

LAMPLIGHTER

14 Adar 1
Parshas Ki Tisa
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's portion, Ki Tisa, G-d commands Moses to make a washing basin and place it in front of the Tent of Meeting. This basin was for the priests to wash before they performed their service, as it states, "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet from it when they go into the Tent of Meeting."

The act of washing had two objectives. The first was for cleanliness and purity, as the kohen (priest) was required to maintain a higher standard than others. The second was for the purpose of holiness: by washing himself the priest received an extra measure of sanctity. In fact, the very act of washing is called the "sanctification of the hands and feet."

Although the Holy Temple in Jerusalem is no longer standing, the lessons we derive from the services that were performed there are eternal. Every Jew is considered a "priest" (the entire Jewish people is called "a nation of priests and a holy people"), and the concept of washing before serving the Creator exists on many different levels.

In his Laws of Prayer, Maimonides writes that one must "wash his face, hands and feet before praying the morning service." Nowadays, when we cannot bring actual sacrifices, our prayers are offered in their stead. Washing before we pray follows the example of the priests, who washed before performing their Temple duties. But why does Maimonides stipulate that the face must be washed - something the priests were not obligated to do? The answer is that the concept of "face" has a special significance during the period of exile, after the destruction of the Holy Temple.

Hands and feet are symbolic of man's physical ability and prowess; the face is symbolic of his higher powers (intellect, sight, hearing, speech, etc.) The more mundane aspects of life are to be carried out by the hands and feet alone, whereas the higher powers are to be reserved for man's higher calling - the service of G-d.

When the Holy Temple stood, the overall spiritual level of the Jewish people was higher. It would never have occurred to the "face" to involve itself in lower matters; thus, it didn't need an added measure of protection and holiness. During the exile, however, the Jew is sometimes so demoralized that he forgets himself and invests his higher powers in affairs that are truly unworthy of their attention. His "face," as it were, must therefore be safeguarded.

In practice, many authorities rule that the "Modeh Ani" prayer said upon awakening, thanking G-d for restoring the soul, is sufficient preparation for prayer; washing one's face is not strictly necessary. For the Jew's innermost essence is always pure and connected to G-d, and thus always ready to worship the Creator.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. 31

G-d is Somewhere

So you think you're the first guy out there looking for G-d? People have been searching for spirituality, exploring the metaphysical and generally searching for truth for millennia. Even the greatest prophet of them all, Moses himself, was preoccupied with seeking the Divine. Moses wanted to see G-d in all His glory.

"Please, show me your glory," Moses appeals in the 33rd chapter of Exodus. The commentators understand this to mean that he wanted it all, the ultimate revelation. Others see it as a quest for understanding the infinite ways of G-d, like why the righteous seem to be perennial sufferers and the wicked seem to be laughing all the way to the bank.

Whatever the meaning, the Almighty places limits on Moses' understanding. "You will see my back," G-d responds, "but my face may not be seen." Finite earthlings - even a Moses - can only perceive so much and no more. The face of G-d, the ultimate full picture, is beyond human comprehension.

A youngster was being given his lesson and he wanted to know, "Where is G-d?" The answer he received was, "G-d is everywhere." "That's the problem," said the child, "I want a G-d who is somewhere!"

"Everywhere" is abstract, theoretical and rather intangible. "Somewhere," on the other hand, is more defined, substantial and real. Yes, Judaism definitely believe that G-d is everywhere. But even more important is the somewhere where G-d is to be found.

In Judaism we find a clearly developed infrastructure of life. There is a list of behaviours that are considered G-dly, and another list that may seem a lot more attractive but is deemed to be unG-dly. We know what G-d expects of us - and what He does not. It isn't left to what feels good or bad to us in our highly personal and very subjective mindsets. There are objective rules of right and wrong. Morality and ethics are in the province of G-d and are therefore non-negotiable. Oh, we can talk about it and debate the issues all night long but, ultimately, our moral code is Divine and absolute.

I was once asked regarding a certain person whether he was "a religious person." I remember how that question was a moment of personal insight for me. From the perspective of the questioner, the answer was a definite "yes": the person he was asking about was a believer, came to synagogue faithfully every week, and did charity work-- the things that qualify a person to be called "religious" in the commonly accepted sense of the term. But in Judaism, the term "religious" carries different connotations. The most obvious one is Shabbat observance. Adhering to a kosher diet is another. The nitty-gritty do's and don'ts which the Torah instructs the Jew.

