

LAMPLIGHTER

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

As we read in this week's Torah portion, Yitro, just prior to the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai G-d commanded Moses: "Thus shall you say to the House of Jacob, and tell to the Children of Israel." The Midrash explains that the "House of Jacob" refers to the Jewish women. Moreover, the command to "tell" the men implies harsh speech, whereas the command to "say" to the women connotes a gentler manner of imparting information.

This is not the only difference in the way Moses was commanded to transmit the Torah to the women and to the men. In fact, Moses was instructed to communicate the "general principles" to the women, whereas the men were to receive the "laws in detail."

At first glance, this seems to imply a diminution of the value of Jewish women, as if the assumption is that they will not understand the minutiae of Jewish law. However, an in-depth analysis of the Midrash reveals something quite different:

"General principles" does not mean simple or nominal matters. On the contrary, it implies essential fundamentals and rules. In other words, G-d commanded Moses to transmit to the Jewish women the basic foundations of the Torah, from which all the smaller details he was to convey to the men are derived.

"General principles" is thus synonymous with the Torah's very essence. Similarly, at the giving of the Ten Commandments, the first two contained the "general principles" of the other eight. ("I am the L-rd your G-d" is the source of the Torah's 248 positive commandments; "You shall not have any other gods" is the source of its 365 prohibitions.)

Seen from this perspective, the Jewish women received the quintessence of the Torah, whereas the men "only" received its laws and ordinances, which obviously represent a lower level. The Torah is thus emphasizing a certain advantage women have over men.

In truth, the qualities of simple faith and awe of G-d are more openly revealed and manifested in women. G-d created women in such a way that their intellect does not override or control their personalities - who they really are - nor can it weaken their basic faith in G-d. Women are therefore more closely connected to the Torah's essence, which is why being Jewish is determined by the mother and not the father. (A person whose mother is Jewish is Jewish; a person whose mother is not Jewish is not Jewish, even if his father is.)

This also relates to the Final Redemption: In the same way the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt in the merit of the righteous Jewish women, so too will Moshiach come in the merit of the righteous women of our generation, may it happen immediately.

(Adapted from Volume 31 of Likutei Sichot)

How to Have

By Yanki Tauber

What do you have? And what makes it yours? Look around you and make a mental list of the things that are "yours": your husband or wife; your children; your home; your job; your knowledge; your car --

These things differ greatly from each other. They differ also in the meaning of the word "your" as applied to them. But they are all, in some sense, yours. How did you come to possess them?

Certain things you **earned**. You paid for them with cash, toil and derring-do. Perhaps these are the things from which you derive your deepest sense of accomplishment. You have achieved them.

Certain things were **given** to you. A brand new car that is a gift from your parents. Someone loves you, generously, more than you deserve to be loved. Perhaps these are the things that you desire most of all. After all, you could never have achieved them on your own. They are beyond you; they belong to a reality greater than yourself. Being gifted these things means that you have transcended your limitations.

Finally, certain things are yours because they are **inherently**, intrinsically, yours. They are your birth-right, your inheritance. You did nothing to earn them and no one gave them to you: you possess them by virtue of who and what you are. Your soul. Your mind. Your inborn talents. Your traditions.

Perhaps these things do not afford you the depth of fulfillment you get from the things you earn. Perhaps you do not experience the intensity of desire and striving for them evoked by the "gifts" of life. But these are more yours than anything else you possess.

Your earning power will fluctuate as you traverse the rises and dips of life, as you grow or diminish in strength, mental proficiency and spiritual sensitivity. The gifts you receive will always depend on forces beyond your control. But the things that are inherently yours will be yours in all circumstances and under all conditions. Even if you reject them and disavow them, they will remain ever, irrevocably yours.

On the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), the newborn nation of Israel assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah from G-d. Ever since, the event is referred to as the "Giving of the Torah." Indeed, the Torah calls itself our "gift from the desert" (Numbers 21:18).

The Torah, however, also describes itself as Israel's "acquisition" (Proverbs 4:2), as well as "the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4).

So which is it -- gift, acquisition or inheritance?

