

THE PIKESVILLE TIMES



A Chanukah Message

First Decorate and then Sweep

The Director

Rochel Kaplan

Dear Reader,

For issue six-volume one, the final issue of our first year, at The Pikesville Times, we decided to do something colorful, picturesque, with greater creativity. So you will notice a touch of art, creative writing, creative thinking, and more. *We trust that you enjoy the read!*

After a fabulous Jewish New Year month of Tishrei, robust with great spiritual inspiration, festivity, and food, we arrive at the month of Cheshvan, holiday-free. The mazal (zodiac) of Mar Cheshvan is עקרב (scorpion) a.k.a. Scorpio. To navigate smoothly from one month to the extreme next, we seek to access and unpack what we “packed-in” over Tishrei. We take the warmth, the light, of Tishrei and give back and self-generate into the cold month of Cheshvan. As we draw from within, we take on the material world. In the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings: “משיב-רוח ומוריד הגשם” move the wind-רוח-spirit, and the rain-גשם-material, flows. Then, as we enter the month of Kislev, we think “Chanukah.” On the 25th of Kislev, we begin to celebrate eight days of this very favorite and festive holiday.

In this issue, we would like to take you through an Amoraic debate on the topic of Chanuka between two academies that played a critical role in our Jewish heritage; Beit (house of) Hillel and Beit Shamai. The two scholars, Hillel and Shamai, headed flourishing houses of Torah, while their students maintained many opposing viewpoints. The school of Hillel usually takes the more lenient view, and Shamai takes the more stringent view. In regard to Chanukah: Hillel said that the Chanuka Menorah lights should be lit in increasing numbers following the rule of thumb that-מעלין בקודש-we grow in holiness. On the other hand, Shamai references the sacrifices brought over the holiday of Sukkot, which decrease in number each day (no elaboration here), and ruled that we must similarly light the menorah in decreasing numbers. In other words, do we count up or down? Beit Hillel says to start with one candle and add a candle each night to the count, and Beit Shamai says to count down from eight candles the first night to igniting one last candle, on the final night. *Why the debate?*

We can draw insight and greater depth by examining the timely Torah portion of Vayechi.

Years earlier, Jacob and his son Joseph had a disagreement that revealed the Chanukah argument’s depth years later. In this Torah portion, we find that Jacob is lying on his deathbed, and Joseph brings his two sons to be blessed by their grandfather before he passes on. Joseph places the older son, *Menashe*, to Jacob’s right and the younger son, *Ephraim*, to his

left. Joseph then crosses his hands above their heads to give precedent to the younger son, Ephraim. Joseph observed this, and it displeased him. So he gently told his father, “Not so, for this one is the first-born.”

To elucidate this disagreement between father and son, we cite Rabbi Yechezkel Halberstam, Rabbi of Shinove (1811-1899): The two brothers, Menashe and Ephraim, are two physical beings who individually embody two different life paths. The name “Menashe” translates, to forget or to move away, and represents the path of-מרח-סור-remove inner negativity and any darkness lurking within. The name “Ephraim” means to grow and be fruitful representing-עשה טוב, to imbue our life and environment with positivity, and to grow in our commitment to G-d and Torah. *So, which life path takes precedence?*

Joseph maintained that one should first mend their past before beginning on a path of Torah and mitzvot. Joseph responded to his father, “not so, father, for this one is the firstborn.” Meaning that it is preferable to first rectify one’s negative past. Jacob replied, “I know, my son, I know.” I am aware that the manner represented by Menashe is superior, but it is also harder to achieve. On the other hand, his brother’s service is more accessible to the masses and to reach a greater number of returnees. *So which path should take precedence?*

After seeing one psychologist after another, with a diagnosis of “classic narcissist,” she could not manage to change her behavior. Rabbi Friedman suggested that she consult with the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Brooklyn, N.Y. The Rebbe said, “Okay, so what is the problem? I don’t see any problem.” The Rebbe said, “So stop being selfish!” The Rebbe continued, “If you listen to me when you go back to school, and you are in the dining room at each meal, you offer to bring food for all the others.” “This is what it means to think about someone else.”

