

LAMPLIGHTER

15 Av
Parshas Va'eschanan
Shabbos Nachamu
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Eikev, talks of the desert in which the Jews wandered before entering the Land of Israel. It is described as: "The great, terrifying desert, where there were snakes, vipers, scorpions and thirst. Where there was no water..."

The great desert symbolizes our long galut (exile). A desert, uninhabited by man, is symbolic of the Jewish people in relation to the other nations of the world. The uninhabited areas of the globe far outnumber the portions which are populated, in the same way that the nations of the world far outnumber the Jews. Furthermore, within the Jewish nation itself, those who observe the Torah and mitzvot are also vastly outnumbered by those who do not yet observe.

The Torah warns us that the very consideration that the outside world is "great" is the first step in causing our spiritual exile. Thinking that because we are outnumbered means that other nations have power over us creates the possibility that these non-Jewish influences can enter our lives.

The next spiritual step down is alluded to in the word "terrifying." This is the fear that the non-Jewish world will find out that we keep the Torah. This thinking causes a Jew to measure his behaviour according to non-Jewish standards and increases the power of the galut over the Jewish soul.

The next level down is that of "snake." A snake's "hot poison" alludes to the heat and enthusiasm which a Jew can have for things which are really foreign to his essence. When a person's excitement is reserved solely for physical pleasures, his enthusiasm for the spiritual is decreased.

From here, the next jump down is to the level of "vipers"--saraf--which in Hebrew comes from the word "to burn." This is the level on which a person's whole interest toward the satisfaction of his physical desires is so great that it completely overshadows any attraction to G-dliness.

But even worse than this is the level of "scorpion." A scorpion's sting is cold, symbolizing total coldness and indifference to holiness. Heat and excitement, even if directed toward things which are unworthy, can eventually be redirected into enthusiasm for holiness. But when a person is cold to everything, it is much more difficult to inspire him.

The lowest level belongs to the "thirst, where there was no water." G-d, in His kindness, sometimes causes a Jew to be thirsty for holiness and Judaism, but if one is very far from Torah (called "water" by our Sages), he may not recognize what he is thirsting for. This is the lowest level of our exile.

The antidote to the progression of spiritual degradation is the avoidance of the first pitfall, that of considering the world to have unnecessary significance. By having the proper mindset we will merit the Final Redemption.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Never Ending Voice

By Yossy Goldman

When the Ten Commandments are repeated in the Torah as part of Moses' review of the Israelites' 40 years in the wilderness, Moses describes how G-d spoke those words in *"a mighty voice that did not end"* (Deuteronomy 5:19). One of the explanations offered by Rashi is that Moses is contrasting G-d's voice with human voices. The finite voice of a human being, even a Pavarotti, will fade and falter. It cannot go on forever. But the voice of the Almighty did not end, did not weaken. It remained strong throughout.

Is this all the great prophet had to teach us about the voice of G-d? That it was a powerful baritone? That it resonated? Is the greatness of the Infinite One that he didn't suffer from shortness of breath, that He didn't need a few puffs of Ventolin? Is this a meaningful motivation for the Jews to accept the Torah?

Moses was the greatest of all prophets. He foresaw what no other prophet could see. Perhaps he saw his people becoming caught up in the civilization of ancient Greece, in the beauty, culture, philosophy and art of the day. And they might question, is Torah still relevant?

Perhaps he foresaw Jews empowered by the Industrial Revolution, where they might have thought Torah to be somewhat backward. Or, maybe it was during the Russian Revolution that faith and religion were positively primitive.

Perhaps Moses saw our own generation with its satellites and space shuttles, television and technology. And he saw young people questioning whether Torah still speaks to them.

And so Moses tells us that the voice that thundered from Sinai was no ordinary voice. The voice that proclaimed the Ten Commandments was a voice that was not only powerful at the time, but one that "did not end." It still rings out, it still resonates, it still speaks to each of us in every generation and in every part of the world.

Revolutions may come and go but revelation is eternal. The voice of Sinai continues to proclaim eternal truths that never become passé or irrelevant. *Honour Your Parents* revere them; look after them in their old age instead of abandoning them to some decrepit old age home. *Live moral lives*; do not tamper with the sacred fibre of family life, be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Dedicate one day every week and *keep that day holy*. Turn your back on the rat race and rediscover your humanity and your children. *Don't be guilty of greed, envy, dishonesty or corruption.*

Are these ideas and values dated? Are these commandments tired, stale or irrelevant? On the contrary. They speak to us now as perhaps never before. The G-dly voice has lost none of its strength, none of its majesty. The mortal voice of man declines and fades into oblivion. Politicians and spin-doctors come and go, but the heavenly sound reverberates down the ages.

