

LAMPLIGHTER

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Vayeishev, recounts the birth of Peretz and Zerach, the twin offspring of Judah and Tamar. The Torah relates that when Zerach "put out his hand first," the midwife tied a red thread around it as a sign, saying, "This one came out first." But Zerach drew back his hand; Peretz "broke forth" and was the first to be born.

The Torah's stories are not merely historical accounts of our progenitors. Rather, by virtue of their inclusion, they allude to events occurring later in Jewish history and reveal teachings pertinent to us in every day and age.

Our Sages teach that, by right, Zerach should have been the firstborn of the two brothers. His birthright was forfeited, however, because of a grave sin one of his descendants would commit generations later, during the time of Joshua. The sin was so great, affecting all Jews, that the twins' birth order was switched, and Peretz was born first.

The twins' names hint to an even deeper significance. The name "Zerach" comes from the Hebrew for "shining forth," like the light of the sun which illuminates the entire world. "Peretz," literally "breaking forth," was the progenitor of King David, from whom Moshiach will descend. On a more profound level, "Zerach" and "Peretz" stand for the two types of service of G-d - the service of tzadikim (righteous), and the service of baalei teshuva (penitents).

Each type of service has an advantage not present in the other. The tzadik's worship of G-d - "Zerach" - is steady and dependable. Each day, the tzadik methodically ascends the spiritual ladder, attaining higher levels of holiness. The service of "Zerach," however, is that of those whose yearning toward G-d occurs only after an initial distancing. At such times, the baal teshuva's thirst for holiness is even greater than the tzadik's, and his service is even more impassioned. The service of the baal teshuva contains the power to "break forth" and overcome the harshest of limitations. "In the place where baalei teshuva stand, even perfect tzadikim cannot."

G-d desires every Jew to serve Him in righteousness; accordingly, Zerach's hand was extended first. But because the world was created in such a way as to accommodate sin, it was necessary for Peretz to be born first, indicating the value of the service of the baal teshuva.

Furthermore, the Final Redemption is dependent on the service of the baal teshuva, which is why Moshiach is a descendent of Peretz. The long Exile served to expiate the sins which led to the destruction of the Holy Temple, thus placing the Jews in the category of baalei teshuva. Indeed, Maimonides states that when the Jewish nation sincerely returns to G-d, "immediately they will be redeemed."

Adapted from Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Vol. 30.

The Lonely Moment

By Yosef Y. Jacobson

A rabbi was bothered by the fact that he had never been able to eat pork. He flew to a remote tropical island and checked into a hotel. He immediately got himself a table at the finest restaurant and ordered the most expensive pork dish on the menu. As he eagerly awaited it to be served, he was shocked to hear his name called from across the restaurant. He looked up to see ten of his congregants approaching. Just his luck - they'd chosen the same time to visit the same remote location.

At that moment, the waiter came with a huge silver tray bearing a whole roasted pig with an apple in its mouth. The rabbi looked up sheepishly at his congregants and said, "Wow - you order an apple in this place, and look how it's served!"

This week's Parsha tells the dramatic story of how Joseph, as an extremely handsome young man, attracted the imagination of his master's wife. She desperately tries to engage him in a relationship, yet he steadfastly refuses her.

Then came the fateful day "when he entered the house to do his work, and none of the household staff was inside. She grabbed him by his cloak and pleaded, 'Lie with me.' He ran away from her, leaving his cloak in her hand, and he fled outside."

Humiliated and furious, she used the cloak as evidence that it was he who attempted to violate her. Her husband, Potiphar, had Joseph sent to prison, where he spent the next twelve years of his life until, through an astonishing turn of events, he was appointed viceroy of Egypt.

The question is: why was this episode recorded in detail in the Torah? The objective of these Torah chapters is to relate the story of how the first Jewish family ended up in Egypt. Thus, we read about Joseph's sale as a slave to Egypt, his prison sentence and his encounter there with the king's ministers. This ultimately leads to his release from prison and designation as viceroy of the country in a critical time of famine, which in turn causes his father and entire family to relocate to Egypt.

Why did the Torah find it necessary to relate the story of Joseph's ugly struggle with his master's wife? Why is it important to for us to know the detailed episode that caused his imprisonment?

