

LAMPLIGHTER

21 Shevat
Yisro

1072

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

As narrated in this week's Torah portion, Yisro, something most unusual occurred when G-d descended on Mount Sinai to give the Torah to the Jewish people. "And all the people saw the thunders," the Torah states. "They saw what is heard, and heard what is seen," elaborates Rabbi Akiva.

What an amazing phenomenon (the technical term for which is known as "synaesthesia")! But why was such a great miracle necessary to accompany the giving of the Torah? What possible benefit could be gained from seeing what is heard and hearing what is seen?

To understand what occurred, let us examine the concepts of hearing and seeing and the different ways in which they impart information to us. A person acquires knowledge through having witnessed something with his own two eyes or through hearing the information second hand from someone else. Yet there is a fundamental difference between the two.

Our sense of sight verifies external reality in the clearest and most convincing manner. An individual who has actually seen something needs no further proof, he is as convinced as he can be. Hearing something, however, is a much less definite and absolute way to acquire knowledge, leaving room for later doubts as to what was really heard. (Incidentally, this is the reason behind the principle that "a witness cannot serve as judge": a judge must be able to treat the defendant fairly, without harbouring preconceived notions; once he has already witnessed the defendant committing a certain act he can no longer do this.)

At the same time, our sense of sight is far more limited than our sense of hearing. A person can only perceive physical objects through seeing, whereas hearing enables us to understand a more abstract and spiritual reality.

In our world, reality appears to be only that which can be seen with the physical eye, with spiritual matters being relegated to the more abstract realm of hearing. What occurred at Mount Sinai was a reversal of this order - spiritual reality was more easily perceived and understood, and physical existence became more indistinct.

This phenomenon was not a special miracle wrought by G-d in honour of the occasion, but was merely the natural outcome of His revealing Himself at Mount Sinai. The reality of G-d's existence took centre stage at that moment in history; it was the physical world which seemed less sure of its existence.

This entire incident lasted only a short while. Immediately after the Revelation our perception of reality returned to its former state. The world was not yet ready for such G-dliness to be revealed on an ongoing basis.

But when Moshiach comes and the world reaches a state of perfection, this is precisely what will occur. "And the glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh will see" - the underlying G-dliness hidden within physical reality will be revealed and apparent to all, until even our physical flesh will be able to perceive this. At that time, we will no longer require abstract proofs of G-d's existence; our belief in Him will stem naturally from actually seeing the G-dliness around us.

From Likutei Sichot of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Vol. 6

Change? When All Excuses Fail...

By Mendy Wolf

A recovering alcoholic described the catalyst to his rehabilitation and recovery. "I thought alcohol could drown my sorrows," he said, "until I realized that sorrows float."

Human tendency is to blame our problems, mistakes and failures on everyone but ourselves: "If only I had grown up with more loving parents, I would have more self-esteem..." "If my teacher hadn't embarrassed me in second grade, I would have never ended up like this..." "If I hadn't been surrounded by such bad friends, I would be different..."

The giving of the Torah at Sinai was a monumental event. It was a moment in time that radically changed the world and left its mark on every human being. G-d had revealed Himself! G-d Himself appeared to millions of people and declared, "I am the L-rd your G-d."

No room for doubts or ambiguity: it was the "If only G-d would tell me He exists..." moment we all wish for.

But the continuation of the dream we all have - "...then I would never do anything wrong!" - did not materialize. Mere days after this awesome experience, the Jews succumbed. Afraid that Moses had abandoned them, they created a golden calf and began worshiping it. Never mind the "You shall not serve any other gods" they had just heard from the Almighty's voice. Forget the certainty and intense belief with which they had been filled. They were the same fallible human beings with doubts and temptations as always - and they failed.

Ultimately, no one can change our lives but ourselves. Just as alcohol cannot solve one's emotional challenges, inspiration cannot take the place of effort. Just as the giving of the Torah could not prevent the Jews from sinning, neither can better parents, teachers, friends or financial conditions. We and we alone, are the creators of our destiny. We have been granted free choice.

As a child, a famous Jewish sage watched as his home went up in flames. As he stood beside his mother, watching the last remnants of their house reduced to ash, he saw that she was crying inconsolably. "The family tree!" she exclaimed over and over. "The book that records our beautiful lineage! It is lost forever." The little boy comforted his mother, declaring, "Don't worry about that book. I will create a new family tree. I will establish a new lineage that you can be proud of."

