

LAMPLIGHTER

2 Iyar
Tazria-Metzora
17th day of the omer

1082

12 April
5773/2013

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week we read two Torah portions, Tazria and Metzora. Tazria comes from the Hebrew word meaning "to plant seeds." Why does a farmer sow his field? For the purpose of obtaining a greater yield than he started with. It makes no sense to go to all that work if the end result will be quantitatively the same as before. Thus the whole point of planting seeds is to eventually harvest a larger crop of produce.

The Jewish soul, sent from the celestial spheres down into the physical world, is likened to a seed that is planted in the earth. Once encloded within a physical body and able to perform practical mitzvot (commandments), the soul can obtain a very great "crop" from its service in this world.

In the allegorical sense, man's service of G-d is likened to the act of sowing. His mission in life is to produce the greatest possible yield by sowing goodness within himself, his family and friends, and within the world at large. His study of Torah and performance of the commandments are like seeds that germinate into an overwhelmingly abundant yield of good.

Exile, too, is likened to the act of sowing. The actions we perform during the galut (exile) serve the function of cultivating and hastening their later outgrowth in the Messianic era.

The second Torah portion that is read this week is Metzora, which opens with the words "This shall be the law of the leper." In many places this portion is known simply as "This Shall Be."

The words "This shall be" are in the future tense. They constitute G-d's promise that so it shall be, that after the difficult process of sowing there will be much to harvest. After the exile, the redemption will surely arrive. When Moshiach comes we will reap all the fine fruits that grew from the seeds we planted throughout the years of exile.

Thus the two Torah portions, Tazria and Metzora ("This Shall Be"), are symbolic of exile and redemption. In many years (as this one) they are read together, on the same Shabbat.

Whenever two Torah portions are combined it signifies that their themes are interrelated. Exile and redemption constitute a natural sequence; the redemption follows the exile immediately upon its conclusion.

We who are still in exile and involved in the act of "sowing" must thus always strive to connect ourselves in all we do to the imminent Final Redemption, just as Tazria is connected to Metzora. Our "seeds" must be sown with a sense of perpetual longing and anticipation of Moshiach's coming. We must never reconcile ourselves to remaining in exile, but repeatedly demand and pray to G-d that He fulfill His promise. In this way we will merit the true and complete Redemption, immediately and at once.

Adapted from Hitva'aduyot 5742

Your Own Choice

By Tali Loewenthal

Is it your choice? Or were you forced into it?

We're talking about your Judaism, the fact of your being a Jew in the world today and having all those laws and traditions in your background. Is this something you chose? Do you *have* a choice?

As with many questions, Jewish teaching gives at least two answers. First answer: Yes, it is your choice. Second answer: Yes, you are born into it, it is who you are and you cannot escape it... How can both answers be right?

The Torah tells us about "a woman who gives seed and bears a son" (Leviticus 12:2). It is interesting that it starts with a woman rather than with a husband and wife getting married. It does not say that "a man married a woman and she gave birth to a son." The focus is on the woman herself. Chassidic teachings explain that this woman in our *parshah* represents the Jewish people or the Jewish individual, whom our prophets describe as the "wife" or "betrothed" of G-d. The Torah is telling us about a person who makes a step forward in Jewish life, by his or her own volition. A choice was made, and this has a good result: the birth of a child, signifying achievement and success.

According to this, the important thing is our own choice. If one makes one's own choice to express one's Jewishness, rather than being forced, then it will have a positive and lasting effect.

Ethics of the Fathers touches on the same point. Chapter 1 begins "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai..." Chapter 2 starts by asking: "What is the path that a person should choose?"

The first chapter of Ethics of the Fathers begins with something being imposed from above: Moshe received the Torah from G-d at Sinai and then transmitted it to future generations of Sages and leaders. As a result, if someone is brought up in a traditional Jewish environment they get a strong input of Jewish teachings and practice in their daily lives. It is coming from "above"; they did not choose it themselves.

By contrast, the second chapter starts with the idea of choice. A person chooses for themselves, and this gives them a deeper relationship with their Jewish identity.

In fact we need both qualities. We need as much input as we can get from the chain of tradition, the Jewish environment, home life and education which mold us in a Jewish pattern. But then comes the important next step: our own choice, our own personal recognition of our identity and our relationship with the Torah.

You might ask, does this always happen? Does every Jewish person find their "real" identity in Judaism? Well, let us look at a Talmudic comment on pregnancy and birth, the opening theme of our *parshah*.