Say, for example, you were to bring new furniture into your home; your probable first step would be to sweep up the dirt, mop the floor, and straighten out. Afterward, you would decorate. In life, the same applies to how you “clean up your act.” First sweep and then decorate, and adorn and increase in positivity.

However, Jacob believed differently. Waiting to achieve perfection from all dysfunction may be a life-long process. It is preferable to begin immediately with the *Ephraim path* -fill your life with goodness and increase in Torah and Mitzvot. Jacob believes, sometimes it is preferable to bring in new furniture before removing the dirt. Seeing a beautiful transformation will inspire you to remove all obstruction for a new look.

In the last century, these two divergent approaches have developed two fields of psychology, i.e. Dr.

Sigmund Freud vs. Dr. B.F. Skinner. Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, advocates digging deeper into the psyche so you may confront your demons and move on. Skinner, as other more modern therapists recommend, focuses on behavior. Alter your behavior and let the inner workings of your psyche figure themselves out in the process.

To sum up our Talmudic debate:

Beit Shamai says: On the first night of Chanukah when you begin your inner work, *Menashe path* –מרח-סור- you require a tremendous amount of inspiration, brightness, and spiritual power to take on your insecurities; shame, guilt, fear, laziness, rudeness. Therefore you start with eight lit candles and decrease gradually from there. The school of Hillel says: Do not begin with focusing on the darkness. First, light a candle of positivity in your life. Do not begin by battling evil, rather Ephraim-עשה טוב. Do good, study Torah, fill your mind with G-dly wisdom, and engage in acts of love and kindness. Indeed at the start, your light will be small and struggling. But each progressive day, the darkness will decrease, and the light will increase.

The verdict-the law follows Beit Hillel. In our journey on earth, our main focus and priority must be to cultivate the good in us and become ambassadors of light, despite our shortcomings. If we allow our obsession with the dirt to take precedence, we may fail and get stuck there. In summation: First Decorate and then Sweep.

As relayed by Rabbi Manis Freidman, Dean of Beit Chana Women’s Seminary in Minneapolis, the story of a young Jewish woman who was seeking to marry. She felt stuck as she was self-centered. When she dated, she only spoke about herself. After seeing one psychologist after another, with a diagnosis of “classic narcissist,” she could not manage to change her behavior. Finally, Rabbi Friedman suggested that she consult with the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Brooklyn, N.Y. She proceeded to meet the Rebbe and presented a sheaf of papers with the analyses of her doctors; “These are my problems.” The Rebbe leafed through the stack and then put them down. The Rebbe then said, “Okay, so what is the problem?” She was stunned and asked if he had read them. The Rebbe said he had and did not understand the problem. She explained that she is self-centered, completely egotistic, and has no space for others. Therefore she cannot allow anyone into her life. She is plain selfish!

The Rebbe said, “So stop being selfish!” The Rebbe continued, “If you listen to me when you go back to school, and you are in the dining room at each meal, *you* offer to bring food for all the others.” She responded that this behavior was impossible for her. The Rebbe insisted, “This is what it means to think about someone else.” She returned to Minnesota and followed the Rebbe’s advice, which transformed her relationships. Today she is married and is the mother of a beautiful family.

It is not necessary to analyze for years. Just do good for others; one favor a day, and you will change and improve the world.



A mother's heart beats for her son

by Ruti Rosenbloom



A mother's heart beats for her son
We are bound with love together
Human eyes cannot vision where
I hold our bond inside my heart
Dirt below my feet so clever;
Fool me into forgetting not!
I heard his heartbeat before.
My memory seeks to find your grace
And put it in my heart's sacred place.
Your ways remembered, I emulate.
How long this world keeps me separate.
My Angel plays exalted tunes
Happy strumming all my heartstrings
His song keeps my heartache anchored.