Let us abandon the "if only I had..." and begin replacing it with "I will establish a new lineage." Let us not look past at what could have been, but rather forward at what must be. What could have been would not have changed things anyway. What will be is in our hands.

Slice of LIFE

The Twilight Stranger

By Bentzion Elisha

"There are three things this city is famous for," said the Ukrainian rabbi. "Odessa is famous for having the best Chazanim (cantors), the best Rabbanim (rabbis) and the best Ganovim (thieves)!"

"Please watch yourselves here," he warns us. "While you're walking around town, beware not to stay out past twilight because once the city gets dark, it isn't safe anymore..."

My friend, Meir, and I finally arrived in Odessa to help the local Chabad emissary for the Passover Seder's. We had gotten our visas at the very last minute. Being forced to go through much red tape attempting to make our way into the Former Soviet Union makes me wonder how we managed to get there in the first place. It was a miracle!

Passover came and went. Overall, it was very nice and, of course, we were kept very busy.

After all the potatoes are peeled and all is said and done, we find we have a little time on our hands.

We venture out into the city. We really enjoy soaking in the ambiance of this old world town as we search for Jews to inspire.

Funny, while walking around, we meet someone that recognizes me. He mistakes me for my father! That's always a compliment. He knew my father when we lived in Odessa many years ago and the facial resemblance opens the conversation. What a small world.

As usual, we get carried away just walking about, and then it occurs to us that it is getting dark. Suddenly we notice that all children and women are off the streets, and here we are, alone in the city, lost, with a wrinkled map in our hands to guide us.

Out of the blue, a tall man wearing a leather jacket walks towards us. The man looks like a skinhead. The rabbi's earlier warning rings in my ears, as this guy reeks of trouble.

I say "hello" in fluent Russian as I try to put our map away. We don't need to look completely like fish out of water.

He says hello, and asks where we are from. "I'm from Odessa originally," I tell him. His face changes to express disbelief.

"My father was born here, and my family lived here when I was a child."

"What are you looking for?" He cuts to the chase.

I tell him we are looking for Pochenko

Park, which we aren't, but I mention the first random name I remember from the map. We just have to lose this guy.

"I know where Pochenko Park is. It's very easy," he says.

"Do you see the alley by the side of the street? Well, you go down the dark alleyway and that will lead you to the dark seaside. Then you'll go up the road there which will lead you to the edge of Pochenko Park." He smugly looks at us.

Looking at the man knowingly, I reply, "The alley looks awfully dark. I would hate for something bad to happen to us there. Looking at our map also shows us that we can take the main road, which is lit up by street lights, and that will lead us straight to our destination. The main road is just four blocks away."

The man breaks into laughter and says, "You're smart. You're very smart." There is a menacing look in his eyes that express words left unsaid: "You stupid fool. It won't help you knowing the directions. The only direction you are heading in is being robbed."

All the conversation so far was in Russian. Meir, by my side has no idea of what is going on. Meir takes this brief moment of silence to push me to put Tefillin on our new friend, who he thinks is Jewish.

Why not? What is there to lose at this point, I say to myself. Perhaps we can make a soul connection.

"My name is Israel. What is your name?" I ask.

"My name is Senya," answers the local stranger.

"Where are you from, Senya?" I ask him.

"What do you mean?" he answers in a bewildered tone, as if to say: What do you mean 'where am I from?' Of course I'm from Odessa, nobody moves to Odessa, people move out of here!

"I'm from Odessa. I've always lived here," he answers.

"Odessa has had so many Jews living here for so many years that they inevitably left their mark. Everything here seems so Jewish, even the non-Jews have something Jewish about them here. Tell me, Senya, what's Jewish about you?" I ask innocently.

"Nothing." He hides his face for a second before he continues. "Nothing is Jewish about me. My mother is Jewish but I'm not."

"Senya, do you know what that means?" I ask him.

"What?" he scoffs. "What does it mean?"

"Senya, if your mother is Jewish, that makes you Jewish too."

Stunned, he immediately denies my statement.

"No, I'm not Jewish, I'm Ukrainian. It even says so in my passport. Do you want to see?"

He searches for some document to prove to me I'm wrong, unsuccessfully.

"Senya, I don't care what it says in your Ukrainian passport. According to Jewish law, if your mother is Jewish that makes you Jewish!"

Contemplating this new identity he has never considered his own, something inside him breaks. I can see it in his face. He is silent. I take the opportunity to continue.

