

LAMPLIGHTER

20 Teves
Parshas
Shemos
1224
1 January
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week we commence the Book of Exodus (Shemot), which begins: "These are the names of the Children of Israel who came to Egypt."

This is not the first time the Torah enumerates the names of the Children of Israel. The sons of Jacob have already been tallied several times in previous chapters. Why, then, does the Torah list their names again?

The Midrash offers two explanations:

Even though they were in exile, the Jewish people did not change their names for Egyptian ones.

The Jewish people are likened to the stars, about which it states, "He [G-d] counts the number of stars; each one He calls by name." Aside from denoting preciousness and value, once something has been counted it can never afterward be nullified.

Chasidic philosophy explains that a person's name relates to his most external aspects rather than his innermost being. (The reason a person has a name is so that others can call him by it; he himself, however, does not really need a name.)

To a certain extent, this describes the Jewish soul after it descends into the physical world and is invested in a body. However, not all of the soul comes down into the physical world: its essence always remains above, united with G-d, while only its external reflection descends to the physical plane.

This is alluded to in the verse "And these are the names of the Children of Israel who came to Egypt." The Hebrew name for Egypt, Mitzrayim, comes from the word meaning constriction and limitation. Only the "name" of the Jewish soul, its outermost reflection, is subjected to the limitations of the physical world and the difficulties of the exile. The soul itself, however, remains unaffected and in full possession of all its powers.

The Jewish soul has never gone into exile. It is not contained or restricted in any way by the physical world, and its essence is always "free." Thus it is a perpetual source of strength for its reflection down below, enabling a Jew to overcome spiritual obstacles and cleave to G-d in all circumstances and situations.

It was this strength that empowered the Jewish people throughout their years in Egyptian exile, allowing them to remain faithful to their beliefs and retain their original Jewish names. Indeed, this is the connection between the two explanations in the Midrash: the Children of Israel were able to "stay Jewish" in Egypt precisely because the essence of the soul never goes into exile - a lesson that applies to our day as well.

Adapted from Volume 3 of Likutei Sichot

The Power of Invention

By Tali Loewenthal

Humanity has the ability to select beautiful pieces of nature and arrange them in a pleasing way. We also have the power to create new things which do not occur naturally: we discover fresh possibilities, and develop them into something which has never existed before.

Both these faculties are important. However, it is our power of invention and discovery which has led to the fascinating technology with which we live. It is our power of invention which has created the modern world.

How do these two faculties relate to the Torah? Is the Torah trying to push us back to the simplicity of the past, or forwards to the discoveries of the future?

A discussion of the Parshah by the Lubavitcher Rebbe throws light on this question.

One of the themes in our Parshah concerns bricks. The Jewish slaves had to make bricks. They mixed straw and clay, formed the mixture into blocks of the right shape and heated them in a kiln. With the resulting bricks they built store cities for Pharaoh.

A serious moment in the Parshah is when Pharaoh tells the Jews he will no longer supply them with straw for the bricks. They will have to gather it themselves.

Now, the brick making technology described above might sound very primitive, straight out of the British Museum. True. However, the point is that it was a "technology." People had discovered, through human thought, creativity and inventiveness, that this was a way to obtain strong bricks. It was a completely different approach from building with natural rock cut to size. How does this tell us anything about us? Isn't this just describing a detail of ancient history, the slavery of the Jews in Egypt?

The Chassidic way of understanding the Torah is that as well as telling us our national history, it is also describing our own personal lives. We too may find ourselves in a kind of spiritual slavery, in which we use our personal powers of creativity and invention for our "Egyptian" taskmasters. In other words, we use these powers for purely material purposes, perhaps even, for selfish purposes. Metaphorically, we use this power to build "store-cities for Pharaoh."

Personal redemption from Egypt means that this human power of invention is redeemed from slavery. It is devoted to unselfish goals, and even more, to spiritual goals. Our power of invention is used as a way to serve G-d. In the imagery of the Torah, when redeemed we make bricks not for Pharaoh's store cities but in order to build "the city of G-d."

This helps us understand the Jewish concept of Redemption. It is not only a matter of passively recognizing the G-dliness which is hidden in nature. It means also utilizing to the full our human powers of creativity, our ability to make something new in order to express the Glory of G-d.

