

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas Yisro
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

As we read in this week's Torah portion, Yisro, when the Jewish people received the Torah from G-d, Moses taught it first to the women and then to the men. The Torah states, "So you shall say to the House of Jacob [the women] and tell the Children of Israel [the men]."

Why did the women precede the men in the giving of the Torah?

Our Sages tell us that Moses taught the general principles of the Torah to the Jewish women, after which he learned the minutiae of its laws with the Jewish men. The general principles came first, after which the details and particulars of the Torah's many laws followed.

In fact, this is the prevailing order when it comes to Torah: first come the generalities, then the particulars.

To give an example:

The Jewish people heard the first two of the Ten Commandments directly from G-d - "I am the L-rd your G-d" and "You shall have no other gods" - after which they heard the rest of the Ten Commandments, which were given over by Moses.

Another example: G-d gave the Jews the Ten Commandments - the general principles of the Torah - then He gave them the remainder of the Torah's 613 mitzvot.

Similarly, Moses first taught the general principles of the Torah to the women, after which he went into the details of the laws with the men.

But why were the Torah's principles taught specifically to the Jewish women?

Faith in G-d and fear of G-d are the "general principles" of the Torah, as it states, "And G-d commanded us to keep all these statutes [in order] to fear G-d." In other words, the totality of Torah and mitzvot is merely a corollary of faith in G-d and awe of Him.

Believing in G-d and fearing Him are the foundations of the entire Torah. Women are particularly distinguished in these two qualities; their faith is much more apparent and expressed more openly than it is by men. Jewish women observe mitzvot with simple faith and with a pure and perfect fear of heaven.

Indeed, it is for this reason that the Jewish women merited to receive the general principles and foundations of Torah ahead of the men.

It was in the merit of the righteous women of that generation that the Jewish people were taken out of Egypt and received the Torah. So too is it in our times: In the merit of our righteous women we will go out of our present exile, and be worthy of learning Torah directly from Moshiach.

Adapted from *Likutei Sichot*, Volume 31

Get Down!

By Elisha Greenbaum

The Torah describes G-d as "descending" onto Mt. Sinai to proclaim the Ten Commandments.

The expression seems strange on two counts:

Firstly, the fact that G-d is described as descending, surely G-d is neither above nor below. G-d is everything and everywhere. He is found in all places and all times equally. Neither male nor female, neither up nor down, permeating and encompassing alike-He just is.

Of even more interest is the fact that G-d seems to instigate the connection; He came down to us without expecting us to come up the mountain to Him. I always understood that the purpose of Torah and mitzvot is to energize and elevate the Jews. After all, G-d started off perfect and hasn't changed since; but we're the ones who need to shape up. We're the people who should be setting off on the great journey that starts on earth and ends at Sinai. Why should we expect G-d to *come down* to us?

Obviously this notion of G-d's descent from on high is metaphorical and not literal. However the description is possibly also symbolic of the effort each of us is expected to make when reaching out to others who need us.

We all have information to share and skill sets that others would benefit from learning. It is tempting to assume that those who wish to learn will approach you first and request to be taught. It is too easy to sit at home and wait for people to come looking for you. Yet the lesson of G-d *coming down* to the Jews is that we have no right to sit on our hands when those who need us are waiting.

Some people need Judaism, others need faith or love. There are hungry souls out there who need to be fed and jobs need to be found for the unemployed. Don't be proud, be generous. People need you. You have gifts to share and knowledge to impart. Go out and teach. Reach out to others. You may feel that you are going below your current station; it may feel like a physical or spiritual descent from your present position in life, yet the good and G-dly way is to lower yourself into the world and share your bounty with those who need you most.

Slice of LIFE

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Biston and his wife Bayla Rachel have been emissaries of the Rebbe in North Broward, Florida for over four decades. Their eldest daughter Estie became engaged to Rabbi Mendy Gutnick. The wedding was to take place in Florida and the many people with whom they had connected with over their years of devotion to the Jewish community, as well as family and friends, looked forward to attending the wedding.

On the day of the wedding, while standing under his daughter's chupa (wedding canopy), Rabbi Biston noticed an old friend of his amongst the guests. This was none other than Mr. H. from Flatbush, a neighbourhood in Brooklyn, New York.

