

LAMPLIGHTER

9 Tammuz
Parshas
Chukas
1197
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

"This is the law when a man dies in a tent," we read in this week's Torah portion, Chukas. "Everyone who comes into the tent...and every open [earthen] vessel on which there is not a closely fitting cover, is [spiritually] unclean." Moreover, whatever substance was within the open vessel is also rendered spiritually unclean.

However, as explained by Maimonides, if a person happened to be in the tent of the deceased "in a sealed barrel with a 'closely fitting cover,'" he remained spiritually pure and unaffected.

Every aspect of Torah provides us with a practical lesson to be applied in our daily lives. To the Jew, spiritual life and death are defined by his connection to G-d, as the Torah states, "And you who cleave unto G-d are all alive this day." Conversely, any weakening in our service of G-d or defect in that connection constitutes the Jew's spiritual death, G-d forbid.

Nonetheless, no matter how connected to G-d the individual Jew may be, he still exists within the context of the material world, defined as "a world in which the wicked are ascendant."

Therefore, no matter how "alive" the Jew is in absolute terms, the world around him is unclean; the Jew is always "in the tent of the deceased."

This is especially true during the exile, when darkness covers the face of the earth, in contradistinction to the times of the Holy Temple, when G-d's Presence in the world was openly perceived, thus enabling Jews to perform mitzvot with vitality and enthusiasm.

What can a Jew do to protect himself from negative influences during these last few minutes of exile? How can we guard ourselves against the spiritual uncleanliness that surrounds us "in the tent of the deceased"?

The answer lies in the above-mentioned ruling, on the principle that properly sealing an earthen vessel protects its contents from spiritual impurity.

In terms of our service of G-d, the Jew must strive for the humility and self-nullification symbolized by the earthen vessel, which is composed of the dust of the earth.

Our Patriarch Abraham epitomized this quality when he declared, "I am but dust and ashes"; similarly, we recite during the High Holidays, "Man, whose basic element is dust...is likened to a shard of clay."

Every Jew is obligated, therefore, to fit himself with "a closely fitting cover" - to guard every opening and channel that connects him with the outside world in order to filter out the bad influences from the good. Doing so will protect him from spiritual uncleanliness and ensure that his connection to G-d remains healthy and intact.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. 23

Where There's a Will There's a Why

By Yossy Goldman

Why do certain people find satisfaction in Judaism while others are bored stiff? Why is faith exciting for some and irrelevant for others, a joy for one guy and an absolute burden for the next? One fellow cannot imagine going to work without first putting on his *tefillin* and the other hasn't seen his *tefillin* since his bar mitzvah 40 years ago. This woman can't wait to get to *shul* and the other can't wait to get out. Why?

This week we read about the ultimate mitzvah of faith, the Red Heifer. It is a statutory commandment whose reason still remains a mystery. I must admit, to take the ashes of a red heifer and sprinkle them on a person so he may attain spiritual purification is, indeed, rather mind-boggling.

According to the Midrash, the Almighty promised Moses that to him He would reveal the secret meaning of this mitzvah, but only after Moses would initially accept it as a Divine decree. If he would first take it on faith, thereafter rational understanding would follow.

The truth is that there are answers to virtually every question people may have about Judaism. Intelligent sceptics I meet are often amazed that what they had long written off as empty ritual is actually philosophically profound, with rich symbolic meaning. But the sceptic has to be ready to listen. You can hear the most eloquent, intellectual explanation but if you are not mentally prepared to accept that listening may in fact be a worthwhile exercise, chances are you won't be impressed. Once we stop resisting and accept that there is inherent validity, suddenly Judaism makes all the sense in the world.

It is a psychological fact that we can grasp that which we sincerely desire to understand. But if there is a subject in which we have no interest, we will walk into mental blockades regularly. The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, says this explains why some very astute businessman may sit at a Talmud class and find himself struggling to grasp basic principles of rabbinic reasoning. Why is it that the same person who can concoct brilliant schemes in the boardroom fails to follow straightforward logic in the Talmud class? The answer, says the Rebbe, is that this businessman is really not that interested in the subject. But if it was half as important to him as making money, he might well become a rosh yeshiva!

So, in the same way that G-d told Moses that he could come to comprehend the meaning of the Red Heifer but only after he accepted it, similarly today, those who genuinely wish to understand Judaism will succeed, but only if they buy into the product on some level first.