Slice of LIFE

Stop Debating

Ofer was an embodiment of the Israeli dream. He was young, handsome, intelligent, athletic, uninhibited and ... a successful stuntman in Hollywood. He had 'made it' in California!

Money. Fun. Action. Excitement. The world was his for the taking, and he took as much as he could.

But most of all he loved riding his motorbike. Speeding down a desert highway over 100 Mph was what made him really happy. That's where he wanted to be forever; on the cutting edge of life.

Of course in the true Israeli tradition he kept as far from G-d, and certainly from Judaism, as possible. "In fact", he often quipped, "If I thought that religion was like Marx said, the Opiate of the masses, I might have tried some." But it was even more meaningless to him than that.

Until his accident.

One beautiful summer day on a lonely highway somewhere in Nevada he hit about 130 miles when suddenly, from nowhere, a huge semi-trailer truck appeared in front of him. It took him a second to realize that it wasn't a mirage and then it was too late. He smashed into the front of it and flew into oblivion. When the police arrived they had to search for a while till they found his broken body several hundred feet from the scene of the accident. He was still alive, but they had seen a lot of accidents and they were sure he wasn't going to last.

"This one is for sure a goner" was the last thing he heard as they pushed him into the ambulance and closed the doors. He thought to himself, "I don't want to die; I'll do what You want. PLEASE, G-d, Save me!!!" And everything went black.

When he woke up it was dark. He couldn't move. Was he dead? No, he was alive. Why couldn't he see or move? Then suddenly he realized what happened; "My G-d - I'm buried alive!! They buried me!!!"

He was sweating; it was getting hard to breathe. He tried to get up but he

couldn't, he couldn't move. He started to scream, "Please G-d - Please, HELP ME!! I'M SORRY!! G-D, HELP ME!!!"

Suddenly he was blinded; it was so bright! The florescent light flickered on. He was in a hospital.

"Doctor!! Doctor!! Come fast!!! He's conscious!!!"

He had been in a coma for over a month. He couldn't move because he was in a body cast from head to toe; almost all his bones had been broken. Even the policemen that were at the accident had never had seen anything like it, it was clearly a miracle that he was still alive. But the miracles didn't stop.

It took a lot of physical therapy and a lot of prayer but in one year he was actually back on his feet, completely recovered! He even went back to work as a stuntman, bought a new bike. And completely forgot his vow.

Although it sounds a bit hard to believe, a year later the same thing happened again!

Speeding like the wind through the desert, he lost control on a curve, destroyed his bike, broke his neck and skull and on the way to the hospital made another vow to G-d before losing consciousness.

A year and a half later after another miraculous recovery, he was back on his feet and back to his old lifestyle like nothing had happened.

He even set his sights on a promotion. He had caught the attention of a very influential manager in Hollywood and was on his way to getting some really big-time jobs with opportunities to do some serious acting. If it worked out he could be earning more than a million dollars a year! Things were looking up.

There was only one drawback; the manager was a missionary.

Now really the fact was that Ofer could have cared less. Religion meant nothing to him. He read the books the manager kept giving him because he wanted to keep on good terms. He even went to a couple of meetings with him. Everyone there was friendly, the lectures were nice, but he was interested in having a good time.

And it would have remained that way

if his manager would have left him alone, but he didn't. He kept shaking up Ofer's indifference with strange interpretations of the Torah and ideas about sin and salvation that he had never thought about.

He didn't know what to do. On one hand he wanted the big bucks and really couldn't find anything wrong with the manager's line of thought. But on the other hand, maybe it was just his Israeli egotism or Jewish stiff neckedness. For the first time in his life Ofer felt that he was a Jew and someone was trying to take it away from him.

The only problem is that he didn't know enough about the Torah to argue back.

This continued for several months until one Friday morning he happened to be walking downtown thinking about some of the things his manager said when someone called out to him, "Excuse me sir, are you Jewish?" "What?" he replied as he turned around and saw a young Chabadnik standing behind a small folding table filled with literature and holding a pair of Tefillin. "Are you Jewish? Come put on Tefillin, it will only take a minute. Have you got a minute?"

It wasn't long before Ofer was sitting in the Chabad House pouring his heart out to the Rabbi in charge about his missionary friend.

Now he was ready. The next time the manager brought up the subject, Ofer wrote down all the quotations, thinking he would defeat them. But the more he read from the Torah and the prophets afterwards to prepare his rebuttals, the more he realized that he himself knew nothing about Judaism.

