

Living Jewish



Tell your Children

Bad Start, Good Finish

Harmin was born in Holland into a Protestant, church-going, anti-Semitic family. The word "Jew" was synonymous with dishonesty, sub-humanity, and damnation. But Harmin, a liberal free-thinker, was never drawn to those views.

She excelled at art school, especially in interior decorating, and was quickly hired by top firms. Soon, she was representing Holland in international exhibitions. Busy and successful, she believed she was truly happy.

Then came an invitation to an exhibit in Israel—a country she'd never visited. Intrigued by its label as the "Holy Land," she eagerly went. The exhibition was a success, and afterward, she toured the country. She fell in love instantly—especially with Jerusalem. The city's buildings, people, and even the air felt magical and ancient.

From Israel to New York

One week turned into a month. Then another. She couldn't bring herself to leave. Holland now felt empty. She rented a room, got a job, learned Hebrew, and even found an Israeli boyfriend, Nissim Ozari—a traditional Jewish news photographer. At first, he kept the relationship from his parents. But as things got serious, he invited her to a holiday meal. For the first time, she experienced Judaism from within.

Later, Nissim landed a good job as one of Prime Minister Menachem Begin's staff on a U.S. trip and eventually settled in New York. He landed a great job and soon proposed to Harmin—asking her to join him as his wife. She agreed and flew from Israel to New York. But on the drive from the airport, he made a request: would she convert to Judaism? His parents would never accept a non-Jewish daughter-in-law. "It wouldn't mean much change for you," he argued. But for Harmin, religion had no appeal. She saw conversion as suffocating. She refused and broke off the relationship.

Still, she decided to stay in New York. She quickly found work, a place to live—and another Jewish boyfriend. He, too, was traditional. But instead of blunt-



Iyar—The Month of Healing
painting by Yehoshua Wiseman, yehoshuawiseman.com

ly asking her to convert, he explained Judaism's beauty and resilience, and eventually enrolled her in classes. Harmin enjoyed them, especially the Chabad teachings. She even agreed to attend introductory conversion sessions. Her boyfriend began imagining their life.

But then came a class on Shabbat observance—where they were told details such as not to tear toilet paper on Shabbat. To Harmin, this was like a bucket of cold water. "What does this have to do with me?" she thought—and walked out.

Seeing the Rebbe

Desperate, her boyfriend had one last idea: take her to the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Simchat Torah. Thousands filled the synagogue. A woman helped Harmin to the front of the women's section, where she could see the Rebbe clearly. As she watched, it was as though the world stood still; no time, space, people - only the Rebbe. He was majestic, royal, with alert and penetrating eyes deeper than the sky. She never experienced anything like it. Her eyes filled with tears of joy and awe. For twenty minutes, she stared. Even after he left, she kept looking at the empty space.

"This," she thought, "must be what the Bible meant when it called Abraham the father of many nations."

When she rejoined her boyfriend, she told him, "I must speak to that Rabbi. You must get me an audience with him."

Two weeks later, she stood outside the

Rebbe's door. The man who left before her had been crying. Nervously, she stepped inside.

The room was quiet and bright. Before she entered the secretary had told her to write her request on a piece of paper and hand it to the Rebbe but she decided to speak for herself. Now she regretted it.

Tongue-tied, she hesitated—until the Rebbe smiled.

Thunderstruck

She spoke for five minutes in German telling her life story and finished by declaring that although she was impressed with Judaism, her new boyfriend and the Rebbe, she still did not want to convert. Perhaps she should try the seven Noahide commandments. She was confused.

The Rebbe answered also in German. "My opinion in the matter is that there is no necessity for you to convert... because you are Jewish."

She was thunderstruck. The Rebbe said a few more things, but she didn't hear a word. She blurted out, "What?! Rabbi, this is impossible. You are mistaken! How can you say such a thing?"

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Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	6:40	7:58
Tel Aviv	7:02	8:01
Haifa	6:53	8:01
Beer Sheva	7:01	7:59
New York	7:35	8:39

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From Nega comes Oneg

In the second of this week's two Torah readings, Metzora, it is written, "When you enter the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as a possession, and I place a lesion of tzara'at upon a house in the land of your possession."

In this Torah portion, the laws regarding tzara'at afflictions that affect homes are detailed. If the affliction reappears after all prescribed steps have been taken, the house must be demolished: "He shall demolish the house, its stones, its wood, and all the [mortar] dust of the house..."

Two Explanations

Two seemingly contradictory explanations are given for the cause of these house afflictions. One reason is actually a positive message: "It is good news for them (the Jews)... because the Amorites hid treasures of gold in the walls of their homes... Through the affliction, the house is demolished and the treasure is found."