When I was studying in yeshiva, I would always try to attend the annual "Encounter with Chabad" weekends for university students. These were organized to expose Jewish students to Judaism over a Shabbat and there were lectures by leading Rabbis and religious academics. Once a young man shouted back at the lecturer, "How can you expect me to put on *tefillin* if I don't believe in G-d?!" The speaker calmly replied, "First put on *tefillin*, and I promise you will see that you really do believe in G-d."

We all have a G-dly faith inside us. It just needs to be revealed. As illogical as it may sound, if we start by observing a mitzvah, we find that our faith will follow through and begin to blossom. It has been shown to be true again and again. If we are not interested, no answer will be good enough. If we are genuinely searching for truth and we are objective, there are ample and meaningful answers.

Slice of LIFE

Michele 'Weiss' (Weiss is a fictitious name) was Jewish, but it meant nothing to him; it was no more important than having red hair or blue eyes. He was a Frenchman through and through. In fact he was a community man, a politician- so involved in making connections and rising in politics that he didn't even have time to get married.

His work took him all over the world meeting people and making important agreements, but one encounter that he had in New York changed his life.

One Friday he was walking down some tremendously busy Manhattan avenue when strains of Jewish clarinet music faintly wafted over the honking car horns from a distance.

As he walked, the music became closer and louder until he saw a large van parked half on the sidewalk with a loudspeaker on it and a few bearded people milling around in front of it.

"They must have some sort of special permit to park there" he thought to himself, "I wonder who they are".

He approached and saw young Chassidim busy in various activities. Some were talking to passers-by while others were wrapping some sort of straps on people's arms. He became even more curious.

Before he could say anything one of the Chassidim turned to him and called, "Excuse me sir, are you Jewish?"

"Jewish?" he replied "Juif?" Why, yes I suppose I am. That is, I am from France but....."

"Your mother is Jewish?" The Chassid asked. Michel came closer and shook his head yes. "Well then, you're Jewish! Mazal Tov! Here, you can put on Tefillin!!"

The young man held out a small black box with a black leather strap dangling from it.

Michel had never seen 'Tefillin' in his life and had no idea what this fellow was talking about but it seemed to be something religious. He was an assimilated Frenchman; liberty, fraternity and equality were in his bones and not religion! Indeed, it was somewhat abhorrent to him.

"What is this? Religion?" he looked at the Chassid as though he was being offered a dead cat.

"No," the Chassid answered, "It's Judaism."

Michel waved his finger and shook his head 'no' and turned to go when the young man

made some clever remark and skilfully called him back to talk.

Michel relaxed and responded; he loved people and in no time he was conversing and joking with the Chassid as though they were best friends. But when he mentioned that the reason for his visit was politics the young man lit up.

"Aha! Politics!? Why didn't you say so?! Why, if you want to meet politicians you have to go to the Lubavitcher Rebbe! ALL the politicians are by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Sunday?" (In fact this was a trick. True, there were many politicians that visited the Rebbe but usually they were in no mood for socializing.)

"Lubavitch Rebbe?" Michel repeated. "All the politicians? Why have I never heard of this? Are you sure?"

He was interested. The young man convinced him to give his hotel address and telephone number, they shook hands and parted and, on the surface of things, it looked like that both of them would forget the whole thing.

But early Sunday morning Michel's phone rang; his Chassidic friend was waiting downstairs to take him to the Rebbe. "Rebbe?" asked Michel groggily still half asleep.

"Yes," The Chassid replied, "Remember? The politicians at the Lubavitcher Rebbe?"

"Ahh, yes, yes!"

"Well, I'm waiting here with a taxi."

An hour later Michel was standing with his Chassidic friend in the middle of a long, moving line of people winding down the street before a large, stately, red-bricked building in the Crown Heights district of Brooklyn; 770 Eastern Parkway, the Rebbe's headquarters. People were arriving constantly behind them and about an hour later they were standing before the Rebbe at the head of a huge line.

The young Chassid introduced him; "This is Michel, he is a politician in France."

Michel was surprised and impressed. He came to meet politicians but he was beginning to realize that something very big was happening.

"What is your Jewish name?" The Rebbe asked him.

"Jewish name? Why, Michel." He replied simply.

"No, the name given you at your Bris" (circumcision).

