

LAMPLIGHTER

16 Shevat
Parshas Yisro
1122
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah reading, Yitro, contains the Ten Commandments, the ultimate distillation of G-d's revelation to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai.

The commandments themselves range from the highest theological and moral concepts - "I am the L-rd your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" and "You shall have no other gods before Me" - to "simpler," ethical concepts man would seemingly figure out on his own - "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour," etc.

The juxtaposition of both types of commandments teaches us a very important lesson: All of G-d's commandments, be they of a "higher" or more mundane nature, must be carried out with the same intent, i.e., solely because G-d has so commanded us. The reason we do not commit murder or steal is only because the same G-d Who declared "I am the L-rd your G-d" is the One Who has commanded us not to - not because the concepts make sense to our human intellect.

The human mind is eminently pliant and malleable, its logic often determined by a wide range of factors. Relying on intellect alone can result in a person's convincing himself that an aveira, an out-and-out sin, is actually a very great mitzvah!

Without the foundation of "I am the L-rd your G-d," a Jew's observance of the "lower" commandments will be sorely lacking.

For example, the spiritual corollary of "You shall not murder" is the prohibition against shaming another person in public, symbolically "shedding his blood." Likewise, the commandment "You shall not steal" applies equally to the theft of intellectual property and ideas.

It states, "Self-love will cover up a multitude of transgressions." Just as a small finger can obscure the entire world when it is placed right in front of the eye, so too does a person's love for himself often blind him to the true reality. Accordingly, a Jew's obligation is to ensure that his observance of all of G-d's mitzvot is thoroughly permeated with a sense of "I am the L-rd your G-d," even if the reason for a particular commandment appears to be perfectly understandable and obvious. With this basic principle in mind, all our deeds and actions will truly be imbued with G-dliness and holiness.

Adapted Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe Vol. 3

Is there anything wrong with arguing?

By Levi Avtzon

Chaim came back from a long trip to Minsk. "Minsk is a crazy city!" he told his friends.

"Why?" they asked.

"Well, in Minsk I found a socialist, a communist, a Zionist, a Bundist, a leftist, a rightist, a devout religious man, a secular humanist, a closed-minded in the box person and a free thinker!"

His friends didn't understand: "But isn't that a normal community, where you have different people with different ideas?!"

"Ah," said Chaim, "you don't understand: this was all the same person!"

We are a nation who argues. A lot.

From ancient history, when Abraham and Moses argued with the Divine, to the present where the bricks and cement of synagogues and Jewish social halls vibrate from the sound of verbal battle on the widest spectrum of subjects, from how-cold-is-it-really-outside-including-the-windchill to the solution to world hunger.

Life as we know it: I say yes you say no.

But then we hear the cries for peace: "Why must we argue?" "All problems arise from disagreement!" "If we would all agree to agree, life would be so simple and harmonious." Tell me about it.

Where did this notion that we must think alike originate from? Where in Torah or in common sense is there any hint to the notion that we must all think alike?

Yes, there are fundamental premises that are not up to debate. One may not kill. We must believe in one G d. Adultery is forbidden, Hamas is a terror organization and Holocaust denial is the work of the Satan and cannot be college campus debate material. On this we all agree (we better!).

But for almost everything else from the 'role of government' to the 'difference between a manager and a leader' and plethora of issues that keep our pundits, journalists and talk show hosts mouths and pockets loaded, these are part of a healthy society.

This week we read the story of the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. In 19:1, we read that after arriving at Sinai, "there Israel camped opposite the mountain."

Says Rashi: "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 conflict, whereas here they camped as one man, with one heart."

Notice that Rashi uses the expression "one heart." No mention of "one brain." There is no evidence that for the sake of peace, the Jews let go of their opinions!

Mouth shutting due to the fear that "it's gonna cause a fight" is not and never was a Jewish concept.

Our history is full of rabbis and teachers debating, arguing, and defending their ideas. The Talmud is but a microcosm of hundreds of years of debate on a myriad of topics. It is a part of our psyche. Jews argue, and that is a good thing.

True, debate must remain in the realm of objective discussion, where we argue about the message, not the messenger. While we may dispute ideas and disagree with the other's opinion, we must always have respect for our opponent, as a human being, as a Jew. But within the framework of fair debate - we are lifetime members.