The second explanation, found in the Zohar, is that the Canaanites, being idol worshipers, infused their homes with a spirit of impurity. Therefore, these homes needed to be destroyed so that the Jewish people could live "in holiness and in a holy dwell-

ing."

Clearly, not all the Canaanites' homes needed to be destroyed. True, they were idol worshipers, but in most cases it was sufficient that the house became the property of a Jew, or that a mezuzah was affixed to the door, and similar acts. Only those homes where a very intense impurity resided—due to the corrupt behavior of the former Canaanite inhabitants—had to be demolished.

Based on this second explanation, the presence of tzara'at in a house signals that it is a place steeped in severe impurity, which reflects a serious spiritual decline. How, then, can this be reconciled with the first explanation—that it's actually good news, a positive thing, meant to reveal a hidden treasure buried in the walls?

The Path to Elevation

This brings out a profound concept: the journey to the highest good sometimes passes through the deepest descent. This theme is central to the entire concept of tzara'at. On the one hand, a nega (tzara'at affliction) indicates the lowest spiritual descent. Yet the very same Hebrew letters also spell oneg (delight), representing the highest spiritual level.

When the metzora (person afflicted with tzara'at) is purified from his impurity, the

nega is transformed into oneg. Thus, the purpose of the affliction is actually to elevate the Jew to a higher level—like the transformation that occurs in a ba'al teshuvah (a penitent), who reaches a level that even the perfectly righteous cannot attain.

A Revealed Intention

This also explains—on an inner, mystical level—why the "hidden treasures of gold" came to the Jewish people specifically through the tzara'at affliction, and specifically through the lowest houses, where the strongest impurity had resided. It is precisely through the lowest descent that one reaches the highest ascent.

In the case of house afflictions, the inner divine intention behind the descent was tangibly revealed, even on a physical level. That's why the Torah uses precise wording: "I place a lesion of tzara'at upon a house in the land of your possession..."—indicating that this affliction comes from above, reflecting the divine purpose behind the phenomenon.

So may it be for us—that we merit the purity of the complete and final redemption, and the revelation of the hidden treasures of the Third Holy Temple.

(from the teachings of the Rebbe, Likutei Sichot, vol. 27, translated from Sichat HaShevua)

From our Sages

"... and the person to be cleansed shall take ... a strip of crimson [wool], and hyssop." (Leviticus 14:4).

Rashi explains: "Because lesions of tzara'at come as a result of arrogance—what is the remedy to be healed? Let him humble himself from his pride, like a worm and like hyssop." [The Hebrew for strip of crimson is tola'at shani—the literal translation of tola'at is worm, ed.] Every other sin requires some form of action—a movement of the hand or foot, a nod of the head or the movement of the lips—except for arrogance. A man can lie in bed, not moving even a finger, and think in his heart: *How great I am...*

(Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz)

No Reason for Pride

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vorki said: From arrogance itself one can learn not to be arrogant, for arrogance isn't found only among the great—it exists even in the lowliest of people.

An Arrogant Person Who Doesn't Show It

There is a proud person who does not display arrogance outwardly. He doesn't

speak of his own virtues and even behaves gently, as if he were truly humble. But inside he greatly exaggerates his own worth, holds himself in high esteem, and feels pained that others do not honor him as he believes they should.

(the Previous Rebbe)

It Can Be Used

There is a person who uses pride for good—he fulfills many mitzvot, in the spirit of "his heart was uplifted in the ways of G-d" (Chronicles 2, 17:6). And there is one who uses humility for harm—he feels too lowly in his own eyes to believe he is worthy of doing mitzvot.

(Keter Shem Tov)

"Love work and hate (positions of) authority." (Ethics of the Fathers 1:10)

If everyone followed this, who would teach Torah? Rather, what one should hate are the side effects that sometimes come with authority—namely arrogance and self-glorification. But the role of leadership itself is certainly not to be despised.

(Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk)

Not a Principle

Mr. Pinchas (Peter) Kalms, a respected businessman from London, became close to Chabad emissaries in England. As a result, in the year 5724 (1964), he found himself in a private audience with the Rebbe.

During the conversation, Mr. Kalms raised a question that had been bothering him: "I observe the Rebbe's emissaries and greatly appreciate their work. However, I've noticed that they earn very small salaries, and their families live with very modest means. Which, in my view, is excessive. My question is: Is this the result of some kind of principle?"

The Rebbe replied: "No, definitely not. The goal is that they should earn salaries comparable to those in similar positions in the broader world."