The Talmud says that while a woman is pregnant, her unborn child is taught the entire Torah. When it is born "an angel strikes the child on its upper lip" and he or she forgets. Yet this means that deep down in every child's subconscious there is still an awareness of the entire Torah.

Each Jewish man or woman has this inner level of knowledge and recognition. Life is a process of *remembering*, and the patterns imposed from above, "forcing" us into Jewish patterns of life, in fact evoke our own inner recognition, our own choice to be a living Jew.

Slice of LIFE

THE HAPPY MOTHER OF SONS

By David Wilder

The following happened to my son-in-law's sister, Mina, and her husband Yoav, who live in Kiryat Arba. I heard it from Yoav on the Friday night before Rosh Hashana 5765.

One day Mina was in Jerusalem, running around, doing errands. As she started to get onto a bus in the city, a woman in front of her turned around and attacked her. She hit her, kicked her, and viciously beat her. It was an extremely ugly event, and it left Mina hurting, physically and emotionally.

Afterwards, Mina made her way to her husband Yoav's place of employment. Yoav is an expert scribe. He writes Torah scrolls by hand on fine parchment. Arriving at his office, Mina related what had happened to her a short time before. Upon hearing the story, Yoav was of course quite upset and decided to approach an important Rabbi to ask his advice about what to do.

At that time, Rabbi Shamai Gross, a Torah scholar and judge was visiting Yoav's office. Yoav approached him and repeated Mina's story, asking his council. The rabbi, after hearing the story, told Yoav and Mina to sit down in the office, and in a few minutes he would come speak to them. A few minutes later he sat down with them and told them about a tremendous argument that had occurred in his community between two men, which threatened to tear the neighbourhood apart. In the midst of the ongoing quarrel the Rabbi approached one of the men involved and said to him: "I want you to fully forgive the other person, absolving him of all blame. If you do this, you will receive a present from G-d, whatever you want. All you have to do is exonerate the other person."

When the man finally agreed to forgive the other person, he had very few requests. In fact, being childless for twenty years, his list had only one item.

Nine months later his wife gave birth to their first child, a son.

The Rabbi concluded by saying, I just arrived now from this child's brit milah circumcision ceremony.

"Now," said Rabbi Gross to Mina, "if you agree to fully pardon the woman who attacked you, no questions asked, you too can have whatever you want. G-d will grant your wish."

Mina, her head still spinning from the recent attack, and also stunned by the story and the Rabbi's promise, managed to express her agreement. She fully forgave the other woman, and left for home.

Rabbi Gross looked at Yoav and said, "Yoav, I see you didn't understand." Yoav, startled, asked, "What didn't I understand?"

"Yoav," answered the Rabbi, "now, right now, go home, and make your decision. This minute, leave work, leave everything. Now!"

So, Yoav went home to Kiryat Arba and sat down in the living room with a cup of coffee. "So Mina," he said, "what do you want? You have an open contract with G-d."

Mina looked at Yoav and said, "I want a son."

Yoav, slightly shaken, responded, "But Mina, we have eight children. Isn't that enough?"

"We haven't had a child in five years and I want a baby, I want a son, with the following characteristics," and she detailed exactly what she wanted. Yoav looked at her and said, "if that's what you want, so be it."

And nine months later Mina gave birth to a baby boy.

However, that's not the end of the story. Once the baby was born he had to be named. Yoav had a secret dream: to name a son after a famous rabbinic scholar who had been killed during the Holocaust, Rabbi Yisachar Shlomo Teichtel. Rabbi Teichtel had written an extensive treatise about the importance of the holy Land of Israel, and was known to be a genius. However, such a name is not common in Israel and Yoav didn't know exactly how to approach suggesting the name to Mina.

Following the birth, Yoav spoke to Mina and suggested: "We were so fortunate to have such a miracle, perhaps we should give thanks to G-d, and maybe represent that in the baby's name. Maybe a name like Yisachar (which, in Hebrew) incorporates the word 'sachar' which means reward), would be appropriate. He then continued, "We could call him Yisachar Shlomo, after the author of the famous book about Eretz Yisrael."

Mina's reaction was very lukewarm. "It's such a long name, and very 'heavy.' I'm not sure that I like it.

Yoav replied calmly that she could name the baby whatever she liked, he would be satisfied with whatever she chose, and left it at that.

In the meantime, it was doubtful whether the baby would be circumcised on the eighth day following his birth, because the

bilirubin count in his blood was very high. Yoav was sure the brit milah would be delayed and they'd have more time to decide on a name.

