attention to the apparent conflict in the descriptions found in our sacred sources regarding this Sanctuary. When Chana brought her son Shmuel to Shiloh in fulfillment of her vow to dedicate her long-awaited child to the service of G-d in His Sanctuary we are told “she brought him to the house of G-d” (*Shmuel I 1:24*). But when King David speaks of the destruction of the Mishkan in Shiloh he describes it in two passages as a tent (*Tehillim 78:60, 67*).

The resolution provided by this Sage is that the Shiloh sanctuary had both the feature of a house and that of a tent. In contrast to the gold-covered boards that formed the walls of the Mishkan in the wilderness and the first fourteen years in Eretz Yisrael, the walls in Shiloh were made of stone. Its ceiling, however, remained the same as its predecessor with its tapestries and skins. The stone walls thus gave it the nature of a house, while its covering still endowed with a resemblance to a tent.

Maharsha points out that the first passage, which deals with Shiloh in its glory, describes it as a house, which symbolizes stability. The passages that describe its destruction, on the other hand, describe it as a tent, which symbolizes a temporary dwelling.

This blend of permanence and transience may also explain why the Torah describes Shiloh as “the resting place” and the *Beit Hamikdash* in *Yerushalayim* as “the inheritance” (*Devarim 12:9*). Shiloh was constructed when Jews finally rested from their conquest of the land and its division. This sanctuary enjoyed a degree of “house” permanence – 369 years – but was only a “tent” in preparation for the permanence of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

• *Zevachim 118a*

NIGHT & DAY OF THE PRIVATE ALTAR

Following their military victory over the Philistines the Israelites under the command of King Shaul seized the animals of their vanquished enemies, consecrated them as *shelamim* sacrifices and slaughtered them. When the king was informed that the people, in their haste, were eating the flesh of these sacrifices before their blood was applied to an altar he reprimanded them:

“And he said you have been unfaithful. Roll over to me this

very day a large rock” (*Shmuel I 14:33*).

The purpose of the rock was to serve as an altar upon which the sacrificial blood could be applied and render the flesh permissible for consumption. This took place after the destruction of the Mishkan in Shiloh, when it was permissible to offer sacrifices on private altars anywhere, even though the large communal altar was in Nov.

Shaul’s insistence that his people prepare an altar for sacrificial service to take place while it was still day seems to contradict what is reported in the very next passage that “all the people brought forward their oxen at night and slaughtered them there” (*ibid. 14:34*). This apparent contradiction posed by Rabbi Elazar is resolved in two different ways, leading to conflicting halachic conclusions.

The approach of the Sage Shmuel is that the passage reporting the slaughtering of the animals at night refers to those animals which were not consecrated as sacrifices and therefore there was no restriction when to slaughter them. Those animals that were consecrated as sacrifices, however, had to be slaughtered during the day like all sacrifices even though this service was being performed on a private altar.

The Sage Rav, however, explains that all the animals mentioned in these passages were consecrated as sacrifices. Those that had been consecrated to be offered on the large communal altar had to be slaughtered only during the day even if offered on a private altar. But those that were originally intended for offering on a private altar had no such restriction and could be slaughtered even at night.

In summation, states the *gemara*, Rav permits the slaughtering of a sacrifice at night on a private altar and Shmuel forbids it.

