

LAMPLIGHTER

4 Sivan
Parshas
Bamidbar
1192
22 May
5775/2015

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

Throughout the thousands of years of Jewish history, countless men, women and children have willingly given up their lives rather than deny their Jewishness. Not only scholars and learned Jews went to the auto-da-fe, with the "Shema" on their lips; simple and untutored Jews also chose to die sanctifying G-d's name without hesitation.

This irrational willingness to give up one's life for the sake of G-d seems odd in light of the dictum which states that "nothing can stand in the way of repentance." With the sword at their throats, who could have faulted our ancestors had they agreed to bow down to whatever idol worship was being forced upon them? Why didn't they save their lives by uttering some meaningless phrase or performing some other seemingly insignificant gesture demanded by their tormentors? Could they not have later fully repented and returned to G-d?

This question may be answered by understanding the special nature of the Jewish soul and the relationship it enjoys with G-d. That inner spark of Jewishness, described in Chasidus as "an actual part of G-d above," exists on a plane above time and space. It cannot bear to be severed from its Source for even a moment; the threat of separation from G-d is always utter and absolute. The willingness to give up one's life rather than lose that connection is a consequence of the soul's very nature.

This concept is well illustrated in this week's Torah portion, Bamidbar, in which G-d commands that a census be taken of the Jews. Rashi, the great Torah commentator, notes that because of the great love G-d has for His people, "He counts them at every moment."

This comment must be interpreted beyond its literal meaning, for since the exodus from Egypt, there have only been nine censuses of our people. The tenth census will be taken after the Final Redemption. What then, does it mean that G-d counts the Jews "at every moment"?

The act of counting reduces the objects being counted to their common denominator; both great and small are counted as one. The common denominator among all Jews, without regard for educational status, societal standing or wealth, is the Jewish soul, which exists in every Jew to the same extent and renders all Jews equal.

G-d unceasingly "counts" His children and holds each of them dear, all the time. This love is so overwhelming that the Jew cannot endure being cut off from it for even a moment, even with the knowledge that his later repentance has the power to restore the relationship to what it had been. It is G-d's perpetual "counting" of His children which reveals the innate power of the Jewish soul.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Two-Way Mirror

By Yanki Tauber

Does G-d care if I cheat on my taxes? Am I going to be a better husband/wife/parent if I keep kosher? Are these the same question?

The 613 *mitzvot* ("commandments") of the Torah are commonly divided into two categories: 1) laws that govern the relationship "between man and G-d" (*bein adam la-makom*); and 2) laws that legislate the proper conduct "between man and his fellow" (*bein adam la-chavero*). Even the Ten Commandments were inscribed on two separate tablets, one containing commandments such as "I am G-d your G-d" and "Remember the day of Shabbat," and the other proclaiming laws like "Do not kill" and "Do not steal."

But is this division a legitimate one? Let us examine the evidence.

On the one hand, we have the aforementioned two tablets (though one still needs to explain how "honour your father and your mother" ended up on the "between man and G-d" side). On the other hand, we have the famous story the Talmud tells about the prospective convert to Judaism who came to Hillel asking to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot. "What is hateful to yourself," said Hillel, "do not do to your fellow. This is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary." (But how is putting on *Tefillin* a commentary on "Love your fellow"?) There's also the statement by the Zohar that the divine instruction, "I am G-d your G-d... You shall have no other gods beside Me," is the essence of all 613 commandments and prohibitions of the Torah. (Meaning that helping my neighbour shovel his car out of a snow bank proclaims the oneness of G-d and disavows the existence of any other gods beside Him?)

The masters of the mystical wisdom of the Kabbalah insist that, ultimately, there is no essential difference between the Torah's "civil" laws and its so-called "religious" laws. Each *mitzvah*, whether it's visiting the sick or waving a *lulav* on Sukkot, is a facilitator of the flow of desire and gratification between G-d and creation -- a flow that sustains all of the created existence and fulfils the divine intent in creating it in the first place. So a crime against G-d (which causes a disruption in the flow) is a crime against all of His creations; and a crime against a fellow creature is also a crime against G-d (for the same reason). A kindness to a fellow is a kindness to G-d, as it contributes to the realization of His desire in creation; and a positive "personal" relationship with G-d has a positive effect on His relationship with creation as a whole and with each and every citizen of His world.

So why did G-d deliver His Torah to us in two tablets? Maybe it's because He wants us to understand that there are two sides to life. Life is not an uninterrupted spiritual experience, nor is it exclusively a social exercise. Life means dealing with people, but also conversing with oneself; it means meditating and praying, as well as digging neighbours' cars out of snow banks.