Slice of LIFE

A DREADLOCKS SHABBBAT DROP-IN

Yisrael Benyamin

Shabbat! How G-d loves for us to keep *Shabbat*. And so He is ever willing to do whatever it takes to help make the arrangements for us to fulfil this all important *mitzvah*.

I remember many years ago when I first began to keep *Shabbat*. At the time I was new to Jewish observance. I had been hitchhiking around the country, and living on the streets for a few years, searching deeply for answers and ways in which I could become closer to G-d. I was fortunate enough to come into contact with the Chabad House in Berkeley, CA, where I met Rabbi Yehuda Ferris. Such a special Jew, so loving and non-judgmental, he turned me on to *Shabbat*. After some months of living there it was time to move on, and I took on the commitment of keeping *Shabbat*. I made it very clear to G-d that even though I was hitchhiking, and even if I should be on the side of the road once *Shabbat* came in, I would simply stay there with my pack till after *Shabbat*.

So I began my journey. I arrived in Boulder, Colorado, on a Friday afternoon. Not to worry though, I would go to the local Chabad House. I found the address and directions, and proceeded to walk the few miles necessary. I figured I still had a good three to four hours and that I was ok for time.

When I finally arrived at the address I did not find a Chabad house, but a huge office building. At this point I was a little worried. I went inside and saw that the Chabad office was on the third floor. Of course it was already closed for *Shabbat*. Now what to do? I should mention my appearance: I had long dreadlocks (matted hair) with a Tibetan bell attached, a scraggly beard, tattered, painted pants and a very exotic shirt from India, which had Sanskrit written all over it. I definitely was not your average looking Jew, or

even human.

I noticed that there was a financial firm of some sort next door to the office, with a glass door through which I could see an elderly lady sitting at a desk and looking at me. I asked if she might let me use the phone. I was getting a little nervous because it was almost *Shabbat*. She asked me in quite a surprised and curious tone, "Are you one of those religious Jews?" She had seen me knocking on the Chabad door, but was confused by my appearance. I told that I was Jewish and trying to be religious. "Oh, that's wonderful," she exclaimed. "I'm a born-again Christian and I think you Jews are the greatest!" She invited me in and I called the Chabad House in Denver. They told me that there was nothing they could do as *Shabbat* was so soon and they knew no one who could help me in Boulder. I proceeded to call all the synagogues in the phone book. This was many years ago when there were almost no observant Jews there. Now, B"H, that is not the case. The synagogues simply laughed at me.

My problem was not that I needed a place to stay, but rather a place to leave my backpack, because you cannot carry outside on *Shabbat* where there is no Eruv. I had lived on the streets for a few years and knew how to take care of myself. My main concern was to not break *Shabbat*. I travelled with candles and grape juice for this very purpose. Finally I spoke to one person who told me that I could leave my pack if the janitor was there.

The lady had been listening and offered to drive me to the Synagogue. I was greatly relieved, because there was only an hour to *Shabbat*. We went in her new Cadillac to the Synagogue, only to find it locked, and no one there. At this point I decided to forget it, throw my pack in the bushes and retrieve it after *Shabbat*. The woman would not hear of it, and offered to allow me to celebrate *Shabbat* at her home. I was amazed by her kindness, and saw no reason not to take up her wonderful offer. I told her yes but we had to hurry.

Not a moment too soon we arrived at her house, which I might add was quite

nice and in one of the ritzier areas of town. Her husband came out and she introduced me as a religious Jew who had come to celebrate the *Shabbat*. He was overjoyed, and invited me in with nothing but graciousness. I immediately lit candles and then *davened* (prayed). Afterwards they put some food together for me - I was a vegetarian and wasn't that concerned with *kashrut* at the time. After I had eaten they tried to explain to me about their Messiah and so on and so forth. They spent about five minutes talking about it. I said that he sounds like a great guy but that I was just starting to get into my Jewishness. "Absolutely you should learn about being Jewish and what it means. That is the most important thing."

After this they informed me that the following morning they were going to visit their daughter, who lives in North Carolina, for a week, and were leaving at 6:30am. I asked them to let me put my backpack in their backyard, and I'd retrieve it on Saturday night. "No, No," they exclaimed. "We wouldn't hear of it. We want you to stay, here are the keys, stay as long as you like. The house is yours. It is our honour to be able to serve a Jew and help him in any way."