• *Zevachim 120a*

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1. Why were heaven and earth specifically chosen as witnesses?
2. How is the Torah like rain?
3. How is Hashem "faithful without injustice"?
4. Why is Hashem called "tzaddik"?
5. How many major floods did Hashem bring upon the world?
6. What group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example.
7. Why did Hashem separate the world's nations into exactly 70?
8. Why is the merit of the Jewish People's ancestry called a "rope"?
9. How is Hashem's behavior toward the Jewish People like an eagle's behavior toward its offspring?
10. Regarding the Jewish People's punishment, Hashem says "I will spend my arrows on them." What is the positive aspect of this phrase?
11. How does the idea of "chillul Hashem" prevent the nations from destroying the Jewish People?
12. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Jewish People?
13. When Hashem overturns a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
14. When Hashem punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment?
15. How will Hashem's punishment change the way the nations view the Jewish People?
16. On what day was *Ha'azinu* taught to the Jewish People?
17. Verse 32:44 calls Yehoshua "Hoshea." Why?
18. In verse 32:47, what does "it is not empty from you" mean?
19. Why did Hashem tell Moshe that he would die a similar death to that of Aharon?
20. If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Jewish People have learned?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Ha'azinu's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 32:1 - They endure forever.
2. 32:2 - The Torah gives life and promotes growth like rain.
3. 32:4 - He is "faithful" by rewarding the righteous, and "without injustice" by rewarding even the wicked for any good deeds.
4. 32:4 - All will agree that His judgments are righteous.
5. 32:7 - Two. One in the time of Adam's grandson Enosh and one in the time of Noach.
6. 32:7 - The Prophets. Elisha called the Prophet Eliyahu "My Father." (*Melachim II 2:12*)
7. 32:8 - To correspond to the 70 *Bnei Yisrael* who entered Egypt.
8. 32:9 - Their merit is "woven from" the merits of the *Avot*.
9. 32:12 - He mercifully wakes them gently, hovering over them, and carrying them on His "wings."
10. 32:23 - "The arrows will be spent" implies that the afflictions will cease but the Jewish People will not.
11. 32:27 - The nations would attribute their success to their might and the might of their gods. Hashem would not let His name be desecrated like this.
12. 32:35 - They will eventually be punished.
13. 32:41 - His attribute of Justice.
14. 32:42 - For their sins and the sins of their ancestors.
15. 32:43 - They will view the Jewish People as praiseworthy for cleaving to Hashem.
16. 32:44 - The Shabbat upon which Moshe died.
17. 32:44 - To indicate that although he was the Jewish People's leader, he still maintained a humble bearing.
18. 32:47 - That you will receive reward for studying Torah and that there is nothing meaningless in the Torah.
19. 32:50 - Because Moshe wanted this.
20. 32:51 - The Jewish People would have reasoned as follows: If a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, obeys Hashem's commands, all the more so should we.

THE UNFIT CANDIDATE

An animal can be offered as a sacrifice only if it is permissible food for Jews. A source for this rule is a passage in the prophecy of Yechezkel that speaks of the contribution that will be given by the nation to the *nasi* – *Mashiach* – as a sacrifice to inaugurate the third *Beit Hamikdash*.

“One lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the *mashkeh* of Israel” (*Yechezkel 45:15*).

While the literal translation of “*mashkeh*” indicates that the animal should be of the choicest quality, our Sages interpreted it as referring to what is suitable for the meal of the people of Israel, i.e. permissible for them to eat. This rules out a *treifa*, an animal suffering from a terminal condition that is forbidden as food.

The question arises, however, why it is necessary to draw upon this source when we already have another one. In commanding Jews to tithe their herds and flocks and offer the tenth one as a sacrifice the Torah describes these tithed animals as “whatever passes under the rod” (*Vayikra 27:32*). Since the *treifa* cannot wholesomely pass under the rod that is carrying out the tithing, it is eliminated as a candidate for sacrifice.

The *gemara*’s resolution is that both sources are necessary to rule out the *treifa* as a sacrifice. The passage in Yechezkel which mentions the figure of two hundred is interpreted as hinting at the rule that if a forbidden ingredient such as the wine from grapes that grew in the first three years of their vines (*orlah*) fall into kosher wine to be used for a libation on the altar it is eliminated as a problem if there is 200 times as much of the kosher substance. Since one part of this passage deals with *orlah* which never had a status of being permissible we must assume that the *treifa* ruled out as a sacrifice is also one who was born with that defect and was never eligible to serve as a sacrifice. It is therefore necessary to have the second source to teach us that even if it became a *treifa* at a later stage and was once eligible it is ruled out as a sacrifice once it becomes a *treifa* which cannot “pass under the rod”.

• *Menachot 6a*

ALL OR ANY?

