

LAMPLIGHTER

17 Elul
Parshas Ki Tavo

1156

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion of Ki Tavo begins by saying: "When you come to the land that G-d your L-rd is giving you as a heritage, occupying and settling it, you shall take of the first fruits...and go to the site that G-d will choose as the place for the indwelling of His name." Rashi comments: "This teaches us that [the Jewish people] were not obligated to bring the first fruits until they conquered and divided the land."

Offering the first fruits served for the Jewish people as a gesture of thanks to G-d for leading them into the Land of Israel and allowing them to enjoy its bounty. It thus indicated that they were not ingrates.

The above is also related to Chai Elul, (the eighteenth day of Elul), which occurred this past week. For it is the birthday of two great luminaries--the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic Movement, and Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the founder of the Chabad-Lubavitch segment within that movement. Among the fundamental principles they taught are the obligation to love one's fellow Jew and the concept of the intrinsic unity of the Jewish people which are alluded to at the beginning of this week's Torah portion, the week in which Chai Elul occurs.

How are love and unity among Jews best achieved? When two or more people unite, then no matter how strong their bond may be it is not absolute unity, since they are intrinsically disparate entities; their union is but an extension to their essential being. We thus understand that the unity of the Jewish people, which is an absolutely true and essential unity stems from the fact that all Jews, by virtue of the common Source of their souls, are truly one.

Nevertheless, the true unity of the Jewish people finds expression specifically when Jews, existing as distinct and separate individuals, are even then truly united as one. Indeed, if the unity of the Jewish people were not to find expression among Jews who exist as distinct individuals, this would prove that their unity does not stem from the essence of their being, for an individual's essence must be found in all his particular and detailed aspects.

This, then, was the deeper reason as to why the Jewish people were not obligated to bring their offerings of the first fruits until they had conquered and divided the land--for it served as an indication of the true and absolute love and unity that existed among them, to the extent that no individual could be truly joyful so long as there existed one fellow Jew who did not yet have a portion in Israel.

And as to ourselves, by truly loving our fellow Jews, we can once again merit to "come to the land" of Israel - through our Righteous Moshiach, speedily in our days.

From The Chasidic Dimension, adapted by Rabbi S. B. Wineberg from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Is Unhappiness a Sin?

By Rabbi Ben A.

"Because you did not serve G-d with joy and a happy heart..."- Deuteronomy 28:47.

In this week's portion, we find a lengthy description of the dire consequences to be faced by G-d's people should they fail to serve Him properly after entering the Land. The results for untoward behaviour include: desolation, famine, war, illness and exile.

Among the transgressions which bring on all these troubles is unhappiness. Yes, unhappiness! "Because you did not serve G-d with joy and a happy heart..."

But is being unhappy a sin? How can one be punished for a thing like that? If G-d punishes people for being unhappy, that would rather seem like kicking a man when he's down.

These questions, however, only arise from a fundamental misunderstanding of what happiness is. We tend to see happiness as an indicator of outside conditions. If things are going well for us, we are happy. If things are rough, we are - or have cause to be - unhappy. The word itself implies that happiness is something that happens to us; that when we are happy, it's due to good fortune. Conversely, whenever we are unhappy it is because we have caught a bad break and suffered some kind of mishap.

But G-d tells us that this is not so. Happiness is a decision. And like all decisions, it has consequences. And G-d does not *punish* people for being unhappy. He warns us about the trouble that unhappiness can bring.

We alcoholics and addicts can testify to the disastrous consequences of unhappiness. Why else did we keep coming back for more of a beating from alcohol other than the fact that we were fundamentally unhappy? We found life to be a frequent source of disappointment and aggravation. It was never good enough to make us feel content and at ease. We were "men and women... [who] are restless, irritable and discontented unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th Edition, p. xxvii)

Our spiritual program of recovery gives us the tools to change ourselves into people who are comfortable with life. It teaches us how to be happy; and that our happiness is not a result of what happens, but of the ideas, attitudes and actions we choose. If we do not use the tools of recovery, we find ourselves quickly growing weary and agitated with life. We steep in self-pity and rage and, eventually, we relapse. Then there is the resulting chaos, with the possible end results of destruction and death.

So, is unhappiness a sin? What difference does it make what you call it? The result is the same.

As for happiness, there is no limit to the blessings that being happy can bring.

Slice of LIFE

Chasing Judaism

By Mindy Rubenstein

There's a funny cartoon of a young man wearing *tefillin* and praying, while his mother looks on and complains, "Why can't you rebel like a normal teenager?"