How clear I was that this was a miracle. Here I was, coming into a town I had never been to before, on Erev *Shabbat*. I didn't know anyone. I looked like a complete freak, and this wealthy, elderly, non-Jewish couple asked me into their home. Not only did they take me in, but they basically gave it to me! And they really didn't try to convert me, but encouraged me to learn more about being Jewish, and the importance of keeping *Shabbat*. What more could I ask of G-d? He showed me what He is willing to do to help me keep *Shabbat*, if I am willing to make the commitment too.

We have to know that G-d is not far away from us. He is very close and involved in every aspect of our lives. If we will simply let Him in, and be a part of our life, He will do things for us which are far beyond our imagination.

May we all be blessed to constantly see the miracles that are manifest in our lives at every moment.

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ISSUE 1122

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In this week's Parsha it says "and it was on the third day during the time that it was morning". Why doesn't it say "in the morning"? In Yeshaya it says (60:19) "and (when Moshiach comes) the sun will no longer be for you as light..." meaning that the revelation of the Shechina - the Divine Presence - will be so brilliant that the light of the sun will not be noticed. This was the case in our Parsha by the giving of the Torah, and so the Torah only mentions the time of the morning as a parenthetical reference.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
22nd of Iyar, 5721
[May 8, 1961]
Brooklyn, NY
Greetings and Blessings:

I received your letter of April 24th, in which you write about the apparent contradiction between the latest scientific attempts to penetrate outer space, especially reaching the moon, which seems to you to contradict the statement in the Torah, "The Heavens belong to G-d, and the earth He gave to the children of man."

Actually there is no contradiction at all, if you consider the term "earth" not in the narrow sense referring only to our globe, but in its proper sense, as meant in this verse, which includes also the atmosphere and the whole physical universe, with which mankind is concerned and directly affected by. We must not confuse the terms Heaven and the planets. The stars, planets, moon, etc. are not called Heaven, since Heaven is something spiritual, whereas those planets are physical and belong in the physical universe.

The fact that G-d created the so-called heavenly bodies to serve our world, and to give light, warmth, and energy to it, and placed them in the firmament of the sky at a certain distance from our earth, does not preclude man's attempt to learn all about them. Similarly, when the Torah states that G-d placed the moon in the sky so to give light on earth, this does not exclude the possibility of man's landing on it at some future time. The meaning of the verse "The Heavens belong to G-d, etc.," is in the sense that while G-d is everywhere, including the Heavens, man was placed in the physical universe, and is part of it, and, therefore, must make the most of it, as long as there is life on this earth. There is nothing in actual scientific experiments and accomplishments that contradict the Torah, nor is there such a possibility since the Torah is Truth.

Judging by your writing and background, I firmly hope that you are conducting your daily life in strict accordance with the Torah, which is called Toras Chaim, the Law of Life, and the Mitzvahs whereby Jews live, and that you attempt to make steady advancement along this road, in compliance with the principle that "all things of holiness should be on the upgrade."

With blessing

By the Grace of G-d
18th of Teveth, 5720 [January 18, 1960]
Brooklyn, NY
Greetings and Blessings:

I received your letter of January 10th, in which you ask my explanation of the reference of the four basic elements (Yesodoth) mentioned in chapter one of the Tanya, and you ask me how it is possible to reconcile this with modern chemistry which recognizes over one hundred elements.

Prefatorily, I must make at least two corrections in your letter. One, the origin of that statement in the Tanya, is not as you write, but it is to be found in the Medrash Rabba Bamidbar 14:12, and at greater length and in greater detail in many parts of the Zohar, and further explained in other books of the Kabbalah. Two, modern chemistry does not recognize over one hundred basic elements but a considerably fewer number if matter is to be reduced to its basic components or particles. (For the so called elements are themselves made up of atoms, which are the smallest particles into which an element can be divided and yet retain its properties and characteristics, but the atoms themselves are further made up of further smaller particles), such as electrons, protons, neutrons.

Thus the answer to your question lies in the proper definition of the terms under discussion. For as indicated above, the so called element is not the basic particle matter. Even the term atom which originally meant something indivisible, is an archaism now employed only for conveniences, as it no longer corresponds to its original meaning. Similarly when we speak of an individual as being an element of society this does not mean that the individual himself is not composite.