When a *mincha* flour offering was brought in the *Beit Hamikdash* the Torah commanded the *kohen* performing the service to take a three-finger full *kometz* mixed with oil “and all the *levona* incense which is on the *mincha*” and place it on the altar to be burned” (*Vayikra 6:8*).

There are a couple of issues raised by the need to include *levona* in this offering.

First of all there is the practical problem of properly performing the act of *kemitza* – removal of the *kometz* – while there is *levona* incense on top of the flour batch. The *Mishna* (*Menachot 6a*) states that if even a grain of the *levona* was gathered up with the flour in the *kometz* it is disqualified because it is not an absolutely full measure. If so, how was it possible to make *kemitza* and avoid *levona* getting in the way?

Rashi solves this problem (*ibid. 11a*) by pointing out that the *levona* was all pushed to one side of the vessel containing the flour so that an unobstructed *kemitza* could be performed in the middle of it.

The other issue is how much of the *levona* must still be around when it is placed on the altar together with the *kometz*. There are three different opinions on this point, all of them based on varying interpretations of the above-mentioned passage.

Rabbi Meir sees in the Torah’s phrasing regarding “all the *levona* which is on the *mincha*” an absolute need for all of the *levona* to remain when offered on the altar, the same quantity which it had when it was first placed on the *mincha* – a full *kometz* of incense. Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Shimon, however, interpret the word “*kol*” in that passage not as *all* but rather as *any*, indicating that even if most of the *levona* is not around, the barest remainder is sufficient. They only disagree as to whether we read into the word “*ess*”, which we literally translate as “*and*”, a message to require more than the absolute minimum of one grain of *levona*. Rabbi Yehuda sees this “*ess*” as adding one more grain to the minimum level of “*kol*” and therefore requires a remainder of two grains, while Rabbi Shimon maintains that even one grain is enough.

• *Menachot 11b*

THE THANKSGIVING LOAVES

When a Jew offered a *todah* thanksgiving sacrifice to G-d he was required to offer forty *challot* along with the animal, thirty of them consisting of three varieties of unleavened loaves and ten of them leavened. One of each ten *challot* went to the *kohen* performing the sacrificial service and the rest by the person bringing the sacrifices along with the flesh of the sacrificed animal.

What is the relationship between the animal itself and the *challot* accompanying it?

First of all, the moment the animal is slaughtered the *challot* acquire a sacred status and may be consumed only within the time and space limitation assigned to the flesh of the animal — a day and night within the walls of Yerushalayim.

This is another aspect of the relationship between the *todah* sacrifice and the *challot* arising out of a nuance in a Torah passage. Should the *kohen* performing the sacrificial service intend, while performing one of its critical functions, that the flesh of the animal will be eaten on the following day rather than within the time limitation of a day and night stipulated by the Torah, he renders the flesh of that sacrifice *pigul*. Anyone subsequently consuming that flesh, even on the day that the sacrifice was offered, is guilty of a sin punishable by extirpation.

The improper intention which disqualifies the flesh by making it *pigul* also affects the *challot* even if no such intention related to them. This, explains Rabbi Kahana, is because the Torah refers to the *challot* as being an integral part of the *todah* sacrifice. Rather than instruct that the *challot* should be offered with the sacrifice the passage inversely states “he shall offer with the *todah* sacrifice *challot*” (*Vayikra* 7:12). This is a signal that the *challot* themselves are called *todah* and therefore share the same fate as the flesh of the sacrifice if an improper intention renders it *pigul*.

• *Menachot* 15a

WHO CAN BE A SHOCHET?

Although there are four critical functions in the sacrificial service which can determine the status of the sacrifice not all of them must be performed by a *kohen*. If the performer of the slaughtering, receiving of the blood,

transporting it or applying it to the altar had an improper intention while carrying out his role, he can disqualify the sacrifice in one of the degrees discussed in this *mesechta* and *Mesechta Zevachim*.