"My advice to you" said the Shaliach a few days later, "is to write to the Lubavitcher Rebbe for advice and a blessing."

"A blessing?" asked Ofer incredulously, but he wrote anyway and in two weeks he received a reply. The Rebbe told him to concentrate only on strengthening his own Judaism through learning the Torah and doing the commandments and forget the debates.

Today Ofer is a Chabad Chasid and lives near Sefad with his wife and seven children.

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ISSUE 1224

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The day of Bar Mitzva, which is the day the boy becomes obligated to study Torah and keep the mitzvot (commandment), is a day of personal redemption. The transition from keeping mitzvot in preparation for the time one will be obligated, to that of keeping mitzvot once one is obligated, may be compared to the movement from exile to Redemption. For the keeping of mitzvot in exile is a "preparation" when compared to the full keeping of mitzvot at the time of the Redemption. One could even go as far to say that in exile, the entire Jewish people keep mitzvot like children, and when Moshiach comes we will celebrate our national Bar Mitzva. (Talk of the Lubavitcher Rebbe to Bar Mitzva boys and their parents)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

This letter was addressed to David Leib Meckler, the editor of the Previous Rebbe's *Memoirs* in Yiddish.

B"H, 22 Teves, 5708

Greetings and blessings,

I heard that you returned from your visit to Europe. I hope that it was fruitful in all areas. I am happy to send you a copy of *Sefer HaZichronos (Memoirs)* from my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe *Shlita*. If you desire to receive more copies, let us know and we will send them to you.

[To add] several words with regard to the significance of the *Memoirs*: In the Torah, every detail contains great importance. [Indeed,] even the sequence of the Torah teaches us much.

The word Torah relates to the word *horaah*, meaning "instruction." Implied is that the Torah is not a book of stories, but rather a text which teaches. The order of the Torah is that *Bereishis* comes first, and then *Shmos*, *Vayikra*, and the others. The reason for this is not merely that this was the chronological order in which these events took place. That would be sufficient for a history book, but not for a book which is intended to chart a path for [our] lives.

In addition, and perhaps this is most fundamental, the reason is that this reflects the pattern of instruction through which an individual, a community, and an entire nation structure their lives.

Such a pattern of instruction does not begin with positive commandments and negative commandments. Instead, it relates and presents real-life examples of individuals and entire generations, ancestors, relatives, and just ordinary people who lived in the desired pattern of life. They "cleared the path," providing a clear example of how we should lead such a life, how we can overcome different challenges that arise, and that this alone is the correct path in life.

Only afterwards comes the directives - arise and do, abide and refrain from acting - as an almost self-understood conclusion from the previous examples of life experience.

The importance of the *Memoirs* is of a similar vein. The primary intent was not meant to be - however important that [goal] is - telling the life history of so-and-so and so-and-so, in order that we know the history or the personalities of the previous generations.

[Instead,] the primary intent is to show a living example of how a Jew - a *Rav*, a student, a merchant, a craftsman, or a beggar, each one in his own field a prominent Jew - carried out his life.

This will point out the proper direction for our times and make it easier to overcome the difficulties that are connected with proceeding in that path.

To conclude by again expressing a heartfelt *yasher koach* for your great efforts in this important endeavour.

With appreciation and greetings,

Rabbi Menachem Schneerson

Chairman of the Executive Committee

CUSTOMS CORNER

AMEN

1. Chazal viewed the recitation of Amen very highly. In fact, Chazal tell us that responding Amen is of greater significance than reciting the bracha. The failure to recite Amen is considered a gross transgression, while responding Amen with great concentration opens the gates of Gan Eden.
2. The letters of Amen are the root letters of the word *Emunah*, belief or trust. By responding Amen one declares: "I believe in the bracha that I have just heard and I affirm its truth." Additionally, when responding Amen one should have in mind the beginning of the bracha, "Baruch Atta Hashem", that Hashem's name is blessed.

A WORD

from the Director

With the Yartzeit (the day of passing) of the Rambam, and the 24th of Teves, the Yartzeit (the day of passing) of the Alter Rebbe, immediately following Shabbos it's proper to address the accomplishments of both.

There is a common denominator between the deeds, teachings and Divine service of the Rambam and the Alter Rebbe (which are revealed at the time of the Yartzeit).

