

LAMPLIGHTER

4 Tevet
Parshas Vayigash

1171

26 December
5775/2014

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In the Torah portion of Vayigash, Joseph finally reveals his identity to his brothers. "I am Joseph," he says, "is my father still alive?"

The question itself demands further explanation. Judah had just told Joseph that Jacob was unwilling to send Benjamin down to Egypt, fearing that he would die there. He had also just stated that if Benjamin were to be detained in Egypt, he was afraid that his father might not survive. It is obvious that Joseph knew that Jacob was still alive. Moreover, we see that Joseph didn't even wait for a response, but immediately ordered them to bring their father.

"Is my father still alive?" was therefore not stated as a question, but as an expression of surprise. Joseph was astonished that his father was still among the living.

At the time Jacob was 133 years old, relatively young compared to the lifespan of Abraham and Isaac. Why, then, was Joseph so surprised?

When Jacob heard that Joseph had died, he entered a state of constant mourning. For 22 years he endured incredible grief, "and refused to be consoled." Jacob's pain was simply unendurable. It was therefore surprising to Joseph that his father hadn't succumbed to such protracted suffering.

Joseph then tells his brothers to "Hurry back to my father." The element of speed was required not only to inform Jacob that Joseph had been found alive, but also to bring him to Egypt as soon as possible. Every moment that passed without father and son being reunited placed Jacob in danger for his life.

(As for the question as to why Joseph didn't travel to his father himself, the answer is contained in his words: "G-d sent me before you." Joseph knew that he was fulfilling a Divine mission in Egypt, and therefore could not leave.)

Jacob was in mourning for Joseph 22 years. This corresponded to the 22 years Jacob did not observe the mitzva of honouring his father and mother (as he was not in close physical proximity to them). His 22 years of mourning for his son were a punishment for this shortcoming.

However, at the exact moment the 22 years were up, the Divine decree that he be separated from his son no longer existed. Joseph thus urged his brothers to "hurry," for there was no longer any reason to delay "even the blink of an eye."

There are sometimes situations in life when it is necessary to act within the attribute of severity. And yet, as we learn from Joseph, we must always be careful to do so sparingly. As soon as the reason for punishment no longer exists, we must immediately revert to loving-kindness and mercy. For it is forbidden to cause even a moment of unnecessary suffering.

Adapted from Volume 15 of Likutei Sichot

The Challenge of the Rich

By Elisha Greenbaum

Joseph wasn't just rich, he was fabulously wealthy. Viceroy of Egypt, chief financier of Pharaoh, placed in charge of taxation and sanctioned by law to take a cut off the top on every financial transaction, he could easily have been forgiven for indulging in the temptation to let his bankroll control his brainwaves.

If absolute power corrupts absolutely, can you imagine the temptations implicit in being simultaneously invested with wealth, might and brains? What couldn't he do-and, more ominously, what could possibly stop him from doing so?

That Joseph managed to overcome these moral challenges is admirable; that he managed to utilize his talents for the common good is commendable; that he managed to triumph over the injustices that he had personally suffered and still approach the world with integrity is remarkable.

Joseph had suffered horribly. Kidnapped as a youth and sold into slavery, he had been left decaying in a dungeon for years, the victim of false accusations. No one would have been surprised had these assaults on his person and spirit left Joseph with a twisted personality, determined to take his every revenge on a cruel world.

Joseph's ability to disregard these insults to self, and to set about saving the world from famine, is commemorated to this day. The Jewish people as a whole are compared to Joseph, and we are enjoined to emulate him, the "great provider" (Psalms 80:2).

Joseph was known as the great provider not only for the humanitarian aid he extended to the impoverished, but also because of the spiritual legacy he left behind, standing in good stead for us, his spiritual heirs. We can speculate that the personality traits that helped Joseph live through the hard times, maintaining his faith while impoverished and in pain, were the very qualities that allowed him to maintain a true perspective even when the hand dealt to him in the great card game of life changed for the better.