Torah is truth and truth is forever. The voice of G-d shall never be stilled.

Slice of LIFE

Yehuda Finerman was young and strong when he entered Auschwitz with his parents and siblings. But four years later when he got out he was broken in body and spirit and....totally alone.

After a few months in recuperation camp and a few years wandering from job to job he decided to move to Israel, purported to be the haven for 'survivors', and volunteer in a Kibbutz.

That is where he met Jerry Simon. Jerry had just finished a stint in the U.S. Army where he had encountered subtle and no-so-subtle forms of anti-Semitism. He thought that the U.S.A. was the land of equality and the army was battling bigotry and evil; but he got a rude awakening when he met soldiers and civilians that hated Jews more than they hated the Nazis.

So he figured that Israel would be his city of refuge from anti-Semitism. There he could achieve the Zionist dream of being a human being like everyone else and forgetting that he was a Jew. But even here he couldn't escape it.

In the Kibbutz he and Yehuda became working partners but they didn't really get to know each other; there was not too much time for talking or even thinking. They worked till they were hungry and tired, then slept till they were ready to work again the next morning. All he knew about Yehuda was that he had been through the death camps and that he was a really good guy; their friendship was natural and they didn't have to say much to understand each other.

But one hot summer day when they were toiling side by side under the blazing sun Jerry couldn't help but notice the numbers tattooed on his friend's bared forearm that ended in ---7416. "Hey!!" He gasped "That's my number!"

What's the matter, Jerry?" Yehuda asked.

"I...I'm sorry" Jerry stammered "I'm not trying to be nosy or anything, but I couldn't help but notice the numbers on your forearm. I mean, what struck me is that those numbers----seven, four, one, six---just happen to be the last four digits of my American social security number! I had to use it a lot filling out papers in the army and when I was applying for work afterwards so it really rang a bell. Sorry for blurting out like that."

"That's what you're so excited about?" Yehuda almost scoffed. "It's just a meaningless coincidence."

But Jerry couldn't stop thinking about it and a few hours later in the lunch break he turned to his friend and said, "Look Yehuda, I mean, if you don't want to talk about it it's okay, but, well, I don't really know what happened there in the concentration camps. I mean I've heard terrible things, saw some photos but... is it all true? What did they do to the Jews there? I mean, why did they tattoo you? Like, did EVERYONE have a number? Did they ever call you by your name?"

Yehuda looked at Jerry thoughtfully and said almost to himself. "I never talked about it but maybe I should. Maybe you're right. Maybe it's a mistake to keep it in. Maybe it's good that everyone knows. All right my friend. I'll tell you exactly what happened."

For the next hour, Yehuda told his story. How all the Jews in town were rounded up by the Nazis and how no one dreamed that they were going to be murdered; certainly not by the Germans who were so just and proper! Everyone did as told, even the Rabbi. "They put us in cattle cars, hundreds packed in each car, and then we got out and stood on line at selection---my brother, my sisters, my parents, and I--- it was like yesterday. And we were branded with these numbers, in numerical order. But it was a sort of trick so we all figured we would live, why else would they brand us? But afterwards we didn't have names. Only numbers. The line was huge. Then our turn came. First my parents, then my brothers and sisters, I was next to last, followed by my brother. We were split up everyone to the left, but me. I never saw any of them again. I was the only one who survived. I asked around after the war and someone told me they were dead!"

Jerry was silent. What could he possibly say in the face of such suffering? Now he understood why survivors were loath to recount their stories. Their nightmare was truly unutterable, unspeakable. But still, the story had to be told...didn't it? But he never brought up the subject again.

Twenty years later, Jerry had long left the kibbutz, got married, had a family and was working in the Jerusalem area as a tour guide for wealthy Americans who wanted to be personally chaperoned in a comfortable limousine. He still kept occasional contact with Yehuda who had since married and settled down elsewhere in Israel.