Deeply I breathe and nostrils filled
Bring fragrance to my innermost sigh
The scent of my Rose I keep close.
Dear son whom I long to embrace
My hopes for you I held quite high
I am sorry for demanding
I beg you for understanding
Your life He took away so fast,
I would have pledged on your behalf.
Your light most brilliant and vast
The brightest shine I ever knew
Carried in my soul, your light never dim,
Since you left this world, my Love has blossomed.

Our worldly dreams sailed away by sea.
New dreams built by our spirit.
Raindrops pour from clouds in heaven.
Wellsprings gather from earth depths deep.
Between these streams a channel flows.
So salty and oh so sweet, they are the mother's tears.

A Mother cries to fill the gaping hole.
These cries prepare and purify life.
They get us ready!...
Drop by drop small beads emerge,
Master of the World gather our cries! Trillions of tears,
Prepare puddles
Into a Great sea.
The cry prepares our future
Search teams look along the perimeter.
Mothers like me relentless with fervor
Hashem is gathering...
A world of complete peace is coming.
Get Ready!

Tears stream to rivers
to bring our son in arms today.
Never will I give up hope Hashem will keep his promise.
Your mother I was
Your mother I am still,
Just our dreams have passed me by.

In the heights of Heaven
Where the birds cannot fly
The Holy One asks a malach to carry blessings down here.
The Creator waits to see if the people find the blessings below.

Happy children find the treats and hold them in their hands.
While watching carefully from above, Hashem sees precious souls confirm with

blessings and give praise to our Maker. One child in particular passed every test. A mother's love doesn't win when Hashem decides he loves him best.

The precious one he brings to a garden of revealed splendor. He is by the High throne. Mommy, take heart! Your precious one is loved. He is happy up above. One day again, you will join hand in hand.

The sun rose up and so began the day.
A day starting like the day before. Pitter patter are children's feet on the floor. Gentle laughter, breakfast aroma fills the air. The gentle balance of life in place.

My son, you shine in my eyes so brightly. I say your name and a smile appears. A star so bright all eyes shine on you. My heart sings and I want to dance when you come near. I was not near when a surgeon removed you from this world. Now, the light in the room is dim. I adjust the light and still little is gained. I look up at the sky and the stars are pulsing bright. Avraham Avinu was promised stars like you. I search for you to shine. While a hole remains, your ways are my light. Your light I carry hidden inside my heart.

"The Alter Rebbe explained to his Chassidim, they can continue to keep him alive by following his ways".

Gam zu L'Tova!
Master of the World, everything is you. I have blessings to enjoy. I have pain and suffering, too! I live with emuna, faith. You are good and you created the world from good and kindness. I do not understand something you call good. We hurt and we need nurturing. Yet, this is part of you. Everything is you.

Gavi dreamed of creating his Shabbos table. A place to transform the mundane week into a spiritual oasis.

Navigating life without interruption is a privilege for the very few. Gavi took his first boat ride at four years old and he loved it. Our "captain" felt at ease near water. Today, my world feels like a boat without a steer, a captain gone amiss, alone I sit inside. Traveling surrounded. Only saline waves of and deep dips. So much water and nothing to drink! Where will this boat take me? I am thirsty and longing for the day of my rescue.

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Thank you!

"When Moshiach Comes"

A historic painting

Michel Shevach Schwartz. Born November 16, 1926, in Catskill, NY, died in Flushing, NY, on September 8, 2011. Michel spent a lifetime painting and designing Jewish works of art for countless organizations, charities, foundations, friends, and family. His results may be seen in Israel in the President's residence, the Knesset, Jerusalem City Hall, the Jewish Children's Museum in Brooklyn, numerous synagogues, and the private collections of many dignitaries and celebrities. Michel's lifelong friendship with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, referred to him as the Rebbe's personal artist. Excerpt NYT September 11, 2011



Famed artist Reb Michel Schwartz merited rich Judaic tradition from his parents, descendants of a long line of prominent rabbis and scholars. After his family moved to New York City, he studied at Yeshivot. Alongside religious studies, he was enrolled in the New York School of Art and Design. His relationship with The Lubavitcher Rebbe began when he was 15 years old. A few of his numerous calligraphic and artistic designs are featured on: Talks and Tales, Map of the Exodus, Merkos Logo, Tzivos Hashem, Cup of Elijah, "When Moshiach Comes" painting.

