

LAMPLIGHTER

22 Kislev
Parshas
Vayeishev
1220
4 December
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

At first glance, this week's Torah portion, Vayeishev, chronicles the circumstances leading to Joseph's appointment as second in command over Egypt, subordinate only to Pharaoh. Yet, upon examination, we find that Joseph's story is synonymous with the history of the Jews.

Joseph, the pride of his father, at the age of 17 is suddenly plucked from his secure environment, family, and his country. Sold into slavery and finding himself in a foreign land, he must now cope with the most adverse circumstances. Joseph is not to blame, for all this has come about through no action of his own.

A lesser individual would have surely succumbed to bitterness, depression or indifference. But Joseph realized that he must deal with the reality which presented itself. As the servant of Potifar, he fulfilled his duties to the best of his ability. It soon became apparent even to Potifar that it was in Joseph's merit that his household enjoyed its material blessings.

This, then, is the task of every Jew: No matter how adverse the circumstances, each Jew must live up to his full potential and fulfill his duties to the best of his ability.

But how was Joseph repaid for his loyalty? He was thrown into prison! Why? Because he refused to betray his master by succumbing to the advances of the master's wife. Not only didn't Joseph's honesty and integrity bring him any positive benefits, these very qualities caused him to be incarcerated. Was Joseph discouraged? Did he reject his lifestyle and renounce his high standards? Joseph's response to adversity was to continue in the same path, acting honestly and in good faith. Eventually his behaviour and virtue drew the attention of his jailers.

This is the history of the Jew as well: No matter how depraved and corrupt his surroundings, he remains undeterred from his faith in G-d and His Torah.

When Joseph noticed that two of his fellow inmates, Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, were distressed for some reason, he rushed to their aid, without thought of rejoicing at their misfortune or of taking revenge for the role they played in his downfall. Joseph could not bear to see people in need, and so he immediately offered his assistance. He was able to bring them relief by interpreting their respective dreams.

In return, Joseph did not ask for monetary payment or special treatment. He merely requested that the chief butler mention his name to Pharaoh when he was freed, which he didn't do. In his unbending faith in the goodness of man and in ultimate justice, Joseph believed that fairness would prevail if only Pharaoh was presented with the facts.

This theme has been played out time and again in Jewish history. Joseph learned the hard way that this world is full of lies and deception. Yet when he later found himself in a position of almost unlimited power, he refused to exact revenge on those who had harmed him. This is not the way of the Jew. Joseph faithfully used his office to steer the Egyptians and the whole world from potential catastrophe during the years of famine, enacting, for the first time, the historic role the Jews have played during their exile among the nations.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Staying on the Swing

By Tali Loewenthal

Most children thrill to go on a swing. It is challenging to start off from the still position and slowly build up momentum. Gradually, the swing goes higher and higher. Watching the child swinging reveals an interesting point: in order to get really high on the upswing, one must develop a really strong downswing. After reaching the lowest point, at which there is the greatest momentum and energy, one swings up aloft to the highest point.

It is one of the ironies of life that in order to swing to the greatest height, it is necessary to plunge to the lowest point. It seems to be almost a law of nature that there is often a "descent" in order to "rise" - a negative situation before the positive. In the Torah this principle is illustrated by the chain of events which begin in this week's Torah reading: the descent of Joseph into Egypt and his subsequent rise to greatness.

In a tragic example of a breakdown of brotherly relationships, Joseph was sold as a slave into Egypt. For thirteen years he suffered slavery, imprisonment and derision, but eventually ended up as the viceroy of all Egypt. From this position he was able to save his family and thousands of others from starvation during the terrible years of famine.

This pattern is the key to the twin concepts of exile and redemption. The divine promise of redemption depicts an exalted state of being and consciousness for all humanity. However, somehow, in order to achieve this, there must also be the "down" swing: the bitterness and darkness of exile.

