

LAMPLIGHTER

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Behar-Bechukosai
38th day of the omer

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This Shabbat we read two Torah portions, Behar and Bechukotai which is the final portion in the book of Vayikra (Leviticus). Bechukotai begins with the Divine promise: "If you will walk in My statutes, and keep My mitzvot (commandments) and do them" - then G-d will bestow many blessings, including rain at the right time, ample produce, security and peace.

One might wonder: Should we be fulfilling the mitzvot for the sake of material rewards or for their own sake - because G-d commanded them?

Among the many answers to this question, Maimonides gives the following answer: The mitzvot must, indeed, be fulfilled unconditionally and without regard for reward. However, there are inevitably various distractions and difficulties connected with daily life that makes it harder to fulfill the mitzvot. When these distractions are minimized, it is much easier to carry out the mitzvot fully and completely. But when material circumstances are not quite so satisfactory, though the same performance of the mitzvot is expected, it requires a greater effort. For it is obviously harder to concentrate on Torah and mitzvot when one has to overcome outside pressures.

G-d's promise of material rewards is not meant to provide reason for keeping the Torah and mitzvot. But it is a promise that where there is a firm resolve to walk in G-d's ways and keep His mitzvot, He will make it easier by providing all material needs and reducing outside pressures to a minimum.

The book of Leviticus, which we complete this Shabbat, is also known as Torat Kohanim (the Laws of the Priests) and the Book of Sacrifices.

Jews, as a people, and individually, are expected to behave like kohanim (priests), as G-d has declared: "And you should be unto Me a Kingdom of Kohanim." Just as the kohen has been selected to dedicate himself to the Divine Service - and not only for his own sake, but also for the whole Jewish people - so has every Jew been chosen to serve G-d, with a responsibility also for his entire environment.

To serve G-d does not mean to withdraw from the world; it rather means to serve G-d within this world and together with this world. The beginning of this G-dly service is in one's own home-life, by conducting it in such a way that G-d's Presence should dwell in it, as it is written: "They shall make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them."

This is accomplished by a way of life exemplified by the sacrifices of old. The service of the sacrifices consisted in taking things from one's possession - a lamb, flour, oil, wine, salt, etc. - and consecrating them.

This is the way a Jewish home should be conducted; every detail of one's life should be consecrated to G-d. How is this accomplished? By bringing spirituality into our daily lives and our homes through charity and good deeds, communicating with G-d, and Jewish education. And then the Divine Presence dwells there, and it is a home blessed by G-d, materially and spiritually.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Effort That Really Counts

By Avraham Plotkin

In the traditional prayer recited upon completion of a tractate of the Talmud, we thank G d for the great opportunity to toil in the study of Torah. The prayer contains a line that goes like this: "We toil and they toil. We toil and receive reward, while they toil and don't receive reward." The prayer is obviously contrasting Torah study with all other activities and forms of work: while Torah study offers meaningful compensation, other endeavours don't.

Is this really so? Is there really no meaningful compensation in other fields of work? Last I heard, people were being compensated in other areas as well! So, how does Torah study differ?

The explanation lies in careful examination of the words of the prayer: ". . .they toil and receive no reward." Why did the author of this prayer of thanksgiving choose the word "toil" as opposed to, let's say, "work" or "achieve"?

The answer is that Torah study is all about the effort and the "toiling," in contrast with other endeavours or sciences, where the main focus is on accomplishment and the final product.

Torah study is mostly about the means, not so much about the ends. In other areas of life, who cares about your toiling? Toiling is just a means to an end. There is no reward for hard work and shvitzing. In fact, if you could accomplish the same job without toiling, that would be just as good. No extra reward is given for the toiling. It is mostly the results that count! In Torah study, however, it's the opposite. Even if you were to toil in Torah study without any tangible results, that itself is worthy of reward!

The reason for this is because unlike other sciences, Torah study is not about accumulating knowledge. Unlike other self-help books and religious manuals, the Torah is not only about learning how to observe. Torah study is primarily about building a relationship with G d. When we toil in the study of Torah, and connect to the fountain of G d's wisdom, we are at that moment experiencing oneness and shaping this relationship - regardless of whether we succeeded in totally mastering the subject we are studying.