"Ahh, yes" Michel replied "My family name is Weiss".

"No" replied the Rebbe. "You must call France and ask your mother what is your Jewish first name. Then please come back here and tell me."

He handed Michel a dollar, told him to give it to charity and moments later Michel and friend were outside trying to digest what happened.

He was a bit confused. He had never met anyone like this Rebbe before. He turned to the young Chassid and asked "That was very impressive. But where are the politicians you promised?"

The young man thought fast, "Here everything goes according to your Hebrew name. Without that we can't begin."

"Ahhh yes!" Said Michel. He returned to the hotel and called home.

"Jewish name?" His mother answered "Where are you, Michel? Is everything all right? Are you in trouble? Are you sick?"

He assured his mother there was nothing wrong and she told him to call his aunt Paulette who is religious (the only one in the family that occasionally fasted on Yom Kippur) who might know.

With this new information, Michel called his Aunt, got the name and early the next morning rushed back to the Rebbe's headquarters. He found his Chassid friend, told him the good news and they stood outside the Rebbe's door waiting for him to come out for the Afternoon prayer to give him the report.

After a short wait the Rebbe's door opened and he immediately noticed Michel who stepped forward and said in a half-whisper, "Rebbe, my Jewish name is Menachem Mendel."

The Rebbe smiled and said. "Menachem Mendel, you should be a good Jew and live according to the Shulchan Aruch (Jewish book of law)" and continued walking.

Michel later said that at that moment he suddenly transformed into a different person.

"Up to that moment I was only concerned with myself and my career. That was what drove me and what I lived for. But after the Rebbe said those few words I began to think ... 'How can I help Jews? How can I improve the world?'"

(Incidentally, the young Chassid who brought him made a getaway before Michel could ask him where were the politicians he promised.)

Michel truly became a new man. When he returned to France he contacted the Chabad house and began learning Judaism. Shortly thereafter he married a Jewish girl and even took on a few of the commandments... miracle after miracle.

And from then on he became the address for helping Jews in need and distress. Often at the cost of much time, energy and money a few times even at the risk of his precious career.

He became alive.

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ISSUE 1197

MOSHIACH MATTERS

When the pre-marriage contract was written for Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev's niece, he told them to write: "The wedding will take place, G-d willing, with good mazal, in the holy city of Jerusalem. And if, G-d forbid, Moshiach has not arrived by then, the wedding will take place in Berditchev."



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

14th of Sivan, 5724 [1964]

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter of May 21st, in which you write about your background and some highlights of your life.

In reply, I will address myself at once to the essential point in your letter, namely your attitude towards religious observance, as you describe in your letter, and especially to the particular Mitzvah [commandment] which is most essential for a happy married life, namely Taharas Hamishpocho [the Laws of Family Purity]. You write that you do not understand the importance of this Mitzvah, etc. This is not surprising, as is clear from the analogy of a small child being unable to understand a professor who is advanced in knowledge. Bear in mind that the condition between the small child and the advanced professor is only a difference in degree and not in kind, inasmuch as the child may, in due course, not only attain the same level of the professor, but even surpass him.

It is quite otherwise in the difference between a created being, be he the wisest person on earth, and the Creator Himself. How can we, humans, expect to understand the infinite wisdom of the Creator? It is only because of G-d's great kindness that He has revealed certain reasons with regard to certain Mitzvoth, that we can get some sort of a glimpse or insight into them. It is quite clear that G-d has given us the various commandments for our own sake and not in order to benefit Him. It is therefore clear what the sensible attitude towards the Mitzvoth should be. If this is so with regard to any Mitzvah, how much more so with regard to the said Mitzvah of Taharas Hamishpocho, which has a direct bearing not only on the mutual happiness of the husband and wife, but also on the well-being and happiness of their offspring, their children and children's children.

It is equally clear that parents are always anxious to do everything possible for their children, even if there is only a very small chance that their efforts would materialize, and even if these efforts entail considerable difficulties. How much more so in this case where the benefit to be derived is very great and lasting, while the sacrifice is negligible by comparison. Even where the difficulties are not entirely imaginary, it is certain that they become less and less with actual observance of the Mitzvah, so that they eventually disappear altogether.