The Torah is an acquisition for which we must struggle and toil, which becomes ours through diligent study and meticulous observance. As such, we experience the deep sense of fulfillment that only a fully-earned achievement can bring.

The Torah is a divine gift, for its wisdom is above and beyond anything our finite selves could attain. As such, it wakens our most transcendent strivings, elevating us above our temporality and mortality, making of us infinitely more than we are on our own.

And the Torah is our inheritance, our birth-right. As such it is always ours. Even when we do not earn it. Even when we close ourselves to the gift of it being bestowed upon us from above. For it is of a piece with our essence.

Slice of LIFE

LOYAL COMMUNIST COMRADES

The following true story is known to us from a Russian Jewish woman who was present at the court case described below.

In 1924, the Russian masses, most of whom had been fervently religious before the Revolution in 1917, were in the process of being weaned away from their religion. But, there were many - even Communist party members - who remained faithful to their religions. Many Jews retained outward appearances to show that they were good Communists, but deep within them burned the eternal Jewish spark.

One such man created a sensation in the town of Gomel. Soon after his wife gave birth to their first child, a son, he said that he was suing for divorce. The reason: his wife had the baby circumcised!

The Communists were enthusiastic about having a chance to display to Gomel's Jewish population how a young man was prepared to sacrifice family ties for his party. They immediately planned a public trial. The trial was well publicized and when the day arrived the galleries were filled to overflowing.

The judge, who was himself Jewish, called the husband first. "Tell me, Comrade, are you a loyal party member?" he asked.

"I am indeed." And the husband described his important post in the governmental hierarchy.

"Until now, have you loved your wife? Have you been on good terms?" asked the judge.

The husband replied in the affirmative.

"What then, Comrade, has happened that you wish to divorce her?" the judge asked.

"Comrade Judge, my wife gave birth to a son. I looked forward to bringing him up as a true Communist. One day, I came home and to my utter consternation found that he had been circumcised! Was I supposed to stand guard all day, neglecting my important work for the advancement of communism? I hold her responsible!" the husband said emotionally.

"Let the wife step forward," the judge ordered. "Comrade, are you guilty of perpetrating this heinous crime?"

"Comrade Judge," she wept, "it isn't true. He won't listen to me. We live in a single, rented room in someone else's house. One

day I had to go shopping for food and I left my baby sleeping in his crib. I made sure to lock the door before I left. It took me longer than I expected. Just imagine how frightened I was when I found the door of our room wide open! I looked around and saw that nothing had been touched. But suddenly, I realized that my baby was gone!

"There was no one else in the house, no one to ask, no sign of any theft. I ran out into the street like a madwoman when I suddenly saw my parents and my husband's parents. Imagine my relief when I noticed my mother carrying the baby. She tried to calm me; they had just taken the baby for a walk, she told me.

"I believed them. But when I brought him home and changed his diaper I had a fit. How could my parents do this to me?" she screamed.

"Terrible," the judge shook his head.

"Unbelievable that in the modern Soviet Republic these religious practices still exist. Let the child's grandparents come forward."

All four grandparents stood together. Both grandfathers had grey beards and wore long black coats. The grandmothers' heads were covered with kerchiefs. One of the grandmothers, who knew a little more Russian than the others, spoke for them all.

"Honourable Comrade, I admit that I can't see what's wrong with our grandchild having a circumcision like all Jewish boys. But you should know that we didn't mean to do it. It just happened."

The public galleries reverberated with howls of laughter. The judge called for silence and asked sarcastically. "How, Babushka, does a circumcision just happen?"

"We took our little grandson out for some fresh air. We came to streets where we hardly ever go. Suddenly a young rabbi walked over to us, whom we never saw before and asked, 'Don't you want your grandson to have a bris mila like every Jewish boy?' 'Of course,' we answered. So he quickly took out a knife and before we knew what was happening our grandson was circumcised!"

The gales of laughter from the galleries couldn't be contained.

"Babushka, have you finished your ridiculous story?" asked the judge.

"I have told you all," said the grandmother. "But I want you to know that I am very happy."