At this point, the Rebbe's gaze became more penetrating, and he added: "But the implementation of that goal depends on Jews like you. It is your responsibility to ensure it happens—though the emissaries themselves are not meant to demand it."

Chassidus page

Loving Every Jew

The Baal Shem Tov expressed deep love even for simple Jews, drawing them close and encouraging them.

The Talmud (Berachot 6a) says that G-d, as it were, dons tefillin. The Baal Shem Tov explained: “Tefillin consist of the arm tefillin and the head tefillin... The arm tefillin is put on before the head tefillin. Likewise, G-d’s ‘arm-tefillin’ comes before His ‘head-tefillin’! G-d’s ‘arm-tefillin’ represents Jews who perform good deeds, simple people who keep mitzvot. They take precedence over the ‘head-tefillin’—the Torah scholars.”

The Wicked and the Righteous

The Maggid of Mezeritch added a deeper layer to the concept of Ahavat Yisrael (love for fellow Jews). His students would take shifts serving him. Once, during the shift of the tzaddik Rebbe Elimelech, the Maggid suddenly called out and said: “Do you hear, Meilech, what they’re saying in the heavenly academy? That Ahavat Yisrael means to love a complete evildoer just as one loves a complete tzaddik!”

This statement by the Maggid adds a new dimension. The Baal Shem Tov emphasized loving simple Jews who do good deeds. The Maggid revealed that one must even love a completely wicked person to the same degree as the love for a perfectly righteous person.

Love your Fellow as Yourself

The Alter Rebbe added another dimension. He explains (Tanya, Chapter 32) that Ahavat Yisrael applies from the greatest

to the lowest—like real siblings, sharing a natural, intrinsic love. Just as a person’s love for themselves is essential and unconditional—so deep that even their own flaws don’t diminish the love, so too must our love for our fellow Jew be “as yourself,” without any conditions.

What the Alter Rebbe adds to the Maggid’s insight is profound: While the Maggid states we must love a complete sinner like a complete tzaddik, this still implies a distinction between them. The Alter Rebbe teaches a love so deep and essential that no distinction exists at all—it’s simply “real siblings,” and nothing more.

How to Reach Such Love

How to attain this unconditional love?

a) Ahavat Yisrael, love of Torah, and love of G-d are one. A Jew’s love for G-d is intrinsic—“You are children of the L-rd your G-d”—and a child and father are one essence. Therefore, the love for fellow Jews, which flows from love of G-d, is also essential. When you love someone, you love what they love. Since G-d loves every Jew with an essential love, a Jew loves every Jew with an essential love.

b) All Jews are like one body, one essence from which all particulars emerge. Thus, loving another Jew is not loving someone else—it’s loving oneself. When a Jew loves their fellow, they’re loving a part of themselves, because both are one essence.

Adapted from the teachings of Rabbi Menachem Brod, Sichat HaShevua

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continued from page one:

The Rebbe replied, “this is no mistake. If you investigate you certainly will reveal this.” She tried to explain how ridiculous the idea was. Her parents were bitter anti-Semites and their whole life was the Church. But the Rebbe just answered with complete certainty, “The Torah tells us that if you search you will find. Certainly, you will discover the truth for yourself.”

Shaken, Harmin left and went home. The next day, she called her mother in Holland.

“Jewish?!” her mother yelled. “Are you crazy?! Never say that word again!” Then she hung up.

Her mother’s fury only deepened Harmin’s curiosity. She flew back to Holland, kept things cordial, and avoided any mention of Judaism.

On the third day, her mother asked her to go for a walk. After a long silence, her mother said:

“I’ll tell you something—but promise you’ll never tell your father.” Harmin nodded.

“Your great-grandmother—my mother’s mother—was Jewish. She escaped persecution in Spain and settled in Holland. To protect her children, she hid her identity. She married a Dutchman and changed her religion. But her daughter—my mother—found out. So did I. And now you.

“It’s strange, but perhaps G-d doesn’t want us to forget. Please don’t ever tell your father. It will be the end of our happy home.”

Harmin kept her promise.

She broke up with her boyfriend, returned to Israel, became an observant Jew, and, miraculously, reunited with Nissim. They married and today are proud parents and grandparents.

Adapted from the rendition of Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Moshiach Now

Dancing in the Streets

During the seven days of festivities following the wedding of the Rebbe Rashab in Elul 5635 [1875], the chassidim celebrated with indescribable joy. On one of those days, his father the Rebbe Maharash sat at his window and watched them dancing in the garden in dozens of circles.