Most of Jerry's clients were kind and amiable and he generally enjoyed his job. But he had all types, including some real freaks. For instance, one day he picked up a middle-aged American at the airport whose behaviour was monstrous! He was an obnoxious control freak that continually shouted conflicting orders from the back of the car and then curses even if they were carried out exactly as he said.

Jerry clenched his teeth and made an almost superhuman effort to remain polite. But finally, just when he couldn't take it anymore and let out a groan of frustration, the man inexplicably shouted: "Pull over to the side of the road!"

"What?" Jerry asked, thinking that perhaps his passenger either wanted to fire him or was having some sort of attack and needed help.

"I said, pull over!" was the gruff reply. At the first opportunity Jerry pulled his stretch limousine to the side of the road and turned around to see what he wanted.

"Look," said the man to Jerry, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, "I guess I got a little out of control. I mean, you probably don't like me very much do you?"

Jerry was silent.

"I know sometimes I get out of control. Sometimes even I can't quite believe some of the things I say and do. I'm sorry, I apologize. Okay? So I apologize. I guess you're a Jew just like me, right? It's just that... I'm so alone in the world. I've endured a lot. I'm going crazy. There are nights I think I just won't make it through...."

And then he broke down and cried.

"You think I'm an arrogant, wealthy American businessman," he gained some composure and said. "What I really am," he undid a cufflink and rolled up his shirtsleeve "is a Holocaust survivor." He held up his arm to show Jerry the numbers. 7...4...1...7.

"I lost my whole family in the concentration camp, everyone was killed except for me; mother, father, brothers sisters. I have no one in the world! Even G-d left me."

Jerry stared at the American in shock and whispered, "My dear friend, you are wrong. I know where number seven-four-one-six is! It's your brother. We worked together in a Kibbutz. He's very much alive...and I happen to know exactly where he can be found."

That very day was a reunion and a new beginning for at least two people that shook the heavens.

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ISSUE 1202

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Each month, the fullness of the moon reflects a state of completion in the fundamental service connected with that month. In regard to the present month, its very name Menachem Av, points to a connection with Moshiach, who will be named Menachem, "the comforter." Similarly, our Sages describe Tisha B'Av as the day on which Moshiach was born, i.e., the day on which his spiritual source is endowed with additional power. Thus the Fifteenth of Av is a time when the potential for redemption reaches a state of completeness. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 16Av, 5751-1991)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Continued from previous issue, a letter dated 15 Tammuz, 5723 [1963] to the Annual Convention of the Rabbinical Alliance of America

It is incumbent to exert every effort so that each and every Jewish child should study in an all-day Yeshiva or when this is not feasible, that every Jewish child should attend a Hebrew all-day school. But although this is the aim, we must recognize the fact that far too many Jewish children do not study Torah all day or do they even attend Hebrew all-day schools. A vast number attend public schools and to these children we must also turn our attention for we must not despair nor may we neglect them. The circumstances requires that a supreme effort be made to preserve the spark of Jewishness in each child so that it will not be extinguished, G-d forbid. At the very least, these children should recite a "proper prayer" each day so that the "name of G-d will be fluent on their lips."

It goes without saying that this is not the ultimate objective, for as stated above, the ideal situation would be for all and every Jewish child to study in a Yeshiva. But since this is not yet achieved, we must not make light of having the children in the public schools at least recite a proper prayer. While the performance of the Mitzvah [commandment] of "proper prayer" is only a minimum, it must not be disregarded. Especially as there are some people who are waging a battle against the mere mention of G-d's name in the public schools and thus, regardless of their intentions, creating an appalling Chillul Hashem [desecration of G-d's name].

It is superfluous to emphasize again and again that what is referred to here, is a nondenominational prayer. And to insure that the nondenominational aspect is heeded in all the schools. Bible-reading in Public schools should be ruled out to prevent introduction of religious subjects non acceptable to many.

The following precedent established by the saintly Baal Shem Tov will serve to discard the wrong stand of some misguided people, as well as those who oppose the mention of G-d's name in the public schools, supposedly, in deference to the Shulchan Aruch!

One of the Baal Shem Tov's "holy tasks" was to use every opportunity to cause people, men, women and children, to bless G-d's name. He would ask them how they are, so that they would reply: "Thank G-d", etc. My father-in-law of sainted memory, emphasized that the Baal Shem Tov would do so not only in the synagogue and at home, but also in the street and stores, and places of work; at every time and every place....

