

LAMPLIGHTER

8 Sivan
Naso
1087
17 May
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's portion, Naso, we read about the census of the tribe of Levi that was conducted in the desert by the sons of Gershon and Merari. This tally was made only once, in the second year after the Exodus. In the spiritual sense, however, the concept behind reckoning the number of Levites has eternal significance for every Jew, in all times and places. For, even if an event took place only once in history, or the Torah speaks about something that no longer exists in the physical sense, it is still relevant to us at the present time.

Following the sin of the 12 spies, G-d decreed that the Jewish people would have to wait 40 years before entering Israel. The spies' sin was that they did not want to enter Israel; their punishment was not being allowed to do so. In truth, the Jewish people could have waited out their punishment anywhere outside the borders of Israel. But as it turned out, the 40 years were spent wandering through the desert.

There is great significance in the Jewish people's having wandered through a desert. A desert is a place uninhabited by people. It is desolate and uncultivated. The presence of the Jewish people transformed the empty wilderness into "home" for a great multitude. Its stark desolation was also relieved by the grass and trees that sprouted wherever they went, thanks to the well that accompanied them in the merit of Miriam. The desert, a place incompatible with human life, was transformed into a place that could support it.

Though this happened thousands of years ago, it has practical significance for us today. For every Jew is obligated to transform his desert-like surroundings into "cultivated land."

It sometimes happens that a Jew may look around and discover that he is indeed in a "desert." He may feel himself alone in the world, overwhelmed by a sense of being different. Nonetheless, we are not permitted to simply leave, to run away and look for a better place to live. Like our forefathers, we must turn our surroundings into habitable land. This is accomplished by studying and sharing Torah, and bringing everyone we meet under its influence.

Another "desert" may be a personal, spiritual one. For, if we have not properly sown our environment with good deeds, our inner garden is uncultivated. Yet, we always have the power to change! As we read in this week's Torah portion, it was only upon attainment of the age of 30 that a Levite became eligible to carry the Sanctuary's components. Similarly, if any Jew sincerely resolves to serve G-d properly, regardless of age or past conduct, he will be given the strength from Above to purify himself and amend his ways.

In this manner, both one's personal "desert" and the world at large will be transformed into a flourishing "cultivated land."

Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 13

Nazirites and Nunneries

By Yossy Goldman

The mightiest man in the Bible was, of course, Samson. He took on the most savage of beasts and levelled a stadium with his bare hands. In the end, Samson was undone by a haircut-Delilah cut his hair and he lost his strength. Why should such an innocuous event have sapped his strength? The answer is that Samson was a *nazirite*. And as we read in this week's Torah portion, the sacred vow of the *nazirite* precludes him from cutting his hair, coming into contact with the dead, and drinking wine.

At the end of a person's *nazirite* period, there were certain atonement offerings he needed to bring to the Temple. The Talmud asks: why should a *nazirite*, who essentially has taken upon himself voluntary prohibitions beyond the letter of the law, be required to seek atonement? What sin did he commit? One Talmudic opinion suggests that the fact that he denied himself the pleasure of drinking wine is considered sinful.

Now the question is: why is it wrong to deny oneself anything? Just because the Creator allows us to enjoy the fruit of the vine, is it wrong to decline? Will I really be held accountable for every product that bears a kosher certification which I choose to do without? And if I haven't yet made it to that fancy kosher restaurant in Manhattan, am I desperately in need of some atonement?

The answer, it would appear, has more to do with attitude than with blatant iniquity. What is the right way to live? What should be our approach to G-d's creation and the material world? Do we need to divorce ourselves from society in order to be holy? Should we reject anything that isn't wholly spiritual because we fear it may interfere with our piety?

There are ideologies which preach celibacy and revere those who sequester themselves from the daily grind of worldly activity. They see the body as unclean, and marriage as a less-than-ideal concession to human frailty. Then there are some who climb mountains to escape to the spiritual realms. The heavens are far more blissful and beautiful than the crass street corners and alleyways of city life.

Judaism sees it differently. We follow neither rejectionist nor escapist theologies. We embrace and engage G-d's world. Of course, there are clear guidelines, even rules and regulations. But within the Torah framework we should work with the Almighty's universe. "In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth." Earthiness, too, is part of His vast, eternal plan. That plan is that earthly beings, men and women, should invest their time, energy, wealth and wisdom to infuse the material realm with G-dliness.