Rabbi Biston was delighted yet surprised to see Mr. H. at the wedding as he had not responded that he was coming and he therefore did not expect him. He had met Mr. H. more than thirty years prior, when they both attended Camp Gan Israel overnight camp in Swan Lake, New York. Mr. H. was several years older than Rabbi Biston and came from a different country. Despite these differences, they become friends, a friendship that grew stronger when Mr. H. studied in the Central Lubavitcher Yeshiva at 770 Eastern Parkway. Though separated over the years by distance, the two kept in touch and would "catch up" whenever they would see each other.

After the chupa, Mr. H. came over to wish Rabbi Biston "mazel tov" and said, "I will tell you later why I am attending this wedding."

A little while later Rabbi Biston found Mr. H. again and Mr. H. proceeded to tell his old friend this most amazing story:

"Before I tell you the dream that I had, I must tell you something that happened over 23 years ago. Your father and I were friendly. I knew that you had been married for several years and still did not have any children. I decided to go to the Rebbe and ask him for a blessing for you and your wife. As I knew what time the Rebbe would leave '770' to go home, I

planned to go up to the Rebbe as he was walking to his car. Sure enough, when the Rebbe came out of 770, I approached him and asked him for a blessing for children for Yosef Yitzchok ben Zvetel Gitel and his wife Bayla Rochel bas Devorah. When the Rebbe heard me, he immediately said 'Devorah Leah,' to correct me, and then added, 'I already gave them a blessing.'

'But that was not good enough for me. I told the Rebbe, 'I want a guarantee.' To this the Rebbe said, 'You and I will dance at the wedding.'

"I asked the Rebbe, 'The Rebbe will dance? But the Rebbe doesn't go to weddings.'

"The Rebbe looked at me and said, 'Don't worry, we will both dance at their children's wedding.'

"I asked the Rebbe, 'Who is "we," me and the Rebbe?' The Rebbe repeated this sentence two more times. And that was the end of the conversation.

"After Gimmel Tammuz [the day of the Rebbe's passing] came I couldn't understand what the Rebbe had meant, just how was he going to keep his promise. But after I tell you the dreams that I had you will understand."

Mr. H. then continued his story. "On this past Friday night, just a few days before your daughter's wedding, I had a dream. The Rebbe and your father Yiddel (of blessed memory) came to me. The Rebbe asked me, 'Why aren't you going to the wedding?' At first I didn't respond so the Rebbe asked me again, 'Why aren't you going to the wedding?' We made a deal that we would dance at the wedding.' I didn't respond and I woke up. I did not pay attention to the dream.

"The following night, Saturday night, the Rebbe came to me in a dream again, this time without your father. Once again the Rebbe asked me, 'Why aren't you going to the wedding?' I responded that I have no money with which to go. To this the Rebbe said, 'A Chasid never has a problem with money.'

"I told the Rebbe, 'But I am not a Chasid.' The Rebbe answered, 'Du bist - you are.' And with that the dream ended. I did not pay any attention to this dream as well.

"The next night, Sunday night, I had yet a third dream. The Rebbe came to me and asked, 'Nu, why aren't you going to

the wedding?' I responded, 'It's too difficult financially.' The Rebbe answered, 'Du vest haben di gelt - you will have the money.' With that I awoke.

"That day, Monday morning, I went to work and met a friend along the way. He said to me, 'You look worried.' I told him that I hadn't slept in a few nights. My friend said to me, 'I want to give you \$400 to go to Florida and take a vacation.' I responded that I didn't have the time to go to Florida for a vacation. But my friend insisted, 'You can even take a vacation for one day.'

"That afternoon when I came home, my wife suggested that I call the Bistons to wish them 'mazel tov.' After all, their daughter was getting married in two days. I then said to my wife, 'Maybe I should go to the wedding instead of just calling them.' I called my friend and asked him if his offer still stood. 'Of course,' he said. I called the airlines and booked a ticket, then booked a hotel in Florida for the night. The total price was \$300. I called my friend back and told him I would only need \$300. His response was, 'How could you go to a wedding and not bring a gift? Give the extra hundred dollars to the bride and groom.'