G-d is the absolute oneness, and human life is the endeavour to express His oneness. But true oneness is not uniformity. True oneness tolerates, indeed embraces, various and even opposite particulars. For there is no greater expression of oneness than the ability to see opposites reflected in each other.

So G-d divided the divinely-ordained blueprint for life into a "between man and G-d" column and a "between man and man" column. And then He granted us the ability to see each side reflected in the other. To see a fellow's needs peering out to us from the pages of our prayer book. And to see G-d's face smiling to us from a beggar's mumbled gratitude, from the wonder in a child's question, from a loved one's trusting eyes.

Slice of LIFE

A few years ago Greece was not a good place to be. Angry, violent mobs with grievances to the government set to the streets, destroyed property, set fires, rioted and battled the police and bedlam reigned.

Vacationers shunned the place, trips, hotel reservations and plane tickets were cancelled but for Rabbi Yoel Kaplan, the Chabad Representative in Salonika Greece it was just another major challenge.

Rabbi Kaplan thrived on the unusual. His home, like all the hundreds of Chabad Houses throughout the world, was open to the public 24/7 with the hope of helping Jews, Judaism and, thereby, the entire world. And that required expecting the unexpected.

In the days of the rioting there was nothing to do, it was impossible to leave his house. And even weeks after the rioting ceased signs of vandalism were everywhere and tension filled the air but the Rabbi tried to resume his normal activities.

It wasn't easy; there were no tourists, Jews included, and after all the violence it seemed wise for him to just stay indoors for a few more weeks but he had a job to do... maybe there was even one Jew out there and then there were some things that were pressing like going to the post office to get his mail which was a daily necessity.

But even such a seemingly simple task was fraught with danger. The post office was located in a part of downtown that was a youth hangout and had been hit the hardest by violence.

There were days that he took side roads to get there and used the back entrance, which meant a serious detour and time loss, just to avoid trouble.

But one day he was running late and forgot to worry for trouble. He headed straight for the post office but as he neared his goal he began to regret it. A group of about ten mean-looking fellows, some of them with tattooed arms, punk hairdos and other bizarre and frightening decorations were staring at him with hatred in their eyes. His full beard, black hat, long black coat and entire Jewish demeanour were like a red flag before a maddened bull and he was a sitting duck for their frustrations.

He should have turned back, taken an alternate route and avoided them but something told him to just keep walking. From afar he heard the curses they directed at him

first in Greek then, because they knew he spoke English, in English; all of them anti-Semitic.

He had experienced Greek anti-Semitism before. Usually he just ignored it but for some reason this time he glanced up, raised one hand and, as he got closer, said in as friendly a tone as possible "Hello, good morning!"

"Someone talking to you?!" the biggest of them replied sarcastically as the others got ready for some action.

Suddenly the Rabbi realized something. Just like Abraham, the first Jew, some 4,000 years earlier was alone in his quest to bring meaning into a hostile world, but trusted G-d to protect him (therefore we pray to 'The Shield of Abraham') so this same 'G-d of Abraham' would protect him now.

He smiled and said, "Maybe you weren't talking to me... but you certainly are talking about my people."

"That's right Jew!" The young man replied with burning venom laced with terms not fit to print, "About your cursed nation of thieves, liars and cheaters we certainly were talking. And we'll keep talking until you are exterminated etc."

The smile did not depart from Rabbi Kaplan's face as he calmly replied, "You look like intelligent people. You have no reason to hate me or any other Jew. In fact, if you knew the truth I'm sure you wouldn't treat any of us badly."

This was too much for the 'leader'. He was livid with anger as he made a fist, held it before the Rabbi's face and said, "I'm an experienced boxer. Unless you want to taste a few of these you'd better get away as fast and far as possible and don't come back!"

Rabbi Kaplan realized that things were about to get out of hand, so he calmly turned to the others, blessed them warmly with a good day and good news and continued on to the post office.

But after he finished his business there and left the building something told him not to take a detour back home, rather to return the same way he came... through the crowd. After all, he was only here to do good; the same G-d of Abraham that protected him on his way here would protect him on his way back.

But this time when he passed the group something unexpected happened, they were quiet. He again blessed them with a good day and all of them answered "Same to you."

He continued walking and the 'boxer' that had threatened him previously approached him and stuck out his hand. "I want to apologize for what we said before. We thought about it and decided that you are right. We really know nothing about the Jews. Must be that we were

affected by the media or what people say."