Every mitzvah we do achieves just that. We take the physical and transform it to the spiritual, not by breaking it or running away from it, but by confronting it and molding it into something sacred and purposeful.

"Jews have no nunneries," goes the proverb. A *yeshiva* is meant to be not a monastery, but a school which will teach and train students to create spiritual value within the material world. So the *nazirite*, who because of his own moral weakness found it necessary to distance himself from that which the Creator permitted us, is somewhat sinful after all. And his attitude does indeed require some atonement.

Judaism calls upon us to live a higher, otherworldly life *within* this world. Rather than allowing the emptiness of a society to bring us down, we are challenged to assertively insist on changing our society for the better.

By all means, drink the wine, but make sure you make *kiddush* and say "L'Chaim!"

Slice of LIFE

Please Invite Me to the Wedding

Dr. Avraham Goldenski was an Israeli success story. Despite his being semi-crippled after a severe auto accident he managed to acquire a doctorate in the humanities and be appointed as a representative of the Israeli ministry of transportation to the U.S.A.

In the true Israeli leftist (Mapa'i party) tradition he was as far from being an observant Jew as possible but he had an open mind and heart to Judaism and anything new. So when his term of service had ended and he was preparing to return to Israel it wasn't surprising that when one of his friends suggested that he visit the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Brooklyn before he left, he agreed.

The next day an audience was arranged, something which usually takes weeks or even months, and before he knew it he was entering the Rebbe's office.

Due to his difficulty in walking The Rebbe stood and helped him to sit down and the conversation began. Doctor Goldenski thought that he would be there for a few minutes, receive a few blessings and possibly discuss religion, and that would be it, but he was in for a very pleasant surprise.

The Rebbe took a great interest in his work and his other interests, asked deep questions and made accurate and deep comments. The conversation was lively and the Doctor enjoyed it immensely but then about a half an hour later the Rebbe suddenly became serious.

"Ah ha! Here's the pitch about religion," the Doctor thought to himself "This is what he's been setting me up for." But it wasn't so.

The Rebbe looked into his eyes and said, "I understand that you will be leaving for Israel tomorrow but I think that you should consider delaying your return in order to see a neurologist (and the Rebbe named a professor). He's a friend of mine and it won't cost you anything; I will pay the bill. Please think about it."

Then, as Dr. Goldenski was about to get up, the Rebbe said, "And I have one

more request. Please send me an invitation to your daughter's wedding."

The Doctor sat back down, looked at the Rebbe strangely and corrected him. "Heh, heh! Wedding? Excuse me Rebbe, but my daughter is only fifteen years old! She's not going to get married so soon."

"Certainly" the Rebbe answered "But when she does please don't forget to send me an invitation."

Once outside of the Rebbe's office Dr. Goldenski could not calm himself down; he was really impressed. He had never met anyone that both knew so much and was so interested in his welfare. Something told him that he should take the Rebbe's offer seriously.

So the next day Dr. Goldenski was sitting in the professor's office after being examined, and was listening to the diagnosis.

"My friend, you are very fortunate that the Lubavitcher Rebbe sent you here." The professor said seriously. He held up some of the x-rays and explained. "See here? This is your spinal chord. Because of the structure of your body there is pressure here and, well, it's not good. In a few weeks the cord will almost certainly break which means crippled for life ... or worse. But now that we caught it in time it can be stopped. You said you are returning to Israel, right? Well you can go to Haddasa Ain Kerem hospital in Jerusalem. They have an excellent staff. I'll be in touch with them! I'm sure you'll last till then."

Goldenski left in a daze and immediately took the first cab to the Rebbe's headquarters to thank him.

He was admitted almost immediately and when the Rebbe heard the news he smiled, said he was happy to help, reminded him again to send an invitation to his daughter's wedding and finally made a strange request. He asked him to stay in Crown Heights for Shabbat.

The Doctor, as unreligious as he was, actually accepted the invitation. That evening he returned for Shabbat and the next afternoon stood with hundreds of Chassidim at the Rebbe's public talk.