My "rebellion" came a little later in life - I was an adult, married, with two young children.

But I had always been searching for something meaningful, something with which to identify. My husband and I grew up around the block from each other. We both received pretty much the same dose of Judaism. Most of our peers and family members intermarried, and we didn't think much of it at the time. As a couple, we had little if any connection to our religion.

Then, during a Friday night Shabbat meal with Rabbi Yossi and Dina Eber and their children - my first-ever immersive Shabbat experience - a light went off. This was it. This was the "something" I had been searching for: Judaism. It had been there waiting for me all along.

During that Friday night dinner - complete with prayers and songs and delicious kosher food - my soul came alive. Later I scoured the Internet, wanting to know more about my religion of birth. What had I been missing? What was Shabbat and kosher? How could I make up for lost time, and teach my children?

I wanted it all, immediately - the life, the rituals, the holidays, clothing and prayers.

So I started collecting mitzvahs like a child hoarding candy. I called to make an appointment to immerse in the local *mikvah* without first learning the laws. (The rebbeztzin kindly offered to teach me.) I bought a *challah*, made chicken soup, and lit candles for our first Shabbat. I started dressing more modestly.

I admit it. I was obsessed. A "born-again" Jew.

I didn't fully understand what it was I was getting myself into, or how to take on change in a healthy and meaningful way. For me, it was more about the destination - all or nothing. I wanted to be in the club and leave everything else behind. And unfortunately, I was not strengthening my relationship with G-d, or my husband, parents or children.

In the beginning, for example, before I fully understood all the laws of kosher, I rigidly refused to eat at my parents' non-kosher home, and I was very vocal about it. I touted our newly religious lifestyle, frequently

discussing the new things we were giving up and taking on. I judged. I was condescending and overly zealous. And I didn't understand why my friends and family didn't see the magic and beauty - the *truth* - as I saw it.

The journey of a *baal teshuvah* (Jewish returnee) can be tricky - trying to navigate gracefully into a new world while still retaining one's own unique identity. Along the way, I dropped mitzvahs and picked them back up. I connected more with G-d and with myself, except for the times I turned away. But I see everything as a point along the path that I am meant to take, one that's leading me - I hope - to a better place.

Several years ago, I moved with my husband and children to a close-knit Jewish community in Atlanta. My kids attend a Jewish day school, where they learn Torah and apply it to their lives. I admire how easily and fluidly they soak it all in - academically and in real life. They are little *mensch*s, most of the time.

We are considered completely observant now - we keep kosher, Shabbat and family purity. While there are still many details we have yet to acquire, the framework is there. And I feel it on the inside. That I'm no longer chasing after something just out of reach. It is all part of me. Judaism has permeated my life and integrated into who I am, how I act, the way I think and the choices I make.

I have discovered that being Jewish is a wonderful thing - we are to serve as a "light unto the nations," G-d's ambassadors for goodness. But first, we must have the knowledge of what that means. And it doesn't mean lecturing others. It doesn't mean moralizing. The beauty of Judaism, the magic of Shabbat and the richness of Torah cannot be explained with words; they must be experienced. They must be felt.

I pray that I will set a good example for my children, by showing them that my Torah observance is genuine and done with love. I still have a long way to go. I still struggle daily with making the right choices. I still sometimes yell at my children and lose my patience with them. But I'm quick to forgive myself, apologize to them and move on.

I pray that my children will grow up to love Judaism and love themselves. That they will discover and rediscover their relationship with it many times along their own paths.

I pray that they will claim their birthright and live by the Torah - in the way that they treat others, as well as in the mundane details of their daily lives.

I pray that *shalom bayit* - peace at home - will permeate our lives, that my husband and I will continue to grow in our love and in our service of G-d. Because that is the foundation of everything.

I still make mistakes, but I try to view myself, and others, with compassion. And every morning, thank G-d, I get the chance to start fresh.

Save the Orphans

By Elisha Greenbaum

Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin, known universally as the Brisker Rav, lived in Jerusalem for the last 20 years of his life, where he devoted himself to the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of thousands. He established Talmudic academies, soup kitchens and other charitable institutions - the most famous of which was the Diskin Orphanage of Jerusalem.

One day, the rabbi summoned a number of reputable *sofrim* (scribes) to his office and deputized them to fan out through the streets of the holy city, knock on local doors and offer the residents the opportunity to have their *mezuzah*s checked for errors or faded letters. Rabbi Diskin paid the *sofrim* from the funds of the orphanage.

