

Thoughts from the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The Month of Kislev

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

The Hebrew month of Kislev arrives in mid-November and with its arrival come days of brightness and joy. The most famous holiday of the month is the eight day festival of Chanukah which comes at the very end of the month. But there are other historic dates during the month of Kislev which are worth exploring.

But first it is important to explain that every historical date or holiday is not a day of remembrance alone, but rather a day of observance as well. The classic example is the story of Purim which is recorded in the scroll of Esther. At the conclusion of the story there is an instruction which says "And these days [of Purim] are remembered and observed."

Our Sages explain that these days are remembered through their observance. When they are observed properly and with meaning, these days are properly remembered. The same is true of every holiday or day of remembrance, it is remembered through its observance.

On the 19th day of Kislev the famous Rabbi and scholar Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi was released from the S. Petersburg prison in 1798. Rabbi Schneur Zalman was a follower of the famed Chassidic leaders Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov and his successor Rabbi Dov-Ber of Mezritch. He was seen as the leader of the Chassidic movement in Russia and Ukraine, and was founder of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

The Rebbe was wrongly accused of trying to undermine the sovereignty of the Russian Tzar, due to his massive campaign to support Jews in Israel. The Rebbe had written many letters to his followers all across Russia to give whatever they could financially to support the community in Israel. He even sent people to settle in Israel and helped expand the community in every way possible.

Israel, in that period of history, was under the governance of the Ottoman Empire of Turkey. The Turks were at war with Russia; thus The Rebbe's opponents misrepresented his help to Israel as treason against Russia.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman's success in attracting thousands of followers to his unique approach to Judaism was seen as suspicious by other Jews and they made an effort to stop him. Eventually they convinced the Russian authorities to take the Rebbe into custody and he was held for three weeks of intense interrogation.

His arrest generated much interest in the higher circles of the Russian government, many of whom visited the Rebbe in his jail cell. Upon learning of his brilliance and wisdom, the Tzar himself visited the Rebbe and

was disguised as an ordinary soldier.

When he entered, the Rebbe rose and greeted him with salutation accorded to a king. The Tzar was surprised and asked the Rebbe how he knew that he was the Tzar. The Rebbe explained that every king has an angel from above accompanying him and when the Tzar entered the cell, the Rebbe felt the presence of the angel.

After 3 weeks the Rebbe was released with great fanfare and made a respected citizen of Russia for all generations to come. This day has been established as a holiday for Chassidic Jews and eventually spread all over the world as a day of liberation and a day of renewal in the ways of Chabad Chassidus.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman's approach was unique in the fact that it was based on a deep intellectual understanding of G-dliness, yet it ultimately had to lead to an emotional stimulation which produced intense love of G-d and G-dliness. The Rebbe promoted higher Jewish education and reached out to the masses with love and care.

The 19th of Kislev has become a milestone in the annals of Chassidic history, as it was the day that passed all obstacles of its time in promoting this new and exciting way to serve G-d. This day has in fact been coined by the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe as the Rosh Hashanah - the New Year for Chassidic study.

Each year on this day Jews all over the world gather to celebrate this day of liberation by reflecting on his life and philosophy and most of all by studying his writings and making a commitment to increase in the study of Torah and the observance of its commandments.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson who is a direct descendent of Rabbi Schneur Zalman and leads the world wide movement, holds a huge gathering of over 15,000 people on the night of this historic day. For the past forty-three years the Rebbe has expounded on the significance of this important holiday and taught the many lessons learned from this day. His talks are broadcast live through a network of telephone hook-ups and satellite broadcasts.

The festive atmosphere adds to the observance of this day which helps everyone reinforce their commitment to Judaism.

May we take this opportunity to extend our sincere prayers that the Al-mighty G-d send the Rebbe Shlita a quick and full recovery and he should see his true desire fulfilled with the arrival of Moshiach and the redemption of all of Israel.

Fifth and Sixth Graders Wrote And Performed Play

The following article was written jointly by Gali Berri, Jessica Brandt, Sam Foner, Sam Rose, Melanie Rousso and Geoff Wexler.

During the holiday of Succoth (on the fourth day of Chol Hamoed) we performed a play on the Ethrog and the mitzvah of Tzedakah. The story is about a man named Yakov who was very poor. He took his last \$20 to buy food and gifts for his children.

It was on the last day of Succoth that Yakov went out to the market place when he was approached by a person who was collecting money to help marry off a poor orphan girl. Yakov gave his last \$20 to the collector. He was so moved by the need of the poor orphan that he felt compelled to help her with the little that he had.

Yakov went to the local Synagogue and collected used Esrogim, and filled a large sack with the citrus fruits as a gift for his children.

On the way home he took a wrong turn and lost his way and he stopped to rest. He fell asleep, and when he awoke he was surrounded by the king's royal soldiers. They demanded to know what was in his sack. When they learned that it was Esrogim, they quickly rushed him to the king's palace.

It seems that the king was afflicted with a rare disease that can only be cured by Ethrog juice. The king was given fresh juice extracted from Yakov's Esrogim and was quickly cured. In thanks the king filled Yakov's sack with gold coins and sent him home.

Yakov and his family were never poor again. The lesson we learn from this story is, when doing a mitzvah and giving to the poor you receive in return much more than what you gave. That is only one reason why you should always do a mitzvah when the opportunity arises.

The play was performed before the entire school, by all of the 5th and 6th graders at Lubavitch Day School. The play was directed by our Judaica teacher, Channie Weiss. It was narrated by Jessica Brandt and Sam Foner.



Day School students performing Succoth play.



Younger students were an enthusiastic audience.

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Jewish Calendar Candlelighting



Nov. 5 - 5:06 p.m.
Nov. 12 - 5:01 p.m.
Nov. 19 - 4:57 p.m.
Nov. 26 - 4:54 p.m.
Dec. 3 - 4:53 p.m.
Dec. 8 - 4:53 p.m.
(First night of Chanukah)
Dec. 9 - 4:53 p.m.
(Second night of Chanukah)
Dec. 10 - 4:53 p.m.
(Shabbat and
Third night of Chanukah)

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