While the three functions beginning with the receiving of the blood in a sacred vessel must be performed by a *kohen*, the *shechita* slaughtering process may be performed by any Jew. Three sources are offered for this exception.

The first is the passage describing the offering of an *olah* sacrifice in which mention is made of the *shechita* of the animal followed by the requirement that “the *kohanim*, the sons of Aaron, will receive and apply the blood to the altar” (*Vayikra* 1:5). This is viewed as an indication that the role of the *kohen* begins only with the receiving of the blood, and that the *shechita* preceding that function may be performed by anyone.

Another signal comes from the proximity of that passage discussing *shechita* to the preceding passage requiring the owner of the animal being sacrificed to place his hands on its head before it is slaughtered in order to achieve his desired atonement (*ibid.* 1:4). The equation born of proximity leads us to the conclusion that just as any Jew can perform this function if he is the owner of the animal, so can any Jew also be the one performing the *shechita*.

A final source is found in the Torah instruction to the *Kohen Gadol* regarding the Yom Kippur service in the *Beit Hamikdash*. Moshe was told that Aaron must bring to this service a bullock of his own and that “he must slaughter the bullock sin offering belonging to him” (*Vayikra* 16:11). The insistence on the *kohen* doing the *shechita* in this case is an indication that in regard to all other sacrifices there is no need for a *kohen* and that every Jew is eligible to perform it.

• *Menachot* 19a

The Weekly Daf

by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

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A TESHUVA STORY

From: A. M. in Houston. TX

Dear Rabbi,

I hope you had a lovely Rosh Hashana. I was inspired by the services at my friend's synagogue during the holiday. My request now might be a bit unusual, but would you mind sharing a nice teshuva story to send me. Thanks and have a great year!

Dear A. M.,

I hope you like the following story told by a colleague of mine:

A few weeks ago I was approached by a friend of mine who is a teacher in Yeshivat Ohr Somayach's advanced Center program, and his was a pretty straightforward request.

"Eli, would you mind having two guys from the Center over for a meal on Shabbat?"

I cleared the request with my wife, and we settled on Shabbat lunch. Like many local English-speaking families, we have Shabbat guests on a pretty regular basis. On Shabbat morning, when the boys showed up before I arrived home from shul, my wife greeted them and went into the kitchen to prepare the meal, leaving the guests to entertain themselves until I returned.

Perhaps ten minutes after the guests arrived I came home from shul, and we made introductions all around. It turned out they were both named Daniel, which gave us an opening topic for conversation, and then we settled down to eat.

In the course of the conversation, one of the young men, a pleasant twenty-four-year-old named Daniel Lubin, told me his story. He had visited Israel once as a teenager, and though he had a nice time touring the country, he did not look for, nor find, any kind of religious experience. When he was twenty-one, he returned to Israel for another visit, again looking for nothing more than a good time.

After several weeks of picking bananas on a kibbutz and some time touring up north, Daniel decided to spend his last weekend in Jerusalem. He would go to the Western Wall on Friday night and drive down to the Dead Sea on Saturday morning.

He spent his time at the Wall observing the black-hatted Jews praying and un-hatted tourists snapping pictures. After a short time, having nothing more to see, he turned to leave.

He never made it.

Meir Schuster intercepted him. "Do you have anywhere to eat tonight? Would you like to experience a real Shabbat meal?"

Daniel was slightly taken aback, but with nothing more

exciting than a slice of pizza on the agenda, he decided to go along with the offer.

At worst, it would be an interesting story to tell his friends when he got back to the States. And if the food was really terrible, he could always get that slice of pizza later.

Schuster hooked him up with another young man, a hulking Australian bartender traveling around the world, and off they went to experience their first taste of gefilte fish.

"Well," Daniel said to me, "that meal changed my life. I had the most incredible time, the food was great, the conversation was really stimulating, and the singing was beautiful. It lasted until one in the morning, and I knew right then that I had to check out this religion business. I had never felt anything was missing, but now I saw how much more there could be to life."

The next morning Daniel went on his trip to the Dead Sea, and with only twenty-four hours remaining in his visit to Israel, he crammed in a few lectures on Torah and Judaism before flying home Sunday evening.

