

LAMPLIGHTER

1 Av
Parshas
Matos - Massei
1200
17 July
5775/2015

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week we read two Torah portions, Matos and Massei. As we read in Matos, when the Jewish people returned from the war with Midian with their spoils, Moses commanded them to purify themselves from their ritual uncleanness (caused by contact with the dead) by being sprinkled with water containing ashes of the red heifer. Afterwards, Eleazar the kohen (priest) enumerated the various laws of how to render the Midianites' non-kosher vessels kosher.

Why was it Eleazar who taught these laws rather than Moses? As Rashi explains, "Since Moses came under the influence of anger, he came under the influence of mistaken judgment, and the laws of cleansing vessels which had belonged to heathens were concealed from him." As related a few verses previously, Moses had become angry when he saw the Midianite women the Jews brought back with them.

Technically, Moses did not render "mistaken judgment," which would imply that he had stated the laws incorrectly. However, his failure to teach these laws stemmed from a different kind of "mistake":

Moses had assumed that the ashes of the red heifer could render the non-kosher vessels kosher. If a few drops of the "water of sprinkling" could remove the greatest impurity of them all, contact with the dead, surely it had the power to kasher utensils.

That is why Eleazar prefaced his words with the declaration, "This is the statute of the Torah." The fact that the ashes of the red heifer can remove ritual impurity is a statute, a super-rational law that only applies to that specific type of uncleanness, and cannot render impure vessels pure. For even after a vessel's impurity has been removed by the "water of sprinkling," the forbidden foods that were absorbed into it must be purged.

Removing uncleanness and making something kosher are two separate things: To remove spiritual uncleanness, a few drops of water are sufficient. But to render a vessel kosher, a more fundamental type of purging is necessary, according to the particular manner in which the utensil was used.

Symbolically, purity is an "encompassing" G-dly influence that surrounds a person from without. For that reason, is it relatively simple to purify oneself: immersion in a mikva, or being sprinkled with the "water of sprinkling." By contrast, the process of making something kosher implies an inner and essential cleansing to remove embedded evil.

Moses, who viewed the Jewish people from "on high," believed that external purification would automatically purify the "inside" as well. Eleazar, by contrast, whose function as a kohen was to elevate the Jewish people from below, held that externals weren't enough. For it is through "kashering" the various powers of the soul, each one individually, that a Jew achieves true purification and becomes a proper "vessel" for holiness.

Adapted from Vol. 8 of Likutei Sichot

Balancing the Spiritual and the Practical

By Tali Loewenthal

A constant theme in Jewish teaching is the interface between spirituality and life, between idealistic dreams and harsh reality. The clash between these two dimensions, and the attempt to find a resolution of the problem, is expressed in an incident in the Torah reading of Matot (Numbers 30:2-32:42).

After forty years wandering in the desert, the Jewish people were camped on the eastern bank of the Jordan. Soon they will cross the Jordan and conquer the Land of Israel. Now a group of two tribes (Reuben and Gad) approached Moses and made a request. "We have flocks of sheep," they said. "The area where we are on the east of the Jordan is good sheep country. Let us stay here instead of crossing the Jordan."

Moses' reaction was extreme concern. He saw this as a replay of the argument with the spies some forty years previously, when the people claimed that it would be better not to enter the Land. The request to remain east of the Jordan seemed similar. However, after a discussion with the two tribes, Moses agreed. As long as they helped the rest of the Jewish people to conquer the area west of the Jordan, everything would be fine.

What is happening here? What are the real issues?

Chassidic commentaries explain that the generation of the spies did not want to enter the Land, because they preferred the spirituality of the desert. There they could feel close to G-d. They did not have to work for their livelihood: the manna from heaven and the water from the rock supplied their physical needs. Going into the Land would mean ploughing and reaping, and all the humdrum activities of daily life. So they preferred to remain in the desert. This overbalancing in favour of the purely spiritual was condemned by G-d.

When the tribes of Reuben and Gad asked to be able to stay on the east bank of the Jordan where they could graze their sheep, it seemed to be the same kind of claim. The sages tell us the reason why many of our ancestors (including the Patriarchs and the sons of Jacob) were sheep farmers is because this activity enabled them to maintain a spiritual frame of mind, far from the hurly-burly of the city.

At first Moses was upset by this request. It was another case of rejection of the reality of life. Yet then he came to terms with it. Why?

