

# LAMPLIGHTER

25 Tevet  
Parshas Va'eira

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Va'eira, we read about the plagues G-d brought upon the Egyptians. On the simplest level, the plagues were intended to punish the Egyptians for enslaving the Jews and refusing to set them free. But the Torah tells us there was an even deeper purpose behind them: "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the L-rd."

The Egyptian people did not believe in G-d; the plagues were meant to educate them about the Creator and His power. As Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel explained, Pharaoh denied three things: the existence of G-d; the concept of Divine Providence (that G-d oversees and is intimately involved in everything that goes on in the world); and G-d's ability to perform miracles that transcend the laws of nature.

When G-d brought the plagues upon the Egyptians, all three of these erroneous beliefs were publicly disproved: The first three plagues demonstrated that G-d exists; the second three plagues established His Divine Providence; and the next three plagues taught Pharaoh that G-d can indeed act in a supernatural manner.

Significantly, however, the Torah mentions an additional reason for G-d's having brought the plagues - to teach the Jewish people about His greatness: "That you may tell in the ears of your child, and of your grandchildren, what things I have done in Egypt...that you may know that I am the L-rd." In other words, in addition to the effect they were supposed to have on the Egyptians, the plagues were meant as a lesson for the Jews, that they should "know that I am the L-rd." As Rashi notes, "The Holy One, blessed be He, brings punishment upon the nations in order that Israel should hearken and fear."

But why wasn't punishing the Egyptians and refuting their religious misconceptions enough of a reason? Why was it necessary for the Jews to be brought to a greater awareness of G-d?

The answer has to do with the reason G-d created the world in the first place. Our Sages teach that G-d created the world "for Israel and for the Torah." Accordingly, everything that happens in the world - every event and every little detail - has a direct connection to the Jewish people and the Torah, and is intended for their benefit.

For this reason, there had to be more "justification" than simply punishing the Egyptians and refuting their beliefs; the plagues would somehow have to be advantageous to the Jews. In fact, it was only when they caused the Jews to have a greater awareness of G-d that the Egyptian plagues completely fulfilled their objective.

*Adapted from Vol. 36 of Likutei Sichot*

## A Mixture of Wild Beasts

*By Yitschak Meir Kagan*

The first three plagues with which G-d punished the Egyptians were Blood, Frogs and Lice. When warning of the imminent fourth plague of wild animals, the Almighty declared:

*"...And on that day I will make distinct the Land of Goshen in which my people live, in that there will be no mixture of wild animals there" (Exodus 8:15).*

When the first three plagues were discussed, why did the Torah not explicitly state they did not affect the Jews? If it is so obvious that it need not be specified -- then why does the Torah take care to specify with regard to the fourth plague that the wild animals did not affect the Israelites?

Some commentators explain that the first three plagues did indeed affect the Israelites. Others, however, maintain that this could not be the case, for if the Jews and the Egyptians were suffering equally from the plagues, how would Pharaoh be forced to conclude that he should send the Jews out of Egypt?

According to the famed commenter Rashi, the plain meaning of the text suggests that the Jews did suffer the first three plagues! The purpose of the first two plagues (blood and frogs) was to strike at the Egyptians' deity. It was therefore essential that the plague be unlimited, affecting the Nile wherever it flowed, even in the Jewish settlement of Goshen. For had the "Nile god" not been smitten there, Pharaoh might think that the Nile in Goshen, etc. was more powerful than G-d.

The same reasoning applies also to the third plague of lice, whose stated purpose was to show Pharaoh and his sorcerers that the plague was not the work of magicians, but an act of G-d. Had the lice affected only certain parts of the land, the sorcerers would have thought it to be the limited achievement of human sorcerers (Moses and Aaron).

The fourth plague, the mixture of wild animals, was not intended primarily to show the impotence of Egypt's deities and sorcerers, so it was not necessary that it affect all inhabitants alike. Here G-d declared "...I will make distinct the Land of Goshen etc..."

With the advent of the plague of mixture of wild animals it might have appeared to some that the Almighty had removed all natural barriers, boundaries and distinctions. Animals of completely different natures, some inherently inimical to each other, were now roaming around together; could not this mean that the inherent distinction between Jew and non-Jew had also been abolished?