"And here I am," concluded Mr. H.

Rabbi Biston was totally overwhelmed by this story. The Rebbe truly keeps his word, he told himself and everyone else to whom he later told the story. Of course, during the dancing, Rabbi Biston made sure to dance with Mr. H. at different times. He truly felt that he was dancing with his father a'h and the Rebbe.

Later, Mr. H. reminded Rabbi Biston that about eight years earlier, he had married off a son. Rabbi Biston happened to be in New York at the time and his father wanted him to accompany him to the wedding. Rabbi Biston told his father that he hadn't responded that he was coming and there might not be enough space as they hadn't planned for him. His father asked him again to go along and keep him company and out of respect for his father he agreed. At the wedding, Mr. H. came over to them and said to his father, "I am so glad Yossi came. He is a shliach (emissary) of the Rebbe and I am very honoured." His father then told Mr. H. "G-d willing you'll dance at Yossi's children's wedding." And so it was!

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ISSUE 1177

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Yalkut Shimoni states, "In the future, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, will sit... and expound a new Torah, which will be given by Moshiach." That is, there will be such a tremendous revelation of Torah wisdom that it will be considered a new Torah.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

16 Shevat, 5724 [1964]

...Now that we are in the weekly portion of Mattan Torah [the Giving of the Torah], we can all draw inspiration from it, as indeed we ought to, in accordance with the teaching of the Alter Rebbe [the first Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman], author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch, that the weekly portion of the Torah should be a source of timely inspiration and instruction to every Jew, in all his affairs of that week.

Mattan Torah has the further significance in that it has to be regarded and accepted as a new experience every day. This also evidenced from the bracha [blessing] over the Torah which we make every morning in our morning prayers, "Noten ha Torah" [Who gives the Torah] -- in the present tense. As you know, our Sages declared that the words of the Torah should be as new every day.

One of the basic messages of the Ten Commandments is contained in the fact that they begin with "I am," i.e. the profound principle of monotheism, which in itself was a tremendous revolutionary idea in those days of idolatry, dominated by the polytheistic culture of Egypt (as indicated in detail in the Second Commandment, where all forms of idolatry are prohibited).

Incidentally, the emphasis on monotheism, and the denial of polytheism, is to be seen not only in the fact that these ideas form the subject of the first two Commandments, but also in the quantity of words and detail which they contain. At the same time, the Ten Commandments conclude with such apparently simple and obvious injunctions as "Thou shalt not steal," etc.

The profundity of monotheism, with which the Ten Commandments begin, and the simplicity of the ethical and moral laws, with which the Ten Commandments conclude, point to an important lesson, namely:

- a. The true believer in G-d is not the one who holds abstract ideas, but the one whose knowledge of G-d leads him to the proper daily conduct even in ordinary and commonplace matters, in his dealings with his neighbors and the respect for their property, even if it be an ox or a donkey, etc.
- b. The ethical and moral laws, even those that are so obvious as "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not murder," will have actual validity and will be observed only if they are based on the First and Second Commandments, that is to say, based on Divine authority, the authority of the One and Only G-d.

If in a previous generation there were people who doubted the need of Divine authority for common morality and ethics in the belief that human reason is sufficient authority for morality and ethics, our present generation has unfortunately, in a most devastating and tragic way, refuted this mistaken notion. For, it is precisely the nation which had excelled itself in the exact sciences, the humanities and even in philosophy and ethics that turned out to be the most depraved nation in the world, making an ideal of murder and robbery, etc.

Anyone who knows how insignificant was the minority of Germans who opposed the Hitler regime, realizes that the German culture was not something which was practiced by a few individuals, but had embraced the vast majority of that nation, who considered itself the "super race," etc. Surely it is unnecessary to elaborate on this at greater length.