The generation of the spies wanted the entire Jewish people to remain in a spiritual world. By contrast, the two tribes were a minority. Further, they agreed that they would cross the Jordan in order to help the rest of the Jewish people conquer the Land. This means they accepted that their spirituality was for the benefit of others. Moses was then able to approve their plan.

In our own time, there are people who are primarily active in the world of commerce and the professions, while there are others who devote themselves to the spiritual dimension of life, and studying Torah is their prime activity. The presence of these two groups, those active in the practical world and the scholars, is a time-honoured feature of the Jewish community. (In general society, too, there are many full-time academic scholars.)

Sometimes the question is raised whether the Torah scholar is, in some sense, "escaping" from the real world. The lesson of the Parshah is that if the scholars see that their true purpose is fulfilled by helping others, by communicating Torah knowledge and inspiration to them, then they are not escapist at all. Instead they are helping to combine the spiritual and the practical, to make the reality of this world into a true dwelling for the divine.

Slice of LIFE

It was miserable luck, two weeks before the banquet and here she was in the hospital with a swollen foot. Mrs. Chana Lillian Cohen had been hired by the Chabad Yeshiva in Boston to organize their annual fundraising dinner, these last weeks were crucial and here she was lying flat on her back. She had no choice, she couldn't give up. Her only alternative was to make the hospital room into as much of an office as possible and try to get the job done. 'Maybe it was all for the best' she tried in vain to convince herself.

Late the next night when she was busily typing away by the light of her bed lamp a voice boomed out from behind her. "What are you doing at this hour of the night Mrs. Cohen? You should be resting up. What are you typing there?" It was none other than the head of the department.

She began explaining but just as she got started and said she was working for Lubavitch, the Doctor's face lit up. "Lubavitch!? Why, I know the Lubavitcher Rebbe personally! I was there! In fact I have an amazing story about him. I mean, it didn't make me a religious Jew or anything, but it changed my mind about a lot of things. I used to think that Judaism was a bunch of superstition and stale stories. Am I disturbing? I see you are awake anyway would you like to hear it?"

Mrs. Cohen happily turned off her laptop and listened.

"Some thirty years ago when I graduated University I enlisted in the Army medical corps and served for four years. A few years after my discharge, I had a private practice then, I got a phone call from the Army asking for help. It seems that on the army base on the island of Guam in the Philippines, hundreds of soldiers had been hospitalized in the course of the last few months with severe intestinal inflammations and cramps and no one could figure out why.

"I asked my mother for advice and she agreed that I should accept the offer but with an addition of her own. She made me promise that I would travel through Brooklyn on the way to Guam and see the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"I had to travel through New York for no more than a stopover, which would mean I had to make a special trip from the airport. And combined with the fact that I had absolutely no patience for Judaism I tried to refuse... but it was to no avail.

"It seems that my mother, who owned a successful clothing store, had been sending monthly donations to this Rebbe and now she figured that it was paying off; her son would finally get some religion.

"Well, despite my protestations she made all sorts of phone calls and several hours later announced that the next night I had an appointment with this Rebbe. And just to make sure I wouldn't back out she gave me an envelope with some money in it and told me to be sure to hand it to him in person.

"The next night at four thirty A.M. I entered the Rebbe's office. It was a fairly small room, walls lined with books and simply furnished. The Rebbe smiled and looked at me in a way I'll never forget, as though he recognized something deep inside of me and paid no attention to my mother's envelope when I put it on his desk. He only asked me what I am doing.

"When I explained my special medical mission in the Philippines he suddenly became very serious, thought deeply for a few seconds, lifted his phone and asked the party on the other side (it was one of his secretaries) to bring him a detailed map of the Philippines. About fifteen minutes later the map was spread on his table and he was making all sorts of lines on it with the help of a ruler and a small pamphlet from the American Naval Academy that he produced from somewhere. I was familiar with that booklet it contained tide charts and other nautical information throughout the entire world but he seemed to be more familiar than I.

"When he finished he turned the map around to me and said, 'This is what you can do to help. And it's not necessary to tell anyone where you got this information.

"Here', the Rebbe pointed to a certain intersection of his lines that came out near the coast of Guam and continued, 'Find this place in the sea near the shore and go there when the tide is out. According to my calculations it should be a bit before sunrise. Just as one of the waves recedes to the sea take a sample of the sand where the water was. Make an analysis of that sand and I think you will find the cause of the illness.'