To utterly negate this supposition, G-d declared "I will make a separation between my people and your people," not only between Pharaoh and Moses, but between every Egyptian and every Jew -- even those Jews who did not want to leave Egypt!

The lesson for our age is clear. There is a plague of "mixture" and confusion in the world. Natural boundaries and distinctions have been broken. The catastrophic of assimilation, the demarcation line between our nation and others. Never before has there been a more urgent need to intensify the distinction between Jew and non-Jew, to implement the Almighty's declaration.

# Slice of LIFE

Rabbi Kaminetsky in Dnepropetrovsk Russia was a very busy man. Besides having to direct the activities of his Chabad House; give Torah classes, visit homes, encourage Judaism, overcome opposition, collect money, run his schools and help as many Jews as possible both spiritually and physically he also had to worry about his personal life; educating his children etc.

So it wasn't surprising that he had little patience for foolish requests.

For instance, once he was approached by a young gentile girl with a big cross dangling around her neck who asked him to give her dying grandmother a visit.

The girl explained that the old lady was over ninety years old, didn't have a penny to her name, felt she was about to die and wanted a Jewish priest to perform the last rites and, oh yes, she lived over two hours' drive away!

When the Rabbi asked why she didn't just get a normal priest she answered that the old lady hated them all because of something some priest did or said to her some fifty years ago. Since then she hated all priests and never went to Church. But now she's dying and needs someone, so she said that she wanted a Rabbi. She added that her grandmother was also bit senile which also could explain her strange request.

The Rabbi had no problem refusing: two hours' drive both ways for a demented gentile lady was definitely not his line of work.

But suddenly it occurred to him that perhaps the old lady was really Jewish. There were many such cases in Russia. He began asking the girl questions. Perhaps she had seen her grandmother light candles on Friday or separate milk and meat - something... anything Jewish? Maybe she once mentioned something about Judaism?

But it was a dead end. There was nothing. It was clear as day; there were some three hundred million gentiles in Russia and this old lady her daughter and granddaughter were among them.

Rabbi Kaminetsky apologized, explained that he was sorry but he didn't know any Church rites, this was definitely NOT for him and bade her farewell and that was the end of it. The girl left.

But a week later she returned. And this time she refused to leave.

She began speaking quietly but gradually raised her tone to weeping and moaning. She had travelled two long hours and would never leave until he fulfilled her precious grandmother's last request. He had to have mercy. Only he could do it. The lady was dying!!

The Rabbi tried to make excuses but she just screamed louder. He tried to reason with her but she wouldn't let him finish a sentence. He even offered to personally calling the local Church and introducing her to a real Priest but she wouldn't hear of it. Her grandmother made her a bit crazy as well.

The Rabbi was stuck. He couldn't ignore or get rid of her. There were only two choices; call the police and get her kicked off his property or give in.

But suddenly it dawned on him that the police wouldn't understand why he, a man of 'the cloth' wouldn't give last rites to this heart-broken girl's grandmother. And even if they did understand and did evict her, she would certainly come back - perhaps every day... all day!

He gave in. After all, she was a human being! But why did she have to live so far away?! Who knows, maybe the old lady had been an anti-Semite and wanted to repent on her deathbed. In any case there was no way out.

They drove silently and two hours later they arrived at a large run down hut in a typical Russian village. On the porch was sitting a very old woman in an old torn stuffed chair. She was no more than skin and bones with a blanket covering most of her and looked out of

contact with the world. But when she saw the bearded Rabbi her eyes lit up and filled with tears. She began silently weeping.

The Rabbi walked up the few stairs and as he approached she looked deeply into his eyes and began speaking...in Yiddish!

"My whole life I have been waiting for this moment," she said in a wavering voice.

"I am a Jew!"

She hesitated, took out a handkerchief and wept aloud.

"When I was nine, my parents were killed in a pogrom, and I was put in a Church orphanage. One nun there once told me that I must never tell anyone I am Jewish because all Jews get killed. Now I am ninety-six, that's right, ninety-six years old, and my entire life I have been keeping this secret, even from my children."

