

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas
Va'etchanan
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Va'etchanan, Moses describes the Revelation at Mount Sinai to the younger generation of Jews who were about to enter the Land of Israel. He describes the voice of G-d, saying: "A great voice, which did not continue." One of the explanations that the Midrash offers for this is that G-d's voice did not have an echo.

The Midrash's answer seems to beg a few questions. How does the absence of an echo indicate greatness? If the voice was indeed strong, would it not have produced an echo? Furthermore, why did G-d perform such a miracle? Since miracles are not performed unnecessarily, why would G-d seemingly change the laws of nature just so that His voice would not produce an echo?

An echo is produced when sound waves hit an object. When the sound waves reach a wall, a mountain, or any such obstacle, they are bounced right back. The only condition necessary to produce an echo is that the object deflecting the sound waves must be strong and rigid. If the object is soft and yielding, the sound will be absorbed and no echo will result.

This physical phenomenon will explain why G-d's voice on Mount Sinai had no echo. When G-d said, "I am the L-rd your G-d," His voice was so overwhelmingly powerful that there was nothing in the world that was strong enough to deflect the sound. G-d's voice actually penetrated the physical world. Every object in the world, from the inanimate to the higher forms of life, absorbed the G-dly voice and was affected by it.

The phenomenon of the Revelation at Sinai is akin to what will take place in the Messianic Era, described in these words: "And the Glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh will see." Even our very bodies will be able to perceive G-dliness. So it was at the Revelation. All of physical reality absorbed the Revelation of the G-dly voice.

This is why G-d's voice had no echo. This was not a miracle; the laws of nature were not at all abrogated. It is in keeping with natural law that when a sound is absorbed, no echo is produced. And since the Voice was totally integrated into physical reality, there was nothing that could bounce the sound back. Therefore, the absence of an echo shows the infinite strength of the voice, rather than the opposite.

This phenomenon did not occur only once in the history of the world. Whenever a Jew studies Torah, the holy voice of Torah penetrates the physical surroundings and elevates the world. Our Sages say that in the World To Come, "the very beams of the house will bear witness," for they have been absorbing all the holiness produced when a person learns Torah in his home. (This explains why many tzadikim commanded that their coffins be made from the wood of their desks and tables where they learned Torah and gave food to the poor, for the Torah and mitzvot were "absorbed" by the very planks themselves!)

The power of Torah is such that nothing can stand in its way. The world was created in such a manner as to enable the continuing voice of Revelation to penetrate the corporeal world even today.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Making Judaism Relevant

By Avraham Plotkin

Nine-year-old Joey was asked by his mother what he had learned at Hebrew Sunday school.

"Well, Mom, our teacher told us how G-d sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his engineers build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then he used his walkie-talkie to radio headquarters for reinforcements. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved."

"Now, Joey, is that really what your teacher taught you?"

"Well, no, Mom. But if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe it!"

One of the greatest challenges facing rabbis and teachers today is making the Torah relevant. Stories that happened thousands of years ago need to be explained in contemporary language; otherwise they become meaningless.

When G-d introduces himself for the first time to the Jewish people, when giving them the Ten Commandments, he says: "I am G-d, your G-d, who has taken you out of Egypt." Now if G-d was trying to give here His best credentials to His newly acquired nation, why would He choose to mention the exodus? Isn't the creation of the heavens and earth a far greater feat? Wouldn't that have been a far more awesome description?

Yet, while creation is a far superior feat, redemption from Egypt - to the people whom He was addressing - was contemporary and relevant. The G-d of creation is great, but very distant; the G-d of redemption is current, meaningful and alive.

One of the daily observances of the Jewish people, which constitutes an essential part of our prayers, is remembering the Exodus from Egypt every day of our lives. Why this obsession with an event that happened thousands of years ago? The answer is simple. By remembering the Exodus from Egypt we are celebrating the G-d of redemption.

And this G-d is personal, contemporary and relevant. After all, we all have our personal spiritual "Egypt" in our lives that with the help of G-d we can succeed in overcoming.

Every day there are miracles in our lives that need to be recognized. We need to see the hand of G-d in our lives. G-d takes us out of Egypt every day. The exodus is a live reoccurring experience that makes G-d a very relevant part of our lives!

Slice of LIFE

The Book My Soul Had Been Waiting For

By Gedalia Ferdman

I grew up in an assimilated upper middle-class suburban neighbourhood. My Jewish education consisted of "afternoon school" (Hebrew school) several days a week and on Sundays. Friday nights, we made Kiddush and sat down to a family meal, then ran off to play "Friday night basketball" at the local school.