Faith in general, attending Shul and helping out are all nice, but still somewhat superficial. They are in the *Everywhere* category. Keeping Shabbat, though, is more in the *Somewhere* department. It is clearly defined and absolute. It goes beyond the surface-level feel good stuff. As Jews, we require a more precise definition of "religious." Practicalities not platitudes, action more than attitudes are the order of the day. G-d must be somewhere, not just everywhere.

In the final analysis, when we connect to G-d by doing His will we experience the greatest revelations.

Slice of LIFE

DURING THE PREVIOUS WAR IN LEBANON

During the closing days of Israel's 1982 "Peace in Galilee" campaign in Lebanon, I was one of a group of ten Chabad Chassidim who got permission from the army to enter Beirut to cheer up the soldiers.

The soldiers welcomed us as though we were announcing the end of the war. The entire night we went from group to group, singing, dancing, talking, laughing, and of course making L'Chaims.

There was no time to sleep. At the crack of dawn we got our tefillin out of our bags and began asking soldiers if they wanted to do a mitzvah and put them on for a minute.

At that hour of the morning most of the soldiers were still asleep. I walked around looking for "customers" and happened upon a line of about ten open jeeps with two soldiers seated in each. Their motors were running and they were waiting in the chilly morning to go out on a mission. It must have been some sort of combat foray, because they were armed to the teeth and were wearing bulky bulletproof vests and steel helmets.

I approached the first jeep and asked them if they wanted to put on tefillin and one soldier agreed. When he finished, I moved on to the next one and asked the driver the same question, but was in for an unpleasant surprise.

He just listened, looking straight ahead, and didn't even react to my question. So I just stood there and waited for a reply. After a few seconds of silence, he turned to me and said (loose translation): "Get out of my sight, you parasite religious scum! If you don't get out of my face I'll tear you to pieces! I hate you vermin!"

I understood that the answer was no. I tried to force a smile and figure out something to say, when suddenly the driver of the next jeep in line called out to me in a desperate tone of voice: "Rabbi, Rabbi! Come here. I want to put on tefillin." I turned, happy to get away, and began to walk toward the third jeep in the line. "Tell me Rabbi," he called out distance from him. "If... if I put on tefillin will G-d protect me?"

It was obvious that the man was very worried. Yesterday he was probably sitting in his hardware store selling pipes and tools when they called him up to reserve duty, and suddenly here he was about to enter the front lines.

"Listen, my friend," I assured him, "G-d will protect you whether you put on the tefillin or not. Don't worry. He loves you because you are a Jew. But if G-d protects you for free, so why not do something for Him for free, and put on tefillin?"

It seems that the soldier in the second jeep -- the one that had cursed me out -- had heard all this, because when I finished putting on the tefillin on this soldier he called out, "Hey Rabbi! Come over here!"

I turned around to see him rolling up his sleeve like he wanted to put on the tefillin and motioning me to come over.

I took a few steps towards him. "What do you want? What happened?"

"Listen!" he replied "What do you care? I want to put on the tefillin, too."

I gave him a look and an Israeli hand motion as if to say, "Are you for real?" And he replied: "Listen, my friend. To put on tefillin in order to go to heaven or to be religious, that's not for me. But to put on tefillin for no reason... That I'm willing to do!"

This is the essence of the Jewish soul in action. A Jew may reject all reasons, all explanations, including mystical explanations, for doing a mitzvah, but will embrace the deed itself. Because a Jew inherently wants to do what G-d wants; s/he is one with G-d not only spiritually, but also -- and even more so -- through his or her everyday physical life.

FIRST CLASS TO TOKYO

A Lubavitcher chasid in the USA did his best to find a consistent source of income in order to support his family, but despite his efforts he was unable to attain any noticeable results. After numerous attempts to find a worthwhile job without success, he asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe to bestow on him a blessing for a good livelihood.

The Rebbe's answer was not long in coming: "Go to Japan on a first class ticket."

He wanted to follow the Rebbe's advice immediately. However, his financial situation was bad and he had to take the time to borrow the money for the first class flight ticket. Within a short while he was

able to pack his suitcase with his personal belongings and set out for the trip to Japan.

After the plane took off, when it was time for the first meal to be served, he realized that he had forgotten to order kosher meals. As you would expect of a Chabad chasid, he did not touch anything on the tray that was set in front of him.

The Japanese man sitting next to him asked him why he did not eat anything. He replied that he was Jewish and this kind of food was forbidden for him to eat. The Japanese man tried to persuade him to eat by explaining that the trip to Japan would take a very long time and he might end up being very hungry. However, the chasid did not agree to eat any non-kosher food.