The Rabbi was surprised but a thought flashed through his mind; it could be that she had once worked in a Jewish home and learned Yiddish. Now she's senile; she's crazy and thinks she's Jewish.

"I know what you are thinking," She interrupted his thoughts, "You're thinking that maybe I'm not Jewish, right? Well you should know that I remember how my mother would light the candles and make a Brocha (blessing) before Shabbos; Boruch Ata etc." (And she repeated the blessing). "And my father would put on Tefillin and a Tallis and daven in Shul in the weekdays. And she repeated some more details."

She paused for a few minutes, dried her eyes again and continued.

"My whole life I have been repeating these things because I was afraid that I would forget them. See, I remembered! But I didn't tell my daughter because I didn't know how to explain it.

"Now I want you to tell her and my granddaughter that they are Jewish too, so that they will remember. Will you do that Rabbi? And teach them what it means to be Jewish. Then I will be happy."

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ISSUE 1174

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

The ultimate perfection of the days of Moshiach is a kind of birth – a revelation of the light of G-d within the deepest recesses of a man's heart.

*(Torah Or of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, Va'eira, p. 55a)*



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

29th of Teves, Erev Rosh Chodesh Shevat, 5734 [1974]

## Greeting and Blessing:

I am writing to you in English this time, in order to give you an opportunity to convey the contents of this letter to a wider circle of friends, without the necessity to pour it from one vessel into another. Moreover, this is a case where the important thing is the content, and consideration must be given to the avoidance of language limitations, so as to make it accessible to all.

We are now about to pass from the month of Teves, which begins with the latter days of Chanukah, and enter into the month of Shevat, which for us has a special highlight in the Yahrzeit of my father-in-law of saintly memory on the 10th of this month. And, as has often been emphasized, every commemoration in Jewish life and every observance dictated by Torah or Jewish custom, has for its main purpose to give the Jew an opportunity to relive and experience in a personal way the events or matters remembered or commemorated.

In light of the above, first of all, I want to express to you my sincere appreciation of your activities in connection with our Operation Chanukah, to illuminate as many Jews as possible with the light of Torah and Mitzvoth, as symbolized by the Chanukah lights, which have the special requirement to be seen also outside. Moreover, as in the case of light which is of immediate benefit not only to the one who lights it, but also to many others at the same time, so a Jew has to illuminate his personal life as well as his surroundings with the light of Torah and Mitzvoth. I hope and pray that the benefits which you brought to many, and the effects of which you have already seen, should continue in a growing measure, also in keeping with the message of the Chanukah lights, which are kindled in growing numbers from day to day, as has often been emphasized before.

And from Chanukah to Yud Shevat, which brings to mind my father-in-law's dedicated efforts in the course of the last decade of his life in this country, to spread the principles and teachings of Chasidus to many who were "outside." Thus, many "outsiders" became "insiders," whose lives were brightly illuminated with the light, vitality and warmth of Chasidus, and who in turn became "shining lights" illuminating others.

In accordance with the saying of our Sages, "He who has 100 desires 200, and having gained 200, desires 400," may the Hatzlocho [success] of the past serve as an ever growing stimulus for even greater accomplishments in the future in all the above matters and activities.

With blessing,

## CUSTOMS CORNER

### Shul continued

One should not enter a Shul in the heat only to seek shelter from the heat or in the rain only to seek shelter from the rain. If one has to enter to call a colleague, one should enter, recite a verse, a Mishnah or a prayer, or listen to others studying - at the very least, he should sit for a while, for sitting in these buildings is also a mitzvah - and then call his colleague.

It is a mitzvah to run to Shul, to the house of study, or to fulfil other Mitzvos. Accordingly even on Shabbos - when generally it is forbidden - it is permitted to run for the sake of a mitzvah. However, within a synagogue or a house of study, it is forbidden to run.

When constructing a Shul, it is necessary to consult a Rabbi, who will give directions how it should be built.

## A WORD

*from the Director*

This Wednesday is Rosh Chodesh, the first day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. The name itself means a branch or a stick, yet there are many other words in Hebrew that express the same thing: "makehl" (staff), "mateh" (rod), "etz" (a piece of wood), etc. "shevet", by contrast, refers to a branch that is soft. It is obvious that our Rabbis chose this name for the month because on the Fifteenth we will celebrate Tu B'Shevat, the New Year for Trees.