"Happy?" roared the judge. "About what?"

"Happy that our dear little grandson had

a bris mila. Just like you, your honour! Aren't you proud to be a Jew?"

Try as he might, the judge could do nothing to stop the titters and snickers. Eventually the courtroom was brought to order. The husband was called back to the witness stand.

"Tell me, Comrade, hero of communism, if not for this most unfortunate affair, is there any other reason you have for divorcing your wife?"

"No, Comrade Judge, none whatsoever."

"If I tell you that she is not guilty, will you consider returning to her?"

"Of course, Comrade," said the husband.

"Then, here is the decision. Your wife is innocent. It is entirely the fault of the grandparents who persist in observing these religious practices. They will be fined 50 rubles. This is the decision of the Soviet Court of Gomel."

As the spectators filed out of court, they couldn't help but admire the ingenious plan of the young party-member and his wife to have their son circumcised while still retaining his high-ranking job and party membership.

The bizarre story about the stranger was, of course, to protect the mohel's identity. But, it was no secret to anyone; everyone knew the one mohel left in the city, Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi Shagalov, a young rabbi who had studied for ten years in the famous yeshiva in Lubavitch, and was one of the chasidim left in Russia by the Previous Rebbe to continue with Lubavitcher activities at great personal sacrifice.

* * *

In the early hours of the morning, on the 4th of Tishrei, 5698 (September 9, 1937), while still up and studying Chasidus, as was his nightly custom, Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi Shagalov was arrested for spreading Judaism in Russia and less than five months later, on the 25th of Tevet, was shot to death in prison at the young age of forty.

In 1953, his wife Rebbetzin Mariasha Shagalov, settled in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York, where she lived until her passing, at age 106, on 20 Tevet, 5767 (January 10, 2007).

By the grace of G-d, she merited to enjoy the blessings of many descendants (including great-great-grandchildren), all of them chasidim, and many of them emissaries of the Lubavitcher Rebbe on all five continents. At the time of her passing she had nearly 600 descendants!

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ISSUE 1021

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The two sets of tablets that were given to the Jews signify two aspects of G-d's presence in this world: the 1st time the ten commandments were said by G-d himself, the stress here is of the greatness of the revelation, yet it is too abundant to relate to the world, as appose to the 2nd time it was said by Moshe, a human being, the stress here is a G-dly revelation which can manifest itself in the limitations of the world.

The G-dly revelation that will shine and reside in the world when Moshiach will come will be of a great phenomenon, it will include both those aspects; on the one hand it will be of the greatest revelation, yet it will still manifest itself in the world.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

This letter was written to Mrs. B. Shifrin and the members of Zeminer Gemilas Chesed Ladies Auxiliary.

B"H, [1]Adar II, 5703

Greetings and blessings,

With great thanks, we would like to acknowledge your contribution of \$10 for the Beis Rivkah girls' school on Chester St. which is one of the numerous girls' schools founded by Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch.

It is our hope that this is not a one-time or a sporadic contribution, but rather the beginning of an ongoing interest and support for the important and holy work of the Beis Rivkah schools, an institution dedicated to the Jewish education of the daughters of our people.

Dear women: In these difficult times for our people, we must remember what transpired in the time of the first Haman who rose up against the Jews. The ones who evoked G-d's help for the Jewish people at that time and caused Haman's downfall were a woman and a man: Esther and Mordechai.

Esther did not focus on the comfort she enjoyed nor the fact that she was not in danger. Instead, she risked her life to try to save her brothers and sisters. But before she tried to nullify Haman's decree, she told Mordechai: "Go gather together all the Jews," so that they should pray. And our Sages relate that Mordechai collected tens of thousands of Jewish children and studied Torah with them.

In the present time of crisis, when a terrible Haman has risen up against us, [we must know] that this Haman will also have a bitter end, and that "the Jews will enjoy light, happiness, gladness, and honor." Each one of us, however, must work so that this will take place a moment earlier.