This thought is echoed in this week's Torah portion, which tells us: "If you will walk in my statutes" (Leviticus 26:3), explained by Rashi to be a reference to "toiling in Torah." Again, the emphasis here is on the effort and not so much on the results.

What a refreshing approach and dramatic contrast to all those other areas, where the only thing that matters are your results! From a Torah perspective, we don't care so much about what your grades are, or even how many titles and degrees you master in life. What is most cherished and valued by G d is the hard work and effort that you put into your Torah studies! The quality and effort while on the journey of Torah study is much more important than the destination.

Slice of LIFE

Possessed vs Kosher

This story happened some thirty years ago in Minnesota. The heroes are Yigal and Nechama, two typical Israeli kibbutzniks. They were intelligent, sensitive, anti-religious (especially Judaism), and living in America.

Both had good jobs and would have lived happily ever after if it wasn't for the day that Nechama became.....possessed.

It was early one Monday morning when it happened. They were both getting ready to go to work. Nechama was making coffee for the two of them and Yigal was in the bathroom just finishing shaving when he heard her shouting from the other room.

"Hey! You don't have to yell! One minute, I'm coming!" he shouted above her voice as he dried his face and went to her. And there she was, standing in the middle of the living room shaking her hands and head strangely and shouting at the ceiling.

He tried to calm her down and even got her seated on the couch but it didn't help. She stood and began shouting again until, after fifteen more minutes, she finally sat down on her own and became silent. After a few minutes she began talking normally and didn't remember a thing.

Yigal called his and her bosses to say they wouldn't be in and took her to the doctor. But the checkup and the tests he took showed nothing. He suggested they wait, and if it happened again to go to a psychiatrist for more comprehensive testing.

Two days later it happened again but this time for half an hour and they went to the hospital for neurological tests. But they too gave no clue as to what was going on.

Yigal didn't know what to do. The attacks came without warning and were becoming more severe. The next week she had four; one lasted over an hour.

Going to work was out of the question for either of them. He couldn't leave her alone and certainly not with the children.

But on the other hand, she couldn't be hospitalized; when she wasn't having a fit she was completely normal and didn't even recall anything she had done. The only chance was to try other doctors or perhaps alternative medicine.

For months they ran from office to office and from treatment to treatment. Poor Nechama took pills, shots, massages, acupuncture, changed her diet, and did tens of other things but the attacks continued.

But help often comes from strange places. Someone suggested to her that since everything else failed maybe she should consult with a Rabbi.

At first she refused. "No, no!" she protested, "not a Rabbi! How could a Rabbi possibly help? Rabbis are for weddings and burials and things not about life."

"But this Rabbi is different," her friend said. "I heard him speak and he was very practical and positive." With no other choice Nechama agreed. "But don't let my husband know!" she warned her friend.

The Rabbi was a well-known Chabad Chassid and teacher, and when he heard her story he immediately suggested that they write to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"G-d is the source of all health and life and the Rebbe has a special way of connecting people to the Creator of the Universe," he explained.

She wrote and the answer was soon in coming.

The Rebbe wrote that he was pained to hear of her illness but assured her that if she and her family would be careful from now on to eat only kosher food, she would return to normal health.

It didn't take much to convince her to try, she was desperate! She threw caution to the winds and decided to go for it.

It wasn't really that hard. She went shopping for new food and appliances, and meanwhile, the Rabbi sent a group of young Chassidim to make her kitchen kosher; the stove, the dishes, the pots and pans, even the spoons and forks had to be boiled or torched to make them fit for Torah standards.

Nechama returned home with ten shopping bags full of kosher food and new orders for the family.

But Yigal held his head in agony. Just

when he thought that things couldn't get worse....now this! Before it was only her but now she wanted to "infect" him and the kids as well!

He was trying to be calm and speak to her logically when the bell rang and entered with a huge pot, a blow torch, and other implements to work on the kitchen.