If I pray to G-d during the times of sorrow, said Joseph, trusting that this too is a stage in the divine plan, shouldn't I draw on those reservoirs of faith and be there for others when my circumstances change for the better?

Without Joseph's example, most of us would at best hope to maintain a muddled equilibrium on our journey. Play it safe. Don't stick your head up too high, in fear of getting it blown off. Live life small. True, the highs are not so stupendous, but neither will the troughs be too intimidating.

It takes a Joseph to demonstrate the strength of character we must aspire to, to live a life of faith, nobility and courage, even in times of hardship and poverty, and to keep the faith even when the good times are rolling.

Slice of LIFE

Rabbi Yitzchak Wolfe of Chabad Chicago was once sitting in a bus on the way from Toronto to New York, when the religious Jew sitting next to him, a member of the 'Papo Chassidim', told him a story about another Papo Chassid who had been saved by Chabad.

The story begins when the saved Chassid was a young boy perhaps fifty years earlier.

The lad was bright and beautiful and his love of learning the Torah brought tremendous pleasure to his parents. When all the other children were playing games, his only interest was to learn and learn and learn. Not only that, but he understood and remembered everything he read or heard with ease, and his mind was so sharp that even the most difficult Talmudic problems were no challenge for him.

It wasn't long before he had surpassed all his classmates, and all the pupils in the entire school. Even his teachers were having trouble finding new challenges for him.

But grow as he did academically, amidst the praises of his parents and teachers, he was lacking one fundamental trait; humility. There was simply no one for him to be humble before, and people began to whisper that he was conquering the Torah and forgetting G-d; the "Giver of the Torah".

In time he became a lively, inquisitive young man, and although his parents tried to keep him from bad influences, they couldn't keep him from searching. It wasn't long before

he met up with new "friends" and discovered the "enlightened" world of non-Torah knowledge; Philosophy, Politics, Art, Literature. It was all so new and alive to him, and he took to it like a fish in water.

Here was a world of action and results, freedom and excitement with no invisible G-d telling you what to do. New vistas opened before him with new challenges, new experiences, and most importantly... new admirers.

As soon as his parents noticed what was happening they jumped into action. They tried appealing to his loyalty to G-d, to the Jewish people, to his family, but it didn't work. They brought Rabbis to speak to him, first local Rabbis, and then bigger and more famous ones, but the young man made fools of them all.

He had become a cold-blooded genius, and for every one of their questions he answered, he asked them two that they couldn't.

It wasn't long before he left home, moved in to live with his intellectual friends, cut off all contact with his old life, and enrolled in a local university where he succeeded beyond belief.

After a year, all the professors were so impressed with his progress, that they recommended him to the Sorbonne University in Paris - the best in the world at that time. In less than a month he was accepted with a full scholarship. A week later he was in France, had rented a room, and enrolled in University, and was briskly walking, head erect long hair ruffling in the breeze, to his first lecture. How exhilarating!

Now he was truly free! He was no longer just a Jew. Now he was part of all mankind. The ornately decorated

crowded University corridor with its high arched ceilings and exquisite paintings and murals, echoed his thoughts.

Suddenly he felt that someone was staring at him from a distance.

Sure enough, through the crowd of students he saw a young, bearded Jewish man, hat on his head heading directly toward him. He tried to turn away and walk to the side, but it didn't help.

They met face to face. The Jew confronted him, looked deeply into his eyes and said,

"Have you put on Tefillin today?" He was stunned! How did he know he know he was Jewish? The stranger gently put his hand on our hero's shoulder and continued.

"No? No problem, I put Tefillin on a lot of Jews, so I'll put on you as well. Come, it will take no more than a few minutes."

For some reason he didn't resist as the stranger took him to the side and pulled a pair of Tefillin out of his briefcase.