People trusted the rav and accepted his judgement implicitly. Yet a number of those present were troubled by his seemingly cavalier attitude toward corporate money management. On the face of it, as important as it might be to ensure that people have kosher *mezuzah*s hanging on each door, it was hard to justify how this could be fulfilling the purpose for which those funds were donated. How could the rabbi claim to be supporting orphans with this money?

Rabbi Yehoshua Leib understood their disquiet and explained: "It's very simple. We say every day in the Shema, '*And you shall inscribe them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates, in order that your days and the days of your children may increase, in the land which the L-rd swore to your forefathers to give them.*' K kosher *mezuzah*s saves lives!

"Surely prevention is better than a cure. Those generous donors who are moved to support orphans would surely prefer that there were fewer orphans to support. Rather than wait for tragedy, I am attempting to forestall the deaths of mothers and fathers in this city, in this land which G-d has given us, and thus spare their innocent children from suffering in the first place."

G-d gives us an easy prescription for saving lives, and it is our duty and privilege to follow His instructions to the letter.

We are approaching the month of Elul, when people traditionally have their mezuzahs and tefillin checked. Call your rabbi or arrange for them to be checked directly with the sofer. It could save a life!

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ISSUE 1156

MOSHIACH MATTERS

We see in recent years how the verse "Moshe gathered... the Jews" is occurring literally -- the ingathering of the exiles of Jews from all over the world, who are returning to the Holy Land. The current number of Jews ascending to the Land of Israel is incomparably greater than that of previous generations." (From a talk of the Rebbe, Shabbat Vayakhel, 5752-1992)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
11 Tishrei, 5712 [October 11, 1951]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

In reply to your letter and questions contained therein:

I. Re the apparent contradiction between the Omniscience of G-d and man's Free Will (or choice of action), there is a whole literature dealing with the subject, and it is impossible to give an outline of it in the course of a letter. I would refer you, at least, to the Rambam (Hilchoth Teshivah, Ch 5). However, I cannot leave without some answer, so I will state very briefly:

G-d's foreknowledge is no contradiction to man's free choice. That could be a contradiction to free choice is compulsion, not knowledge. Hence, a foreknowledge that is not compelling or forcing, is in no way a limitation on one's free choice of action.

I will cite two illustrations. First, assuming that there are men with prophetic knowledge, their forecast concerning certain people does not compel them to not in a certain way and does not rob them of their free choice of action.

Secondly, as you know, G-d is not subject to time, and the past, present and future is all the same to Him (He was, Is, and Will be, all in One). It follows, that to G-d the future is like the past, and as knowledge of a past action is no contradiction to free choice, so is His knowledge of a future action. In other words: G-d knows the thoughts of man and man's decisions, and such knowledge does not rob man of thinking and deciding how to act.

II. Re your question as to my opinion of the theory of Evolution. You do not mention what Evolution you are referring to. Presumably the evolution of vegetable and animal life.

My opinion is, as stated in the Torah, that during the Six Days of Creation, G-d created the Four Kingdoms (minerals, vegetation, animal and man) independently of each other. Our Sages have enlarged upon this question in detail. However, this Creation does not deny possibility of evolution after that of particular species through various mutations.

III. With regard to your question concerning the role of Aggadah in the Talmud, particularly those dealing with medicine, I want to point out that you are touching upon two distinct questions: Aggadah in the Talmud, and Medicine in the Talmud.

As to Aggadah, not all Aggadah can be treated equally. In the introductions to various editions of Ein Yaakov you will find how our Sages classify the Aggadah of the Talmud.

As the question of Medicine in the Talmud, they are not at all as fantastic as they may appear. As a matter of fact, many medical suggestions in the Talmud have been confirmed in recent years as to their therapeutic value, although medical science had long derided them.

Generally speaking, however, inasmuch as the nature of the human organism had undergone many changes since those days, the medical advice contained in the Talmud cannot be applied nowadays. But it is quite certain that in their days the remedies were quite effective.

For references consult: Tosefoth Moed Koton 11a, Kesef-Mishnah, ch. 4 of Hilchoth Deoth, ch. 18, and the sources mentioned in Sdei-Chamed, vol. of Kololim, under "R" klal 54, where it is stated that due to physical and climatic changes, medical treatment and remedies of old no longer hold good generally.

In the History of Medical Science many illustrations are cited as to changes in both in man's susceptibility to disease and treatment, the development of virus attack, new diseases, etc. There is quite a literature on the subject, and there is no need for me to enlarge upon this subject.