But after the Rebbe finished his first speech, the Doctor approached him and thanked him again, whereupon the Rebbe shook his hand, reminded him a third time about sending the wedding invitation and they parted.

Dr. Goldenski returned to Israel and the treatments in Ain Kerem saved his spinal chord. He even brought a Chabad Rabbi to give a class in Chassidut in his house to some friends once a week. But despite all this, he did not move even one iota closer to observing the commandments.

But he didn't forget the Rebbe's request. Three years later his daughter became engaged and he sent the Rebbe an invitation but, strangely, he received no reply.

Then just days before the wedding as he was in the middle of his afternoon meal, suddenly he clutched his chest in pain, lost his breath and fell to the ground unconsciousness. It was diagnosed as a severe heart attack and he was hospitalized in serious condition. The very next day a long letter from the Lubavitcher Rebbe arrived in the mail!

It was over three pages long but the Doctor asked that it be read to him. It was filled with positive and encouraging ideas about actually fulfilling commandments and near the end the Rebbe wrote:

"When I came to know you and saw your courage and fortitude that, despite your state of health you were not only able to withstand all difficulties but to even to overcome them and surpass those around you (and even more importantly, in a pleasant and refined way) there is no doubt in my mind that if you truly decide to make an effort to encourage your daughter live a true Jewish life, at least from the day of her marriage (including you being a living example to her), that you will also succeed."

The Rebbe closed by saying, "Please pardon me for taking the liberty of entering into your personal affairs and your private life but I feel that the topic is so important and serious that I don't have the right to keep my thoughts and hopes to myself."

Dr. Goldenski silently read and re-read the letter and an hour later turned to those around his bedside and said seriously "It's necessary to fulfill everything written here."

These were his last words on earth. Moments later he closed his eyes and returned his soul to the Creator. The Rebbe foresaw that just before his daughter's wedding he would be willing to become a new person; a living example of true Judaism.

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ISSUE 1087

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Abarbanel writes that resurrection of the dead will apply to all of mankind. The nations then to be resurrected will realize the folly of their beliefs and will acknowledge G-d's sovereignty, in the spirit of the prophecy that appears in Zephaniah 3:9: "For I shall then make the nations pure of speech, so that they will all call upon the Name of G-d and serve Him with one purpose."



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

B"H, 11 Menachem Av, 5710

Greetings and blessings,

I received your letter from the Friday preceding *Shabbos Parshas Devarim* with the check for Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch. Enclosed is a receipt.

[With regard to] what you wrote - that you wanted to write a longer letter but refrained from doing so because I am very busy: I want to assure you that I am always happy to receive detailed letters and I read them with the appropriate concentration. It may, however, happen that my reply will be delayed because of the large [amount of] work. I would like that, [in such an instance,] you not be offended and indeed, you probably will not become offended.

In continuation of my previous letter, whose content [emphasized] working with others, I would like to add several lines about the nature of the work which every person must and can achieve with himself. As my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, *hk"m*, once said in his talks: "We must work with others, but we may not forget about ourselves."

Nevertheless, the *yetzer hara* is [aptly] called "the clever one," and therefore approaches every individual according to his particular character. If it sees that a person has abilities in communal activities ([the field of] social work), it tells him: "Why should you work on yourself? Saving lives supersedes everything. And besides, if you can make others more observant, there is no need to take care of one's own Divine service."

This is what the Rebbe sought to clarify, that one can't let himself be convinced by the words of "the clever one": one must always examine oneself [to see] if all [the aspects of] his [conduct] are as they should be, as mandated by the Torah and its *mitzvos*, as clarified by *Chassidus*.

In general, one's Divine service with one's own self involves three dimensions: Torah study, service (prayer), and deeds of kindness. All of these must be performed as *avodah*, labour, working on oneself with strenuous exertion. As long as one does not exert himself, his Divine service is not being conducted as it should. As stated in *Tanya*, ch. 15, the battle with the *yetzer hara* requires that one struggle [to advance in his Divine service] far more than his nature motivates him. [Only then] is he referred to as "a servant of G-d."

Every person must carefully judge the extent to which he carries out the awesome battle [with the *yetzer hara*], as clarified at length in *Tanya*, ch. 30.