CUSTOMS CORNER

Covering our eyes when making a blessing on Shabbos candles

Many authorities consider that the blessing over the candles is also the acceptance of Shabbos. Therefore, the normal sequence of first reciting the blessing and then performing the mitzvah - like any other case - would result here in the impermissible lighting of the candles on Shabbos. Thus we cover the light immediately after the kindling so that we will not enjoy it until after the blessing has been made.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming Wednesday is the twenty-seventh Yartzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, of blessed memory, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and daughter of the Previous Rebbe. Born in the Russian village of Babinovitch (a small shtetl near Lubavitch) in 1901, she played an integral role in both her father's and husband's affairs throughout her life. And yet, she deliberately chose to function out of the limelight. Extremely modest, royal in bearing and above all kindly, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka was the embodiment of Jewish womanhood and an exceptional role model for Jewish women and girls.

A few years after her passing, in a public address on the anniversary of her passing, the Rebbe spoke about the special mission all Jewish women have been entrusted with. The function of every Jew - man, woman and child - is to "make a dwelling place for G-d" on earth. But the goal of the Jewish woman is to take this one step further, and adorn G-d's abode on the physical plane so that it is "lovely" and appointed with "fine furnishings."

In particular, the Jewish woman fulfils her role of "spiritual decorator" through the three special mitzvot G-d has given her to implement in her private home: maintaining the kashrut of her kitchen, keeping the laws of Family Purity, and lighting candles on Shabbat on Yom Tov, together with her daughters. (The Rebbe specified that young girls should light first, so that their mothers can assist them if necessary.)

The Rebbe also called on women to renew their commitment to the Jewish education of their children, from the earliest age on. When a Jewish mother sings a lullaby to her baby about how the Torah is "the best, the sweetest, and the most beautiful" thing in the world, it instils a deep love and appreciation for Torah that lasts a lifetime.

The main point during these last few moments of exile, the Rebbe stressed, is to recognize the great merit and power Jewish women and girls have to bring about the Final Redemption, may it happen at once.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Reb Mordechai, a follower of the third Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789-1866), widely known as the Tzemach Tzedek, had been dispatched by his Rebbe to wander the countryside of Russia, journeying from town to town and inspiring the Jews scattered there with the teachings of Chassidism.

But one day -- it was the day before Yom Kippur -- he arrived at some town in the middle of nowhere only to hear that all its Jews, about one hundred altogether, had left the day before to the city of Vitebsk to pray in the large synagogue there on the Day of Atonement. Suddenly, only a few hours away from the holiest day of the year, he found himself without a minyan-- the quorum of ten Jews required for communal prayer.

"You won't find any Jews here, Rabbi," one of the townspeople told him. "But about two hours away there's a small village of Cantonists. They're a strange bunch, but that's the closest thing to Jews you'll find around here now."

(The Cantonists were Jews who, by decree of Czar Nicholas I, had been snatched from their families when they were young children for a 25-year term of "service" in the Czar's army, where every cruel means had been employed to force them to abandon Judaism. The few that survived were so emotionally and psychologically destroyed, when they left the army decades later, that they were never able to live normal lives. So they lived together in little villages, apart from the rest of the world.)

Immediately, Reb Mordechai started walking, but after over an hour he still saw nothing. No... wait! There seemed to be something on the horizon.

Sure enough, there it was. There were only a few old wooden houses, but this must be the village he was looking for.

The first resident that saw that the rabbi enter the village called everyone else, and in no time they were all lined up with shining faces, taking turns shaking the newcomer's hand.

They were overjoyed. Such an honour to have a real rabbi as their guest!

Suddenly they stepped back, formed a sort of huddle, and began whispering to one another. Then they fell silent, looked again at the rabbi, and one of them stepped forward in great humility, cleared his throat, and announced:

"Excuse me, Rabbi, but we would be very honoured if His Excellency the Rabbi would please honour us with leading the prayers of Yom Kippur."

All the others stood staring at the Rabbi with wide pleading eyes, nodding their heads beseechingly.

Reb Mordechai nodded in agreement, and the joyous hand-shaking ritual was repeated once again.

"We only have one stipulation," the man continued. "That one of us leads the closing prayer of the holy day, Ne'ilah."

An hour later, in the solemn atmosphere of Yom Kippur, they were all seated in their little Shul (synagogue), listening to the beautiful heartfelt prayers of the Chassidic rabbi, Reb Mordechai.