Every Jewish woman must come out with a call: "Go, collect." Bring together Jewish children and youth. Educate them in the spirit of self-sacrifice for Yiddishkeit and for the Torah. Women, see to it that the means necessary to support the institutions [for Jewish education] will not be lacking. Make sure that our sons and daughters grow up as Jews, as Torah-true Jews.

This resolution will bring the Hamans of all generations a very speedy downfall.

Dear women: See that your daughters follow your path through receiving a proper Torah education and a proper upbringing. See that the proper institutions have the potential to continue to exist and increase the number of their students so that not one Jewish daughter will be left outside. In the Beis Rivkah schools, Jewish daughters will be educated as Jewish and Torah-true sisters and women, the mothers of the future generation. Therefore, by helping the Beis Rivkah schools, you help us secure [the involvement of] our youth, our future. And in the merit of this, we will merit the downfall of the present day Haman very speedily and enjoy the true light and happiness.

With the blessing "Immediately to teshuvah, immediately to Redemption,"

in the name of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson,
Chairman of the Executive Committee
N. Mindel, Secretary

CUSTOMS CORNER

1. It is forbidden to pass 4 'amos' in front of one who is citing the Shmone Esrei lest he may lose his concentration. Even to sit near him is forbidden for when one is praying the ground he is standing on is 'holy ground' and it is disrespectful to sit near him then, unless the person sitting is learning or praying.
2. If one was uttering the prayers with his lips but was not able to actually hear himself, he none the less fulfilled his obligation of prayer. If he did not move his lips at all however, he did not fulfil his obligation.
3. One must be careful not to pray when he is drunk to the extent that he cannot speak properly in front of a king, for then his prayer is disgusted.
4. If a holy book fell on the ground while he is in the middle of Shmone esrei, if it is distracting him from focusing on prayers he may pick it up when he reaches the end of that blessing.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming Wednesday is the anniversary of the passing day of Rebetsin Chaya Mushka, the Lubavitcher Rebbe's wife of blessed memory.

Rebetsin Chaya Mushka was a righteous woman indeed; the Rebbe once commented about her that "only G-d understands how great she really was".

Here is one lesson - the Rebbe related - that we can learn from the Rebetsin, in fact it is hinted in her names;

Our sages say "G-d desired a resting place for himself down below", this is the intent of creation and this will ultimately be completed when Moshiach comes.

There is a primary element - or rather attitude- needed in making this resting place, and in fact we can learn them from the names of the Rebetsin ; Chaya - life, the resting place must be a lively one, but even more so there must be the concept of Mushka, Mushka is Yidish for a particular spice and incense, the abode for G-d in this world must not only be prepared with the basic necessity's needed to make a dwelling place rather there must be the element of beatifying it even more than needed, like the incense which is there only to add a good smell.

And this we find particularly by Jewish women, they are the ones to 'beautify' the Jewish home - their personal abode for the divine presence, they are the ones that plant in to their kids that deep feeling and passion to Judaism, and they are the ones that light up the house with the light of the Shabbos candles etc. etc.

May we all take a lesson from Rebetsin Chaya Mushka and excel in 'beautifying' this world for G-d to rest in it with the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days

J. I. Gurtman

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Rabbi Yoel Sirkush (1561-1640) was a master of all aspects of the Torah; both revealed and mystical and, as well as being a Talmudic and legal genius, he also was familiar with the 'upper' worlds.

One of his pupils was a wealthy Jew by the name of Yosele HaGvir. This Yosele could have been a teacher in his own right, but he was first and foremost a devoted pupil of the great master Rabbi Sirkush and did whatever the Rabbi told him to do without hesitation....almost.

It so happened that one day there appeared in Rabbi Sirkush's Synagogue a distraught Jew by the name of Reb Shaya who asked if he could meet with the Rabbi. When he was told that he would have to wait he began pouring out his heart to whoever would listen.

He lived in a nearby town and made his living by running the inn he rented from the local Baron, selling liquor and sandwiches to the local population. But just a few days ago the baron appeared and announced he was doubling the rent and if he didn't get paid within a few days Reb Shaya would have to leave! Poor Reb Shaya almost lost his mind! He had a wife and seven children! What would he do?! Someone told him about Rabbi Sirkush, and that's why he came.