Our problem is that, sometimes, a particularly unfortunate accident happens. For example, as the swing comes to its lowest point, the person's foot might catch on something, and he or she is thrown out of their seat. In other words, the exile can suddenly become so difficult that many people lose hope. After the Holocaust, there was widespread despair about the future of Judaism, especially as regards traditional observance and knowledge. Miraculously, despite these fears, there has been a wonderful rejuvenation of Jewish scholarship and traditional life. Jewish knowledge and Jewish observance, in Israel and elsewhere, has moved into a happy, joyful upward swing.

In the life of an individual or of a community, there can be comparable jarring events which threaten to shake the person from his or her seat. Gradually, one comes to terms with the new situation, and makes a step forward. The challenge is to keep sitting firmly on the swing, holding on tight as it goes through what seems like the lowest point, with faith in G-d that soon it will reach the exalted heights.

The Chanukah festival, which is always read in proximity of this week's Torah reading, also expresses this pattern. The Jewish people had reached the depths of assimilation to Greek culture and idolatry. This process began as something voluntary among wealthy Jews, and then became enforced by government decree on everyone. The sacred Temple was defiled, and Jewish study and observance were banned.

It was the lowest point on the swing. Then, in a miraculous way, the Maccabees gathered together, defeated the Syrian-Greek troops, and restored the Temple. When they lit the golden menorah, although they had only one day's supply of oil, miraculously it stayed alight for eight days, heralding a nationwide return to Judaism. Thus again the swing soared upwards.

Whatever happens, hold on tight!

Slice of LIFE

Rabbi Avraham Hershberg, until his passing, was the chief Rabbi of Mexico. Before the holocaust he was one of the most successful pupils in Yeshiva (Torah Academy) Chachme Lublin in Poland and just as the war began he miraculously escaped from Europe to the U.S.

In America his talents didn't go unnoticed and soon after he arrived he was offered a job as Rabbi of an orthodox community in Chicago but he said he would only accept if there was a Yeshiva there where he could teach Torah.

But there was no such Yeshiva in Chicago at the time and it didn't look as though there ever would be. So he asked around and was told that the only one who could break the spiritual ice of America was Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, the sixth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch.

Rabbi Hershberg travelled to Brooklyn, told the Rebbe his problem and after a short pause the Rebbe declared "There will be a Yeshiva in Chicago!"

The next day ten young Chassidim travelled to Chicago, established a Yeshiva and Rabbi Hershberg had a job and a Yeshiva where he could teach Torah as well.

In 1950 Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak passed away and his son-in-law Rebbe Menachem Mendel, became the seventh Rebbe of Chabad. Rabbi Hershberg's connection to the new Rebbe was no less than to his predecessor. So when he got an offer to be the Chief Rebbe of Mexico he asked for the Rebbe's blessing and afterwards was always consulting the Rebbe for blessings and advice.

Especially when he got an offer to visit hostages in Iran.

In 1979 the secular, pro-American regime of Iran was overthrown by a radical Islam government led by Ayatollah Khomeini. In the chaos that followed, Iranian students took over the American embassy and held the fifty five staff-members as hostages there for almost a year and a half.

How is this connected to Rabbi Hershberg? Well it seems that even before the Islamic Revolution he had been very involved in a massive secret program directed by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to smuggle thousands of Jewish children out of Persia and give them Jewish educations in America and Israel.

So when the Red Cross got permission from the Iranian government to send a group of clergymen to visit the embassy hostages, the Rebbe used his influence to get Rabbi Hershberg included in the group.

Preparations were made and just before they left, Rabbi Hershberg visited the Rebbe to ask for a blessing. He was afraid. Iran wasn't exactly a safe place for foreigners, especially Jewish ones and he and his wife were worried that he might not return! But the Rebbe calmed him down. He told him there was nothing to worry about and blessed him with success. But he reminded him to be sure to light Chanukah candles.