The Rabbi shook his hand, smiled and said. "Apology accepted. The fact is you should never judge anyone before knowing them and for sure you shouldn't hate anyone just because of their opinions. Here" Said Rabbi Kaplan as he took a calling card from his wallet and handed it to the 'boxer', "if you ever want to talk over a cup of coffee ... on me!"

If the Rabbi had doubts about talking to these people in the first place all of them melted away. Finally he would have a chance to dispel some of the hatred in the streets and maybe convince some of those fellows to live better lives.

A few days later he got a phone call. "Hey Rabbi, my name is Alexandros remember me? I'm the fellow you gave your card to the other day. You know, the boxer. Were you serious about that cup of coffee? If so, I'm right outside your house.

Rabbi Kaplan was pleasantly surprised and in just moments he was introducing Alexandros to his wife and children. But then they sat down and the conversation began. His visitor had good questions and was a great listener but eventually, at the third or fourth cup of coffee, when the topic of 'Who is a Jew' came up and the Rabbi explained that only someone with a Jewish mother, or genuinely converts to Judaism, is considered a Jew, Alexandros got serious and began making interesting calculations. "Mother? What about Father? What about grandmother? What about grandfather's mother? What about grandmother's mother?"

He thought about it for a few seconds and announced that his maternal grandmother once told him that she had once beenJewish.

Indeed, she had even been observant but in the war, after her husband and children were taken and murdered by the invading Germans she ran and hid in the mountains for several years and figuring that all the Jews had been killed and she would be too if anyone found out, when she returned to civilization, she married a gentile and began going to church.

Shortly thereafter she gave birth to a baby girl who grew up and married a religious Greek Orthodox man and their first child was..... Alexandros!

Alex was Jewish.

He even took the Rabbi to visit his aged grandmother where she verified the story and even agreed to put a Mezuzah on her home.

Suddenly Alex transformed from one who knew nothing about Jews to being one. He even agreed to put on Tefillin for the first time in his life and every day thereafter.

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

Editor: Isaac Hilel
P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

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ISSUE 1192

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Baal Shem Tov taught that when Moshiach arrives, he will explain the entire Torah from the perspective of each and every letter, starting from the first letter of the Torah to the last. Then he will join all the letters together into one long Name of G-d and explain the entire Torah from the total perspective. Meaning to say, first he will explain the Torah according to the unique view of every individual, so that each one will hear an explanation of Torah that rings harmoniously with the root of his soul. Then he will join all the letters together, and reveal the unity of the entire Jewish People through the Torah. (Eliezer Shore-Bas Ayin)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5738 [1978]

...I take this opportunity of expressing my regret that - for reasons you are aware of - it was impossible to talk things over with you personally and at length, nor to meet your younger daughter. However, when Jews meet at a Farbrengen [Chasidic gathering] dedicated to Torah and Yiddishkeit [Judaism], in a sacred place of Tefilah [prayer] and Torah study, especially one that had been graced by the presence of my father-in-law of saintly memory for ten years - this unites Jews and brings them closer together than a personal conversation.

Apropos of the above, and in connection with the forthcoming Festival of Mattan Torah [the Giving of the Torah], the unity of our people is directly related to it, as our Sages interpret the words, "and Israel encamped there facing the Mountain" (Yisro [Exodus] 19:21), taking note of the use of the singular person - k'ish echod b'lev echod, "like one person, with one heart." (Rashi, from Mechilta). It was the first time since the departure from Egypt that the Jewish people felt truly united, and G-d said, "Now they are fit to receive the Torah."

At first glance it seems extraordinary that a whole nation could be so united as to be described "like one person with one heart," especially as it has been said that "people differ in their outlooks as they differ in their looks," and there are various walks of life and interests. But the explanation is found in the words, "facing the Mountain." For, when the Jewish people were about to receive the Torah, they were all of like mind and heart, and all so eager to receive the Torah and its Mitzvos [commandments] that in the light of it everything else paled into insignificance, and thus they all truly became like one person with one heart.

Since the Torah was given not only to our ancestors coming out of Egypt, but the souls of all Jews of all future generations were present and joined in "na'aseh v'nishma" ["we will do and then we will understand"], the reading of the portion of Mattan Torah on Shavuos - most solemnly and with a Brocho [blessing] before and after - inspires every one of us to relive this experience, and rejuvenates the powers of every Jew to renew his, and her, commitment to Torah and Mitzvos with increased vigor and vitality and joy. May it be so with you and yours and all of us in the midst of all our people.

Wishing you and all your family a joyous and inspiring Yom Tov [holiday], and the traditional blessing to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness,

With blessing,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Why do we stay up all night on Shavuos?