That night Yigal called a friend and asked for help, and he called the right person. "There is a fortune teller!" his friend said with great certainty. "Not just a fortune teller but a healer and miracle worker. Everyone goes to her and she is amazing! I think she's a gypsy from India or something but if anyone can help, she can. I'll make an appointment for tonight and we'll go together."

"Phew!" Yigal sighed with relief. "Finally something normal!"

That evening he was seated opposite the miracle lady, pouring out his heart while his friend sat next to him, looking alternatively at him and her to see what she would respond.

She heard the story, thought for a moment in silence, looked at him seriously and said, "Wait a minute, you are Israeli, right? I mean....you are Jewish? Correct? So why do you come to me? You Jews have a grand Jewish Rabbi in Brooklyn that has a thousand times my powers! Even more than that! And he is never wrong. Why don't you go to him?"

Yigal tried to explain that Rabbis are not healers and that Judaism is too archaic, complicated, and meaningless for him but the fortune teller just shrugged her shoulders. She couldn't understand what he was getting at.

That night Yigal returned home a defeated man....or rather a victorious one. He had begun to defeat all his false conceptions about G-d and His commandments. He announced that he was willing to be a partner in Nechama's kosher craze. Until the next attack, that is.

But the next attack never came. In fact, Yigal and his wife, although they still do not consider themselves to be at all religious, keep kosher, Shabbat, and he even puts on tefillin daily to add health to the world.

And, of course, a big picture of the Lubavitcher Rebbe adorns the most prominent wall in their living room.

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ISSUE 1065

MOSHIACH MATTERS

A verse we read this week reads "And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit (Leviticus 26:3)". One of the explanations of these words is that in the days of Moshiach, every species of trees will bear edible fruit, even those trees that in exile did not.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

B"H, Erev Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, 5710

Greetings and blessings,

In response to your letter of 20 Sivan, 5710:

Any question concerning the life of the Jewish people, whether minor or major, requires serious attention on the part of any convention that is called to judge about matters concerning the Torah and Judaism. Nevertheless, questions arise from time to time that involve risk to - material or spiritual - life, that of individuals or that of many people. Hence they require special attention and that all one's powers be focused with extra ardor on the task of saving [lives].

The issue of the education of the children now immigrating to our Holy Land and how to save them from heresy and spiritual destruction, Heaven forbid, is one of these questions.

My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, led the Jewish people without [consideration of] any party affiliation [and carried out] his entire [life-] work with self-sacrifice over decades above all party factionalism. Whenever there was, Heaven forbid, a danger to the Jewish nation, he endeavored to use all the groups that could possibly help to save the situation. And during his lifetime, he had already begun gathering together different forces to save those children.

Even though the fruits of those efforts have already been seen, the situation of those children remains sufficiently perilous and the question of their education and guidance of the most [pressing] severity.

Therefore any gathering of Jews that concerns itself with the benefit of the Jewish people must be a platform where "a call from the high places is heard," a voice powerfully demanding the solution to this worrisome question in the most immediate future. Decisions must be made to use all the mediums available to remove all of the obstacles and stumbling blocks [that might appear] from all possible directions which prevent and negate these children's right to be educated according to the Torah and Judaism.

Indeed, in our country as well, the question of saving the youth requires great and wide-reaching efforts - one of its dimensions being a battle against the feelings of equanimity within the [Jewish] community which has already become used to the situation in which only a [limited] percentage of Jewish boys and girls receive a proper [Jewish] education. At the most, they sigh at this terrible state of affairs and leave it at that. Although the efforts of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, in this field have also been crowned with great success, there is still a long road before we reach the desired intent. Much energy and resources are necessary to establish [Jewish] education in the United States on a proper foundation.

I would hope that the national convention will place these two questions - the question of the education of the youth immigrating to our Holy Land and the question of the education of the youth of America who are presently distant from traditional Judaism - in their proper place on its agenda, and that its voice will be heard and its influence will be felt in concrete actions, for "deed is most essential."