Being that it was over two months before Chanukah, Rabbi Hershberg was a bit puzzled. But he began to understand when the trip was pushed off for sixty days.

They would arrive a day before Chanukah!

If it hadn't been for the Rebbe's admonition he probably would have lit his Menorah in his hotel room every night. But now, the first thing he did when they arrived was ask permission to light a Chanukah Menora in the besieged embassy. He figured that surely there was at least one Jew there.

Amazingly permission was readily granted and even more amazing when they were face to face with the hostages and it didn't seem there was even one Jew there, when he took out his menorah suddenly six of them stepped forward and announced that they were Jewish!

If he hadn't brought in that Menorah many of them might have never revealed their Judaism, perhaps not even to themselves!

These poor Jews had been hostages for a long time and the tension and uncertainty had definitely taking its toll. They looked tired and miserable. But as soon as the first candle was lit the faint yellow light spread over their faces and for the first time since their captivity, they actually sang and danced!

But that was just the beginning.

The next day Khomeini invited all these clergymen to participate in a massive public prayer with an attendance of almost one million people!

Rabbi Hershberg relates, "We were standing on a platform with Khomeini and other important figures and I looked out at the sea of humanity before us. Then, at one point in the prayers everyone, all one million people, all dropped to their knees and then put their heads to the ground. Everyone bowed down! That is, everyone

except for me! I simply never even considered doing it.

"Well, after the prayers two officials approached me and told me that Khomeini wants to talk to me. I thought to myself, that's it! At least I'll die for the sake of Judaism. But then remembered the Rebbe's blessing and became calm. I followed them with the greatest optimism and when I got to Khomeini a few of his servants told me that he demands an explanation as to why I didn't bow down.

"So I calmly approached him and explained in the most positive way that I could muster up that I'm a Jew and I don't understand their prayers. Therefore I am not able to bow down without knowing what they are saying and to whom they are bowing.

"Well, he was really impressed with that answer, I think he liked my simple straightforwardness and when I saw that, I asked him if I could meet with him privately at some time.

"Miracle of miracles... he agreed! The next day we met in his room and, after a short friendly conversation I asked him to please be more kind to the Jews in his kingdom and he promised to consider it.

"It was hard to believe how the Rebbe's blessing turned everything around. I don't know why Khomeini put me on that stage with him but it was a miracle! It comes out that there were either a lot of Jews in that huge crowd or the prayer had been televised but my appearance on that stage made a tremendous impression on all the Jews who saw it, and the next day I heard that thousands of Jews packed the synagogues, many for the first time in their lives!

"Not only that, but Khomeini kept his promise! That next Elul (the last month in the Jewish year) he passed an edict saying that for the entire month Jews were allowed to break the curfew and walk in the streets at 4 a.m. to their Synagogues for 'Slichot' (a series of early morning prayers said before Rosh HaShanna)."

On the plane returning home Rabbi Hershberg began to understand the greatness of the Rebbe. Not only did his blessings come miraculously true above all expectations but even more, the Rebbe demonstrated a love and care for others that was even more miraculous:

When the Rebbe told him to light the Chanukah Menora it put him in a positive state of mind that he could actually illuminate the darkness of Iran. That is what gave him the ability to speak to Khomeini with such certainty.

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ISSUE 1220

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In principle, the measure of blessing and success we receive from G-d is directly dependent on our Torah study and observance of mitzvot, as it states, "If you will go in My ways... and I will cause the rains to fall in the proper time." In other words, the spiritual light and abundance created by our service is transformed into material blessing in the physical world. At present, however, not all of this spiritual light becomes physically revealed. Only in the Messianic era will the light that is reflected below perfectly mirror its spiritual counterpart. (*Hemshech Tav-Ayin-Reish-Beit, Vol. 3*)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

B.H. 21st of Sivan, 57251
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. Velvel Greene
Minneapolis, Minn.