"A few hours later I was in the plane, completely fatigued, on my way to Guam with the Rebbe's map in my pocket but when I arrived the next day and got to my quarters on the army base I took a shower, went to sleep and forgot the entire thing. Then, in the morning when I woke I put on a new pair of pants got to work and it was as though I never had been in Brooklyn.

"A frustrating week went by. The hospital was already full; soldiers kept getting sick by

the tens and with no solution in sight the army considered sending everyone home. Meanwhile we were working day and night with no results. We checked everything possible; the kitchen, the drinking water, the dishwashers, the air, the sand, the toothpaste even the soap until we were literally at our wit's end.

"Then, a week later I woke up one morning and suddenly remembered the Rebbe! But where was the map?! I jumped out of bed like a madman and started searching. Against all odds, in a pile of dirty clothes there were the pants! I was so happy that I actually held them up and kissed them. And there was the map neatly folded in the pocket!

"That day I went searching for the location the Rebbe indicated and when I found it I was so excited that I didn't sleep the whole night. I waited till four in the morning, returned there and sure enough, the tide was low! I did exactly as the Rebbe said. I walked to the edge of the water with a small empty container and when the waves pulled out I filled it with the sand where the water had been and returned to the laboratory.

"The interesting thing was that I still had so many doubts about the Rebbe that I was ashamed to tell the other doctors what I was doing and decided to examine the sand myself. But as soon as I took a good look I knew that that man had super-human powers. The sand was filled with small red shell fish! In an hour the entire staff was in the laboratory busy making an analysis of those fish and the results were astounding!

At this point the doctor stopped his story and, as though transported back to that moment twenty five years ago, began pacing the hospital room deep in thought. Only after a few minutes was he able to continue.

"It seems those shell-fish emitted some sort of poison! They were poisonous fish but it was impossible to know it because when the tide was in the water washed the poison away. Only at low tide, like the Rebbe said, when some of these crustaceans got caught in the dry sand could the juice be detected.

"As soon as it this became clear it didn't take long to discover that the local restaurants occasionally served these shell fish in salads to the soldiers and the mystery was solved.

"I can't understand why the Rebbe didn't want me to advertise what he had done and I don't know where he gets his powers but one thing for sure; the Rebbe saved that entire base of thousands of soldiers, and I know that Judaism is much deeper than I ever imagined."

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ISSUE 1200

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The shofar foreshadows the jubilant proclamation of freedom, when Israel's exiled and homeless are to return to the Holy Land. It calls us to believe in Israel's deliverance at all times and under all circumstances.

(Ninth of the ten reasons that Rav Saadia Gaon gives for the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashana)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

25 Adar, 5721 [1961]

I received your letter which is an acknowledgment of my letter. I was pleased to read in it about your shiurim [study classes], and I hope that you make additional efforts from time to time in accordance with the precept of our Sages that all things of holiness should be on the upgrade.

Generally speaking, all the questions which you mentioned have already been answered in our sacred books, and those who continue to argue about them do so mostly either because of ignorance or mischief. Some people simply fear that if they accepted the Torah and mitzvot (commandments) fully, they would be obliged to commit themselves in their daily life and conduct, and give up certain pleasures, and the like. Therefore, they try to justify their misguided views by futile arguments.

By way of example, I will take one question which you mention in your letter, and which apparently was impressed upon you as something complicated, but in reality the matter was discussed and solved very simply in our sacred literature. I refer to the question of how can man have freedom of choice of action if G-d already knows beforehand what he is going to do? The answer to this is simple enough as can be seen on the basis of two illustrations:

1. Suppose there is a human being who can foretell the future of what is going to happen to a person. This does not mean that this knowledge deprives that person from acting freely as before. It only means that the knowledge of the forecaster is such that it is the knowledge of how the person will choose freely and of his own volition. Similarly, G-d's knowledge of human actions is such that it does not deprive humans from the free choice of action, but it only means that G-d knows how the person will choose to act in a certain situation. To formulate this in scientific terms, we can say that the opposite of free choice is not pre-knowledge, but compulsion, for there is such knowledge which does not entail compulsion (as for example, knowledge of the past).
2. Every believer in G-d, and not Jews only, believes that with G-d the past, present and future are all the same, since He is above time and space. Just as in the case of human affairs, the fact that Mr. X knows all that happened to Mr. Y in the past, this knowledge did not affect Mr. Y's actions in the past, so G-d's knowledge of the future, which is the same as His knowledge of the past, does not affect the free choice of human action.