"Senya, we have so much in common. Your father is from Odessa and my father is from Odessa, your mother is Jewish and my mother is Jewish, I'm a Jew and you're a Jew. We are practically family."

I offer my hand to shake his. We shake hands. He keeps my hand in his as he stares at me.

"Yes," he agrees. "I suppose we can say that."

"Itzhak, do you know why I stopped you this evening?" he asks. "Since we are practically family, I'll tell you."

I wanted to rob you. I saw you two rabbinical students, and thought to myself, 'Look at these two penguins; this will be easy money.'

Uneasily, I say, "I'm so glad you changed your mind."

The look in his eyes gets noticeably softer. "Yes, I guess I did change my mind," he says as he lets go of my hand. Then he looks down. Perhaps ashamed.

"Can you just give me \$20?" he begs. "I really need it. We are family after all, aren't we?"

"I don't have money on me, Senya," I tell him frankly. "However, if you want to stop by the Yeshiva later on, I'll make sure to have \$20 waiting for you."

"It's getting late, and we have to go," I inform our new friend.

"Let me walk you to the main street," he says. "It's dangerous here after dark..."

Senya walks us to the main road. Unlike most roads in Odessa, only the main streets are lit up by street lamps. We walk together into the light. We say goodbye to the twilight stranger as we safely walk back to the Yeshiva.

That night, we were leaving Odessa, heading to gravesites of Tzaddikim, righteous masters, in the Ukraine. Funny timing. Our meeting with Senya was destined. We didn't forget to leave a \$20 bill for Senya with one of the boys in the Yeshiva. We were hoping that perhaps Senya will somehow join the Yeshiva in Odessa, and who knows? Maybe he will become a Jewish leader himself one day.

How wondrous it is that by the mere act of reaching out to another Jew, we were not only saved from robbery, but we somehow managed to steal the heart of a thief.

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ISSUE 1072

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Goodness and holiness are eternal. Hence, when a Jew fulfills a *Mitzvah*, "in the upper spheres, the union [between the soul and G-d] is eternal." Evil, by contrast, has no true existence: it is no more than a concealment of the Divine light. Hence, when a person is punished for a sin (for this cleanses the resultant blemish), or when he repents, the evil ceases to exist.

Since good is eternal, all the accumulated good of all the past generations still exists. This is why now, specifically, we will soon be privileged to witness the coming of *Moshiach*, even though superficial appearances might indicate that "the generation is unworthy."



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

20th of Tishrei, 5718 [1958]

This is in reply to your several questions:

You asked, how long is it since I assumed my present office?

This was after the year of aveilut [mourning] from the day my father-in-law of saintly memory passed on, on the 10th of Shevat, 5710.

You asked, why do Jewish women wear a sheitel [wig]?

You should bear in mind, first of all, that when it comes to any one of the many mitzvot which G-d has given us, no man can understand all the reasons for it, because a human understanding is limited, while G-d's Wisdom is without end.

For example: A small child could not understand the wisdom of a big professor, even if the professor tried to explain it to the child. Remember, both of them are human beings, and the only difference between the professor and the child is in the number of years each one of them has been learning things: The baby has been learning for a number of days only, and the professor has been studying for many years. Yet it would be silly for the baby or child to ask to understand a deep and difficult theory of the professor. Much, very much greater is the difference between a man, who was created by G-d, and the Creator Himself, Who is eternal, and Whose Wisdom can in no way be compared to that of man, even the wisest of men, who has been learning even to 120 years. Therefore, the wise man and the smart child will not question or worry about all the reasons of a Mitzvah, but will do it willingly and joyfully.

However, there are mitzvot where G-d in His kindness has disclosed a reason, only one or two of the infinite number of reasons. In connection with the sheitel, one of the reasons (but by no means the only one) is that it makes the marriage between a man and his wife a holy union, and the two of them become like one. This brings them G-d's additional blessings making it a happy marriage, and that the children should also be well and happy, and well provided for in all their needs.

You asked, finally, why isn't a lady a Rabbi?

You surely know that there were Jewish women who were leaders of all our people, such as the prophetess Deborah, and others. But these were exceptional cases. For, when G-d created the world, He gave each creature something special to do, and to the woman he gave the most wonderful of all things -- to be a mother and raise children, and bring them up in the true Jewish way, so that among these children many will grow up to be leaders of our people Israel. This is a full-time and life-time responsibility, and it leaves no room for other responsibilities which take up all one's time for the rest of one's life.