But something had changed.

Although Daniel had returned to America and his college life, now he felt something was missing. He couldn't forget his incredible experience at that Shabbat table in Jerusalem. As soon as he was able, he sought the local Orthodox community for resources that could help him learn more about his heritage. He was thrilled when he found several knowledgeable and dedicated rabbis who could help him explore his roots.

Under their expert tutelage, Daniel found new vistas opening before him, and he took to it like a fish to water. It wasn't long before he became fully observant and was experiencing for himself the thrill of studying in-depth Torah and living as a Torah-true Jew. Daniel longed to attend a yeshiva and study Torah full-time, but he felt it would be prudent to finish college first.

Finally, having obtained his diploma, Daniel was back in Israel, the place where his adventure had begun three years before, and the circle was now complete.

Almost.

I had listened to the tale with interest and admiration, and now that he had finished, I had only one comment.

I said, "I didn't know Meir Schuster had people over to his own house for meals. I thought he usually sent them to other families. It's interesting that you had the good luck to eat in Schuster's own home."

Daniel said, "No, you misunderstood. I didn't eat with Schuster. He sent me to an American family for the meal."

"Oh, I see. Do you happen to remember who it was?"

"Yes, I do," said Daniel.

"Really? What is their name? I wonder if I know them."

Instead of answering, Daniel pointed at the table.

continued on page eight

I looked at him in puzzlement. “What do you mean? Was it someone in this building?” He nodded.

I started to list the names of my American neighbors.

He shook his head and said, “No, it was in this apartment.”

I said, “Really? What a coincidence. Who lived in this apartment three years ago?”

Daniel just smiled.

Well, slow I may be, but finally I caught on. We had been living in this apartment for almost seven years.

“You mean you ate here?”

Daniel nodded.

“Here, with us?”

“Yep!”

“You mean you knew all along? You set up this meal?”

“That’s right. I’ve been wanting to return here for the past three years. And that’s why I bought you this little gift. I remembered that we made a l’chaim, and you didn’t have shot glasses, so I bought you this decanter set to say thank you for the meal and, well, for everything!”

Now the circle really was complete.

For the first time in a very long while, I was truly speechless. But, to be honest, there was no need for speeches. I just sat there and soaked it in, stunned and happy that I, and my family, had made such a difference in another Jew’s life. And with such a small effort.

And that is the real reason I am telling you this story. Not to boast about our wonderful Shabbat meals; if there’s anything wonderful about them, the credit goes to my wife, not me. And not just to share an entertaining story either.

I tell you this story because it shows how each and every

one of us, professional kiruv worker or not, has the ability to utterly change the world. And it does not require tremendous exertion either, but a minimum of effort. How difficult is it to have a guest over on Shabbat and drink a l’chaim together?

And if we have the ability to change another Jew’s life, then we have the obligation to do so.

That is the point of the story and the primary purpose of this book to show the “average” frum Jew that what he is, and the way he lives, are all he needs to spread the word of Hashem. It needn’t be through a brilliant Torah lecture or a subtle deconstruction of Darwin’s theory of evolution.

It could be a Shabbat meal or a kind word. It could be an act of integrity or a helping hand. That is all we really need to make a kiddush Hashem.

The most amazing thing about this is that we may never know the results of a seemingly insignificant action. Had Daniel Lubin not made a point of returning to our house, we would probably never have known what we had helped achieve, and we would never have gotten the chizuk and the boost that we did.

I had always claimed that one does not need to be a great scholar nor a trained kiruv expert to make someone frum. Thanks to Daniel Lubin and a “chance” encounter, now I have the proof that this is true.

Source:

The above is an excerpt from the newly-published book “The Kiruv Files” published by Targum Press (www.targum.com) For more information about the book check out:

<http://www.jemsem.org/Templates/golden/kiruvfiles.html>

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

A SLEEP THIEF

Question: I share an apartment with some other single fellows and we have different schedules regarding going to sleep both because of our varying jobs and sleep habits. I sometimes make noise when I arrive late and am scolded by one of my apartment-mates for being a “thief” although I don’t recall ever taking anything from him. What should my reaction be to such an accusation?