Cup of Elijah

While he and his wife Josepha lived in Jerusalem (1984-89), several silversmiths approached Michel, insisting that he create Judaica. After much hesitation, he busied himself with pad and pen. He sketched a design for a "Cup of Elijah," an ornamental cup designated for the entrance of Elijah the prophet, at the Seder table. Typical to his works, consisting of myriads of letters, he chose a verse taken from the song in praise of Elijah, expressing the yearning for Moshiach.

His family tradition for Havdallah services was a beautiful ceremony when the family sang a favorite song; Eliyahu Hanavi, Eliyahu Hatishbi, Eliyahu Hagiladi... may he come soon with Moshiach, son of David. Soon after producing the first prototype Elijah cup, Michel's brother Moshe who was involved in research of verses and Judaic designs for his paintings traveled to America. He visited with the Rebbe and brought the cup to show the Rebbe. After explaining that this cup was a prototype to begin production, the Rebbe studied the cup and asked, "Nu, if this is the only one, will it be left for me?" Here, the Rebbe broke all protocol!

For more than 35 years since day one, the Rebbe never asked for any personal gifts. It was the cup of Elijah that he requested. Moshe apologized that he could not leave it as he was only a messenger from his brother. However, he excitedly contacted Michel to relate the story of events. Michel confirmed in his mind that without question, the Rebbe would have his wish. Benefactors in

Monsey, N.Y. commissioned the cup to the Rebbe for his 86th birthday. At the face-to-face presentation, the Rebbe received the gift with a smile and placed it on the table near him. He then went on to offer his blessings to each one individually.

For several years afterward, Michel wondered what happened to the cup. Then, when the Rebbe suffered a stroke in 1992, an old friend attending to the Rebbe told him the following: Michel, the cup you gave the Rebbe, since he became ill, it has been standing on a small round table at his bedside day and night. Michel was stunned. And then another told him: No Michel. Not since he became sick. Your cup has been in his room since you presented it to him four years ago. In fact, his goblet joined the ranks of the wooden table which the Maharash, a previous Chabad Rebbe, personally made when he did some carpentry, a form of therapy for his ill health.

Moshiach Painting

The only work of art to ever be commissioned by the Rebbe took place on the "Sunday dollar line" in 1989, at Chabad headquarters, Brooklyn, N.Y. Michel was taken by surprise but without hesitation accepted this excellent task with humility and great honor. "There was a saintly scholar, revered by millions of Jews around the world, who was asking me to create a scenario of what the world will look like upon the arrival of Moshiach. *Why me?*" Michel was advised that if the Rebbe asked him to do such a painting, then he certainly has the genius to do it. *So do it!*

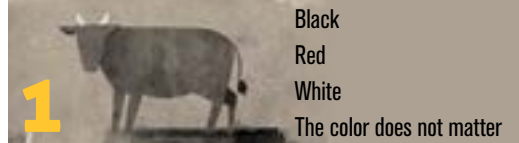
All in all, it took more than 2500 hours of work, together with the tireless research of his brother Moshe, a Torah scholar. The background text consists of 387,000 Hebrew letters describing the many biblical references and statements regarding the coming of and times of Moshiach, excerpted from Tanach, Mishna, Talmud, and other sources. Finally, the historical painting, "When Moshiach Comes," was presented to the Rebbe in honor of his 90th birthday on 11 Nissan.



Take the Colors of Judaism Quiz

By Menachem Posner / chabad.org

What color was the heifer whose ashes were used to confer ritual purity?