Although we did not live far from the synagogue, visits were limited primarily to Shabbat. However, as there were four boys in our house, the Rabbi would call us on those occasions when he was short a minyan. Once, my brother's Greek Orthodox friend was at our home when the Rabbi called, and he decided to tag along to shul. As it turned out, the Greek friend would have been the "tenth" for the minyan, had my brother not pointed out that he was the "wrong kind" of Orthodox!

As a young adult I developed a strong interest in psychology - not realizing that it was an attempt to make sense of this world - an understanding that my predominantly secular upbringing had denied me.

However, in spite of my intentions, none of the psychology texts I read could capture my interest for any length of time. While in college I switched my major to philosophy, in the now-conscious search for life's meaning. During that time, I ploughed through the works of the ancient, medieval and modern philosophers of both the Occident and Orient, trying out this philosophy, and then that one

- much like the fabled Goldilocks - searching for a good fit. However, none of the philosophies I investigated was able to reach and connect with my soul, and so I abandoned each one in turn.

Two years after college I sent myself off to yeshiva where I immersed myself in the ocean of the Talmud, which connected me with my past and provided great stimulation for my intellect. However, several years into this study, my soul still remained largely untouched.

My search led me to a study of Chasidism, and I read descriptions of different books by the Chasidic masters. One of them, however, captured my imagination above all the others: *Sefer HaTanya*, by Rabbi Shneur Zalman, known as the Alter Rebbe. I ordered a copy and anticipated its arrival.

I can still remember my reaction the first time I read its illuminating words describing the nature and origin of the soul: I felt a tremendous excitement and my spirit soared! I jumped from my chair and began dancing around the room, hugging the holy book to my chest. This was the work my soul had been searching for all these years! I felt like Adam when he was first presented with Eve - "bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh!"

Here was a book that satisfied my yearnings on so many levels: psychological, philosophical and spiritual, for which I had been searching since my teens, to help me make sense of this world and my place in it.

How is it, I wondered, that a book written in the 18th century by one of the earliest and greatest of Chasidic masters has so much relevance to a formerly-assimilated Jew born in the 20th century? The answer, of course, lies in the work's timeless nature: it is a treatise on the soul for the soul. And

that soul's essence, in the case of a Jew, coming from the One Above Himself, is also timeless. So, when I read those illuminating words for the first time it was like a meeting between old friends.

Particularly gratifying - the more I learn Tanya - has been the growth in understanding of the interconnectedness of ideas and concepts that were initially so foreign, which now serve as a source of heightened spiritual awareness and understanding.

Recently, I began a one-on-one study session in Tanya with a friend of mine who expressed an interest in learning Chasidut. Being unaccustomed to the terminology and ideas of Chasidut, he asked me "What relevance is this (the study of the Tanya) to me?" I answered him that by gaining an understanding of the origin and nature of the soul, one develops insights into his inner motives and strengthens his service of G-d.

Then, lo and behold, I came across the following statement of the Rebbe: "Although Tanya will open a person up to a deeper level of service of G-d, to love and fear of Him, its essential emphasis is on the study of the inner teachings of the Torah, achieving a perfect unity between the wisdom of man and the wisdom of G-d. This concept is so fundamental to the text that it was alluded to in its very name." That for me is the real key to the study of Tanya - connecting those lofty concepts espoused in its holy pages, with my service of G-d. Not a particularly easy task, but one whose rewards are inestimable.

Gedalia Feldbrum is director of the Asher Library of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies in Chicago, Illinois, where he resides with his family.

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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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ISSUE 1151

MOSHIACH MATTERS

A person studying Torah or fulfilling a mitzva should be aware of the effect of his action. It should be clearly apparent that he is now sowing something that will lead to an ultimate sprouting -- the coming of Moshiach. (*Likutei Sichot vol. 22*)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
Sivan 17, 5711
[June 21, 1951]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

As I told you during your visit here, my father-in-law the Rebbe would often quote a saying by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov: "From everything that a Jew sees or hears, he must derive a lesson in his service of the Almighty." Obviously, one should look for a lesson in his daily occupation.

Clothes and linen, before we put them on, are clean and smoothly pressed-everything in its proper place. But after wearing them for a while, they become creased, dusty or stained. Nevertheless, one need not discard these clothes; instead, one gives them to a laundry or a cleaner's. The laundryman puts them in a tub or machine that has a warm or hot temperature, with hot water, chemicals or soap that serve to remove the dirt and stains. He then presses it by applying a heavy weight or pressure. The garment can now be worn again.

So it is with the Jewish soul. When the Almighty gives the Jew-man or woman alike-his or her soul, it is clean and pressed, and fitted individually to him or her. As we say every day in the morning prayers: "The soul that You have placed within me is pure."

In time, however, as it is used for worldly matters, the soul becomes creased-creased through its use for things that are not the will of G-d. The soul may also become soiled and stained when one neglects, G-d forbid, to do an obligatory mitzvah or one transgresses, G-d forbid, a divine prohibition.