During the trip, the Japanese man spoke to his Jewish co-traveller and asked him why he was going to Japan. The chasid told him that he had been advised by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to go there in order to find a suitable business opportunity for himself.

The Japanese man told him that there is going to be a big business fair in Tokyo, and he should consider attending. He also intended to visit that big event. Before leaving the plane, he gave his business card to the Jewish man.

The chasid spent a great deal of time at the fair, trying to get a job working as a business representative for a Japanese company in the USA -- but without success.

On the last day of the fair he remembered the Japanese man who he had met on the plane. His business card was still in his pocket and he managed to contact him.

He told the Japanese man about his wish to be the representative of a business company, and the man told him that they were just about to open a new line of merchandise. As it happened, his company was looking for a suitable person to introduce their new merchandise on the US market.

The Japanese man said that he was very impressed by the chasid's self-discipline demonstrated by his refusal to partake of the food because of his religious principles, despite the long hours of traveling. Such a person would certainly meet their requirements of honesty and strength of will, and would be capable of fulfilling the assignment in the best possible way.

Thus the chasid found employment with a good salary, and everything happened due to his following the Rebbe's advice of flying to Japan on a first class ticket.

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Editor: Yosef Y. Kasle
P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

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MOSHIACH MATTERS

There is a well-known parable of a midget standing on a giant's shoulder. The tale goes that the giant though very tall, cannot see over a wall obstructing his vision. He needs just a drop more height to reach his goal. Distressed, he raises a midget on his shoulder to be able to see beyond the wall.

The giant represents the great and holy generations of our forbearers, while we signify the midget. Although we may not be the sages of the Talmud, or the tzadikim of the past, it is our very own good deeds that will finalize the revelation of the redemption.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

B"H, 1 Sivan, 5716
Peace and blessing!

In response to your letter from the 25th of Iyar: I was happy to read in it that many of your doubts have vanished. Our holy books explain that *Safek* - doubt - has the same numerical equivalent as Amalek. The intent is to the *Kelipa* of Amalek - the spiritual force of impurity that the nation of Amalek represented. Just like the people themselves, this force embodies the trait of jumping into even a boiling bath, just so long as it manages to cool the ardour the Jewish people. The same is true of all of your doubts - their source is clearly in the influence of Amalek.

You wrote that you read in astronomy books that there are stars whose light rays must travel far more than six thousand years until reaching Earth. How, you asked, could that fit with our holy Torah's position that we are in the year 5716 since Creation?

Even if you were to assume that the above-mentioned calculation about the star's distance is correct (since that, too, is a subject of dissent among scientists), it does not pose a difficulty regarding the age of the universe. Just as stars were created, light rays were also created. And just as G-d could create a star that begins to shine only after its creation, so could He create a star that already has rays of light shining forth from it. Especially since Torah tells us, "there was morning, the first day," even though "Let there be luminaries" was only uttered on the fourth day; i.e. there was light even before the luminaries were set in the heavens.

You write that you saw in some book that possibly the six days of creation did not consist of twenty-four hour days, etc. To our sorrow, similar interpretations are offered in several books. However, they distort the verses, because - with forgiveness asked from the honour of their Torah - they did not properly understand the "foundations" upon which the various scientific theories about the world's age are built. Any knowledge or research into these foundations proves to any healthy mind that they are only conjectures, very far from certainties. This is the scientists' opinion, as is clearly stated in their books. It is just that in the books generally studied in schools by beginners, they conceal their many doubts and uncertainties in the underlying assumptions.

And while there is no need to delve into this at length, the simplest proof that the six days of creation are twenty-four hour days is the fact that the concept of keeping Shabbat after six week days is connected to G-d's resting after the six days of creation.

B"H, 10 Mar-Cheshvan, 5716
Peace and blessing!

You asked: What should be your response when told that science allegedly has proof that the world has existed for more than 5715 years? Can this be answered with the famous statement of our Sages that G-d "built worlds and destroyed them?"

The meaning of that statement is not that G-d actually created earlier physical worlds. Rather, the intent there is to spiritual worlds, as recorded by the Alter Rebbe - based on the Arizal's writings - in his Torah Ohr on the portion of Shemot.