The word Shevat is also related to the concept of a royal rod or staff. In the same way that a king is blessed with riches and all of life's pleasures are accessible to him, so too is every Jew considered a prince or princess, deserving of the very best. This is reflected in the delicacy and assortment of fruits we eat on Tu B'Shevat. Also, just as Moses disciplined the Jews with love and compassion rather than severity, we must always temper our authority (our "royal sceptre") with kindness and concern.

Another interesting connection exists between the month of Shevat and the Mezuzah. Every letter in Hebrew has a numerical value. If you add up the letters of the word Shevat (shin-veit-tet) it equals 314, the same as Sha-dai (shin-daled-yud), one of G-d's Names. This Name is found on the outside of the Mezuzah, our protection from harm. In the month of Shevat, when we are blessed with a great deal of affluence (as demonstrated on Tu B'Shevat), we must ask G-d for special protection to guard us from taking our good fortune for granted. A Jew must always recognize his special mission in life that G-d has put him here to refine and elevate the world for a higher purpose. When we live up to this responsibility and take up our "royal sceptre," we will indeed serve as a "light unto the nations" and have a positive influence on all our surroundings.

*J. I. Guterlich*

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

To be rich was never Berel's ambition. He was a plain Jew, quite satisfied with what he had. When he prayed to G-d three times a day, he prayed for many things: good health; good children; that G-d would put more sense into his head to understand Torah, and more feeling into his heart when doing the commandments. But riches? It never even occurred to him to pray for such a thing. Thank G-d, he had a good wife, nice children, and he was making a modest living. Could anyone wish for more?

Berel lived in a little town called Chasnik, not far from Chernobyl, where the great Rebbe, the saintly Rabbi Mordechai Chernobyler, lived. Berel was his Chasid, and he went there several times a year to get a spiritual boost. On such occasions he would take with him the money he had put aside for charity to leave with the Rebbe, who would know where it would do the most good.

One day the town of Chasnik went agog with excitement. Word was received that the Chernobyl Rebbe was coming on one of his rare visits. Berel was especially excited, for the Rebbe usually stayed in his house. However, Berel was soon bitterly disappointed. He learned the Rebbe would not stay in his house this time. Worse still, the Rebbe let it be known that Berel was not to appear before him, either in private audience, or with others. Furthermore, Berel was not to come to the Rebbe's table, nor was he to be among those to welcome him on arrival, or to see him off on departure!

The Rebbe had made it very clear that nothing would make him change his mind except one thing: If Berel would come with 2,000 rubles -- a veritable fortune in those days -- in his pocket and place it on the Rebbe's table for charity; then, and only then, would he be restored as the favoured Chasid he had always been!

Poor Berel was quite bewildered, and upset. Surely the Rebbe knew his financial position. If he would sell his house with all that was in it he could not raise half the amount the Rebbe expected of him. What had he done to deserve such punishment?

The thought of being so completely shunned by his beloved and revered Rebbe was too much for Berel to bear. For once in his lifetime he wished he were a rich man, and for the first time in his life he now prayed with all his heart that G-d would make him rich, so that he could bring the Rebbe 2,000 rubles for charity.

The Rebbe had come and gone. All the Chasidim of Chasnik had welcomed the Rebbe with joy and dancing, had sat spellbound listening to his inspiring words, had received his blessings, and had seen him off dancing in the street. Berel sat alone in his house, feeling hurt and miserable. However, he didn't give up hope that G-d would accept his prayer and make him rich if for no other reason than that he should be able to be reunited with his Rebbe.

Sometime later, there was excitement in Chasnik, but this time it was more like a panic. A battalion of invading soldiers was passing through town, and the town's people were ordered to quarter the soldiers. Several armed soldiers arrived at Berel's house and announced that they were going to spend the night there. They carried a heavy chest, which they placed in a closet. The soldiers were very tired from their long march, and they were soon fast asleep.

In the middle of the night an alarm was sounded. The half sleepy soldiers scrambled out of the house in a great hurry, and made off with all their comrades. A few hours later, a troop of some twenty soldiers returned and combed the town, looking for the chest which had been forgotten when they responded to the alarm.