Nevertheless, the Torah teaches us not to despair, G-d forbid, of the soul's purity and its fittingness for *mentchlich* and Jewish living. One must immerse it in a warm temperature - that is, warm it with the warmth of Torah and *mitzvot*, so that it should "stew" in them and be vitalized by them. This warmth must be a moist warmth, so that the soul should have a moist adherence to all things holy; this is achieved by heartfelt prayer, of which it is said, "Pour out your heart like water," and with heartfelt Torah study, of which it is said, "Ho, all who thirst, come to water-water being Torah."

One should also mix in other things: the giving of charity, the observance of *kashrut* and other *mitzvot*, thereby restoring the soul to its spotless purity. And if one adds to this the "weight" and "pressure" of Torah - a weight and pressure that may seem, at first, to be a burden - this not only does not bother the garment - on the contrary, it presses it smooth and sets each thing in its place, restoring it to its proper form and shine. In other words, through Torah and *mitzvot* the soul becomes what it ought to be.

I conclude with a blessing of long life for you and your wife, may she live. May you have much *nachas* from all your children, may they live.

CUSTOMS CORNER

Laws of Reciting the Shema

Who is Obligated to Read the Shema?

- As the recitation of the Shema is a "time-bound" positive mitzvah, women are not obligated to read the Shema at a particular time. Nevertheless, it is proper that they recite at least the first verse in order to accept upon themselves the yoke of Heaven.
- Children who have reached the "age of chinuch (education)," i.e., capable of reciting the Shema, should be trained to read the Shema on time.

When to Recite the Morning Shema:

- One should try to recite Shema as early as possible. It is best to recite the Shema while wearing tzitzit and tefillin and as part of the morning prayers.
- If one will not pray until later, it is good to say the three paragraphs of Shema as soon as one awakens, after saying the morning blessings. This is especially true for someone who wishes to drink a tea or a coffee.
- One may perform the mitzvah of reciting the Shema until the end of the third halachic hour of the day. This means until one quarter of the sunlight hours - counting from sunrise till sunset - have passed.
- If one missed that time, he is no longer able to fulfil the mitzvah of reciting the Shema. He should still recite the Shema as part of his morning prayers, but he only receives reward as one who reads verses from the Torah.

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbat is known as "Shabbat Nachamu." It is the first Sabbath after Tisha B'Av, the day commemorating the destruction of the Holy Temple. After the Torah reading, we read the Haftarah which begins, "Nachamu, Nachamu-Console, console yourselves, My people."

Our Sages explain the twofold use of the word "console": "[The Jewish people] committed a twofold sin... received a twofold punishment... and are likewise comforted twofold." Elsewhere our Sages comment, "Because its [the Torah's] commandments are doubled, so too are its consolations doubled."

Why this emphasis on the number two? How can a sin be twofold? And, what is meant by the statement that the commandments are "doubled"?

The terms "twofold" and "double" refer to two different dimensions. Everything in a Jew's life - the Torah and its commandments, the destruction of the Holy Temple and our consolation - reflects this duality, for everything in the world is composed of both a physical and a spiritual component.

A Jew is a mixture of body and spirit which together form a complete being. A Jew is considered whole when both his body and soul are working together to serve G-d. Mitzvot (commandments) are likewise composed of these two dimensions.

Every mitzva contains a spiritual component - the intentions behind it - and a physical component - the way the mitzva is performed.

This is what our Sages referred to when stating that the Torah's mitzvot are "doubled"; similarly, the "twofold sin" committed by the Jewish people refers to the physical and spiritual aspects of their sin.

Accordingly, the punishment which followed - the destruction of the Holy Temple - was both spiritual and physical. The destruction was not limited to the stones of the Temple; the Jewish people were chastised with a concealment of G-dliness as well.

The Holy Temple itself reflected this duality. The Temple was a physical structure. Yet, the G-dly light with which it was illuminated was infinite in nature. Its destruction was therefore a double blow as it affected both of these aspects.

When the Holy Temple is rebuilt in the Messianic era our consolation will be doubled because it will encompass both dimensions: not only will the physical structure of the Temple be restored, but its G-dly revelation will also return.

J. I. Gutterick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

A Timely Treasure

Rabbi Yehuda Lowe of Prague, known as the Maharal, was born in 1512 and was the descendant of famous scholars. He could trace his lineage back to King David. Recognized as a genius from early childhood, he was engaged at the age of 10 to an equally remarkable woman named Pearl. A scholar in her own right, she was a loyal partner of her husband and epitomized the Jewish ideal of a "woman of valour."

It was customary in those times for matches to be arranged while the couple was still very young, the marriage itself taking place sometimes only years later.