I hope you will not take offense at my writing openly. I await hearing good news from you, both in your work on yourself and your work with others.

Wishing you all forms of good and with blessing to you and your household,
Menachem Schneerson

CUSTOMS CORNER

Feeding Animals before Eating

Righteous men have always sought to observe the precept of feeding animals before themselves. It is told that Rabbi Aharon Rokeach, the Belzer Rebbe of righteous memory, would purchase (or at least become a part owner of) a horse, just so he could observe this *mitzvah*. Before eating, he would often check to see that the animal was taken care of.

Some say that feeding one's animals before eating is a Torah obligation. Others say that it is a rabbinic *mitzvah* (that is merely "supported" by a verse from Deuteronomy). Still others maintain that it's a pious practice, not an outright obligation.

Several reasons have been suggested for such conduct:

1. It is cruel to eat while the animals that depend on us for sustenance are hungry.
2. We must emulate G-d's ways. Concerning G-d it is written, "And His mercy is upon all His creatures"; so we, too, show our mercy to animals.

A WORD

from the Director

The Torah portion this week begins, "The Lord spoke to Moses saying: Lift up the heads [take a census] of the sons of Gershon". In reference to counting a group of people, the Torah uses the term "lifting the heads", which seems like a strange usage of words. What connection does counting have to lifting?

When counting an assemblage of items, the only change that occurs in the objects is that post-counting they take on importance as individuals. Before they were counted they were a group of "many" things, if one went missing there would still remain a multitude. After the counting though, there is a specific number and each individual is an integral part of making up the whole. If there are 100, when missing 1, regardless of which, there will only be 99.

Same applies to the Jews as individuals. Counting is the means with which G-d shows his endearment and the preciousness that each one holds in his eyes. Nothing, and specifically a Jew, was put in this world without a reason. Every single person and every single existence on earth was placed here to accomplish a detail in the divine plan, and that detail cannot be carried out by any other being. Before the census the significance of every entity was not as openly apparent, but following it, the status of every Jew was "uplifted" to the state that it is recognisable on every Jew that without him the nation is lacking and is not a complete unit.

Perhaps the Torah is hinting to us how a Jew is able to express this uniqueness he possesses, as well. When created, every person is equipped with different powers: the power of speech, the power of emotions, intellect etc. The Torah tells us: how is a Jew able to stay above, to not get lost in the mix of people, to remain an important individual when the population of the world constantly increase and his existence becomes [seemingly] gradually less and less significant? "Lift the head", use out the brain G-d gave you for Torah learning. Elevate yourself and your intellectual faculties, given to you by G-d himself, to strengthen your connection to him and do your part in the world as a Jew.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

A MEMORY BEVERAGE

Rabbi Chaim Vital was born and raised in Safed. After his Bar Mitzvah, he studied Torah under Rabbi Moshe Alshich. One day Rabbi Yosef Karo came to caution Rabbi Alsheich.

"Your student Chaim is a very remarkable young man. In the name of the *Maggid*, the heavenly teacher who comes to me, I request that you be exceptionally careful in supervising every stage of his development, particularly in Torah."

Rabbi Chaim quickly gained a deep understanding of Talmud and *halacha*, and eventually was ordained by Rabbi Alsheich. He soon turned to the mystical side of Torah and avidly studied the Zohar. In due course of time, he was initiated into the select circle of Rabbi Moshe Cordevero's disciples.

When he began studying with Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the holy *Ari*, in 1570, his mentor set out a two-fold program for him to constantly follow. The first directive was to restrain himself at all times from any bad character traits. He should never get angry, depressed, haughty, or impatient, nor should he even discuss trite matters. Instead, he should maintain a low-keyed image of himself, filled with inner joy and fear of sin. The second directive was an order of learning, a detailed curriculum. Every day he should study Chumash, Mishna, Talmud and Kabbala, especially the Zohar.

Rabbi Luria stressed that man's ability to ascend the spiritual ladder depends greatly on one's *kavana*, his intentions and focus. Besides the necessary *kavana* when fulfilling a commandment, the *Ari* cautioned his disciple to be very meticulous when reciting blessings on food. All foods, he explained, possess (in addition to a holy spark) adverse spiritual forces (*kelipot*) which 'desire' to create a negative effect on the eater. Only by reciting the blessing with the proper *kavana* can one annul that adverse effect, thus purifying one's body and cleansing one's thoughts.