The lesson we learn is, during our lonely moments of misery, when we, too, may feel that nobody cares for us and we are alone in a huge, indifferent universe, we ought never fall prey to the easy outlet of immoral gratification. We must remember that something very real and absolute is at stake at every moment of our existence and in every act we do.

If you only open your eyes, you will see the visage of your father whispering to you through the silent winds of history that you are not an isolated creature in a titanic world whose behaviour is inconsequential. At this very moment, G-d needs you and me to bring redemption to His world.

Slice of LIFE

The Dog Tag Dilemma

By Doron Kornbluth

Do you know what a Protestant B is? I know what a Protestant is, and I know what a Catholic is, and I know what a Jew is . . . but until recently, I had never heard of a Protestant B.

I learned what a Protestant B is from an essay by Debra Darvick that appeared in an issue of Hadassah Magazine. It is a chapter from a book she is working on about the American Jewish experience. This essay is about the experience of retired Army Major Mike Neulander, who now lives in Newport News, Virginia, and who is now a Judaic silversmith. This is his story, Dog tags.

When you get right down to it, the military's dog tag classification forced me to reclaim my Judaism.

In the fall of 1990, things were heating up in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. I had been an Army captain and a helicopter maintenance test pilot for a decade, and received notice that I would be transferred to the First Cavalry Division, which was on alert for the Persian Gulf War.

Consequently, I also got wind of the Department of Defense "dog tag dilemma" vis-à-vis Jewish personnel. Then as now, Jews were forbidden by Saudi law to enter the country. But our Secretary of Defense flat-out told the king of Saudi Arabia, "We have Jews in our military. They've trained with their units and they're going. Blink and look the other way."

With Kuwait occupied and the Iraqis at his border, King Fahd did the practical thing. We shipped out, but there was still the issue of classification. Normally the dog tags of Jewish servicemen are imprinted with the word "Jewish." But Defense, fearing that this would put Jewish soldiers at further risk should they be captured on Iraqi soil, substituted the classification "Protestant B" on the tags. I didn't like the whole idea of classifying Jews as Protestant anything, and so I decided to leave my dog tag alone. I figured if I were captured, it was in G d's hands. Changing my tags was tantamount to denying my religion, and I couldn't swallow that.

In September 1990 I went off to defend a country that I was prohibited from entering. The "Jewish" on my dog tag remained as

clear and unmistakable as the American star on the hood of every Army truck.

A few days after my arrival, the Baptist chaplain approached me. "I just got a secret message through channels," he said.

"There's going to be a Jewish gathering. A holiday? Simkatoro or something like that. You want to go? It's at 1800 hours at Dhahran Airbase."

Simkatoro turned out to be Simchat Torah, a holiday that hadn't registered on my religious radar in eons. Services were held in absolute secrecy in a windowless room in a cinder block building. The chaplain led a swift and simple service. We couldn't risk singing or dancing, but Rabbi Ben Romer had managed to smuggle in a bottle of Manischewitz. Normally I can't stand the stuff, but that night, the wine tasted of Shabbat and family and Seders of long ago. My soul was warmed by the forbidden alcohol and by the memories swirling around me and my fellow soldiers. We were strangers to one another in a land stranger than any of us had ever experienced, but for that brief hour, we were home.

Only Americans would have had the chutzpah to celebrate Simchat Torah under the noses of the Saudis. Irony and pride twisted together inside me like barbed wire. Celebrating my Judaism that evening made me even prouder to be an American, thankful once more for the freedoms we have. I had only been in Saudi Arabia a week, but I already had a keen understanding of how restrictive its society was.

Soon after, things began coming to a head. The next time I was able to do anything remotely Jewish was Chanukah. Maybe it was coincidence, or maybe it was G d's hand that placed a Jewish colonel in charge of our unit. Colonel Lawrence Schneider relayed messages of Jewish gatherings to us immediately. Had a non-Jew been in that position, the information would likely have taken a back seat to a more pressing issue. Like war. But it didn't.