And so, the Maharal, at the age of ten, was engaged to Pearl, the daughter of the wealthy and influential Shmuel Reich. She was only six at the time. According to the marriage agreement, the Maharal continued his studies, illuminating one of the outstanding yeshivot of his day. After the agreed upon years of study expired, he requested permission to continue, since his fiancée was still only fourteen.

Pearl was a girl of exceptional intellectual capacity. At the age of six she was sufficiently mature enough to appreciate the great genius of the Maharal, and she, desirous of being a worthy partner, embarked on an intensive program of study. She learned secretly all the years of their engagement, until, when he returned, the Maharal was delighted and amazed to discover the extent of her accomplishment. He returned with her permission, to his yeshiva studies, but before leaving, he prepared a syllabus for her to follow in his absence.

During the period of the Maharal's absence, financial disaster struck Shmuel Reich, leaving him impoverished. The Maharal received a letter from his future father-in-law explaining the situation and releasing him from his promise to marry Pearl. In his immediate reply, the Maharal, while expressing his sympathy, reiterated his intention to marry Pearl regardless of financial considerations, unless, she was unwilling to wait for him.

More time passed, until the year 1543 arrived, bringing with it a war in Bohemia. The Maharal returned home to his fiancée who was now supporting herself and her parents by running a food store. Pearl, who had been studying Torah during the twenty-two years of their separation, had become an extraordinarily accomplished scholar. She was now twenty-eight years old, and the Maharal thirty-two. Finally, they began their married life. To enable her husband to pursue his studies, Pearl continued to work in her store, learning Torah after her work was done.

The Bohemian war continued unabated until it reached Prague. One day, an armed soldier entered Pearl's store and demanded that she furnish him with a large amount of food which he loaded into his carriage.

However, when she asked for payment, he refused, saying he had no money.

Pearl, whose very livelihood was at stake, explained to him that this store was the only source of support for her family, and he was moved by her words.

He gave her a beautiful embroidered garment as a pledge, promising to return in a few days to redeem it. If unable to come, he said, the garment would be hers to keep.

Days passed and the soldier failed to appear. Knowing that in dire times people sometimes hid jewels in their garments, Pearl opened the lining of the soldier's coat and discovered a large number of precious stones. The couple waited longer for the soldier's return, but when he failed to come, the garment and gems were theirs.

No longer in a precarious financial state, Pearl was now freed from the burden of supporting her family. Pearl used to say that she had since the age of eight studied Torah each day for no less than five hours. Now, she could continue, unhampered, studying with her illustrious husband topics ranging from Talmud to ethics and metaphysics.

It was Pearl who dealt with the Maharal's voluminous Jewish legal correspondence, reading the letters and sending his replies to the many communities which turned to her husband for his decisions. It was also she who arranged and edited her husband's huge opus of Torah literature. It is said that in at least eight places she discovered errors in the Maharal's writings.

Pearl was the mother of a son and three daughters. Her husband applied to her the quotation: "Many daughters have done well, but you surpass them all."

Adapted from lchaimweekly.org

Thoughts THAT COUNT

I beseeched G-d at that time (3:23)

Moses prayed 515 prayers-the numerical value (gematria) of va'etchanan, "and I beseeched" - to be allowed to enter the land. (*Midrash Rabbah*)

You, O G-d, have begun to show Your servant Your greatness (3:24)

Moses was G-d's faithful servant, the greatest of the prophets, the recipient of the Torah from G-d. Yet after 120 years of the most G-dly life ever lived, he sees himself as only having begun in his relationship with G-d! (*Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov*)

That goodly mountain and the Levanon (3:25)

"The goodly mountain"-this is Jerusalem; "the Levanon" - this is the Holy Temple. (*Rashi*)

But you who cleave to the L-rd your G-d are alive, every one of you, this day (4:4)

The wicked, even in their lifetimes, are considered dead . . . The righteous, even in death, are considered alive. (*Talmud, Berachot 18a-b*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 8 AUGUST 2014

BEGINS		ENDS
5:19	MELBOURNE	6:20
5:20	ADELAIDE	6:18
5:04	BRISBANE	5:59
6:23	DARWIN	7:14
5:02	GOLD COAST	5:57
5:26	PERTH	6:23
5:02	SYDNEY	5:59
5:08	CANBERRA	6:06
5:04	LAUNCESTON	6:06
5:22	AUCKLAND	6:21
5:14	WELLINGTON	6:15
5:00	HOBART	6:03
5:00	BYRON BAY	5:55
6:57	SINGAPORE	7:47



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS TZAV
12 AV • 8 AUGUST

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:19 PM
	MINCHA:	5:25 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:00 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:48 AM
	MINCHA:	5:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:20 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	MON-FRI: 8:00 AM
	MAARIV:	5:30 PM
		6:15 PM