On the day of the Giving of the Torah, instead of arising early to properly prepare for the momentous event, the Jewish People slept in. To make amends for this, it is customary to remain awake throughout the first night of Shavuos. We read the "Tikkun Leil Shavuos," which contains selections from all areas of the Torah. Others have the custom of simply studying any topic in Torah throughout the night.

A WORD

from the Director

Beginning tomorrow evening May 23rd through Monday evening May 25th, we will celebrate the holiday of Shavuos, which commemorates the Giving of the Torah 3322 years ago. Before the eyes of the entire Jewish people, G-d descended upon Mount Sinai and uttered the first of the Ten Commandments: "I am the L-rd your G-d Who took you out of Egypt."

Of all the things G-d could have said at this climactic moment of Divine revelation, why did He choose to remind the Jews that He had taken them out of Egypt? Wouldn't it have been more "dramatic" to refer to Himself as the Creator of heaven and earth, or something equally as "big"? Isn't the fact that G-d created the world more significant than the Exodus from Egypt?

Chasidic philosophy explains that from a certain perspective the answer is "no." The world was created (and continues to be sustained) ex nihilo, "something from nothing." To a person this is indeed miraculous, but to G-d, Who is infinite, it is "no big deal."

The Exodus, by contrast, was an even greater miracle. In order to take the Jewish people out of Egypt, G-d had to alter the natural laws He had already set in place, and to perform supernatural wonders. G-d had to expend even more power, as it were, to break through the boundaries and limitations He had already established.

We see this on a personal level as well. It is relatively easy to accustom oneself to do the right thing from the beginning, but much harder to alter negative habits that are already ingrained.

However, when G-d took our ancestors out of Egypt, He gave every Jew for all generations the ability to transcend personal limitations. This power to overcome negative behaviours and serve G-d to the fullest was rooted within us with the Giving of the Torah, and has been part of our inheritance ever since.

As we celebrate Shavuos, let us accept the Torah anew with an active consciousness of the Giver of the Torah, realizing that the Torah is the purpose of the entire creation. In this manner, we will bring peace and tranquillity to each individual Jew and to the world at large.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED

Once...

Early Wednesday morning the first day of Shavuos 5520 (1760), with Rabbi Dov Ber and other disciples at this side, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov passed away in Mezhibush at the age of sixty-one years, eight months and eighteen days.

The succession to the seat of the Baal Shem Tov posed a problem. The master had not designated a successor in his will. Each of the disciples had his own sphere in which he excelled, but the situation called for someone with over-all qualifications.

There was but one revelation relating to the succession, albeit secret and private. In the last summer of his life, in the year 5559 (1759), the Baal Shem Tov wrote to his intimate disciple Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polnoy to inform him.

"...in utmost secrecy...that my place shall be filled by my saintly disciple, the Prince of Torah, Rabbi Ber but this is to remain hidden and concealed..."

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov referred here to a matter of fact, i.e., that ultimately Rabbi Dov Ber would be his successor. It was not a will or an order, but private information conveyed in trust to Rabbi Jacob Joseph and not to be revealed to others. The succession had to be resolved by itself in order to preserve the structure and propagation of Chassidism.

The disciples appointed Rabbi Tzvi, the only son of the Baal Shem Tov, to succeed his father even while assigning certain organizational tasks unto different members of their group. This appointment was as much a temporary compromise as an act of piety and posthumous respect to the great master. Rabbi Tzvi was an interim leader only. His leadership was not a reign but a regency. In spite of his personal merits, Rabbi Tzvi was not the right man. He did not have the personality and qualifications required for that taxing office in those crucial times when the very life of the movement hung in the balance. Moreover, he could not possibly overlook the strict advice of his father who two years earlier cautioned him "for G-d's sake, Heaven forefend that you should occupy yourself with Rabbanut (leadership); pursue but business and therein you shall thrive and succeed. Remember, just remember, how I told you already that ever since that bitter day on which I was revealed I have cried daily over my bitter lot. If I had not been pressed from Heaven..."

Rabbi Tzvi's term in office lasted for one year. For on Shavuos 5521 (1761) the Baal Shem Tov's senior disciples gathered in Mezhibush to observe together the first anniversary of their master's passing.

On the second day of the festival Rabbi Tzvi sat as usual at the head of the table and delivered a Torah-discourse. Immediately upon concluding he rose and said:

"Today my father appeared to me and informed me that the Shechinah and Heavenly assembly that used to be with him 'have gone over this day to Rabbi Dov Ber; therefore my son, transfer to him the leadership in the presence of the Chevraya Kadisha (Holy Society). Let him sit in my place at the head of the table and you, my son, sit in his place."