From the simple solution to the above question, you can draw an analogy in regard to all similar questions and be sure that there is an answer to them, and very often a simple one. But the proper Jewish way is to fulfill the Torah and mitzvot without question, and then to try and find out anything that one wishes to find out about the Torah and mitzvot, but not, G-d forbid, make human understanding a condition of performance of G-d's commandments.

With blessings,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Why must dishes and utensils used for food be immersed in a mikvah?

Before dishes and utensils can be used in the kosher kitchen they must acquire an additional measure of holiness which is conferred through the ritual immersion in a mikvah. Even if a dish, pot, etc. was never used and is therefore "kosher," it must still be immersed.

A WORD

from the Director

There are two approaches to the present period of the three weeks between the Seventeenth of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av, the period which commemorates the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Holy Temple.

One approach is to dwell on the awesomeness of those tragedies and the difficulties suffered by our people in the exile which followed.

The other approach, while not minimizing the extent of our nation's loss, puts the emphasis on the purpose of the exile. Heaven forbid to say that destruction and exile are ends in and of themselves. Rather, within the ashes of the Temple's destruction was kindled the spark of the Future Redemption.

In an ultimate sense, this was the purpose of the exile - to prepare the Jewish people and the world at large for the higher and deeper level of fulfillment to be reached in that era.

Our Sages declared, "All the appointed times for Moshiach's coming have passed; the matter is only dependent on Teshuva (repentance)."

When speaking of the readiness of our generation, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe used the allegory of a garment that is complete in all respects - "and all that is needed now is to polish the buttons."

May we soon see the era in which these three weeks will be transformed from mourning into the celebration of the Redemption.

This edition of Lamplighter is Issue 1200, marking over 23 years of continuous weekly publication.

Over the years, Lamplighter has grown from a circulation of a few hundred to its current distribution of thousands throughout Australia and New Zealand, with thousands more reading its on-line version including in Jewish communities in Asia and around the world. Together with the Chabad House of Caulfield, I look forward to continuing to bring this weekly touch of Torah Judaism to you, and thank you for your many letters of support and encouragement over the years.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Shortly after the Spanish Inquisition, a Spanish Jew named Joseph Jospa arrived in Krakow. He was a great scholar and a Tzadik (righteous person), and was greatly respected by the Jews of Krakow, who called him the Spanish Tzadik. Being 50 years of age and unmarried, he lived by himself.

Thirty years went by in this manner until a tragic event changed this. A young businessman from Krakow was killed during a business trip to Prague, leaving a widow with no children. The businessman's brother performed a Chalitzah ceremony [Under the Biblical system of levirate marriage known as Yibbum, Chalitzah is the process by which a widow and her husband's brother would avoid the duty to marry after the husband's death] in the Rabbinical Court of Krakow. It was the custom of Krakow in those days for the Chalitzah ceremony to be a community event, after which the rabbi of the Rabbinical Court would bless the woman that she should soon marry and have children. Then the Shamash [sexton] would announce that if any man present wished to marry the woman, he should present himself to the Court.

No one responded on that particular occasion, but about five months later, Joseph Jospa, the Spanish Tzadik, came to the Court and announced that he wished to marry the widow, if she would agree. He explained that he had not intended to get married, but now, for certain reasons which he did not wish to reveal, he wished to marry despite his advanced years.

The Court then sent for the widow. Immediately upon arriving in the Court, even before she had a chance to ask why she was summoned, she burst into tears.

"Why are you crying?" they asked her.

"I have a terrible secret weighing me down, but I can't make up my mind whether to tell you about it," she replied.

She said she had been having a recurrent dream in which her father, who passed away many years before, appeared to her and asked her to do something. She could not decide whether to listen to him. She was worried and asked the Court for advice.

The rabbis of the Court told her that it would be best if she would tell them what the dream was. She said that in her first dream, her father appeared to her dressed in his Shabbos clothes, put his hands over her head, blessed her and said, "And now I wish you mazel tov, for it has been decreed that you marry the Spanish Tzadik, Joseph Jospa."

She had awoken from this dream trembling violently, but put it out of her mind. She had the dream again, but again did not take it seriously. Then her father appeared to her looking very serious and told her to that there was no way out of it, as it had been decided in the Heavenly Court. She must speak to someone to arrange the marriage. If she listened to him, he continued, she would be blessed with a son. But if she refused she would come to a bitter end.

Three more times she had the dream, and she finally decided to go to the Court about it. She had just made the decision to go, when the Shamash arrived, informing her that the Court had sent for her.