Needless to say I am aware of the "argument" that there are many non-observant married couples, yet seemingly happy, etc. The answer is simple. First of all, it is well known that G-d is very merciful and patient, and waits for the erring sinner to return to Him in sincere repentance. Secondly, appearances are deceptive, and one can never know what the true facts are about somebody else's life, especially as certain things relating to children and other personal matters are, for obvious reasons, kept in strict confidence.....

Continued in the next issue

CUSTOMS CORNER

Are there special blessings that we will recite when Moshiach comes?

According to many opinions there are five blessings that will be applicable when Moshiach comes. They all begin: "Baruch Ata Ado-nai Elo-heinu Melech Ha'olam - Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the World..." They continue, "Ga'al Yisrael - Who redeems Israel," "Shehecheyanu v'kiyimanu v'higiyanu lizman hazeh - Who has kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this time," "Shechalak m'chachmato l'rei'av - Who has given wisdom to those who fear Him," "Shechalak m'kivodo l'rei'av - Who has given honour to those who fear Him," "Chacham Harazim - the Wise One of secrets."

A WORD

from the Director

The 12th day of Tammuz (29 July) marks both the birthday of the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, and his liberation from Soviet prison and exile.

When the Bolshevik revolution succeeded in overthrowing the Czarist regime in 1917, it set about destroying religion. Judaism, and particularly Chabad, was a prime target. The Previous Rebbe devoted himself to keeping the flame of Judaism alive in the early days of Communist Russia.

So powerful was the Previous Rebbe's impact that at one point he was even offered a deal by the Communist government! He would be allowed to continue to support rabbis, ritual slaughterers, etc., and even continue to encourage Jews to attend prayer services on one condition: He had to stop educating the children in the ways of the Torah.

To the Previous Rebbe this was unacceptable, and he refused, saying, "If there are no kid goats, there will be no adult goats..." Without the proper Jewish education for our children, we as a nation cannot survive. And even when the Previous Rebbe reached the shores of America, he continued to strengthen Jewish life by establishing schools here as well.

The Previous Rebbe showed great courage and determination when it came to preserving the Jewish way of life through Jewish education. He stood up to both Communist oppression and to those in America who told him that it couldn't be done, that yeshivot couldn't thrive in this modern new world. His legacy, and schools worldwide, has outlived Soviet Communism and at the same time continues to prove that those who doubted him were wrong.

The Previous Rebbe was a living example of his teachings. His strength and courage were not for his own personal needs, but for the spiritual needs of the entire Jewish people.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

It was a typical autumn day in 1906 when Rabbi Yedidya Horodner walked into the "Tiferet Yisrael" synagogue in the Old City of Jerusalem with a big smile on his face. With a grand flourish he placed a bottle of whiskey and some cake on the table, and invited everyone to make a "L'Chaim."

The congregants wondered what the cause for celebration might be. A rumour had been circulating that the day before; Rabbi Horodner had gone to all the local yeshivas and distributed candy to the children. Something good had obviously occurred, and they waited expectantly to hear what it was.

Indeed, after everyone had made a blessing on the cake and lifted a few glasses, the Rabbi filled them in:

The whole story revolved around the Rabbi's nephew, a 15-year-old boy named Shmuel Rosen who was originally from Riga. His father, Rabbi Ozer Rosen, had sent the lad to his uncle when he was only eight years old, in the belief that there was no better place in the world to develop the boy's intellectual talents than the holy city of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Horodner raised little Shmuel as if he was his own son, and the boy flourished. He was a delightful child, and exceptionally devoted to his studies.

A few weeks earlier, however, disaster had struck. After experiencing deteriorating vision for several months, Shmuel was now completely blind. The total darkness had set in as he was sitting and poring over a volume of the Talmud.

The boy's spirit was completely broken. For days and nights he wept over his fate, most bitterly over his inability to study Torah by himself. Suffering from a profound sadness, he withdrew and rarely ventured from his room.

His uncle felt helpless, until it occurred to him that a change of place might do the boy good. He contacted his friend, Reb Shimon Hoizman of Hebron, who agreed to let the boy stay in his house. Shmuel felt a little better in Hebron, but remained very depressed.

At that time the Jewish community of Hebron was headed by two Torah giants: the Sefardic Rabbi Chizkiyahu Medini (author of Sdei Chemed), and the Chasidic Rabbi Shimon Menashe Chaikin, the chief Ashkenazic authority in the city. Every evening at midnight, the two Rabbis would go to the Cave of Machpeila, the resting place of the Jewish Patriarchs and Matriarchs, to recite Tikun Chatzot (a special prayer lamenting the destruction of the Holy Temple).