May you achieve success in your endeavors to enhance the position of Torah and Mitzvos in the daily life, each in your community. And in matters of holiness there is always room for improvement, for their source is the Infinite, blessed be He.

May the Almighty grant that you act with the fitting warmth and inner joy in the conviction that you are in the service of G-d, and may others learn from you and follow your example.

With esteem and blessing for abundant success,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Brachot of the Shema

Along with the Shema one says seven Brachot of praise are said as follows: by Shacharit, two Brachot prior to Shema and one after Shema, and by Arvit, two Brachot before Shema and two after Shema. If one only knows the Brachot or only has a Siddur with the Brachot and not Shema, one should still say the Brachot because not saying Shema doesn't prevent one from fulfilling the mitzvah of the Brachot. However, if one knows at least the verse of "Shema Yisrael" one should say it with the Brachot.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming Wednesday (August 5) is the 20th of the Hebrew month of Av. This date is the Yartzheit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the saintly father of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

In a letter that Reb Levi Yitzchak wrote to his son, he emphasized the concept of faith in every little "dot and crown" of our G-d-given Torah, whereby each detail complements and perfects the others:

"Do not imagine that the process of argument and debate as engaged in by the Sages of the Mishnah and Talmud and those who followed... falls into the category of regular human intellectual pursuit. No, it is not that at all... Rather, each of the Sages perceived the Torah's wisdom as it exists Above, according to the source of his soul and his individual portion in Torah, whether in Jewish law or Aggada.

"There is absolutely no doubt that everything in both the Oral and Written Torah, and in all the holy books written by the sages and tzadikim (righteous people), who studied Torah for its own sake... everything was said by G-d Himself, in that particular and exact wording."

Reb Levi Yitzchak's spoken words were not ephemeral sounds; his written words were not mere ink on paper. The understanding that every dot and crown of Torah are true and holy were his blood and bones. He lived with the realization of the importance of every aspect of Torah and had utter self-sacrifice for the compliance to Torah's every detail and nuance.

May we learn from his teachings and example and may his memory be a blessing for us.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Rabbi Meir (the 'Maharam') of Rotenberg was born in Worms, in the year 1215. In his early teens he was already recognized as one of the foremost Talmudic experts of his time. He became a holy genius, a prolific writer and a beacon of light to all the great Rabbis of his age who turned to him for advice and enlightenment.

His name spread throughout the Jewish world and it wasn't long before he opened a Torah academy of his own in the city of Rotenberg. He drew hundreds, even thousands of pupils of his own and was considered the Chief Rabbi of all France and Germany. But then tragedy struck.

When he was already an old man, another wave of European Anti-Semitism suddenly erupted and spontaneous 'pogroms' were everywhere. Jewish blood flowed like water, absolutely no Jew was safe and eventually Rabbi Meir was forced to flee for his life.

According to some opinions he was on his way to Israel when it happened, but in any case he was recognized, captured and handed over to none other than Kaiser Rudolf. He had the Maharam imprisoned and, certain that the Jews would pay all they had in order to save their leader, demanded an exorbitant ransom.

But when the Maharam heard what was happening he put a stop to it. He told the Jews to save their money; paying the money would be going against Jewish law as it would only encourage more kidnappings.

So for six years he sat in prison learning Torah by heart non-stop until his passing at the age of Seventy Eight. The Kaiser actually refused to allow his remains to be buried until seven years later when a wealthy Jew gave all he had, and the Maharam was finally put to rest.

But one story that is little known is that of the Maharam's Torah scroll.

As we mentioned, the Maharam was able to occupy his time by repeating and contemplating the thousands of pages of Torah that were etched in his infallible memory.

But one thing that gave him untold agony was that he did not have a Torah scroll to read from on the Sabbaths and holidays. The thought literally obsessed him: Tefillin and the other commandments had been smuggled to him but there was no way to get him a Sefer Torah.

Then, one Thursday night after two years of imprisonment, he drowsed off while in the middle of his learning and suddenly saw what appeared to be an angel, awesome in appearance, holding what seemed to be...a large, radiant Torah Scroll.

The Maharam didn't know if it was a dream or reality - until the angel spoke, "I am the Angel Gavriel. Your prayers have been heard in heaven, here is your Torah.

"It is known that Moses, before he departed this world, wrote thirteen Sefer Torahs. Twelve were distributed to each of the twelve Tribes and this is the Thirteenth."