With respect and with blessing to all the participants; may this convention bring them success in strengthening the foundations of our faith and spreading the Torah [permeated] with the fear of Heaven,

Rabbi Menachem Schneerson

CUSTOMS CORNER

Hurtful Words

The Torah says, "Do not hurt your fellow, and you shall fear G d." Our Sages explain that this verse is referring to speaking hurtful words and giving improper (detrimental) counsel. The Torah uses the phrase "you shall fear G d" in this context because often one who gives bad advice for his own benefit might claim that it was an honest mistake. The verse therefore emphasizes that G d knows his true intentions.

Some examples of this include, not reminding a *baal teshuvah* (penitent) of his previous immoral lifestyle. If one sees a friend going through difficult times, he may not tell him that he deserves this as atonement for his sins. If one says a remark in a derogatory manner, this is considered sinful, even if the overt content of the remark is not negative. One should be extremely careful to never shame another in public. The Talmud parallels this sin to murder.

Although the prohibition against speaking hurtful words applies to everyone, there are some people that one should be especially careful not to embarrass or hurt: a convert, one's wife, orphans and widows.

A WORD

from the Director

The blessing for the month of Sivan, in which the Jews received the Torah, comes from Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan. This blessing is that the month shall be a successful one, as we say in the Blessing for the New Month: "May the Holy One, Blessed be He, renew it for joy, for deliverance and for consolation." We conclude this blessing with the words, "and let us say, Amen," meaning these blessings should be translated into reality.

Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan differs from all other Shabbos Mevorchims, in that "Av Harachamim" (said before the Mussaf prayer), which is omitted on all other Shabbos Mevorchims, is said on Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan. The reason for this, writes the Alter Rebbe in his Shulchan Aruch, is "because of the decrees [against Jews] which occurred in those days."

However, these decrees occurred many years before the Alter Rebbe's times, and the Mitteler Rebbe writes that in our times the decrees have been abolished, and such tragedies (conversions, etc.) will not occur again. Thus, when the Alter Rebbe writes in his Siddur that we say "Av Harachamim" on Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan, those decrees of a previous era did not apply anymore. In general we find that at certain times, special customs and enactments were made. When the situation which produced those customs changed, the customs and enactments were abolished. In our case, since the Alter Rebbe writes that we say "Av Harachamim" on Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan (although the original reason, the decrees, no longer applies) we must conclude that there is a positive reason for saying it.

That reason is that we thereby transform the tragedies and decrees to good, similar to the future era, of which it states (Yeshayahu 12:1) "I will thank You, O' G-d, that You were angry with me." G-d's anger refers to the darkness of the times of exile, and the obstacles to fulfilling Torah and Mitzvos. We will thank G-d for the opportunity given to us to reveal G-dliness in such dark conditions of exile, for the G-dliness thereby produced, is infinitely loftier than if there were no darkness in the first place. Greater satisfaction (to G-d) is derived from transforming something which was previously evil to good, than from something which was always good.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Reincarnation

It once happened in Safed, that a disciple of the Holy Ari had to go on a long journey. Before departing, he came to his teacher for a letter of recommendation. The Ari wrote it for him, then blessed him and said "May G-d be with you, and may you go in peace".

The disciple then asked "Master, can you tell me anything about what will happen when I get there?"

"You will marry a beautiful woman" the Ari replied. "And she is your destined soul mate for this life. But after you have been happily married for only six months, she will suddenly die.

And here is the reason: In another incarnation, this woman was a man, and you were also a man then. He was your dearest friend, but he also caused you some legal trouble for six months.

Finally, he brought a lawsuit against you in the civil courts, which caused you to lose 600 gold coins, even though you were innocent of his charges.

"Now" continued the Ari, "this friend from another life is once again reincarnated - as the woman you will marry on your journey. His soul has come to make atonement for his sins against you.

For the six months of trouble that he caused in that life, you will have six months of happiness in this life.

The inheritance you will receive when she dies, is to repay you for the 600 gold pieces you lost in the past life.

But even though you know this, you should be kind and patient to this woman, and grant her forgiveness for the trouble she caused you in the previous life."

Everything happened exactly, as the Holy Ari said it would.