When notice of the Chanukah party was decoded, we knew about it at once. The first thing we saw when we entered the tent was food, tons of it. Care packages from the States-cookies, latkes, sour cream and applesauce, and cans and cans of gefilte fish. The wind was blowing dry across the tent, but inside there was an incredible feeling of celebration. As Rabbi Romer talked about the theme of Chanukah and the ragtag bunch of Maccabee soldiers fighting Jewry's oppressors thousands of years ago,

it wasn't hard to make the connection to what lay ahead of us. There, in the middle of the desert, inside an olive green tent, we felt like we were the Maccabees. If we had to go down, we were going to go down fighting, as they did.

We blessed the candles, acknowledging the King of the Universe who commanded us to kindle the Chanukah lights. We said the second prayer, praising G d for the miracles He performed, in those days and now. And we sang the third blessing, the Shehecheyanu, thanking G d for keeping us in life and for enabling us to reach this season.

We knew war was imminent. All week we had received reports of mass destruction, projections of the chemical weapons that were likely to be unleashed. Intelligence estimates put the first rounds of casualties at 12,500 soldiers. I heard those numbers and thought, "That's my whole division!" I sat back in my chair, my gefilte fish cans at my feet. They were in the desert, about to go to war, singing songs of praise to G d who had saved our ancestors in battle once before.

The feeling of unity was as pervasive as our apprehension, as real as the sand that found its way into everything from our socks to our toothbrushes. I felt more Jewish there on that lonely Saudi plain, our tanks and guns at the ready, than I had ever felt back home in synagogue.

That Chanukah in the desert solidified for me the urge to reconnect with my Judaism. I felt religion welling up inside me. Any soldier will tell you that there are no atheists in foxholes, and I know that part of my feelings were tied to the looming war and my desire to get with G d before the unknown descended in the clouds of battle. It sounds corny, but as we downed the latkes and cookies and wiped the last of the applesauce from our plates, everyone grew quiet, keenly aware of the link with history, thinking of what we were about to do and what had been done by soldiers like us so long ago.

The trooper beside me stared ahead at nothing in particular, absentmindedly fingering his dog tag. "How'd you classify?" I asked, nodding to my tag. Silently, he withdrew the metal rectangle and its beaded chain from beneath his shirt and held it out for me to read. Like mine, his read, "Jewish."

Somewhere in a military depot someplace, I am sure that there must be boxes and boxes of dog tags, still in their wrappers, all marked "Protestant B."

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ISSUE 1064

MOSHIACH MATTERS

There is a Talmudic statement: "We are day workers."

Day means light. Our task is to spread light, to illuminate the world with the light of the Torah. Evil and darkness do not get swept out with a broom. By creating more light, the night and darkness will disappear by themselves. The novelty of the Messianic era is that not only will darkness be pushed away, but darkness itself will be transformed and shine.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
On the eve of Chanukah, 5741 [1980]
Brooklyn, NY

To all Participants in the Public Lighting of the Chanukah Menorah in the USA

Greeting and Blessing!

Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, recalls the victory-more than 2100 years ago-of a militarily weak but spiritually strong Jewish people over the mighty forces of a ruthless enemy that had overrun the Holy Land and threatened to engulf the land and its people in darkness.

The miraculous victory-culminating with the dedication of the Sanctuary in Jerusalem and the rekindling of the Menorah which had been desecrated and extinguished by the enemy-has been celebrated annually ever since during these eight days of Chanukah, especially by lighting the Chanukah Menorah, also as a symbol and message of the triumph of freedom over oppression, of spirit over matter, of light over darkness.

It is a timely and reassuring message, for the forces of darkness are ever present. Moreover, the danger does not come exclusively from outside; it often lurks close to home, in the form of insidious erosion of time-honoured values and principles that are at the foundation of any decent human society. Needless to say, darkness is not chased away by brooms and sticks, but by illumination. Our sages said, "A little light expels a lot of darkness."

The Chanukah Lights remind us in a most obvious way that illumination begins at home, within oneself and one's family, by increasing and intensifying the light of Torah and Mitzvos in the everyday experience, even as the Chanukah Lights are kindled in growing numbers from day to day. But though it begins at home, it does not stop there. Such is the nature of light that when one kindles the Chanukah Lights are expressly meant to illuminate the "outside," symbolically alluding to the duty to bring light also to those who, for one reason or another, still walk in darkness.