In conclusion, it should be remembered that in trying to increase one's knowledge one should have one's mind on such things that will help him, or her, in daily conduct to serve G-d all the better. Things of immediate importance should come first, and things which are not of immediate importance should come later, at their proper time.

The thing which is of immediate importance to you is to try to improve your daily conduct, for there is always room for improvement, and to show a good example to your friends by devoting yourself to your studies and conduct, and G-d will surely bless you with success.

CUSTOMS CORNER

When the Israelites wandered in the desert following the Exodus and until they entered the Promised Land, G-d provided them daily with heavenly manna. In order to enable the Jews to observe Shabbat (and not have to carry and prepare the manna on the Day of Rest), G-d provided them with a double portion on Friday. To commemorate this miracle, the Sages instituted that we break bread over two complete loaves at the start of the Shabbat meals. These two loaves are known as *Lechem Mishneh*.

This rabbinic enactment applies to the Friday night meal and the meal eaten on the day of Shabbat. According to most opinions, one should also have two loaves at the third meal. Others say that since in the desert the Israelites would have only one portion of manna left for the third and final meal of the day, we need not commemorate the additional portion at that meal.

The obligation to take *Lechem Mishneh* applies to holidays as well, since the manna did not fall on the holidays. No *Lechem Mishneh* is required on Chol Hamoed, Rosh Chodesh, Purim, the eve of Yom Kippur or on any other (semi) holiday when work is not forbidden.

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbos we commemorate the yahrzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The yahrzeit [day of passing] of any Tzadik is such that it involves the fusion of two opposite movements. The ascent of the soul to higher levels in the spiritual realms, and secondly influence from the soul descending to the lower planes, "bringing about salvation in the midst of the earth."

In particular, a lesson can be derived from the name, Chaya Mushka. Chaya is related to the word Chaim, "life." The ultimate source of life is G-d's essence which gives influence to the soul, which we draw down throu Torah and Mitzvos.

The name Mushka is a Yiddish term. The use of a language other than Hebrew, the holy language, alludes to the elevation of the lowest aspects of our existence. Thus, we see many leaders of Israel had two names, one in Lashon HaKodesh, and one in a secular tongue, e.g., the Alter Rebbe, Shneur Zalman, the Tzemach Tzedek, Menachem Mendel, the Rebbe Rashab, Sholom DovBer. The second name alludes to the service of refinement of the lowest aspects of the world which brings about the highest revelations.

In particular, Mushka, is connected with the concept of "perfume." Our Sages explain that smell is a sense which "brings pleasure to the soul," pleasure being the highest of our spiritual potentials. Also, Chaya Mushka is numerically equivalent to 470, which is also the equivalent of the Hebrew word, eit, meaning "time." Koheles mentions 28 different "times," some, whose positive nature is open and revealed, and others, which through our service can be transformed into good. This relates to the name of the Rebbetzin's father, Yosef Yitzchok which alludes to the service of the transformation of the estranged and also to the service of happiness.

The yahrzeit should, as is Jewish custom, be connected with deeds undertaken in memory of the departed. In this context, it is worthy to mention the gathering of women organized in connection with the yahrzeit. Surely, this gathering will involve resolutions for increased efforts in spreading Yiddishkeit, in particular, spreading mitzvos which are associated with Jewish women, such as lighting Shabbos candles etc.

Similarly, institutions should be established in memory of the Rebbetzin, in particular, institutions for the education of Jewish girls. Until the previous generation, Jewish girls received their education from their mothers and grandmothers. In the previous generation, however, the leaders of the Jewish people began establishing institutes of Jewish education for girls, for example, the Previous Rebbe, the Rebbetzin's father, established Bais Rivkah.

Also, it is proper that gifts be given to charity in multiples of 470, the numerical equivalent of the Rebbetzin's name. May these efforts bring about the fulfillment of the prophecy, "May those that lie in the dust arise and sing," with the coming of the complete and ultimate redemption. May it be in the immediate future.

J. I. Guttentag

IT HAPPENED

Once...

A Guest, a Fish and a Prayer
By Yerachmiel Tilles

"Wow! What an extraordinary, enormous fish! I must buy it in honour of the Shabbat!" exclaimed the Jewish lady excitedly to the maid who'd accompanied her to the marketplace. "How fortunate that we came nice and early this Friday."

Because the fish was so large, it was very expensive, but she could well afford it. Her husband, a noted scholar and leader of the community, was also quite wealthy.