But that isn't the end of the story. Every day for several months this mysterious stranger came to his room with Tefillin, until our wayward friend returned to his Jewish identity contacted his parents and asked that they send his Tefillin.

After a while the young man came to understand that the stranger who visited him daily was none other than Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, the future Lubavitcher Rebbe, when he was learning in the Sorbonne. And Today that young man is sixty years old, and one of the pillars of the Papo Chassidim.

Adapted from "Rabim Hashiv M'avon" by Rabbi Ahron Dov

Published by **The Chabad House of Caulfield** in conjunction with the **Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.**

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ISSUE 1171

MOSHIACH MATTERS

From a mystical dimension, the month of Tevet relates to the Era of the Redemption. Our Sages describe Tevet as "the month when the soul derives pleasure from the body."

Chasidic thought explains that in Tevet, G-d's essence derives pleasure from the service of the Jewish people within the realm of physical reality. This is the level of service which in a full sense will be realized in the Era of the Redemption, at which time, "the soul will derive vitality from the body." (*The Rebbe, 10 Tevet, 5752*)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

The following letter is an excerpt of a freely translated letter of the Rebbe pertaining to the fast of 10 Tevet which occurs this year on Thursday January 1st. At the time, the letter was headed "URGENT"

3rd Day of the week, 5th of Teves, 5736 (1976)

Greeting and Blessing:

In reply to your inquiry and request for instruction in connection with the forthcoming Fast of Asoro b'Teves (10th of Teves), in view of the situation in and around Eretz Yisroel (the Land of Israel), you will surely be instructed by the Rabbi of your congregation....

However, since you have also approached me in this matter - I will set forth, at least, several suggestions - after the following introductory remarks:

Regrettably, there are people who claim that it is necessary to think and act "big," in terms of global dimensions and stupendous undertakings, etc., etc. Surely they mean well; and to the extent that such resolutions are practical and are actually carried out - they are very helpful to improve the situation.

Yet, we must never overlook - indeed, rather greatly emphasize the so-called "small and unsophisticated" things which each modest congregation, or even each individual, can and must do - beginning with the old, yet ever-new, Jewish way, collectively as one people and also as individuals. This is the action of hakol kol Yaakov ("the voice is the voice of Jacob") - Torah and prayer - which G-d Himself has shown us to be the first effective action to nullify the power of yedei Eisov ("the hands of Esau") - in whatever shape or form they are raised against us. Certainly this should find the fullest expression in a day which the Code of Jewish Law declares to be a day of fasting, one to which the prophet Isaiah refers as a "chosen fast ... a fast and time favoured by G-d."

Now, in answer to your inquiry, and since the Fast of Asoro b'Teves is especially connected with Eretz Yisroel and the Holy City of Jerusalem (recalling the siege of Jerusalem), my suggestion - in addition to the regular observances on Fast Days, as set forth at length and in detail in Poskim [halachic authorities] and in books of Mussar and Chassidus - is as follows:

During this day - expressly for the sake (Zechus) of the security and strengthening of Eretz Yisroel, materially and spiritually, and for the material and spiritual benefit of all Jews wherever they are - in Eretz Yisroel as well as in the Diaspora and particularly for the benefit of our brethren behind the "Iron Curtain," a special effort should be made in the spirit of "Old Israel" - in the areas of Torah [study], Tefilla (prayer) and Tzedaka (charity). Specifically:

After praying (both in the morning and in the afternoon) to learn (and where there already are daily study groups, to add) a subject in Torah, including Halachah pesuka (final ruling),

Immediately following the prayers, even before learning, to say several chapters of Psalms (in addition to the regular portion);

Before and after praying - to give Tzedaka (in addition to the regular donation), including Tzedoko for a sacred cause or institution in Eretz Yisroel, Eretz haChayim ("Land of Living").

Needless to say, one who repeats the above again and again in the course of the day is to be praised, and each time - the more one does it (in quantity and quality), is to be praised all the more. And, as in all matters of Holiness, it is desirable that all the above be done with a congregation, (with at least a Minyan).