Next, Rabbi Luria delineated a path of repentance for Rabbi Chaim to follow to correct sins he had committed earlier in his life. For instance, as atonement for cursing his parents when he was a child, Rabbi Chaim was to fast for three consecutive days, meditating on certain holy names. The fast ended on Shavuot night.

"The whole night of Shavuot," wrote Rabbi Vital, "I studied Kabbala with Rabbi Luria. He informed me that I had succeeded in atoning for that sin."

Both the intensity of their learning and its tremendous quantity and complexity began to affect Rabbi Vital. He realized that he could not retain all of the vast wisdom his mentor was bestowing on him.

The situation worsened.

When Rabbi Chaim confided his concern to his mentor, Rabbi Luria simply told him not to worry. He has a plan.

Together they went to Tiberias and walked through the town until they came to the fishing dock by the bank of the *Kinneret* (Sea of Galilee). There they rented a small boat and rowed southward into the lake in the direction of the Tomb of *Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess*.

About halfway there, the *Ari* slowed the boat and carefully scanned the water, searching for a certain spot, using an ancient synagogue on the shoreline as a landmark. When he reached the exact spot for which he had been searching, which appeared to Rabbi Chaim no different from the rest of the lake, he lowered a flask and filled it with sea water.

"Drink this!" he ordered his disciple as he handed him the flask. "It is water from the well of Miriam from which our forefathers drank in the wilderness. They were called the Generation of Knowledge, and once you have partaken of this water, it will cure you and you shall forget nothing I teach you."

So it came to pass. From that day Rabbi Chaim Vital both comprehended the wisdom of the kabbalistic system of his mentor, and became its principal disseminator and redactor, in the form of the multi-volume *Kitvey Ari*-"Writings of the Ari," the authoritative writings of the holy *Ari* of blessed memory.

Biographic Notes:

Rabbi Chaim Vital (1543 - 30 Nisan 1620) Student of Rabbis Moshe Alsheich and Moshe Cordevero, but best known as the main disciple of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria and the authoritative redactor of his doctrines, as recorded in *Etz Chaim* ("Tree of Life"). *Pri Etz Chaim* ("Fruit of the Tree of Life"), and *Shmoneh Sha'arim* ("Eight Gates"). Author of several books of his own as well.

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

If a man's wife go astray (5:12)

A person does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters into him. (The word the Torah uses for the sotah's "going astray," *shtut*, also means "folly" and "insanity.") (*Talmud, Sotah 3a*)

And the priest shall write these oaths in a scroll, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water (5:23)

Great is peace! For to make peace between husband and wife, the Torah instructs that the name of G-d, written in holiness, should be blotted out in water. (The text of the oath administered to the *sotah* included the Divine name.) (*Talmud, Chulin 141a*)

May G-d bless you and keep you (6:24)

With G-d's blessing comes His protection of the blessing. A mortal king has a servant in Syria while he himself lives in Rome. The king sends for him. He sets out and comes to him. He gives him a hundred pounds of gold. He packs it up and sets out on his journey. Robbers fall upon him and take away all that he had given him and all that he had with him... But when G-d blesses one with riches, He also guards them from robbers. (*Midrash Rabbah*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 17 MAY 2013

BEGINS	ENDS
4:59MELBOURNE	5:59
5:02ADELAIDE	5:59
4:49BRISBANE	5:43
6:11DARWIN	7:02
4:46GOLD COAST	5:40
5:09PERTH	6:05
4:44SYDNEY	5:41
4:49CANBERRA	5:47
4:43LAUNCESTON	5:45
5:04AUCKLAND	6:02
4:53WELLINGTON	5:54
4:39HOBART	5:41
4:44BYRON BAY	5:39
6:48SINGAPORE	7:39



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS NASO
8 SIVAN • 17 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:59 PM
	MINCHA:	5:10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:45 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:40 AM
	MINCHA:	5:05 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5:59 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:05 PM
	MAARIV:	5:50 PM