SURPRISE RESPECT

One day Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the holy *Arizal*, was in his house discussing Torah with his chief disciple, Rabbi Chaim Vital, when a teenage boy knocked at the door.

"Come in," invited the *Ari*, and the youngster, Shmuel, opened the door and bashfully entered.

Immediately R' Luria stood up and greeted him. "Welcome!" He shook the boy's hand and invited him to sit beside him.

"What can I do for you?" asked the *Ari* politely.

As they spoke, Rabbi Chaim Vital gaped in amazement. His mentor never acted like this. Why did he stand up for a young boy? And why did he give him such respect?

As soon as the boy left, Rabbi Chaim could no longer contain his curiosity. "I've never seen you act in this manner with anyone before. What is the reason for this, if I may ask?"

"By your life!" called out his mentor. "I did not stand up for this youth, nor was it him I greeted with 'Baruch Haba.'"

"What really happened was this. I saw the soul of the Mishnaic sage, Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair, hovering over the boy's head -- a merit this boy earned today by performing a commandment for which Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair was famous when he was alive. It was for him that I stood up and to him I called out 'Baruch HaBa.'"

R' Vital marvelled at this revelation. What commandment, he wondered, had the boy done to deserve such a handsome reward? With permission, he dashed outside in search of the youth.

"Shmuel" he called out, "Where are you? Wait!"

Soon he found him in one of the cobblestone lanes, and asked, "Tell me, Shmuel, what extra commandment did you do today?"

"The only thing out of the ordinary today," he answered hesitantly, "happened this morning while I was going to shul. I left my house at the crack of dawn and walked through the dark lanes in the direction of the synagogue. As I turned a corner, I suddenly heard crying from one of the houses. Why would adults be crying, I wondered?"

"I decided to find out. When I entered the courtyard and peered in the house, I saw a few pieces of furniture turned over and the family undressed, sobbing. A band of thieves had taken everything of value, they told me, even their very clothes.

"I gave the father my clothes and dashed home to put on my only other garments, my Shabbat clothes. As you see, I'm still wearing them."

Delighted, R' Vital kissed him and returned to his master.

"In the merit of this *mitzva*," smiled R' Luria, "Shmuel certainly deserved that the *tzadik's* soul should envelop him. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair had been famous precisely because he redeemed captives and helped forsaken people whenever he could."

Biographic Note:

Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (1534-5 Av 1572), Known as "*the holy Ari*," revolutionized the study of Kabbalah and its integration into mainstream Judaism during the two years he spent in Zefat before his death at 38.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

For they are My servants, whom I took out of the land of Egypt; they cannot be sold into slavery (25:42)

At the time of the Exodus, G-d made freedom the inherent and eternal state of the Jew. From that point on, no power or force on earth can subvert our intrinsic freedom. (*Maharal*)

He shall not exchange it nor substitute another for it (27:33)

Every person was born to a mission in life that is distinctly, uniquely and exclusively their own. No one--not even the greatest of souls--can take his or her place. No person who ever lived or whoever will live can fulfill that particular aspect of G-d's purpose in creation in his stead. (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 3 MAY 2013

BEGINS		ENDS
5:14	MELBOURNE	6:11
5:14	ADELAIDE	6:10
4:58	BRISBANE	5:51
6:15	DARWIN	7:05
4:55	GOLD COAST	5:49
5:20	PERTH	6:15
4:56	SYDNEY	5:51
5:02	CANBERRA	5:58
4:59	LAUNCESTON	5:58
5:17	AUCKLAND	6:13
5:08	WELLINGTON	6:08
4:55	HOBART	5:56
4:54	BYRON BAY	5:47
6:48	SINGAPORE	7:38



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAR STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS BEHAR-BECHUKOSAI
23 IYAR • 3 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:14 PM
	MINCHA:	5:20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:00 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:40 AM
	MOLAD FOR THE MONTH OF SIVAN:	
	THURSDAY 9 MAY	5:22 AND 11 CHALAKIM AM
	MINCHA:	5:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:11 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:15 PM
	MAARIV:	6:05 PM