Their statement that science has proofs is absolutely false. Science has no proofs at all, only estimations built on flimsy foundations. It is hard to explain all of this in a letter of requisite length. The main point is, however, that the statement in scientific texts with regard to the world's having existed for several billion years, etc., is based on the following theory:

Since a specific number of years are needed (according to today's conditions, such as temperature, atmospheric pressure, wind movements, the proportions of elements in the environment, etc. etc.) for every hundred feet of sand accumulation at the banks of a river, and since there are mountains of this sand which are several miles high, therefore (if one is to assume that these mountains were gathered bit by bit from grains of sand, by the movements of this same river, and that all of the above conditions haven't changed in thousands of years) such and such number of years would be needed. This number is far more than 5715.

When one asks, however, where these grains of sand came from, they have no answer.

When one asks: Just as it is possible for grains of sand to have come to be at a certain point on a flat plain, may it not be possible that mountains too came into being all at once? Again, they have no answer.

When one asks: How do you know that five thousand years ago all of the conditions, of water, wind, river patterns, etc. were exactly the same as they are now? For this, too, they have no response.

When one asks, in addition to all of the above: If you are claiming that your proofs are scientific, how can it be that the results of the research into the age of the world according to astrophysics, according to archaeology, according to geology, and according to radioactivity, all contradict each other, from one extreme to the other? For example, one concludes that the world can be no more than half a billion years old, while the other concludes that it cannot be less than two billion!

These contradictions are clear proof that all of these discussions and research are only theories built on thin air. Here is not the place to delve into this at greater length.

CUSTOMS CORNER

The observance of the Shabbat is one of the most important Mitzvot of the Torah. Shabbat is a special gift that G-d gave to the Jewish people, and one who observes it properly is considered to be a partner with G-d in creation.

Let us focus on the issue of having a non-Jew do work for a Jew on Shabbat. Although this is generally forbidden, unfortunately, there are many Shabbat-observant people that do not understand the scope of this prohibition.

The basic rule of thumb as far as having a gentile do work for a Jew on Shabbat is that if a Jew may not do it, a non-Jew cannot do it for him. This is true whether or not the Jew specifically asks the non-Jew to do the work or even if the non-Jew does it on his own.

There are, however, various exceptions to this rule. Here are some of the variables that may impact the ruling on this matter:

- If the non-Jew is being paid by the job, rather than by the hour or day.
- If the non-Jew is (also) directly benefiting from the work.
- If it's a situation of great need, great financial loss, illness or mitzvah.

A WORD

from the Director

This week's parshah begins with the mitzvah of machatzis hashekel. HaShem tells Moshe to count the Jewish people, but not to count them one by one. Instead, every one over the age of twenty had to bring a half-shekel. Then all the shekalim would be counted and in that way, Moshe would know the number of the people. Later, the money was used to purchase the animals offered as sacrifices.

But giving the half-shekalim was not just to figure out the number of the Jewish people. HaShem tells Moshe that the machatzis hashekel was kofer nefesh (an atonement for the soul). Kofer is the root of the word kapporah. When we do kapporos on Erev Yom Kippur, we are telling HaShem that we are truly sorry for what we have done. We know that we ourselves should be punished for the things we did wrong. But we take a chicken instead and it is our kapporah - our atonement for our sins.

The half-shekel which the Jewish people were commanded to give was also like kapporos, to atone for the sins that a person transgressed.

The Midrash tells us that Moshe found it hard to understand the mitzvah of machatzis hashekel, so HaShem showed him the fiery coin.

But what's so hard to understand about a half-shekel? It's a simple coin. Couldn't Moshe Rabbeinu have known what a half-shekel looked like without HaShem showing him?

And if HaShem had to show him, why did He show him a fiery coin and not a regular one?

The answer is that surely Moshe Rabbeinu knew what a half-shekel was. But he could not understand how this coin, a small amount of money, could be kofer nefesh - an atonement for wrongdoing - even for such deeds that a person deserved to have his nefesh taken away.

So HaShem showed him a fiery coin. HaShem taught Moshe that when a Jew takes his money and gives it for a holy purpose - to bring the sacrifices, support Torah study, or help a needy person - and he gives it wholeheartedly with joy and eagerness, a simple coin becomes a coin of fire. Then that fiery enthusiasm connects the money to the fire he has in his neshamah. Giving the money for tzedakah now becomes so powerful that it can be kofer nefesh - an atonement for his sins.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED

Once...

DOWN WENT THE CLOWN

One Saturday night in the year 5656 (1896), a wealthy businessman in Bagdad decided to celebrate his great success. To enliven the party, he invited Nissim the comedian, who used humour to mock others publicly. Standing on the table and sipping from a cupful of strong drink, Nissim made all sorts of bold gestures while he drew from his repertoire of cruel jokes and witty insults, filling the hall with noisy laughter.