Sholom uBrocho:

I acknowledge with thanks receipt of your letter of May 9th, also your works on your scientific research. I appreciate your thoughtfulness and trouble in sending me the material. Although the subject matter is entirely beyond my province, I trust that I will be able to glean some general ideas from your writings, and perhaps also some specific ones.

At the risk of not sounding very "scientific" to you, I nevertheless wish to express my hope that you will apply also your research work to good advantage in the service of G-d, in accord with the principle, "Know Him in all thy ways." Indeed, the discoveries in the natural sciences have thrown new light on the wonders of Creation, and the modern trend has consequently been towards the recognition of the unity pervading Nature. In fact, with every advancement in science the underlying unity in the physical world has become more clearly discernible; so much so, that science is now searching for the ideal formula which would comprise all the phenomena of the physical world in one comprehensive equation. With a little further insight it can be seen that the unity in Nature is the reflection of true monotheism in its Jewish concept. For, as we Jews conceive of monotheism, it is not merely the belief that there is only One G-d, but that G-d's Unity transcends also the physical world, so that there is only one reality, namely G-d. However, inasmuch as Creation included all the souls, etc., there has been created a multiplicity and diversity in Nature-insofar as the created beings themselves are concerned, without, however, effecting any change in the Creator, as explained at length in Chassidus.

You ask me about my reference to the Rambam and where it contains in substance, though in different terms, the concepts of the conscience and subconsciousness of modern psychology. I had in mind a passage in Hilchos Gerushin, end of ch. 2, in the Rambam's Opus Magnum ("Yad Hachazakah"). The gist of that passage is as follows: There are certain matters in Jewish Law, the performance of which requires free volition, no coercion. However, where the Jewish law requires specific performance, it is permitted to use coercive measures until the reluctant party declares "I am willing", and his performance is valid and considered voluntary. There seems here an obvious contradiction: If it is permitted [to] compel performance, why is it necessary that the person should declare himself "willing?" And if compulsory performance is not valid, what good is it if the person declares himself "willing" under compulsion?

And here comes the essential point of the Rambam's explanation:

Every Jew, regardless of his status and station, is essentially willing to do all that he is commanded to do by our Torah. However, sometimes the Yetzer (Hara) prevails over his better judgment and prevents him from doing what he has to do in accordance with the Torah. When, therefore, Beth Din compels a Jew to do something, it is not with a view to creating in him a new desire, but rather to release him from the compulsion which had paralyzed his desire, thus enabling him to express his true self. Under these circumstances, when he declares "I am willing," it is an authentic declaration.

To put the above in contemporary terminology: The conscious state of a Jew can be affected by external factors to the extent of including states of mind and even behavior which are contrary to his subconscious, which is the Jew's essential nature. When the external pressures are removed, it does not constitute a change or transformation of his essential nature, but, on the contrary, merely the reassertion of his innate and true character.

To a person of your background it is unnecessary to point out that nothing in the above can be construed as confirmation of other aspects of the Freudian theory to the effect that man's psyche is primarily governed by libido, the sex drive, etc. For these ideas are contrary to those of the Torah, whose view is that the human being is essentially good (as in the Rambam, above). The only similarity is in the general idea that human nature is a composite of a substratum and various layers, especially insofar as the Jew is concerned, as above.

I will conclude with the traditional blessing which I have already conveyed to you-to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness, as a daily experience throughout the year.

With blessings,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Atoning for Embarrassment

In order to achieve full repentance for embarrassing someone, one must undergo a complex process of asking for forgiveness. The steps of the process include:

1. First acknowledging, then regretting one's sin.
2. Privately confessing the transgression to G-d.
3. Devoting oneself to not committing a similar transgression in the future.
4. Make amends with the person you have transgressed against.
5. Ask for absolute forgiveness from the one you offended, and from G-d.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming Sunday night, 6 December, we celebrate the first night of the joyous eight day festival of Chanukah. Chanukah is associated with Chinuch, education. This implies that, first and foremost, a person should involve himself with the education of his own children, sons and daughters, by teaching them about the holiday and training them to observe its Mitzvos.