History indicates that both the Rambam and the Alter Rebbe endeavoured diligently to raise the conditions and honour of the Jewish people. And they also expended great effort to reach out and attract the hearts of the Jewish masses to move closer to G-d.

Similarly, in their teachings they both illuminated the world with the brilliance of their knowledge, both in the revealed and the concealed areas of Torah -- law and philosophy.

*Specifically, the Rambam wrote his halachic work, *Mishneh Torah*, which gathered in one opus all of the Oral Torah. In philosophy, he deals with the secrets of creation and the Supernal Chariot in the first four chapters of *Mishneh Torah*, and in much greater detail in his *Guide for the Perplexed*.*

*The Alter Rebbe authored his halachic work, the *Shulchan Aruch*, and revolutionized Jewish philosophy with the teachings of *Chabad Chassidus*.*

*May everyone benefit from the blessing of this Shabbos *Mevorchim* and increase in the activities personified by these two personalities, namely spreading the revealed and concealed aspects of Torah.*

When the effort is done from the heart it is accepted, and when one shows a living example he will surely be successful in awakening the soul of every Jew, which will ultimately result in the future redemption.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

One beautiful summer day a fancy carriage stopped in front of the synagogue which served as the 'headquarters' of the Baal Shem Tov (Besht for short). The driver opened the door and a wealthy-looking religious Jew stepped out of the carriage, entered the simple building and asked if he could have a private audience with the Tzaddik.

A meeting was arranged and when they were sitting face to face the rich man looked at the Besht and wasn't very impressed. The only reason he came was to see who is this Holy Man that everyone was talking about him, and, frankly, he looked like every other Jew, it was obvious that he had come all the way to Mezibuz for nothing.

"Well," said the Besht "Would like to hear a story? I have a very good story to tell you."

"Alright," said the visitor looking at his pocket watch, but I do have a long ride ahead of me."

"Good!" he said "I'll make it short."

The Besht began: "Once, in the city of Warsaw, Poland there were two close friends, who were both religious Jews. They had grown up together, bought houses next to each other, went into business together and, when their business succeeded, become multi-millionaires together. Their friendship was so strong that they were like brothers."

He paused, looked up and asked his guest, "Are you listening?" When he nodded 'yes' the Besht continued.

"After several years they decided to open a branch in Paris with the idea that one of them would move there to manage the new endeavour.

"Everything went smoothly. They travelled to Paris together, made the necessary connections, opened the business, bought merchandise and only after being sure that everything was running smoothly they parted.

"At first they wrote to each other twice a week, but as time went by they corresponded less and less frequently until ten years later they were writing only to wish each other happy holidays.

"Then one year the partner in Poland ran into some bad luck, suffered some major losses, and suddenly found himself without a penny, in fact a debtor. With no other choice he used his last money to travel to France with the hope that his friend would help with a loan.

"However when he arrived at his friend's home and suggested the idea, his friend replied in amazement. 'What! A loan? I should give you a loan!? Why that is ridiculous!!! I'm not giving you any loan! We are brothers!! Half of what I own is yours! Take one million dollars!!! Here!!'

"They embraced and wept on one another's shoulders, renewed their friendship and a week later the poor partner returned a new man with renewed hope to Warsaw, reinstated his freshly acquired funds and in a year's time regained his wealth.

"But, just as before, in a few years time they had both returned to their busy schedules and remembered to write only occasionally.

"The years passed and about ten years later the wheel of fortune again took a bad turn, but this time for the partner in Paris. He too lost all his money in a series of unlucky business deals and with no alternative he decided to visit his partner in Warsaw. He wasn't a young man anymore, and he was a bit broken from the strain of his financial fall, but he had no other choice and he knew he could always depend on his friend in a time of need.

But he was in for a bitter surprise.

"When his friend in Warsaw happened to glance out the window of his mansion that day and saw his partner approaching, a strange thought entered his mind. 'Oh no!!! It's him!' he thought, 'Why did he have to come now!! If he wants his money I'll lose that big merger that I've been working at for years!' He paced back and forth in his warm plush room; poured himself a brandy, made a blessing, drank it down, loosened his collar, and called his servants.

"Well, you can imagine the disappointment of the poor man when one of the servants came to the gate and informed him that the owner was away for an indefinite amount of time.