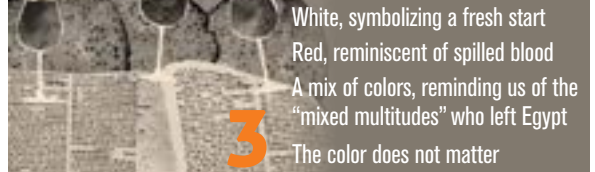
- Black
- Red
- White
- The color does not matter

What color is the tzaraat affliction on the skin?



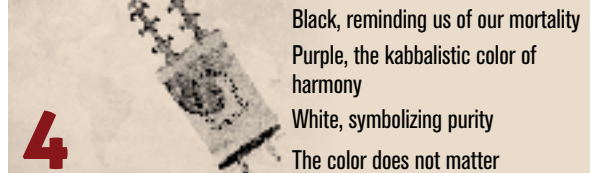
- White
- Green
- Dark brown
- Yellow
- The color does not matter

What color wine is preferred for the Passover Seder?



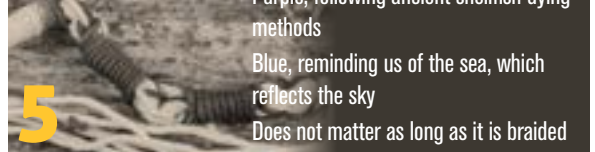
- White, symbolizing a fresh start
- Red, reminiscent of spilled blood
- A mix of colors, reminding us of the "mixed multitudes" who left Egypt
- The color does not matter

During the High Holidays, the Torah is traditionally draped in:



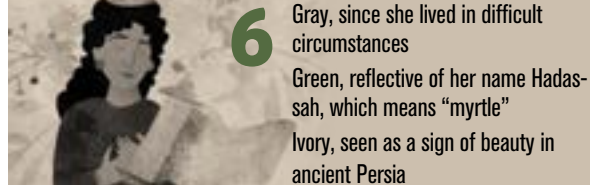
- Black, reminding us of our mortality
- Purple, the kabbalistic color of harmony
- White, symbolizing purity
- The color does not matter

What color is the tekhelet thread, which the Torah tells us to affix to each corner of the tallit?



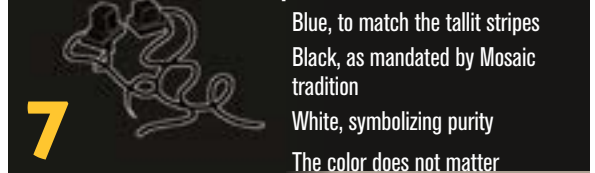
- Purple, following ancient shellfish dyeing methods
- Blue, reminding us of the sea, which reflects the sky
- Does not matter as long as it is braided

According to the Talmud, Queen Esther's complexion was:



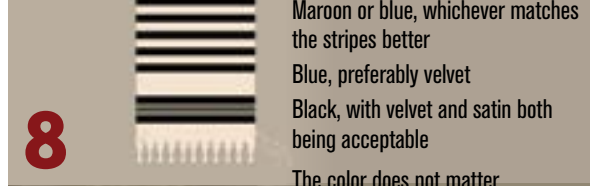
- Gray, since she lived in difficult circumstances
- Green, reflective of her name Hadasah, which means "myrtle"
- Ivory, seen as a sign of beauty in ancient Persia

What color are tefillin straps?



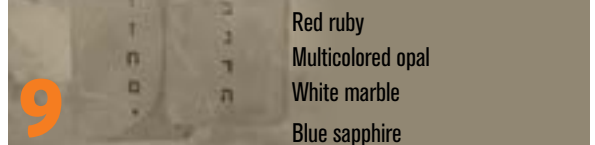
- Blue, to match the tallit stripes
- Black, as mandated by Mosaic tradition
- White, symbolizing purity
- The color does not matter

What color must a tallit bag be?



- Maroon or blue, whichever matches the stripes better
- Blue, preferably velvet
- Black, with velvet and satin both being acceptable
- The color does not matter

What color were the Tablets, upon which the 10 Commandments were carved?