Two days before the milah was supposed to take place, the mohel circumciser, notified Yoav that he had broken his finger and would not be able to perform the ceremony. However, he suggested someone else, who could replace him. Yoav called him and set up a time to meet and allow him to examine the baby, to determine whether or not the brit milah could take place on time.

Yoav and Mina drove to the man's home, at a community between Hebron and Jerusalem, called Beitar Elit. As they took the baby and left their car, they looked up at the street sign. To their shock, it was the same name as Rabbi Yisachar Shlomo Teichtel's book about Eretz Yisrael. On the spot they decided that this could not be coincidence, and decided to name the baby after the great Rabbi.

Within a day, the baby's bilirubin count dropped from 15 to 7, an almost unheard of reduction, and the brit milah took place on the eighth day, as scheduled. The sandak, the person honoured to hold the baby during the ceremony, was none other than Rabbi Shamai Gross, who had, nine months earlier, promised Mina whatever she would choose if she agreed to forgive the woman who had attacked her. The baby's name: Yisachar Shlomo.

The story doesn't end here.

Shortly thereafter, we attended a Saturday afternoon wedding celebration meal of a friend married a few days earlier. One of the participants at the meal was Rabbi Shmuel Yaniv, a well-known Torah scholar who has written a number of books about Torah, the Hebrew alphabet and the letters' numerical equivalents (gematriot). Following the meal Mina approached the Rabbi and asked for a blessing for her family and children.

The Rabbi, who knew nothing of the above-told story blessed her, and concluded his blessing with the words, "you are 'the mother of sons is happy.' This phrase, from Psalms and the Hallel prayer, which in Hebrew is, *Eim HaBanim Semeicha*, is also the name of the book about Eretz Yisrael written by her baby son's namesake, Rabbi Yisachar Shlomo Teichtel, the holy martyr of blessed memory, may the Al-mighty avenge his blood.

That, my friends, is the strength and power of forgiveness.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Exile is likened to pregnancy, and the Redemption is likened to birth; as it is written, "For Zion has been in labour, and has given birth to her children." Parshas Tazria begins with the mention of a woman giving birth to a son, an allusion to the coming of the future redemption. Just as a baby whilst in his mother's stomach, his nourishment passes through his navel rather than through his mouth, which would animate the heart and brain, so too in exile our spiritual nourishment does not come to us in a visible. But when Moshiach comes, all spirituality will be seen.

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ISSUE 1082



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

B"H, Thursday, 1 Tammuz, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greetings and blessings,

One of the fundamental concepts of Judaism is unity. This involves not only faith in one G-d and one Torah, but also unity in the inner life of every particular individual.

[There are] approaches which say that we must make concessions to the body and not consider the soul. [And others] that say that we must continually oppress and burden the body so that the soul can always be at one with and connected to the body. In contrast, *Chassidus* emphasizes that the soul *must* direct a person's [life]. The soul's purpose, however, is not to oppress the body, but rather to see that the body will conduct itself in a healthy manner according to the guidelines of the Torah which is called the Torah of life.

[To focus on the concept of] oneness, in particular with regard to spiritual life: There are three approaches with regard to the proper direction for human conduct:

- our conduct must be dictated by the cold logic of the mind;
- we should follow our hearts and our vibrant feelings; and
- what we think and what we feel is not that important; what is most important is actual deed, that we conduct ourselves in an appropriate manner.

The Torah states - and rules - that a person must be complete; he should strive for perfection. And a complete person must coordinate his head, his heart, and his hands (which symbolize [all the limbs of] the body) in unity and in harmony, having them conduct themselves according to G-d's guidelines.

This thrust is so important that our Sages tell us that it is one of the rationales for the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*. When a Jew puts on *tefillin*, he should remember that his hands ([indicated by] the arm *tefillin*), his heart (which the arm *tefillin* faces), and his head ([indicated by] the head *tefillin*) must be attuned to each other so that he can live a Jewish life and a Torah life.

From a deeper perspective, the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*, the actual deed, strengthens a Jew and augments the powers of his soul, enabling him to establish harmony between the hand, the heart, and the head in a Torah way.

We do not understand how the deed of putting on *tefillin* has an effect on the powers of his soul, just like a child does not appreciate the connection between the bread that he eats and his soul which grants life to his body.