As part of the festivities, children are given Chanukah gelt. This customarily is carried out at least twice throughout the holiday and if possible every day (needless to say, money is not given on Shabbos) and the children encouraged to think of others by giving Tzedakah, charity, to the needy.

Similarly, since Chanukah is connected with "illuminating the public thoroughfare", it is an appropriate time to devote one's self to reaching out to those Jewish children who do not receive any kind of formal Jewish education, as those students attending public schools. We must try to introduce them to a program of Jewish education, setting foundations for a fulfilling Jewish life.

These efforts should be expanded until one educates the world at large, spreading Torah and Mitzvos among Jews and the seven Mitzvos given to Noah and his descendants throughout the world, and in this way, reveal how the entire world was created for the purpose of expressing G-d's glory. This will be realized when, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover up the ocean bed" with the ultimate redemption.

*On behalf of the Chabad House of Caulfield, I wish you and your families a very happy and joyous Chanukah and look forward to your participation in our annual Chanukah In The Park, one of our community's truly great unifying events, on Sunday 6 December at **Caulfield Racecourse**. Chag Sameach!*

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

As the train chugged kilometer after kilometer, the holy Rabbi Shmuel Weinberg of Slonim, author of *Divrei Shmuel*, accompanied by a retinue of Chassidim, sat immersed in his lofty thoughts.

The train lurched to a stop at yet another station. A *poritz* - a wealthy and powerful landowner - accompanied by his young servant boarded the train. The landowner's eyes gazed over the wagon and came to rest on his choice of seat - the one beside the rabbi's attendant who sat right behind the rabbi, ready to respond to the sage's requests.

The landowner sat down, straightened his bones and turned to the rabbi's attendant, "Who is this man sitting in front of us? And why is he surrounded by so many people?"

"He's a rabbi," came the reply.

"A rabbi!" the landowner exclaimed. "I, too, am the grandson of a rabbi!"

This astonishing statement, uttered loudly to the shock of all the passengers, had reached the ears of the rabbi himself. Rabbi Weinberg turned around in his seat and lovingly addressed the landowner, "It that is so, sir, if your grandfather was a rabbi and my grandfather was a rabbi, then come sit next to me."

The Chassidim all moved aside to make room for the landowner and he proudly took his seat next to the rabbi himself.

In a kindly manner the rabbi inquired about his ancestry. The landowner considered himself a grandson of Rabbi Meir, the son of the holy rabbi of Berdichev. He was proud of his heritage, despite the fact that he lived a life far removed from those roots. A physician for Czar Nikolai, it was already forty years, he told the rabbi, since a pair of *tefillin* had passed through his hands...

"I'm reminded of an interesting story about your great-grandfather," said the Rabbi. "Would you like to hear it?"

"A story? Why not?" The landowner's interest was piqued and the rabbi began to relate the story.

Each night, Yankel would drag himself home, drunk and destitute. After sitting all day long, gambling away his every penny and drinking one glass of whiskey after another, his shaky feet would hardly agree to carry him through the twisted streets of Berdichev.

One night, he met the great tzaddik, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev. "Ah, Yankel," the rabbi said kindly, "how I envy you."

Yankel's eyes widened. "Me? You envy me? Is there anything about me to be jealous about?"

"Yes, Yankel," said the rabbi, warmly pumping his head. "Our sages say that when a person repents, his sins get turned into merits. When you will repent with all your heart and return to the ways of your fathers, then your merits will be innumerable. You will be standing on a much higher level than me..."

"Ach, Rabbi!" Yankel spat out. "If that is so, it pays to wait another year, and then the rabbi will be able to envy me a lot more, since my sins will have grown manifold..."

And so Yankel the drunkard would scornfully reject the rabbi's attempts to steer him back on the right path.