- Red ruby
- Multicolored opal
- White marble
- Blue sapphire

What color is the etrog fruit, one of the Four Kinds used on Sukkot?



- Yellow
- Brown
- Red
- Orange



The Art of Loyalty

By M. Hermes

based on a true story

Sadie and Harry

They were neighbors, growing up in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, N.Y. Back then the world was a lot smaller and simpler. It was by no means easier. [People were content with less. Less is more]. It all came down to human relationships. Now, that has always been complex. [Not all neighbors are neighborly]. [Familiarity breeds contempt].

But, when it's meant to be, it happens. Harry knew what Sadie thought and Sadie thought what Harry knew. They were meant for each other. Like the moon reflected from the sun, they were the perfect couple. After 40 years of marriage, they were still best friends. When one laughed the other was happy. If one was lacking the other felt sad. It was a marriage made in heaven and blessed to eternity.

Three sets of twin boys was enough to keep them on their toes around the clock. Neither one complained. On and off, a grandparent would lend a hand, but then head home exhausted.

The boys were healthy and robust. They were mischievous and playful. Also, huggable. As an all American family, the boys were very much keepers of the Jewish faith. They attended the best available Yeshivot of the day. They were rooted in a long legacy of Judaism which they proudly carried forth. Being American in the land of the free meant they had the freedom to choose independently to follow teachings, albeit old, but in no way archaic. Moreover, their mandate was to live with the Torah in a timely fashion, week by week, one Torah portion at a time. Six American-born brothers were devoutly loyal to the Torah. To see them together was to *kvell*.

Isaac, the third son, became a renowned cantor. His voice resonated above the boisterous bunch. He was a special nachat to Harry who recalled his zaidy, also one to serenade the shul members back then. It was the day of Isaac's Bar Mitzvah that everyone in the family would retell. Assembled in the simcha hall of Bnei Torah Congregation, Isaac stood at the podium alongside his father Harry, draped in his new tallit. Harry expressed his gratitude to The Almighty, to Sadie, and to the assembled. Harry took his seat next to Sadie. Isaac spoke next, delivering a Dvar Torah. Immediately following, he began to sing in his budding cantorial voice with his entire being, the famous, "My Yiddishe Mama."

Sadie's heart melted, her eyes filled with tears. Harry was beaming. Isaac's voice was just developing and it was sweet and smooth. What a beautiful tribute to mama! Who could ever forget that Bar Mitzvah!

Sadie was outnumbered by the men in her life. She was treated like the queen. She was Harry's queen. Mama was the heart of the home. She was tough, resolute, but embracing. She was a G-d- fearing woman, every bit the Eshet Chayil [Woman of valor]. No one took anything for granted in the 40s. Harry sold dry goods and Sadie raised the boys. It was a team effort.

When Harry fell ill, Sadie fell apart. After all, he was her life partner. Harry was her loyal forever friend. There would never be anyone as loyal as Harry. Harry was treated for Leukemia. It would not be easy but Sadie was by his side every waking hour. Their loyalty was unflinching. Her unwavering support kept him alive for many years.

Was loyalty sustaining enough? Was love necessary? Love without loyalty is not enduring. Loyalty with or without love in marriage buttressed by the link of progeny is a tie that binds; a three-ply knot.

Meanwhile, the boys grew up and married. At least Harry made it through the good times. Loyalty is an undying need in life, and helps to prolong it. Unfortunately, Harry succumbed to his illness. Sadie lived on for many more years. Her sons were a blessing. Together with their spouses and loving children, they cared for their mama. They named their boys for grandpa Harry.

For Sadie, she never got over Harry. She loved him more each day. Her loyalty sustained her widowhood and her motherhood.

They are together now.



Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin, who oversaw the construction and growth of the largest kosher meatpacking plant in the world, galvanized the Jewish world as the subject of a protracted and headline-grabbing court case. Enduring eight years in prison, he and his family inspired tens of thousands with their spirit, faith, and trust in Hashem, culminating in his miraculous release, pardoned by the President, on Zos Chanukah.

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