Reb Shimon Hoizman was very affected by the boy's suffering. But what could he do to help? Then one evening, he came up with a plan...

About a half hour before midnight Reb Shimon went into Shmuel's room. "Wake up, son," he whispered to him softly. "Get dressed and follow me." The two went off into the night, in the direction of Rabbi Chaikin's courtyard.

A few minutes later the two rabbis could be seen approaching, on their way to the Cave of Machpeila. As soon as they reached the spot where Reb Shimon and Shmuel were standing, Reb Shimon disappeared and left Shmuel by himself. The two rabbis quickly realized that Shmuel was blind. With gentleness they asked him how he had become sightless.

When the young man got up to the part about how he had become totally blind while studying, Rabbi Medini asked if he remembered the last words he had been able to see. "Of course I remember!" Shmuel responded. "They were

in the Talmud, Tractate Chulin, on the first side of page 36: 'On whom can we count? Come, let us rely on the words of Rabbi Shimon [Bar Yochai]'"

The two rabbis became very excited. "If that is the case," they said almost simultaneously, "then you can certainly rely on the holy Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai to help you. Go to his grave in Meron, ask for his blessing, and G-d will surely heal you."

The next morning Shmuel returned to Jerusalem, and the very same day he and his uncle set off for Meron. It was a difficult journey, but after several days they arrived safely. Even before they approached the holy gravesite they were filled with a feeling of confidence. For days they remained at the grave of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, praying steadily to G-d for a miraculous recovery.

The miracle occurred exactly one week later. Rabbi Horodner was reading aloud from the Talmud when all of sudden Shmuel let out a shadow. "Uncle! I can see your shadow!"

Over the course of the next few days, Shmuel's vision improved steadily, until 13 days later it was restored completely. Still camped out at the holy gravesite, uncle and nephew broke out into a spontaneous dance, as they sang the verses that are traditionally sung on the anniversary of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's passing:

"His teachings are our protection; they are the light of our eyes. He is our advocate for good, Rabban Shimon Bar Yochai."

Thoughts THAT COUNT

This is the statute of the Torah... and they shall take to you a red heifer (Num. 19:2)

In speaking of the laws of the red heifer, the Torah states, "This is the statute of the Torah," not just the statute of the red heifer. The red heifer has the power to purify one who was defiled, yet those who partake in the preparation of the red heifer become defiled. The verse is teaching us one of the basic lessons of the Torah, that we are obligated to help our fellow Jew, even if it requires sacrifice. (*The Rebbe*)

And Miriam died there and she was buried there (Num. 20:1)

It is significant to mention both facts, that Miriam died and she was buried. During the forty years that the Jews wandered in the desert as a punishment for speaking ill of the Land of Israel, every year those people who were between the ages of twenty and sixty at the time of the exodus would dig graves for themselves and went to sleep in them. Those who were meant to die did, and those who did not die returned to their tents. Therefore, Miriam was the only person at that time that died before she was buried. (*Sh'nei Ham'rot*)

G-d said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, therefore you will not bring this congregation into the land I have given them." (Num. 20:12)

Aaron was punished, as well. For, Moses hit the rock twice and Aaron should have stopped him after the first time, telling him that the commandment was to speak to the rock and not to strike it. (*Shaar Bat Rabim*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 26 JUNE 2015

BEGINS	ENDS
4.51MELBOURNE	5.53
4.55ADELAIDE	5.54
4.45BRISBANE	5.41
6.13DARWIN	7.05
4.42GOLD COAST	5.38
5.03PERTH	6.01
4.37SYDNEY	5.36
4.41CANBERRA	5.41
4.32LAUNCESTON	5.36
4.55AUCKLAND	5.56
4.41WELLINGTON	5.46
4.26HOBART	5.32
4.40BYRON BAY	5.36
6.55SINGAPORE	7.47



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS CHUKAS • 9 TAMMUZ • 26 JUNE

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4.51 PM
	MINCHA:	4.55 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.25 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.59 AM
	MINCHA:	4.50 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5.53 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SUN-FRI:	
	SHACHARIS:	8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	MAARIV:	5.45 PM / 9.00 PM