Until one day, illness struck. While Yankel lay in bed, withered and weak, his pious wife ran to the Berdichever Rebbe and with tears in her eyes, and begged him to come to her dying husband's bedside.

"Yankel," the rabbi spoke kindly to the ailing patient when he'd arrived, "you've always delayed any thoughts of change for another year. What about now?"

Yankel sighed. "There's something I want to tell you, rabbi."

He was obviously very weak, but there was determination in the eyes. "In the beginning, when I rented my little inn from the *poritz*, it was tidy and well-kept. Then, as I started drinking and squandering all my money with silly card games, I had no

time to look around at my environment. I didn't notice that the roof had caved in and the windows were broken. And so it never entered my mind to repair them.

"One winter morning, while the *poritz* was out hunting, the heavens suddenly opened and a thunderstorm erupted. My landlord, who was stranded in the forest, suddenly noticed his inn and hurriedly steered his horse in this direction, relishing its cozy and warm interior. You can imagine how enraged he became when he set his eyes on the terrible condition of the inn, entirely exposed to the elements like an open invitation for the rain.

"Of course the landlord demanded an explanation. And I, what could I say? I threw myself at his feet, 'My dear sir,' I cried bitterly. 'Did I know that it would rain like this?'"

A terrible wail escaped Yankel's throat. In a haunted voice weak from pain and anguish, he turned to the rabbi. "Those eyes, Rabbi, those furious eyes of the *poritz* keep floating before me and his words leave me without peace. They keep calling, demanding, penetrating my soul like so many swords. "Didn't you realize," he had yelled, "Didn't you think that in the end, the day would come when you'd have to answer for your neglectful behavior?"

"And as the cries of the dying man - cries of deep, heartfelt repentance - ascended to the heavens, so did his soul," the Rebbe of Slonim concluded his tale. "The Berdichever Rebbe himself testified that Yankel the drunkard had left this world with genuine repentance."

The wealthy landowner sat enveloped in a cloak of silence as he listened to the words of the rabbi. He didn't utter a word when the rabbi removed his *tefillin* from his pouch, but merely extended his arm and watched as the rabbi bound the straps around them. And when the rabbi offered him the *tefillin* as a gift, he didn't resist...

Years later, the rabbi's attendant was traveling when an elderly man approached him. "Do you remember me?" he asked.

The attendant studied the face above the flowing white beard, but couldn't quite place him. The stranger then clarified, "Do you remember, many years back, when a landowner sat next to you on a train and the rabbi invited me to sit next to him? I am that landowner whose heart Rabbi Weinberg kindled all those years ago on the seat beside him. The rabbi's *tefillin* stoked the embers into a fiery flame that illuminated the way for my return to my heritage..."

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PARSHAS VAYEISHEV • 22 KISLEV • 4 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8.11 PM
	MINCHA:	8.20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.50 PM
SHABBOS:	TEHILLIM:	8.00 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.30 AM
	THE MOLAD FOR THE MONTH OF TEVES	
	WILL BE ON FRIDAY AT	7.19 (12 chalakim) AM
	FARBRENGEN FOLLOWING DAVENING	
	MINCHA:	8.10 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9.16 PM
WEEKDAYS	SHACHARIS	SUN-FRI: 8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	8.20 PM
	MAARIV:	9.10 PM
	MINYAN #2 (STARTING MON)	9.30 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 4 DECEMBER 2015

BEGINS	ENDS
8.11MELBOURNE	9.16
7.59ADELAIDE	9.01
6.13BRISBANE	7.11
6.43DARWIN	7.36
6.13GOLD COAST	7.11
6.52PERTH	7.53
7.35SYDNEY	8.37
7.47CANBERRA	8.51
8.13LAUNCESTON	9.23
8.09AUCKLAND	9.14
8.22WELLINGTON	9.31
8.17HOBART	9.29
7.13BYRON BAY	8.12