During his performance he was offered a piece of fish, and ate from it while continuing to amuse the crowd. Suddenly, a large bone got stuck in his throat. Not knowing how to assist him, the spectators helplessly watched as Nissim turned blue and then fell to the floor, lifeless. Horrified, the wealthy host screamed in panic, for he feared he would be blamed for the comedian's death!

One of the onlookers suggested they place Nissim upstairs, in front of Saadia the Doctor's door, and so a group of volunteers from among the many guests carried the dead comedian to the second floor, knocked on the doctor's door and hurried away.

Saadia, hearing the knock, came to the door, but because it was dark, did not notice the man lying on the floor and tripped over Nissim's feet, causing them both to roll down the steps, one over the other. Recovering from the fall, he looked at the other fellow and gasped; by tripping over this man and making him fall, he had killed him! Not wanting to be punished for murder, he stood the body against a nearby wall and left.

Ezra the tailor, still busy working at this late hour, suddenly noticed someone looking into his window and was overcome with fear; perhaps a thief was trying to break in? He ordered him to leave immediately, but when there was no response, he took a hot iron and threw it, hitting the dead Nissim in the face and knocking him down. Seeing the body collapse, he was mortified, thinking that he had killed a man! Not wanting to be caught, he dragged the body into the street and stood him up against a tree.

Soon after, a drunkard passed by and thought this man was laughing at him, so he took his bottle of whiskey and hit Nissim on the head, causing the dead body to fall to the ground. At that moment, a police officer was walking by, and seeing what the drunkard had done, arrested him. The news spread around town that in two days the drunkard would be hung for having killed Nissim the comedian. Feeling guilty, the rich businessman, the doctor and tailor, each on their own, went separately to the police to admit that in truth, it was they who had killed Nissim.

The judge was unsure how to pass judgment. Never had he encountered such a strange situation, that four people should admit to killing one man! He decided to seek the advice of the nearby great Jewish sage, Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Bagdad, the *Ben Ish Hai*.

The day of the court case arrived and many gathered to see how this episode would be resolved. The judge proclaimed his verdict: "All four men are free from punishment! My decision is according to the wisdom of the great Rabbi." The judge went on to explain what he had learned. "Nissim the comedian caused his own death through his public mockery, and therefore he received punishment corresponding to all four forms of execution that Jews could have been sentenced to during the time of their Holy Temple."

Biographical note:

Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Bagdad, the *Ben Ish Hai* (27 Av 1834 - 13 Elul 1909), is one of the most important Sephardic Jewish sages in the last two centuries. At the age of 25, he succeeded to his father's rabbinical position and continued in it for 50 years. In 1869 he visited the Holy Land and was offered the position of Rishon LeZion (Sephardic Chief Rabbi), but he did not accept. A great scholar and Kabbalist and highly regarded as a pure and holy man, his rulings are adhered to still today by many Sephardim world-wide. He published many important books on Jewish law, Midrash, Kabbalah and Ethics.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

See, I have called by name Bezalel... of the tribe of Judah... and I have appointed with him Ahaliav... of the tribe of Dan (31:2, 6)

No tribe was greater than Judah and none more lowly than Dan... Said G-d: "Let the one come and be associated with the other, so that no man may despise [his fellow] or be arrogant, for both great and small are equal in G-d's sight." (*Midrash Tanchuma*)

And Moses besought the L-rd his G-d (32:11)

There was not a corner of the heavens with which Moses did not grapple to attain G-d's forgiveness of Israel. (*Midrash Rabbah*)

And no man shall come up with you, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mountain (34:3)

The First Tablets, which were given in great fanfare and noise, were destroyed, while the Second Tablets, given in private, endured. For there is no better trait than modesty. (*Rashi*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 14 FEBRUARY 2014

BEGINS	ENDS
8:02MELBOURNE	9:01
7:54ADELAIDE	8:51
6:16BRISBANE	7:10
6:58DARWIN	7:49
6:15GOLD COAST	7:09
6:51PERTH	7:46
7:32SYDNEY	8:28
7:43CANBERRA	8:39
8:00LAUNCESTON	9:01
8:02AUCKLAND	9:00
8:10WELLINGTON	9:10
8:02HOBART	9:04
7:15BYRON BAY	8:09
7:03SINGAPORE	7:53



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS KI TISA

14 ADAR 1 • 14 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:02 PM
	MINCHA:	8:10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:40 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	10:12 AM
	MINCHA:	8:00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:01 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
		MON-FRI: 8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	8:05 PM
	MAARIV:	SUN-FRI: 8:55 PM