May G-d accept, and He will accept, the prayers and supplications of Jews wherever they are, and soon, in our very own days, may the Promise be fulfilled that "These days will be transformed into days of rejoicing and gladness,"

With the true and complete Geula (Redemption) through our righteous Moshiach.

With esteem and blessing,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Preparing for Prayer

A person should prepare himself to stand in the presence of G-d, blessed be He. Therefore one should wear suitable clothes when they go to pray, as if they were presenting themselves before an honourable official. Even if one prays alone in their house, they should dress themselves in the proper manner.

Cleanliness is also required; a person must wash his hands to the wrists before prayer. Therefore, even though he washed his hands in the morning, if his hands touched a place of filth - i.e., a portion of the body which is sweaty and usually covered: he scratched his head, or in an instance that in the morning, he did not wash them until the wrists - he must wash them again before prayer.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming week, on Thursday (January 1st), we commemorate the start of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. The siege resulted in the eventual destruction of the First Holy Temple nearly 2500 years ago. This day is commemorated as a public fast day.

The strength - both the obligation to fast and its positive influences - of the Tenth of Tevet stems from the fact that it commemorates the first of the tragedies associated with the destruction of the Holy Temple.

Thus this date begins the process of destruction. It is well known that the beginning of any process contains more power than the subsequent stages and for this reason, there is added power to the Tenth of Tevet.

The positive influences of the Tenth of Tevet are connected to the fact that a fast day is a "day of will" when our prayers and Teshuva are more willingly accepted by G-d.

As we are taught that "the beginning is wedged in the end," and the ultimate "end" purpose of the destruction of the Holy Temples will be the rebuilding of the Third and Eternal Holy Temple, the Tenth of Tevet is an auspicious day to hasten the coming of the Redemption.

Of course, our most fervent prayer is that the Tenth of Tevet not be a day of mourning but be turned into a day of celebration and joy with the coming of Moshiach. Thus, by our immediate decision to increase our acts of goodness and kindness, our performance of mitzvot, study of Torah, and specifically the giving of charity, which brings the Redemption closer, we are showing G-d that our actions are in consonance with our heartfelt prayers. May the realization of those prayers happen in the immediate future.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED

Once...

Old Zalman the beggar was standing before the Baal Shem Tov with his head hung in shame trying to explain.

"I'm a tailor, or at least I used to be before I started begging. It's a long story. A few years ago, after going a while with not even one tailoring job, I and my friend Shmerl took to the road hoping that perhaps a change of place would at least bring some work so we could feed our hungry families.

"After a few weeks of wandering we stopped in an inn. The place seemed empty but then we saw that in a corner sat a Jew, head in hands, weeping.

"When he noticed us he dried his eyes, stood, introduced himself as the innkeeper and asked if he could help.

"Yes' Shmerl answered 'You can tell us why you were crying, maybe we can help.'

"He told us that he was in big trouble from the local Baron. The Baron was marrying off his daughter in a month and wanted new fancy clothes for his entire family to wear for the occasion. Anyway he ordered the innkeeper to find an appropriate tailor but everyone he brought the Baron outright rejected.

"Now the Baron said that if he didn't come up with someone soon he'd throw him and his family in the street and rent the inn to someone else.

"So we told him that this was obviously the hand of G-d that brought us here because WE are tailors and WE will save him.

"At first he looked at us and cringed. I mean we didn't exactly look like royal tailors. But on the other hand he was desperate so he took us there.

"We took some measurements, made a few samples and well, the miracle happened. We got the job! The Baron liked our work!

"For the next month we worked day and night almost non-stop and the Baron was ecstatic with the results! In fact he was so happy that after the wedding he invited us to his official room and presented each of us with three hundred guilders!! But I wasn't happy.

"You see, someone told me that there was an entire Jewish family imprisoned in his dungeons because they couldn't pay their debts. I just couldn't sleep nights.