This should be borne in mind when we consider the term Yesodot in the Zohar, Midrash Rabba, Kabbalah, etc., and, of course, in the Tanya and other Chabad sources. This does not mean something which under normal circumstances are indivisible or unchangeable, but the actual so-called "bricks" or components which make up everything that exists in the world. I might also mention that there is another school that conceives these four Yesodot, not in their physical aspects but rather qualitatively, that is to say, "fire," in the sense of the properties of hot and dryness; "water," in the sense of coolness and humidity, and so on.

I hope that this will answer your question, if you have any further questions do not hesitate to write again.

With all good wishes, and with blessing,

CUSTOMS CORNER

In this week's Parsha it says "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it" (Exodus 20:8). This verse is a Torah command to sanctify the Shabbat when it enters (Kiddush) and when it departs (Havdalah). The Sages instituted that this sanctification be accompanied by a cup of wine (or grape juice). They also instituted that Kiddush be recited over wine before beginning the daytime Shabbat meal.

Here are a few points about the Kiddush ceremony:

- It is forbidden to eat or drink anything before Kiddush. This prohibition starts at sundown of Friday night, and after the Shacharit prayer of Shabbat morning.
- A cup of wine from which someone has already sipped is considered "tainted" and the leftover wine may not be used for Kiddush. "Tainted" wine is remedied by pouring into it even a miniscule amount of untainted wine.
- The Kiddush cup must be rinsed and complete (as it is not respectful to the Shabbos to use a cup that is chipped).
- The Kiddush cup is held in the right hand (unless one is left-handed). When starting the Kiddush it is customary to glance at the Shabbat candles, and when saying the Hagafen blessing one should glance at the wine.
- After finishing the Kiddush, the one who recited the Kiddush must drink at least 1.46 ounces of the wine. It is customary for all those who listened to the Kiddush to also have a sip from the wine.

A WORD

from the Director

In this week's Parsha the Torah tells us about Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, suggesting to Moshe that he create a hierarchical system of judges to assist him in judging the Jewish people. In regards to this it says "They will judge the people at all times".

These laws and judgements that the Torah refers to here, generally applies to the parts of the Torah that instruct us in the very logical and civil laws. Laws our logic may have even dictated without the command of the Torah.

This is the account which precedes the story of the giving of the Torah. In next week's Parsha also speaks about the laws that are of logical and civil content. However, sandwiched in the middle is the Divine revelation, the moment so beyond our human grasp that the Jewish people asked Moshe to act as an intermediary to mitigate their experience of supernatural transcendence.

The new insights that are constantly seen in the Torah constitute the ongoing revelation of G-d at Mount Sinai. Many times we sense that the profundity of these insights is so sublime and far-beyond us that it is pointless to try to prepare ourselves for them. If it is meant to happen it will happen anyway.

The fact that the giving of the Torah was preceded by these laws demonstrates that this is not true. True Divine revelation comes specifically after preparation.

In addition this Divine revelation in the Torah is also followed by such laws. This teaches us that we cannot accept Hashem's Torah in a way that remains abstract and transcendent, leaving us complacent, but we must integrate the Torah, it's holiness and it's teachings into every part of our lives so that it becomes part of us.

J. I. Gurtman

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

SIMPLE LOGIC

The daughter of a chassid of Rabbi Shnuer Zalman, the "Alter Rebbe" of Chabad, had blossomed into young womanhood, but her impoverished father lacked the means to provide for her to get married. His friends suggested that since it was winter, he should venture into the hard liquor business. Buy a large quantity from a local distillery, they told him, transport it to one of the large fairs at a big city, and with G-d's help, sell it there for a tidy profit.

The man decided to follow his friends' advice. He managed to borrow a sizable sum of money, and used it to buy a barrel of vodka and to rent a horse and wagon to transport his newly acquired merchandise to the city.

Finally he reached his destination. He immediately went to the fairgrounds, in order to start selling as soon as possible. He seized the barrel in order to hoist it from the wagon, but then froze in mid-action. The barrel felt frighteningly light! Sure enough, the bottom of the barrel was cracked. The strong smell of alcohol wafted into his nostrils from the soaked wood of the wagon. The entire contents of the barrel had leaked out during the long ride. Not a single drop was left!

In great sorrow, he loaded the empty barrel back on the wagon. He decided to drive on to Liozna, to the Rebbe. When he was admitted to the Rebbe's study he unburdened to him his whole sad story. But the telling made the reality of his loss sink in heavily, and he became even more upset. He had barely finished his words when he fainted on the floor.