We can appreciate the importance of the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* from many narratives and quotes from our Sages. To cite a few:

- "The entire Torah is associated with *tefillin*" (*Kiddushin* 35a). [Accordingly,] particular concepts concerning the Torah as a whole and all of its *mitzvos* can be derived from the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*.
- We can fulfill our obligation for the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* by putting them on once during the day, either in shul or in one's own home. In the era when people were purer and more devoted to spiritual matters, it was common practice to wear *tefillin* throughout the entire day, whether in shul, at home, or in the street.

We can see how dearly the *mitzvah* was held and with what devotion it was observed from the Talmud's lament (*Shabbos* 130a) concerning the conduct [of the Jewish people] with regard to *tefillin* at a specific time. [The Romans] had decreed that anyone who put on *tefillin* would be slain.

One might think that the Jews stopped putting on *tefillin*. No, for this the Gemara has nothing to lament; they still continued wearing *tefillin*.

Moreover, one might think they contented themselves with the minimum requirement to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*, i.e., wearing *tefillin* once a day. No, the Gemara continues, they wore *tefillin* while walking in the street without thinking about the mortal danger [it could cause]. This was how important and dear Jews held *tefillin* even at that time.

Rabbi Menachem Schneerson

CUSTOMS CORNER

The Torah gives two signs that determine if a fish is kosher - fins and scales. In order for a fish to be kosher, it must have both of these signs. According to the Talmud, any fish that has scales also has fins. Thus, if one knows that a particular fish has scales, it is considered a kosher fish.

As with the other laws of kosher, the Torah doesn't give a reason as to why only a fish with these signs is considered kosher. These laws are considered a *chok* (a decree beyond comprehension).

In order to render a fish kosher, the scales must be visible to the naked eye and they must be easy to remove from the skin of the fish, either by hand or with an instrument. If the scales can be only be removed after soaking the fish in scalding water, there are differing views as to whether the fish is considered kosher. Sturgeon is one such fish, and, in practice, it is not considered kosher.

If a young fish belongs to a species which develops scales when they mature, it is kosher even if it has not yet developed them. Conversely, if a type of fish has scales when it is young but not when it matures, there are differing views as to whether or not it is kosher.

Certain fish have scales while in the water, but they shed their scales when caught and brought to dry land. These fish are considered kosher.

A WORD

from the Director

Today is the birthday of the fourth Chabad Rebbe, the Rebbe Maharash. As the Rebbe Maharash was a leader of many, his birthday has an effect on each and every one of his followers. The qualities and teachings of the Rebbe Maharash are filled with valuable lessons which we can all learn from.

One of the focuses of the Rebbe Maharash is exemplified in the statement he would say, "Generally, people say, 'If you can't crawl under, try to climb over;' and I say, 'Lechat'chilah ariber' - right from the outset, you should climb over."

On the surface, it was unnecessary for the Rebbe to mention what others think. By doing so, however, he emphasizes that a Jew is aware of the approach which is generally accepted. Nevertheless, as a Jew, he has a potential to reveal a new approach, Lechat'chilah ariber, and have that approach permeate even the most mundane aspects of our existence.

This is the message that should fully envelope our conduct throughout the entire day, beginning with our service of Torah and mitzvos, which is the essence of our being for "I was only created to serve my Creator," and extending into every aspect of our conduct. All our efforts must be characterized by the approach of Lechat'chilah ariber, which simply means that anything one involves himself in should be done with all his might.

Each person has the potential to carry out such service, and is aided in these efforts by G-d Himself. G-d's help does not detract from the virtue of a person carrying out the service on his own initiative. Although G-d offers assistance in every aspect of our service, it is man who carries the responsibility for this service from its beginning until its end.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED

Once...

THE SILENT FUNERAL

When the Jewish fugitives of the Spanish Inquisition originally settled in Turkey, the Sultan made a pact with them that they would never be drafted into his army. But when Abed El Chamid became Sultan in the mid-1800's, he issued a decree obligating all non-Moslems to enlist in the Turkish army.

Serving in the army, however, involved desecrating the Shabbat and eating non-kosher food. Istanbul's *rabbanim* tried to have the decree rescinded, but they were unsuccessful. Despite its severity, they finally decided to accept the decree, not wanting to provoke the Turkish authorities. The city's *Vaad Haruchani* even issued a proclamation urging the region's Jews to fulfill their obligations to the Turkish government, and to enlist.

Only one man protested this course of action: Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri, otherwise known as the *Saba Kadisha*.

At the *Vaad* meeting, he declared: "Since serving in the Turkish army involves Shabbat desecration and the defiling of oneself with non-kosher food, enlisting in the army is considered a *chillul Hashem*. We mustn't yield to Sultan Abed El Chamid. If we are firm, *Hashem* will help us."