What is true of the individual is true of a nation, especially this great United States, united under G-d, and generously blessed by G-d with material as well as spiritual riches. It is surely the duty and privilege of this Nation to promote all the forces of light both at home and abroad, and in a steadily growing measure.

Let us pray that the message of the Chanukah Lights will illuminate the everyday life of everyone personally, and of the society at large, for a brighter life in every respect, both materially and spiritually.

With esteem and blessing in the spirit of Chanukah
M. Schneerson

CUSTOMS CORNER

The basic elements of a kosher menorah are eight holders for oil or candles and an additional holder, set apart from the rest, for the *shamash* ("attendant") candle.

The Chanukah lights can either be candle flames or oil-fueled. Since the miracle of Chanukah happened with olive oil - the little cruse of oil that lasted for eight days - an oil menorah is preferable to a candle one, and olive oil is the ideal fuel. Cotton wicks are preferred because of the smooth flame they produce.

The eight candles of the menorah must be arranged in a straight, even line, not in a zigzag or with some lights higher than others. If it is an oil menorah, the oil cups must hold enough oil to burn for the required time - at least 30 minutes on weeknights, and up to one-and-a-half hours on Friday evening. If it is a candle menorah, the candles should be large enough to burn for the required time.

On Friday afternoon, the lighting of the Chanukah lights precedes the lighting of the Shabbat candles. One should be careful to use sufficient oil to ensure that they remain lit for at least half an hour after the appearance of the stars, as usual. On *Motza'ei Shabbat* (Saturday night) the Chanukah lights are lit after Havdalah. This year the first night is Saturday December 8th.

A WORD

from the Director

Chanukah is connected with Chinuch, "education." This implies that, first and foremost, a person must involve himself with the education of his own children, both his sons and daughters, by teaching them about the holiday and training them to observe its Mitzvos. (In regard to sons, even those under bar-mitzvah age, this involves lighting the Chanukah candles. It is not customary for daughters below bas-mitzvah to light candles. Nevertheless, it is proper to train them in other aspects of the observance of the festival. Indeed, our Sages stressed how women are obligated in all aspects of the holiday's observance since the miracle also involved a woman.

Similarly, the children should be given Chanukah gelt. This custom should be carried out at least twice throughout the holiday and if possible every day. (Needless to say, money itself should not be given on Shabbos.)

Similarly, since Chanukah is connected with "illuminating the public thoroughfare," it is an appropriate time to devote one's self to reaching out to those Jewish children who do not receive any Jewish education, who study in "public schools." We must try to bring them into a program of Jewish education. In particular, efforts should be made to use the summer vacation they are given to involve them in a program of Torah study.

These efforts should be expanded until one educates the world at large, spreading Torah and Mitzvos among Jews and the seven Mitzvos given to Noach and his descendants among the gentiles, and in this way, reveal how the entire world was created only for the purpose of expressing G-d's glory. This will be realized in the Messianic redemption when, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover up the ocean bed."

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

ONE HUNDRED PLUS

The Roman Emperor Hadrian was a cruel and wicked man. It was under his oppressive regime that the Bar Kochba revolt broke out, which ultimately led to destruction of the city of Betar. However, Hadrian was not without a sense of humour, albeit a malicious one.

Once, during one of the Emperor's periodic visits to the Holy Land, he was strolling through an orchard in Tiberias when he came across an old man. The elderly Jew with the long white beard was obviously well on in years, yet he was busily planting saplings in the ground. "Ancient one!" the Roman Emperor called out to him sarcastically. "You must have slacked off in your youth, and thus you need to work so hard in your old age!"

"No, your Majesty," the Jew replied. "I worked plenty hard when I was younger, and I see no reason to stop now. G-d willing, I will continue as long as G-d will give me strength."

"Please tell me, grandfather," Hadrian urged, "how old are you?"

"Today is my one hundredth birthday."

"Then surely," Hadrian persisted in taunting him, "you can't expect to enjoy the fruits of your labour. Will you not be in your grave by the time these trees bear fruit?"