The Rebbe's attendant succeeded in reviving him, but when the poor chassid sat up and came to himself enough to realize where he was and why, he fainted again.

This time, as soon as he opened his eyes, the Rebbe called out to him, "You can go home now; G-d will prosper your efforts."

The Rebbe's encouraging words made the chassid feel a bit less desperate. After a few minutes he felt well enough to climb up to his wagon and begin the return journey to his town. But after he got to his house and had a chance to rest a bit, he became increasingly nervous and agitated as he considered his situation. He had lost his entire investment, he had no foreseeable means to pay back the large loans he had taken, and worst of all, he had ruined his last chance of being able to help his daughter get married.

Bitter tears streamed down his cheeks.

He tried to gain control of himself. Before he could stop crying, his wife ran into the house, bursting with joy. "I found a treasure! I found gold!" she whooped.

"What are you talking about?" he called to her quizzically.

It took a few moments before she could calm down enough to answer. She related that she had gone to unload the empty barrel from the wagon so as to store it away. She thought she heard a clunk so she looked inside. Sitting on the bottom was a wrapped bundle. She dumped it out and opened it, and lo!-it was full of gold coins. A fortune! More than enough to

pay their debts and marry their daughter, and all their other children too (each at the proper time, of course).

What had happened? When he was riding home on the way back from the Rebbe, it was a freezing cold, Russian winter day. When he got to the river, instead of crossing over on the bridge that spanned it, he decided to save time by driving directly on the river surface itself, since it was frozen solid. While he was in progress, a wealthy Russian aristocrat was crossing in his fancy carriage on the bridge above him. Apparently, the package of instant golden wealth had fallen out of the aristocrat's carriage, and plopped directly into the barrel on the chassid's rusty wagon.

When the Alter Rebbe was told all that had transpired, he immediately said, "Don't think that I made a miracle, or even that when I told him that G-d would prosper him that I was divinely inspired. It was simple logic. We are taught that G-d Al-mighty does not require of anyone more than he is capable of, not even in the slightest. When I saw that this Jew was totally unable to withstand the misfortune that had come upon him, I already knew with certainty that G-d was arranging his salvation."

[Translated-adapted by Yrachmiel Tilles from Peninei HaKeser vol. II, pp.135-136 (citing Sefer Zicharon). First published in Kfar Chabad Magazine.]

Biographical note:

Rabbi Shnuer Zalman [18 Elul 1745-24 Tevet 1812], one of the main disciples of the *Maggid* of Mezritch, is the founder of the *Chabad-Chassidic* movement. He is the author of *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* and *Tanya* as well as many other major works in both Jewish law and the mystical teachings.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Now I know that G-d is greater than all gods (18:11)

This tells us that he had full knowledge of every idol in the world, for he had worshipped them all. (*Mechilta; Rashi*)

The Torah could not be given to Israel until Jethro, the great and supreme priest of the all pagan world, and confessed his faith in the Holy One, saying, "Now I know that G-d is greater than all the gods." (*Zohar*)

And they camped in the desert (19:2)

In the ownerless wilderness was the Torah given to the people of Israel. For if it were given in the Land of Israel, the residents of the Land of Israel would say, "It is ours"; and if it were given in some other place, the residents of that place would say, "It is ours." Therefore it was given in the wilderness, so that anyone who wishes to acquire it may acquire it. (*Mechilta D'Rashbi*)

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*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 17 JANUARY 2014

BEGINS	ENDS
8:25MELBOURNE	9:29
8:14ADELAIDE	9:14
6:30BRISBANE	7:26
7:02DARWIN	7:54
6:29GOLD COAST	7:26
7:08PERTH	8:07
7:51SYDNEY	8:51
8:03CANBERRA	9:04
8:27LAUNCESTON	9:34
8:24AUCKLAND	9:26
8:36WELLINGTON	9:42
8:31HOBART	9:39
7:30BYRON BAY	8:27
6:58SINGAPORE	7:49



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD
 PARSHAS YISRO
 16 SHEVAT • 17 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:25 PM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:05 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9:54 AM
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:29 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
		MON-FRI: 8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	8:30 PM
	MAARIV:	SUN-FRI: 9:20 PM