When she finished her story, the rabbis of the Court looked at each other in amazement and told the woman that Joseph Jospa had come to them and told them that he wanted to marry her. She now had no doubt that it was G-d's will that she marry the Tzadik, and the marriage was arranged. The wedding was a great celebration for the whole community. Everyone in Krakow felt that this was no ordinary wedding, but that it held an inner significance beyond their comprehension.

In the second year of their marriage, they were blessed with a son, whom

Joseph Jospa named Elijah, after Elijah the Prophet. When Elijah was two, Joseph Jospa taught him Torah until he was of bar mitzva age, and he studied diligently.

About two weeks before Elijah's bar mitzva, Joseph Jospa told his wife that he felt that he was about to pass away. He told her that after their son's bar mitzva, Elijah would tell her that he wants to go out into the world. She should not discourage him from doing this, because he had been sent down to this world to fulfill a special mission. He told her that when her first husband had been killed, Joseph Jospa had received a Divine command to marry the widow, for a son of very high stature would be born to them who would have a special mission to fulfill for the Jewish people, to help them and uplift them. Elijah the Prophet had been studying with their son Elijah to prepare him for this mission. He was to be the first in a long chain of tzadikim leading up to the coming of Moshiach.

After concluding these instructions, Joseph Jospa passed away. A few weeks after Elijah's bar mitzva, he told his mother that he wanted to go out into the world. Having been prepared for this, she did not object. She gave him her blessing and he left. Forty years later, in the year 5350 (1590) he appeared in the city of Worms, Germany and became known as a miracle worker and a healer. He also established a yeshiva there where he taught Kabbalah, particularly the Zohar, in addition to the Talmud. He was the famous Rabbi Elijah Baal Shem.

Rabbi Elijah Baal Shem was indeed the first in the long chain leading up to the revelation of Moshiach. Rabbi Elijah was the first of four Baal Shem's. He was succeeded by his disciple, Rabbi Yoel Baal Shem, then by Rabbi Adam Baal Shem, who was succeeded by his disciple, Rabbi Yisrael, the famous Baal Shem Tov.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes, "...If a man takes a vow to G-d... according to whatever comes from his mouth shall he do." (Num. 30:2-3)

Moshe taught the commandments first to the heads of the tribes and then to the rest of the Jewish people. This is emphasized in the laws of the vows, because one who runs for office very often makes promises in order to be elected. Moshe warned the heads of the tribes that promises and pledges that were made were to be kept. (*Chatam Sofer*)

Moses said to the children of Gad and the children of Reuben, "Shall your brothers go out to battle while you settle here?" (Num. 32:6)

The tribes of Reuben and Gad wanted to stay in the land east of the Jordan River. Even though the Jewish people are dispersed all over the world, we are emotionally connected, and when a Jew experiences misfortune, Jews all over the world feel compassion. Therefore, Moses asked the tribes of Reuben and Gad, "Can you sit here calmly and enjoy your land when you know that your fellow Jews are engaged in battle?" (*Sha'ar Bat Rabim*)

These are the journeys of the Children of Israel, who went forth from the land of Egypt according to their legions, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron (Num. 33:1)

The first two words of the verse begin with the Hebrew letters "alef" and "mem". Those two letters stand for the two people who redeem the Jews from each exile. The redemption from Egypt was due to Aaron and Moses. The Jews were saved during the Babylonian exile by Esther and Mordechai, and the ultimate redemption will come through Elijah and Moshiach. (*Pardes Yosef Hachadash*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 17 JULY 2015



BEGINS		ENDS
5.03	MELBOURNE	6.04
5.05	ADELAIDE	6.04
4.53	BRISBANE	5.49
6.19	DARWIN	7.10
4.51	GOLD COAST	5.46
5.13	PERTH	6.10
4.47	SYDNEY	5.45
4.52	CANBERRA	5.51
4.44	LAUNCESTON	5.48
5.05	AUCKLAND	6.06
4.54	WELLINGTON	5.57
4.39	HOBART	5.44
4.48	BYRON BAY	5.45
6.58	SINGAPORE	7.49

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS MATOS - MASSEI • 1 AV • 17 JULY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5.03 PM
	MINCHA:	5.10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.40 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.58 AM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6.04 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SUN-FRI:	
	SHACHARIS:	8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	5.10 PM
	MAARIV:	6.00 PM / 9.00 PM