I am surprised that you do not mention in your letter anything about your activities in influencing others to bring them nearer to Torah and Yiddishkeit, which serves also to strengthen one's own convictions.

With blessing,

CUSTOMS CORNER

The Prohibition Against Living in Egypt

The Reasons

Various reasons are given for this prohibition. Some of them are:

1. The people of Egypt were very immoral, as the verse states: "Like the practice of the land of Egypt, in which you dwelled, you shall not do," and going to live there might influence the Jews in a negative way.
2. The return of the Jews to Egypt would be an affront to G-d, who specifically saved us from slavery there and removed us from there.

The Details

- The entire land of Egypt is included in the prohibition.
- One may go there for business or while on the way to another land. The prohibition is against settling there.
- Similarly, one may go to Egypt for sightseeing or on any other temporary trip.
- If the land of Egypt were to be conquered by a Jewish king under the guidance of a Sanhedrin, the prohibition would no longer apply. This is because at that point it would start being considered part of the Land of Israel.

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbos is Chai (the 18th of Elul, the birthday of both the Baal Shem Tov (founder of the Chasidic movement) in 5458-1698, as well as the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidism in 5505-1745. In the same way that the Chasidic movement revitalized Jewish life and introduced a new path in the service of G-d, so too does Chai Elul ("chai" - from the Hebrew word meaning "life") introduce an element of liveliness and vitality into our Divine service in the month of Elul, the main theme of which is repentance.

A basic fundamental of Chasidut is the joyful service of G-d. As surprising as it may seem, Chasidic philosophy teaches that even the mitzva of teshuva (repentance) should be approached with happiness rather than trepidation. If all of the Torah's mitzvot should be fulfilled with joy, how much more so the mitzva of teshuva, which is so great it has the power to perfect all other commandments!

At first glance, the "shidduch" between teshuva and joy appears unrealistic. Repentance is serious business: conducting an honest assessment of one's past behavior, feeling remorse for one's misdeeds, and begging G-d for forgiveness for transgressing His will. How are we to do this out of a sense of joy?

The answer is that joy, as defined by Chasidut, is not the opposite of seriousness. Joy does not mean frivolity, a life without responsibilities or mindless revelry. Rather, joy itself is serious business, a deep feeling created when a Jew contemplates the enormous merit he has to have been born Jewish, to be able to study G-d's Torah and to fulfill His commandments. When a Jew appreciates that he is never alone and that G-d is always with him, his joy becomes the impetus to draw even closer to the Infinite.

With Rosh Hashana approaching, what could make us happier than the knowledge that doing teshuva during Elul is easier than at any other time of year? For the gates of repentance are always open, and G-d always gives us the opportunity to return to Him.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

The eighteenth of Elul is the birthday of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidic philosophy and Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chasidic movement in general. The following story describes how Rabbi Shneur Zalman became involved in the fledgling Chasidic movement.

At the age of twenty, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, decided to leave home for a period of time in search of a teacher and guide. Two centers of learning beckoned his attention. One was Vilna, the Lithuanian capital, the center of the Talmudic scholarship, with the famed "Vilna Gaon," Rabbi Eliyahu at its head. The other was Mezritch, the seat of Rabbi Dov Ber, the "Maggid of Mezritch, heir to Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, the leader of the still young Chasidic movement. For Rabbi Shneur Zalman, Mezritch was both geographically and intellectually the more distant place, but he had heard about the great scholarship of Rabbi Dov Ber, and the new way of Divine service which he was teaching. Rabbi Shneur Zalman had to make a momentous choice. He thought, "I have already been exposed to Talmudic discipline; I have yet to learn the discipline of prayer," and he decided in favour of Mezritch. The decision was, of course, the turning point of his life.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman's decision to go to Mezritch aroused his father-in-law's vehement opposition, to the extent of depriving his daughter and son-in-law of any further financial support. But Rabbi Shneur Zalman's wife stood by him, and agreed to his going there on condition that if he decided to stay, he would not extend his stay beyond 18 months.

His first impressions were not encouraging. Rabbi Shneur Zalman closely observed the Maggid and his senior disciples. He discovered that they devoted considerable time to the daily prayers, and in preparation before the prayers, inevitably reducing the time left for Torah study. To the intellectual that he was, this emphasis on prayer seemed extravagant. He decided that Mezritch was not for him. The Maggid made no attempt to detain him.