The Maharam could not believe his ears. The Angel held out the Torah and continued.

"It is read each Shabbat in Heaven by the Tzadikim in the Heavenly Court. But, as you know, there is nothing that can compare with commandments done by humans in this world. So it will be given to you and all of the Tzadikim will come to listen whenever you read it."

Suddenly the Maharam awoke and saw...the Holy Torah Scroll before him!!

It was truly a miracle! The imprisoned Rabbi's heart filled with indescribable happiness and he joyously kept his side of the bargain. Every Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and Holiday he would sanctify himself and read aloud from this Holy Scroll, and each time the room would fill brilliant spiritual light as though thousands of radiant souls had come to listen. On regular days he would also occasionally study this Torah and each time wondrous new ideas and connections

would fill his mind from the sentences he read.

This continued for some two years until one day it occurred to him to make a copy for posterity that could be, in turn, copied from.

His pupils managed to smuggle in to him parchment, quills and ink and after a year it was finished! And after checking it several times he found it to be a perfect replica.

But that very evening he dreamt that another angel came and took the Torah Scroll back! Startled, he opened his eyes only to discover to his horror that it was true. "Woe to me!" he moaned "Perhaps I shouldn't have made that copy! Perhaps I am being punished."

But a voice interrupted his thoughts and announced that his copy was perfect, was a good idea and that it would serve as a basis for many future copies of the Torah.

When the Maharam felt that his end was approaching, he personally made a wooden box, tarred it inside and out to make it waterproof, put the Torah inside and lowered it from the window of his high prison cell into the Rhine River that flowed far below.

Sure enough the box floated for several weeks unnoticed until it was cited by gentile fisherman off the shore of Worms. But try as they could they could not lay their hands or even their nets upon it until finally they allowed some Jewish fishermen to try. No sooner did the Jews approach the box then it floated toward them and they hauled it into their boat.

After many other strange and miraculous events they finally were able to bring the box to the Synagogue in Worms, and when it was opened they found inscribed on the inside of one of its walls:

"This Scroll was written by the hand of Meir as a gift to the congregation of Worms. The Scroll is holy and pure and should not be read from except for twice a year: on Shavuot, the holiday of the giving of the Torah and on Simchat Torah, the holiday of the finishing of the Torah."

Despite the many tragedies and catastrophes that befell the community of Worms in the centuries to come, they always sacrificed themselves to save the Scroll and amazingly it still exists - the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe testified that he saw it.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor shall you diminish from it (Deut. 4:2)

The Torah is a life-giving elixir, a Divine "prescription" for purity and holiness. It is therefore forbidden to add or detract from the Torah's commandments in the same way one mustn't tamper with the proportions of a medicinal compound. Too much or too little of any one element can be extremely detrimental, and the "doctor's" instructions must be followed exactly. (*Rabbi Yehonatan Eibeshutz*)

And they will say, "Surely a wise and understanding people is this great nation" (Deut. 4:6)

In a different verse (Deut. 7:7) the Torah calls the Jewish people "the fewest of all the nations." How, then, can they also be "great?" In number, the Jews are a very small people. But by accepting their role of keeping the Torah's mitzvot they become qualitatively great, enjoying an elevated status in society and wielding great influence in all areas of life. (*Netef Tzufim*)

And you shall teach them to your children..." (Deut. 6:7)

It is an absolute duty for every person to spend a half hour every day thinking about the Torah-education of children, and to do everything in his power - and beyond his power - to inspire children to follow the path along which they are being guided. (*Hayom Yom*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 31 JULY 2015



BEGINS	ENDS
5.13MELBOURNE	6.13
5.14ADELAIDE	6.13
5.00BRISBANE	5.55
6.22DARWIN	7.13
4.58GOLD COAST	5.53
5.21PERTH	6.18
4.56SYDNEY	5.54
5.02CANBERRA	6.00
4.56LAUNCESTON	5.59
5.16AUCKLAND	6.15
5.06WELLINGTON	6.08
4.52HOBART	5.56
4.56BYRON BAY	5.51
6.58SINGAPORE	7.48

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VA'ESCHANAN • SHABBOS NACHAMU • 15 AV • 31 JULY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5.13 PM
	MINCHA:	5.20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.50 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.53 AM
	MINCHA:	5.10 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6.13 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	
	SUN-FRI:	8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	5.20 PM
	MAARIV:	6.00 PM / 9.00 PM