"Everything is in G-d's hands," the Jew answered. "If G-d wants it to happen, it will happen. But even if it doesn't, my work is not in vain. In the same way my fathers toiled on my behalf, my labour will benefit future generations."

"Then here's to your good health," the Emperor said in parting, "And if you're still alive when these fruits ripen, let me know."

"I will be happy to fulfill the Emperor's command, G-d willing," the old Jew replied.

Years passed, and the young saplings grew into sturdy fig trees. Indeed, the old man lived to eat juicy and delicious fruit, and continued to enjoy vigorous health. The time had come to fulfill his promise to the Emperor. He filled a basket with figs and travelled to the emperor's palace.

After some initial difficulties getting past the royal guard the old man was granted an audience, but the Emperor did not recognize him. "What do you want, old man?" he asked impatiently. "And what's that in your basket?"

The old Jew reminded him of their previous encounter, and the promise the Emperor had extracted from him. The basket, he explained, was full of succulent figs for his Majesty's pleasure.

The Emperor was shocked. After all, the elderly Jew had already been ancient at the time of their last meeting. The Emperor ordered a golden chair to be brought for the old man to sit on. He instructed that the basket be filled with gold in exchange for the figs.

The Emperor's attendants were very surprised at the honour being paid the old Jew, until he related the story. "If the Creator saw fit to grant him such a long life," Hadrian admitted, "it must mean that he was worthy. Is it then not proper that I too should accord him honour?"

The old man returned home with much pomp and circumstance, and all his neighbours came out to greet him.

When the old man returned with a basketful of gold, his neighbour's wife shouted at her husband, saying "Look at your neighbour! All he brought the emperor was a couple of figs, and he became rich from it! And you - you still sit home earning next to nothing! Why can't you make a fortune from our fruit trees too?"

Goaded by his wife's prompting, the neighbour filled a big sack with figs, loaded it onto his donkey, and rode to the palace.

"I heard that the emperor is fond of figs and exchanges them for gold dinars," he told the palace guards.

When Hadrian was told about the man's words, he ordered, "Let him be made to stand at the palace gate. I command that anybody who enters or leaves shall throw the figs he brought in his face!"

The emperor's order was meticulously observed by a sneering and amusement-hungry populace.

At night, the man was finally permitted to leave. He rode home bruised, shamed, and fuming with rage. Upon seeing his wife, he threatened her, "You will yet suffer for having caused my degradation with your bad advice!"

He told her what he had endured, and she responded in bitter humour, "Why should that annoy you? Go, boast before your mother that today you had a stroke of good luck. You were fortunate to have presented the emperor with figs rather than etrogim. Moreover, the figs were soft rather than hard and green - or else I would never have seen you back alive!"

From this story it is self-evident the reward of trust in G-d and hard work, and by contrast the damage and defame jealousy can cause.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And they took him, and cast him into a pit; and the pit was empty; there was no water in it (37:24)

From the implication of what is said, "And the pit was empty," do I not know that there was no water in it? What then is taught by, "there was no water in it"? There was no water, but there were snakes and scorpions in it. (*Talmud, Shabbat 22a*)

Similarly, the mind and heart of man are never empty. If there is no life-nourishing "water", Torah, there are "snakes and scorpions in it", foreign thoughts. (*The Chassidic Masters*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 7 DECEMBER 2012



BEGINS		ENDS
8:14	MELBOURNE	9:20
8:01	ADELAIDE	9:04
6:16	BRISBANE	7:14
6:45	DARWIN	7:38
6:15	GOLD COAST	7:14
6:55	PERTH	7:56
7:38	SYDNEY	8:40
7:50	CANBERRA	8:58
8:17	LAUNCESTON	9:26
8:12	AUCKLAND	9:17
8:25	WELLINGTON	9:35
8:21	HOBART	9:32
7:16	BYRON BAY	8:15

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYEISHEV
23 KISLEV • 7 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:14 PM
	MINCHA:	8:25 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:00 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:31 AM
	MOLED MONTH OF TEVES:	
	13 DECEMBER 2012	4:09 & 11 CHALAKIM PM
	MINCHA:	8:10 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:::	9:20 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:15 PM
	MAARIV:	9:30 PM