"So I asked him if it was true and he told me 'Those who cannot pay must suffer and with a gleam in his eye asked me if we would like to pay their debt? It was three hundred guilders!!

"But my partner said he couldn't do it. He had a wife and family to feed and wasn't willing to give half of his earnings for people he didn't even know.

"I guess he was right but I just handed the Baron my three hundred guilders and begged him to set them free.

"The Baron was obviously impressed. He took the money, ordered his men to free the family, gave me a few guilders for the road, shook my hand and showed me to the door.

"Well, I went home penniless. Shmerl invested his money in a new shop and really did well, thank G-d. But I just couldn't seem to make ends meet and that's why I took to begging.

"Well a few weeks ago this rich man gave me a nice donation and asked for a blessing for some business he was beginning so I did it. I didn't think I was doing anything wrong. Then a few days later he came back excited and told me that my blessing worked.

"Well, since then about fifty people come to me every day and ask for blessings for all sorts of things and they give me charity. So I bless them. I guess I shouldn't do that, right Rabbi? I mean, who am I to bless people? So if you tell me to stop.. I'll stop, Rabbi.

The Baal Shem looked at Zalman with love and explained to him that the opposite was true; it was from the merit of his self-sacrifice that his blessings were effective and he wanted him to continue blessing. The Baal Shem even promised him that he would send him a special tutor to teach him Torah so he could help Jews even more.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Then Yehuda came near to him (Gen. 44:18)

The word the Torah uses for "came near," - vayigash, implies that Yehuda and Yosef came very close together. Many years later the descendants of Yehuda and Yosef split, and actually formed two separate kingdoms. Vayigash alludes to the time of the Redemption when we all will unite as one kingdom under one king, Moshiach. (*Bereishit Rabba*)

He [Joseph] called, "Every man go out from before me." (Gen. 45:1)

Why did Joseph want everyone to leave the room while he was speaking with his brothers? Rashi explains that Joseph couldn't stand the thought of having the Egyptians overhear that his brothers had sold him into slavery, thus embarrassing them. Personal problems should not be aired in public, before the eyes of the whole world. For this reason Joseph asked that the Egyptians leave. In those days it was understood to be a general rule for people to behave in this manner. But today, to our great distress, it is not so clear. (*Penini Kedem*)

How can I go up to my father and the boy [Benjamin] will not be with me? (Gen. 44:34)

This is a question that every Jewish parent must ask themselves. How can I go up after my 120 years to our Father in Heaven if I have not made sure that my children will follow after me on the Jewish path? (*Gedolei Chasidim*)

And he sent his brothers away and they departed, and he said to them, do not quarrel by the way (Gen. 45:24)

There are many true and valid ways of serving G-d within the context of Judaism, all of which are positive and holy (provided that they do not contradict the fundamental principles of the Torah). Joseph was counselling his brothers to avoid quarrelling over individual "styles" of G-dly service, for they are all "the words of the living G-d." (*Divrei Yisrael*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 26 DECEMBER 2014

BEGINS	ENDS
8:26MELBOURNE	9:31
8:13ADELAIDE	9:16
6:26BRISBANE	7:24
6:55DARWIN	7:48
6:26GOLD COAST	7:24
7:06PERTH	8:07
7:49SYDNEY	8:51
8:02CANBERRA	9:05
8:29LAUNCESTON	9:38
8:24AUCKLAND	9:28
8:38WELLINGTON	9:47
8:33HOBART	9:45
7:27BYRON BAY	8:25
6:48SINGAPORE	7:40



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS VAYIGASH
4 TEVET • 26 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:26 PM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:05 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:39 AM
	MINCHA:	8:25 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:31 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8:00 AM
	SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA (except Thur.):	8:35 PM
	MINCHA (Thur.):	8:20 PM
	MAARIV (except Thur.):	9:25 PM
	THURSDAY Fast ends & MAARIV:	9:18 PM