"It was already evening and he was so very tired from the trip. He sat down at the gate to rest for a few minutes and drowsed off to sleep. It must have been an unusually cold

night that night, or perhaps he was not feeling well, but whatever the reason, the next morning they found him huddled up at the gate... dead.

"The poor partner's soul went up to the heavenly court and when he was informed, after a very short trial, that he would go to heaven, he immediately asked about his partner. 'Your partner's selfish callousness was responsible for your death, his spiritual future is looking very bleak'. If so,' the poor man's soul replied 'I shall not enter heaven until he be given another chance.'

"So the court decided, after long deliberation, that the only solution would be that both partners would have to return to the world after their deaths. The stingy partner would be reincarnated to a rich man and the kind one would have to be reincarnated to a poor man who would collect charity from him. Only after the rich one paid all his debt would he be eligible for heaven.

"The soul of the departed man agreed and eventually they were both reincarnated." The Baal Shem Tov paused, looked at his incredulous guest and continued.

"The bad partner grew up to be rich and his poor friend came every day to ask him for a handout. This went on for years until one day the rich man was in a bad mood and when the poor man knocked at his door a bit too loudly, the rich man lost his temper, opened the door, struck the poor man over the head with his cane and Unintentionally killed him! (Of course he didn't realize that it was the second time he'd killed the same man and that he just ruined his only chance for clearing his past.) The rich man felt terrible, he had killed a man! But then he realized that he was in big trouble; he was guilty of murder! He looked about him desperately and seeing that no one was around, dragged the body to a side of his huge garden, dug a hole and buried him. And that's the end of the story! Have a safe journey back home!"

The visitor did not move. He was sitting motionless ... stunned as though he'd just received devastating news.

"Are you all right?" asked the Besht. "Can I bring you a cup of water?" Tears were streaming down his face and his body was shaking, he was weeping uncontrollably.

"That was me!" he whispered, "I killed that man!!! I buried him in my garden."

With these words he slid off the chair onto his knees and then rolled up into a ball on the floor and wept like a baby. "My G-d ... My soul is destroyed!"

"No" answered the Besht "I didn't tell you your story for nothing. There is always hope! G-d is merciful, even for you. You must give away all your money and wander for the rest of your life helping others. If you are sincere, G-d will forgive you."

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Let us deal wisely with them (1:10)

Pharaoh himself took hold of a basket and shovel; all who saw Pharaoh with a basket and shovel working in bricks, did likewise. The Jews came, too, and diligently worked with him all day, for they were strong and brawny. When evening fell, Pharaoh placed taskmasters over them, and said: "Count how many bricks they made." He then said to the Hebrews: "This number you shall deliver to me each and every day," appointing the Egyptian taskmasters over Hebrew officers and the Hebrew officers over the people. (*Midrash Tanchuma*)

And she saw him that he was good (2:2)

At the time when Moses was born, the whole house was filled with light. For it is written here, "And she saw him that he was good," and elsewhere it is written (Genesis 1:4), "And G-d saw the light that it was good." (*Talmud, Sotah 12a*)

And he said to the wicked one: "Why would you smite your fellow?" (2:13)

Said Resh Lakish: He who lifts his hand against his fellow, even if he did not smite him, is called wicked; as it is written: "And he said to the wicked one: Why would you smite your fellow?" It does not say, "Why did you smite," but, "Why would you smite," indicating that though he had not smitten him yet, he was termed a "wicked one." (*Talmud, Sanhedrin 58b*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 1 JANUARY 2016

BEGINS	ENDS
8.27MELBOURNE	9.32
8.15ADELAIDE	9.17
6.28BRISBANE	7.26
6.57DARWIN	7.50
6.28GOLD COAST	7.26
7.08PERTH	8.08
7.51SYDNEY	8.53
8.04CANNBERRA	9.06
8.30LAUNCESTON	9.39
8.26AUCKLAND	9.30
8.39WELLINGTON	9.48
8.34HOBART	9.45
7.29BYRON BAY	8.27



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS SHEMOS • 20 TEVET • 1 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8.27 PM
	MINCHA:	8.35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9.05 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.43 AM
	MINCHA:	8.25 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9.32 PM
WEEKDAYS	SHACHARIS	SUN-FRI: 8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	7.00 / 8.35 PM
	MAARIV:	9.25 PM