Several times the soldiers passed Berel's house, but never entered to search it. After hours of fruitless searching, the troop left again.

Days later, Berel noticed the chest in the little-used closet. Months passed and Berel had almost forgotten about the chest when he noticed it again. Since nobody

came to claim it, he decided to look inside. He was amazed to find it filled with money, in paper and coins, and realized that it was evidently the treasury of the invading battalion. The thought came to Berel's mind that G-d must have, after all, accepted his prayer and made him rich! Berel immediately counted out 2,000 rubles and left immediately for Chernobyl. With a happy smile on his face, Berel came to the Rebbe and placed the money on his table. The Rebbe did not seem very surprised, though he was obviously pleased.

"Where did you get the money, Berel?" the Rebbe asked. Berel told him.

The Rebbe then said to Berel; "It had been revealed to me that you were designated for a big fortune. The only hindrance was that you had never prayed for riches. In Heaven they wanted to hear a prayer from you, at least one little prayer that you wanted to be rich. So I decided to help out and stimulate you a lit. The rest you know. Now that your prayer was accepted and you have become a rich man, I suggest that you move to a larger town and become a wholesale merchant, and G-d will bless you with success. However, remember, Berel; riches can be a more severe test than poverty. Be careful that you should be worthy of G-d's trust in you."

[Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition on [www.lchaimweekly.org](http://www.lchaimweekly.org) (#717)]

**Biographical note:**

Rabbi Mordechai ("Mottel") of Chernobyl [1770 - 20 Iyar 1837], successor to his father, Rabbi Nachum, was the son-in-law of Rabbi Aharon the Great of Karlin and subsequently of Rabbi David Seirkes. His eight sons all became major Chasidic leaders.

## Thoughts THAT COUNT

The L-rd ... gave them a charge to the Children of Israel (Ex. 6:13)

Despite the fact that the Jewish people hadn't listened "because of their anguished spirit and the cruel slavery," G-d commanded Moses and Aaron to keep on talking; for the word of G-d always makes an impression and has an effect, if not immediately, then sometime later. Holy words are never wasted, and are always ultimately heard. (*Sefat Emet*)

And Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh (Ex. 7:7)

Why does the Torah need to tell us the ages of Moses and Aaron? To refute the common misconception that only young people can carry the banner of liberation and redemption. Older people, too, can be "revolutionaries," if G-d determines it is necessary and the proper time. (*Shaarei Yerushalayim*)

It is not proper to do so...shall we sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? (Ex. 8:22)

The Egyptians were extremely careful to avoid hurting animals; according to the Ibn Ezra, they did not eat meat and would not even use any animal products. It is therefore "not proper" when such "humanitarians," who are so filled with pity for four-legged creatures, think nothing about enslaving Jews and throwing their babies into the river. (*Imrei Chein*)

### CANDLE LIGHTING: 16 JANUARY 2015

BEGINS	ENDS
8:26 .....MELBOURNE .....	9:29
8:14 .....ADELAIDE .....	9:15
6:30 .....BRISBANE .....	7:26
7:02 .....DARWIN .....	7:54
6:29 .....GOLD COAST .....	7:26
7:08 .....PERTH .....	8:07
7:51 .....SYDNEY .....	8:51
8:03 .....CANBERRA .....	9:04
8:28 .....LAUNCESTON .....	9:34
8:24 .....AUCKLAND .....	9:27
8:37 .....WELLINGTON .....	9:43
8:31 .....HOBART .....	9:40
7:30 .....BYRON BAY .....	8:27
6:58 .....SINGAPORE .....	7:49



### CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD  
PARSHAS VA'EIRA  
18 TEVET • 16 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:26 PM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:05 PM
SHABBOS:	TEHILLIM:	8:00 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9:53 AM
	THE MOLAD FOR THE MONTH OF SHEVAT	
	WILL BE ON TUESDAY:	11:15 PM (1 CHELEK)
	FARBRENGEN AFTER DAVENING	
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:29 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8:00 AM
	SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:30 PM
	MAARIV:	9:30 PM
	MINYAN #2 (ENDING TUES)	9:20 PM