As Rabbi Shneur Zalman left Mezritch, he remembered that he had forgotten one of his belongings in the synagogue of the Maggid. Returning there, he found the Maggid engaged in the examination of a question of Jewish law. The brilliant analysis by the Maggid of all aspects of the question, which displayed his extraordinary erudition in the realm of Halacha, made a profound impression on Rabbi Shneur Zalman, and he decided to stay a while longer in Mezritch. Thereupon, the Maggid told Rabbi Shneur Zalman that his saintly master, the Baal Shem Tov, had revealed to him that one day the son of Rabbi Baruch would come to him, would leave him, and then return again. Then he - the Maggid - was to tell him about the great destiny that was linked to Rabbi Shneur Zalman's soul. The Baal Shem Tov further predicted that Rabbi Shneur Zalman's path in life would be hazardous, but that he, the Baal Shem Tov, would intercede on his behalf, and on behalf of his followers, so that "his end would be exceedingly great."

Rabbi Shneur Zalman was deeply moved by what he heard, and he decided to cast his lot with the new Chasidic movement.

But what mostly impressed Rabbi Shneur Zalman was Rabbi Dov Ber's demonstration of the perfect equilibrium and harmonious synthesis of the mystic and rationalist which was the object of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's quest. To quote Rabbi Shneur Zalman: "Two things I saw: The sublime ecstasy of the Holy Society on the one hand, and the remarkable composure of our master Rabbi Dov Ber on the other, which enthralled me completely. That is when I became a Chasid." Once the young "Litvak" (native of Lithuania) became attached to Rabbi Dov Ber, the latter began to give him special attention, though he was the youngest and newest of the disciples. Rabbi Dov Ber arranged that his son, Abraham, (who because of the saintliness of his character had earned the appellation Malach ["Angel"]), initiate the new disciple into the esoteric doctrines of the Kabbala and Chasidut, as had been taught by the Besht (Baal Shem Tov) and himself, in return for instruction in Talmudic study. Rabbi Shneur Zalman's time was now equally divided between the study of the Talmud and Chasidut, which he studied with his customary diligence. He also closely observed the master, Rabbi Dov Ber, and his distinguished disciples, in an effort to emulate their day-to-day behaviour and refinement of character. Here was a group of scholarly mystics who exemplified Chasidut at its best. This is what Rabbi Shneur Zalman had been looking for.

When Rabbi Shneur Zalman returned home after 18 months had elapsed, he was asked by his erstwhile colleagues in Vitebsk whether he had found it worthwhile to go so far away while Vilna was so much nearer. Rabbi Shneur Zalman answered, "In Vilna you are taught how to master the Torah, in Mezritch you are taught how to let the Torah master you."

[Excerpted from *The Philosophy of Chabad: Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi*, Kehot Publication Society.]

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And all these blessings shall befall you, and overtake you (28:2)

Even if you fail to recognize the blessings as such and run away from them, they will pursue you... (*Shaar Bat Rabbim*)

This day you have become a people (27:9)

The Jewish people are unique among the peoples of the world: their nationhood was forged not at the point at which they gained their own land, or developed a common language or culture, but on the day on which they pledged to uphold the Torah... (*Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch*)

... Because you did not serve G-d with happiness and with gladness of heart, in abundance of everything; therefore, you shall serve your enemies... (28:47-48)

Because you did not serve G-d when you enjoyed happiness and the abundance of all good things, you shall now suffer want. (*Rashi*)

Even though you served G-d, you did not serve him with joy -- that is the source of all afflictions. (*Maimonides*)

Melancholy is not a sin. But the spiritual damage which melancholy can cause, the gravest of sins cannot cause. (*Chassidic saying*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 12 SEPTEMBER 2014

BEGINS	ENDS
5:49MELBOURNE	6:47
5:46ADELAIDE	6:42
5:21BRISBANE	6:14
6:25DARWIN	7:14
5:19GOLD COAST	6:12
5:48PERTH	6:43
5:26SYDNEY	6:21
5:34CANBERRA	6:30
5:39LAUNCESTON	6:39
5:45AUCKLAND	6:42
5:48WELLINGTON	6:48
5:37HOBART	6:38
5:18BYRON BAY	6:12
6:47SINGAPORE	7:35



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS KI TAVO
17 ELUL • 12 SEPTEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:49 PM
	MINCHA:	5:55 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:25 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:20 AM
	MINCHA:	5:45 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:47 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
	MON-FRI:	8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	6:00 PM
	MAARIV:	6:45 PM