Answer: “Thou shalt not steal” is not limited to money or property. An employee paid by the hour who loafs on the job is guilty of stealing time from his employer. This prohibition also applies to one who deprives another of sleep. There is justification, therefore, for your being labeled a

thief if you fail to show consideration for your apartment-mate’s need for sleep.

I am sure, however, that you are not intentionally committing this robbery of sleep but that you consider the noise you make an unavoidable inconvenience. Experience has shown, however, that problems such as the one you describe have always found solutions such as rearrangement of beds for compatible neighbors or agreed upon curfews. But in order to seek such solutions one must first be sensitive to the fact that disturbing another’s sleep — even involuntarily — is theft, and no decent person would pick someone else’s pocket, even involuntarily.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

On the occasion of the first Yahrzeit of his mother, a renowned Torah scholar in Jerusalem, American-born Rabbi Yisroel Berle, published a distinguished commentary on prayer. In his introduction he includes the following story about his mother:

More than half a century ago U.S. President Harry S. Truman decided to give a series of weekly radio talks to the nation in imitation of the famed "fireside chats" of his predecessor. The time chosen was Friday evening. Fearful that some Jews would be so anxious to hear the President that

they would put aside observance of Shabbat in order to do so, Mrs. Berle dashed off a letter to the President calling his attention to the fact that Jewish Sabbath observers would be denied the privilege of hearing him if the broadcast were on the Sabbath eve.

Her efforts were rewarded with success. A letter from the President's secretary informed her that her letter was being given serious attention. Ten days later an announcement was made that the President's talks would be switched from Friday night to Tuesday.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

YAAKOV – A FAIR DIVISION

When the Patriarch Yitzchak passed away he left all his possessions to his two sons, Yaakov and Eisav. Let us divide everything our father left us into two parts, proposed Eisav, and I will exercise my privilege as firstborn to choose the portion I favor.

What did Yaakov do? He took all of the wealth that they had inherited from their father and made that one



portion. The other portion was Eretz Yisrael. Eisav, of course, chose the wealth while Yaakov happily took Eretz Yisrael with the Machpela Cave in it. This division was duly recorded and it was this document for which the sons of Yaakov sent a messenger to Egypt when Eisav challenged their right to bury their father in that patriarchal burial cave.

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ESCAPING THE TRAP

The Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called “Shabbat Shuvah” because the Haftara, which is read on the Shabbat between the inscribing and the sealing of Divine judgment begins with the words “Shuvah Yisrael”.

On his call upon the People of Israel to repent their ways and return to G-d and His Torah, the Prophet Hosea offers a challenging and encouraging message in the very first sentence of this Haftara. “Return, Israel, to G-d,” he calls, “for you have been trapped by your sins.”

How relevant that call is to our current situation in Israel can be appreciated by taking note of the trap into which the nation has fallen both in regard to security and economy. Our secular leaders are certainly making a maximum effort to get out of this trap and we pray for their success in this

New Year. The Prophet reminds us, however, that escaping this trap is not dependent on military action, diplomacy and economic programs alone. Our spiritual shortcomings, he points out, are the ultimate roots of our problems and only by correcting them can we hope for Divine deliverance from our trap.

Lest any Jew be discouraged by heeding the Prophet’s call because of the gap he perceives between himself and the Creator he has abandoned, Hoshea comforts him with the thought that with a little start in the right direction his return can reach all the way to the Heavenly Throne. “Open for Me the eye of a needle,” G-d has encouraged us, “and I will open for you the widest corridors.”

Is there a better guarantee for escaping the trap we are in?

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

...Ohr Somayach has two special learning programs for retired senior citizens who have settled in Israel.

*שמחה ושלום
לכל עם ישראל*

The Ohr Somayach Family wishes you and yours and all of Israel a year filled with happiness, health and peace.