After completing his fiery speech, he burst into uncontrollable sobs. The other members of the *Vaad* knew that Rav Shlomo Eliezer's words were justified. Nonetheless, they feared expressing their opinion in public.

The Jewish community did have one hope, however. One of its wealthy members was particularly influential in the Sultan's court.

But instead of trying to cancel the decree, the Jew collaborated with the Sultan and helped promote it. But when he visited the palace to supervise various aspects of the decree, he suddenly lost consciousness and died.

The following day, a large throng assembled at the wealthy man's funeral. In Istanbul at that time, Rav Shlomo Eliezer was always the first to deliver a *hesped* at a funeral, and no one dared to precede him. But instead of attending the funeral, Rav Shlomo Eliezer remained at home.

The community leaders pleaded with Rav Shlomo Eliezer to attend the funeral, or at least to grant others permission to eulogize the deceased. But Rav Shlomo Eliezer flatly refused, saying that the man wasn't worthy of honour.

The *niftar's* sons offered Rav Shlomo Eliezer a large sum of money, which they said could be used for *tzedaka*, if only he would relent.

With tear-filled eyes, Rav Shlomo Eliezer replied, "Yesterday I visited your father and asked him not to collaborate with the Sultan. But he defied me. Therefore, I cannot honour him."

In the end, none of the city's *rabbanim* eulogized the deceased. Everyone knew that Rav Shlomo Eliezer was right and respected his actions.

When the Sultan learned of Rav Shlomo Eliezer's efforts to cancel his decree, he was furious and decided to punish him for inciting the Jews against him. He immediately summoned Rav Shlomo Eliezer to his palace.

Once in the palace, Rav Shlomo Eliezer calmly explained his position to the Sultan. The Sultan was very impressed by Rav Shlomo Eliezer; in fact, he was so impressed that he accorded him the title of *Chacham Bashi*, granting him the authority to issue amendments and edicts in the Jewish community.

In the end, the draft decree wasn't implemented due to internal conflicts in the royal court.

Biographical note:

Rabbi Shlomo-Eliezer Alfandri (1820 - 22 Iyar 1930) was born in Istanbul, Turkey, where his reputation for piety and wisdom was established at a young age. He served as the chief rabbi in Istanbul and Damascus, and subsequently in Safed for 20 years toward the end of his life. He passed away at age 110 (!) in Jerusalem. Many of his halachic responses are included in his book, *Sabba Kadisha*.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised (12:3)

Yitzchak and Yishmael were engaged in a controversy. Yishmael said to Yitzchak: "I am more beloved to G-d than you, since I was circumcised at the age of thirteen, but you were circumcised as a baby and could not refuse." Yitzchak retorted: "All that you gave up to G-d was three drops of blood. But lo, I am now thirty-seven years old, yet if G-d desired of me that I be slaughtered, I would not refuse." (*Midrash Rabbah*)

Jewishness is not a matter of historical consciousness, outlook, ethics, or even behaviour; it is a state of being. This is the deeper significance of the debate between Yishmael and Yitzchak. When the Jew is circumcised on the eighth day of life, he is completely unaware of the significance of what has occurred. But this "non-experience" is precisely what circumcision means. With circumcision the Jew says: I define my relationship with G-d not by what I think, feel or do, but by the fact of my Jewishness – a fact which equally applies to an infant of eight days and a sage of eighty years. (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe*)

A Jew is in essence "circumcised" even if, for whatever reason, his physical foreskin has not yet been removed. Thus the verse says, "On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised" – the flesh need to be circumcised, but, spiritually, the Jew is always "circumcised". (*Alshich*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 12 APRIL 2013

BEGINS		ENDS
5:41	MELBOURNE	6:37
5:39	ADELAIDE	6:33
5:17	BRISBANE	6:09
6:26	DARWIN	7:15
5:15	GOLD COAST	6:07
5:42	PERTH	6:36
5:20	SYDNEY	6:14
5:27	CANBERRA	6:21
5:29	LAUNCESTON	6:27
5:43	AUCKLAND	6:38
5:39	WELLINGTON	6:36
5:27	HOBART	6:25
5:14	BYRON BAY	6:06



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS TAZRIA-METZORA
2 IYAR • 12 APRIL

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:41 PM
	MINCHA:	5:50 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:25 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:32 AM
	MINCHA:	5:45 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:37 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:40 PM
	MAARIV:	6:30 PM