The Rabbi's secretary suddenly appeared and told him that the Rabbi could see him.

Reb Shaya entered the Rabbi's study and repeated his sad story upon which Rabbi Sirkush replied. "Go to my follower; Yosele HaGvir. Tell him I sent you and that he should talk to the baron. Yosele will be able to help."

Reb Shaya left the Rebbe with hope in his heart. He only had to find this Yosele and everything would be all right.

But when he found him, Yosele was packing his bags to go to the great bazaar in Krakow (the town where Rabbi Sirkush presided) and the delay of a day or two required to travel to the baron, get an audience and convince him not to raise the rent would cost him a fortune.

All the begging, pleading and arguing of Reb Shaya fell on deaf ears. Yosele just kept replying, "Listen, my friend. No reason to worry. Man's yearly income is determined when the Shofar is blown on Rosh HaShanna, speeding now won't help. Just have a little trust in G-d!" Yosele shook Reb Shaya's hand and set off to the Bazaar.

But when Reb Shaya returned home his wife really gave it to him over the head. "Did you tell him we have only a few more days?! That man was a follower of the Rabbi... why, you should have gone back to the Rabbi and told him to force him to go now! Now we are going to get evicted! Where will we go!?" And so it was, non-stop, for the next four days!

After the Bazaar was over, Yosele HaGvir didn't even return home. He didn't forget Reb Shaya and travelled directly to the Baron's house certain in his heart (but with a small doubt in his mind) that it wasn't too late and his efforts, G-d willing, would succeed.

And sure enough, he was right! He immediately entered the Baron's castle, met with him, had a few l'chaim's (drinks), and then not only convinced him to let Reb Shaya stay but even to lower his rent! From there, Yosele travelled to Reb Shaya to tell him the good news.

Ten years later Yosele HaGvir passed away and several days later appeared to his teacher Rabbi Sirkush in a dream! He explained that he had been granted permission from heaven to relate what had happened to him when he got up there and he requested that the Rabbi pass the message on.

When he reached heaven he found himself in a long line waiting to be judged. The Judges were great holy men that he didn't recognize and each time someone was tried masses of angels and monstrous devils created by their good and bad deeds respectively, came to testify for or against that person.

When his turn finally came his judgment did not take long because he had done so many good deeds and helped so many people. But just as he was about to be escorted into heaven a large angel suddenly appeared and blocked the way!

"Who are you?" He asked the angel "And why are you stopping me?"

The Angel answered "I am the good deed you did for one 'Reb Shaya' about ten years ago. Remember?"

Well, you saved his life, but because you delayed and caused him and his wife so much anxiety therefore I have been ordered to prevent your entrance for the time you delayed in the Bazaar instead of going to the Baron immediately!

"You should have said to yourself what you said to Reb Shaya; that your livelihood is determined on Rosh Hashanna, and rushing off to the Bazaar can't add or subtract!"

This comes to teach us to not put off or delay the performance of a good deed.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And Yitro heard (Ex. 18:1)

Yitro was not the only one to hear of the miracles G-d had wrought for Israel, as it says, "The nations heard it and trembled." However, Yitro was the only one who acted upon what he heard and became a Jew. *(The Kotzker Rebbe)*

CANDLE LIGHTING: 10 FEBRUARY 2012

BEGINS		ENDS
8:07	MELBOURNE	9:06
7:58	ADELAIDE	8:55
6:19	BRISBANE	7:13
7:00	DARWIN	7:50
6:18	GOLD COAST	7:12
6:54	PERTH	7:50
7:36	SYDNEY	8:32
7:47	CANBERRA	8:44
8:06	LAUNCESTON	9:07
8:07	AUCKLAND	9:05
8:15	WELLINGTON	9:16
8:08	HOBART	9:10
7:18	BYRON BAY	8:13

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS YISRO
18 SHVAT • 11 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:07 PM
	MINCHA:	8:15 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:50 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10:09 AM
	MINCHA:	8:00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:06 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:15 PM
	MAARIV:	9:05 PM