Rabbi Tzvi then removed his white robe, the robe which had belonged to his father and symbolized the office of leadership, and he placed it upon the shoulders of Rabbi Dov Ber while wishing him success in his new task.

A later Chassidic sage, Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber of Lubavitch, made the following comment: "To act as Rabbi Tzvi did, one truly needs extraordinary strength; for we find various Tannaim and Amoraim who did not wish to accept a high office, but once they accepted..."

The Maggid ascended to the head of the table and while his colleagues around him stood to listen he delivered his first discourse as head of the Chassidic movement. It was an exegesis on the cryptic verse "And their appearance and their work was as though it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel." (Ezekiel I:16)

A Chassidic tradition has it that eight months before his passing, on Hoshana Rabbah 5520, Rabbi Israel foretold a group of his disciples that he would not survive that year and consequently they should seek a new master for themselves. That particular group, still young apprentices, suggested the name of a certain saint and the Baal Shem Tov advised them: "Go to him and test him. Ask him to show you the way to rid yourselves of pride. If he will suggest to you a way to do so, know that he is not the right man; but if he will exclaim "may G-d help" then attach yourselves to him..."

In this context, it is told that some disciples approached the Maggid with the question 'how does one break the trait of pride,' and he answered them:

"The attribute of pride belongs unto the blessed Creator, as it is written 'the Eternal reigneth, he is garbed in gey'uth (majesty, excellence, but may also mean pride)'. Thus there is no way one can uproot this attribute, and as it appears within us we must battle it all the days of our lives until the last clot of earth has been thrown on the grave."

Quite understandably it was not easy for the elder disciples to simply accept and quickly adjust to the new leadership in Mezritch. After all, as we have seen, Rabbi Dov Ber was a late-comer to the court of the Baal Shem Tov. He was in contact with the master for barely eight years while others had spent many more years in close and special proximity to the Baal Shem Tov. Within a short time, however, he was able to consolidate his leadership, fully and effectively, and his fame and success spread far and wide.

At first there were some strained relationships, especially as the Maggid's reign ushered in a new period in the history of Chassidism with somewhat different ways and emphases as well as a number of significant innovations, but ultimately all, including and especially his senior colleagues, recognized and acknowledged the Maggid as the official successor and true spokesman and representative for the Chassidic movement as a whole.

[Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *The Great Maggid (Kehot)* by Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet, pp. 87-93.]

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS BAMIDBAR • EREV SHAVUOS • 4 SIVAN • 22 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:57 PM
	MINCHA:	5:05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:35 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:48 AM
	MINCHA:	4:55 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5:56 PM
	CANDLE LIGHTING FOR YOM TOV:	after 5:56 PM
	YOM TOV MAARIV:	5:55 PM
	TKUN LEIL SHAVUOS:	from 9:45 PM
	ALOS HASHACHAR:	5:58 PM
	LECTURES THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT	

SUNDAY 24 MAY, SHAVUOS DAY 1:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	ASERES HADIBROIS:	approx 11:00 AM
	SECOND KRIAH:	1:00 PM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	YOM TOV MAARIV:	5:50 PM
	CANDLE LIGHTING:	after 5:55 PM

MONDAY 25 MAY, SHAVUOS DAY 2:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	YIZKOR:	11:30 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	YOM TOV ENDS/MAARIV:	5:56 PM

WEEKDAYS:	TUES-FRI: SHACHARIS::	8:00 AM
		9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	MAARIV:	5:50 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 22-25MAY 2015

BEGINS	22nd	23rd	24th	ENDS	25th
	4:57	5:56	5:55	MELBOURNE	5:56
	4:59	5:57	5:56	ADELAIDE	5:56
	4:46	5:41	5:41	BRISBANE	5:40
	6:10	7:02	7:01	DARWIN	7:01
	4:44	5:39	5:38	GOLD COAST	5:38
	5:06	6:03	6:02	PERTH	6:02
	4:41	5:38	5:38	SYDNEY	5:37
	4:46	5:44	5:43	CANBERRA	5:43
	4:39	5:41	5:40	LAUNCESTON	5:40
	5:00	5:59	5:58	AUCKLAND	5:58
	4:49	5:51	5:50	WELLINGTON	5:49
	4:34	5:37	5:37	HOBART	5:36
	4:42	5:37	5:36	BYRON BAY	5:36
	6:49	7:39	7:40	SINGAPORE	7:40



Light candles on 23 & 24 May after the time given, and only from a pre-existing flame