She herself was an exceptional woman. As the daughter of Rabbi Meir of Kostentin and granddaughter of the famed Rabbi Yaakov Emden, she well appreciated the delight and importance of a Torah atmosphere on Shabbat. Seeing her purchase energetically thrashing around in her basket, she joyfully thanked G d for enabling her to enhance the Shabbat table in such regal fashion.

That afternoon a carriage pulled up in front of their door, and a distinguished-looking man alighted. No one knew who he was, but it was obvious from his appearance and deportment that here was a true Torah personality. Her husband welcomed him heartily, and with respect and deference invited him to stay for Shabbat.

The guest, who chose not to reveal his identity, was none other than the holy Rabbi Yitzchak of Drohovitch. While Rabbi Yitzchak definitely enjoyed the Shabbat with his scholarly host in the luxurious setting, the whole time, night and day, he was nagged by puzzlement. What was the reason for the amazing chain of events that led him to spend the Day of Rest far from home? Surely it was not just to have a pleasurable Shabbat. What was he supposed to accomplish here?

After the Third Meal the holy rabbi retired to his room to rest for a bit, but his feeling of unfulfilled purpose gave him no peace. He decided to do a *shaalat chalom* ("query by dream"). Before he lay down, he composed his mind carefully and focused on his query: "May Heaven inform me why I have been sent to this town. Where are the hidden sparks of holiness that I am supposed to elevate? What must I achieve?"

When he awoke, he had his answer. There is no special task for you to fulfill here, he was informed while he slept, nor anything to rectify. But on Friday morning the lady of the house had purchased a large fish in honour of the Shabbat, and on her way home from the marketplace she had prayed: "Master of the Universe! You granted me this extraordinary fish in honour of Your holy Shabbat. Please also grant

me a suitably pious and learned guest to enjoy this fish tonight." As nobody in this generation is more worthy than you, you were "summoned" by Heaven to arrive here for Shabbat.

After *havdalah* and the *melaveh malkah* meal, Rabbi Yitzchak made his departure. The host and his sons escorted him out to his carriage. Much to their surprise-and at variance with accepted custom-their distinguished holy guest requested of them that they call the hostess out for the farewell too.

When she arrived, he said to her: "I was a great distance from here, but because of your prayer yesterday, I was compelled to travel all the way here to spend Shabbat with your family. Your prayers are powerful!"

Biographical notes:

Rabbi Meir of Kostentin, head of the rabbinical court in Konstantynow, Poland, was the son of Rabbi Yaakov Emden (1697-1776), a leading rabbinical authority, who in turn was the son of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Ashkenazi, the "Chacham Zvi."

Rabbi Yitzchak of Drohovitch was a leading Kabbalist of his generation, and father of Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov (1731-1786), a major disciple of Rabbisrael Baal Shem Tov, who first went to the Besht as a boy with his father.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And they camped in the desert (19:2)

Why was the Torah given in the desert? To teach us that if a person does not surrender himself to it like the desert, he cannot merit the words of Torah. And to teach us that just as the desert is endless, so is the Torah without end. (*Pesikta D'Rav Kahana*)

And there Israel camped opposite the mountain (19:2)

At all their other encampments, the verse says *vayachanu* ("and they camped," in the plural); here it says *vayichan* ("and he camped," in the singular). For all other encampments were in argument and dissent, whereas here they camped as one man, with one heart. (*Mechilta; Rashi*)

Six days shall you labour, and do all your work (20:9)

Is it then possible for a person to do "all his work" in six days? No, but rest on Shabbat as if all your work is done. (*Mechilta*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 1 FEBRUARY 2013

BEGINS	ENDS
8:16MELBOURNE	9:17
8:06ADELAIDE	9:04
6:25BRISBANE	7:19
7:02DARWIN	7:53
6:24GOLD COAST	7:19
7:01PERTH	7:58
7:43SYDNEY	8:41
7:54CANBERRA	8:53
8:16LAUNCESTON	9:19
8:15AUCKLAND	9:15
8:25WELLINGTON	9:28
8:19HOBART	9:23
7:24BYRON BAY	8:20



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS YISRO

21 SHVAT • 1 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:16 PM
	MINCHA:	8:25 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:00 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10:04 AM
	MINCHA:	8:15 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:::	9:17 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	2:03 PM
	MAARIV:	8:20 PM
		9:10 PM
		9:30 PM