Turning to the two chassidim who stood next to him, he said: “See, my children, how chassidim are glad in the joy of a mitzvah. This is how Jews will dance in the streets when Moshiach comes!”

The Rebbe, From Exile to Redemption, reprinted with perm. from Sichos in English

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Human Interest

A Bold Act

A remarkable event unfolded during Pesach at a spring festival in Haifa, where large quantities of chametz were set to be sold at food stands — potentially causing thousands to unknowingly transgress the severe Pesach prohibition against owning or consuming chametz.

According to reports, a visitor from central Israel was vacationing in the north when he discovered the situation. Distressed, he took immediate action. He approached a pizza stand and offered to buy all remaining trays. When the vendor mentioned more stock in storage, he



insisted, effectively halting all pizza sales. He then turned to the event manager, urging him to cancel chametz sales. The manager responded, “This is our livelihood.” The visitor replied, “Tell me what you expect to earn — I’ll cover it, on condition you destroy all the chametz.”

The manager named a sum: 82,300 shekels (approx. \$22,000). The visitor contacted a wealthy friend from Or Yehuda, who agreed to cover the costs and transferred the full amount.

Soon after, beer taps and barrels were emptied into the sewers, whiskey sales stopped, and all chametz products were burned in a traditional *biur chametz* bonfire.

The act was carried out peacefully and respectfully, without any confrontation and onlookers were deeply moved by the effort.

adapted from COLlive

Cooking Tip of the Week

Left Over Matzah

Got leftover matzah? Turn it into a delicious bake! Soak in milk, plant milk, or juice. Add chopped fruit, ground nuts, eggs, sweetener, and cinnamon. Pour into a greased pan or muffin tin. Bake at 180°C until solid. Great for breakfast or side dish. No exact amounts, use what you have!

*Alizah Hochstead
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Halacha Corner – Not Eating the Tip of the Challah

It is a commonly accepted custom not to eat the tip of the challah (or any bread) since it is assumed to be *kasheh leshikchah* (causes a person to forget their Torah learning). There is no known Torah source for this custom. Consequently, one is not obligated to keep it unless it is a custom in their family.

The Rashba tells us that what *nashim zekeinot* (righteous elderly women) say, even if it has no source in Torah, should be just as honored as those customs that do; therefore, if it is a family tradition, one should not abandon it.

Some suggest that perhaps this custom developed from a concern that challah may not have been separated from the dough, and therefore the tip would be cut off and be disposed of in a respectful manner in keeping with the mitzvah of *hafrashat challah* (separating a piece from the challah dough.)

Rav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, shlita, Badatz of Crown Heights, 1 Minute Halachah, #283, reprinted from crownheightsconnect.com

Farbrengen

Question: My husband and I have been married for 20 years. So, what got me to write? Honestly, I’m struggling. We’ve had financial difficulties from the start, and I feel my husband doesn’t make wise choices about earning money. He works hard, but the results are meager. He puts effort into ventures that seem doomed from the start. I often suggest better options, but he gets aggravated—and so do I. I’ve begun to resent managing the house and caring for him. He’s stubborn, and I feel we’re all suffering because of it. How can I get him to take my advice seriously?

Answer: Your frustration is valid, and financial stress certainly affects the emotional well-being of a home. But perhaps there’s another way to approach this.

Rabbi Manis Friedman teaches that marriage is a partnership where both spouses support each other. Support means believing in your partner and encouraging them, even when their path differs from yours. When a wife supports her husband, she becomes a conduit for blessing and success.

A wife can offer suggestions, but expecting things to be her way would not be supporting her husband. Instead, try backing him, showing faith in his decisions, and genuinely rooting for his success. The Torah teaches that a woman is an *eizer kenegdo*—a helpmate. By supporting her husband she is truly helping him. When a man is successful, in most cases, it is because he has a wife who is supporting him, rooting for him and cheering him on.

You may wonder, should I support him even if I think his plans won’t work? In general, yes. While we must make reasonable efforts (a vessel for livelihood), true sustenance comes from Hashem. The Rebbe explains that Aharon’s miraculous staff, placed with the manna (representing livelihood), teaches income is dependent on G-d, not natural means.

In addition, the home is like a nurturing womb. When the wife/mother fills it with positivity and support, that energy brings blessing and success to all who live there.

This may not be the answer you expected, but consider trying it. Shift the tone at home. Support and uplift your husband—and through that, you may open the door to greater blessing and peace.

Aharon Schmidt, marriage & individual counseling: www.aharonschmidt.com.

*To receive periodic ideas on navigating marriage and personal growth, reach out to aharonschmidt@gmail.com



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