A very special feeling overcame Reb Mordechai. He had never quite experienced a Yom Kippur like this. He had never been in such a minyan; comprised of Jews each of whom had been through torture, things that he could never even dream of experiencing, only for the sake of G-d. And although he had studied all the holy books and they knew nothing, he felt dwarfed by these simple folk.

His soul flowed into the prayers, and it seemed to him that he had never sung so beautifully in his life. First Kol Nidrei, then the evening prayer. On the following day, he prayed the other three prayers, and read twice from the Torah.

But finally, at the end of the day, came their turn; it was time for Ne'ilah.

Reb Mordechai stepped back, took a seat in the small shul with everyone else, and waited to see what was going to happen. Why did they want this prayer for themselves?

One of the Cantonists rose from his chair took a few steps forward and stood at the podium, his back to the crowd.

Suddenly, before he began to lead the prayers, he started unbuttoning and then removing his shirt.

Reb Mordechai was about to say something, to protest: You can't take your shirt off in the synagogue!

But as the shirt fell from the man's shoulders, it revealed hundreds of scars; years upon years of deep scars... each one because the man refused to forsake the G-d of Israel.

Reb Mordechai gasped and tears ran from his eyes.

The Cantonist then raised his hands to G-d and said in a loud voice.

"G-d... Send us Moshiach! Redeem the Jewish people now!

"I'm not asking for the sake of our families, because we don't have any families.

"I'm not asking for the sake of our futures, because we have no futures.

"I'm not asking for the sake of our livelihoods or our comfort, or our children, or our reputations, because we don't have any of those things either.

"We're just asking: Assey I'maan shemecha -- Do it for Your sake!"

And then he put on his shirt and began the prayer.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

"Israel encamped there opposite the mountain" (19:2)

Torah was given on a mountain, teaching us that the study of Torah and following in the ways of G-d, must create by man an "elevated heart". Hand and hand with this we must see to it that it doesn't cause haughtiness; this is the meaning of "opposite the mountain" we must stand "opposite" the haughtiness that can arise through ones learning. (*Sefer Hamamorim 5703*)

"I am G-d your G-d" (20:2)

Because G-d appeared to them at the Red Sea as a mighty warrior, at Sinai as a sage teaching Torah, in the days of Solomon as a handsome lad and in the times of Daniel as a compassionate old man, G-d said to them: Just because you perceive Me in many guises, do not think that there are many gods; rather, it is I who was at the sea, I who was at Sinai, I who is in every place -- "I am G-d your G-d." (*Midrash Tanchuma*)

"And the people saw and trembled; so they stood from afar" (20:15)

One can see and even tremble and even so remain in a state of "and they stood from afar" - distant from the "light" that shone at Mount Sinai. (*Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotsk*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 6 FEBRUARY 2015

| BEGINS | ENDS |
|----------------------------|------|
| 8:11MELBOURNE | 9:11 |
| 8:02ADELAIDE | 8:59 |
| 6:22BRISBANE | 7:16 |
| 7:01DARWIN | 7:51 |
| 6:21GOLD COAST | 7:16 |
| 6:58PERTH | 7:54 |
| 7:39SYDNEY | 8:37 |
| 7:50CANBERRA | 8:48 |
| 8:10LAUNCESTON | 9:13 |
| 8:11AUCKLAND | 9:10 |
| 8:20WELLINGTON | 9:22 |
| 8:13HOBART | 9:16 |
| 7:21BYRON BAY | 8:16 |
| 7:03SINGAPORE | 7:53 |



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS YISRO

17 SHEVAT • 6 FEBRUARY

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| FRIDAY NIGHT: | CANDLE LIGHTING: | 8:11 PM |
| | MINCHA: | 8:20 PM |
| | KABBOLAS SHABBOS: | 8:50 PM |
| SHABBOS: | SHACHARIS: | 10:00 AM |
| | LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: | 10:08 AM |
| | MINCHA: | 8:05 PM |
| | SHABBOS ENDS: | 9:11 PM |
| WEEKDAYS: | SHACHARIS: | SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM |
| | MINCHA: | MON-FRI: 8:00 AM |
| | MAARIV: | 8:10 PM |
| | | 9:05 PM |