

# LAMPLIGHTER

27 Teves  
Parshas  
Va'eira  
**1225**  
8 January  
5776/2016

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The first seven of the ten plagues are enumerated in this week's Torah portion, Va'eira. The plagues were the prelude to the liberation of our ancestors from Egypt. The thrilling and dramatic way in which the Children of Israel experienced sudden and complete transformation occurred in both the physical and the spiritual realms.

Physically, the change was extremely dramatic. Imagine the bitterness of our ancestors' slavery: Egypt was a country from which no slaves had ever escaped or left; they were completely in the power of a Pharaoh who bathed himself in the blood of Jewish children to alleviate his leprosy; they were broken in body and spirit by the cruellest forms of forced labour.

Yet, suddenly Pharaoh's power was broken. The entire people were liberated. The former slaves emerged from slavery as free people, bold and dignified, "with an outstretched arm... and with great wealth."

The Jewish people's spiritual liberation was no less sudden and dramatic. After having sunk to the lowest degree of unholiness, to the point of pagan idol-worship, they suddenly - at the time of the crossing of the Red Sea - perceived G-d, revealed in His full Glory. Seven weeks later (commemorated today by the holiday of Shavuot), they all stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, on the highest level of holiness and prophecy. G-d spoke to each one of them individually, without any mediator, and declared; "I am the L-rd your G-d."

There is an additional reason for the hasty departure from Egypt. In theory, once Pharaoh gave them permission to leave, the Jews could have left Egypt at their leisure. However, the Exodus was not just from a geographic Egypt. It was primarily an exodus from the evil and impurity in which the Israelites had become immersed. For this reason, it was imperative for the Jews to leave swiftly.

Not just on the holiday of Passover, but each and every single day, we are commanded to remember the Exodus from Egypt. The instructive message to us all that stands out from the events in this week's Torah portion is that each Jew has the inner capacity and actual ability to transform himself in a short time, suddenly, from one extreme to the opposite.

*Adapted by Rabbi I.M. Kagen (obm) from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*

## What Happened to the Faith?

*By Levi Avtzon*

Two Russian peasants were discussing their love for the Czar.

"I love him to no end," Boris exclaimed. "I would give him everything! If I had a million rubles, I would give it all to him! If I had a horse, I would gladly gift it to him! If I had a store, I would give all its income to the Czar!"

"If you love the czar so much, then I'm sure you'll gladly give up the three chickens you have in your backyard, correct?" Boris's friend asked.

"Umm . . . not really . . ."

"What's going on? A million rubles and a store you would give away, but when I ask about three chickens, you suddenly back off?!"

"The chickens are real . . ." Boris answers.

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I was reminded of this story while learning a fascinating thought from the Midrash on this week's Torah portion, Va'eira.

But first let's rewind a bit to the end of last week's portion, Shemot, where we read how Moses brought the Jews the good news that the time for their redemption had arrived. The Torah tells us that upon hearing the tidings, "The nation believed; they heard that G-d had remembered the children of Israel, and they kneeled and prostrated themselves."

Fast forward to the beginning of Va'eira, where we read how G-d sent Moses to tell the Jews that "I will take you to Me for a nation, and I will be unto you a G-d . . ." And then the Torah tells us that "Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel, but they did not hearken to Moses . . ."

But didn't they just believe? Why did they suddenly clog their ears? What happened to "once a believer, always a believer"? Two hundred years they held on to their faith, and suddenly, just because things got a bit worse, all is gone?

So the Midrash explains:

The first time Moses came, he was like a politician full of promises, but not asking for anything in return (besides the vote). So they believed. True, it was admirable that after so long in exile they still had room for faith. And yet . . .

The second time he informed them that, once redeemed, they would be "taken as a nation" by G-d. In our language, this translates into no more idol worship, no more freebies! Suddenly this freedom had a price! Suddenly, believing wasn't so convenient. No thanks . . .

It's easy to philosophize, to declare and affirm our beliefs. Yet those ideals must translate into actions; otherwise, they don't count for much.

We have to walk the talk.

# Slice of LIFE

Dr. Stein was an excellent Physician. He had a flourishing practice, a happy home, a good reputation and seemingly lacked nothing. Until he met Mr. Greenbaum (fictitious name).

Greenbaum was a religious Jew in his late seventies and when he came to visit Dr. Stein he was well on his way to the synagogue in the sky. His heart was in terrible condition, he almost couldn't breath and he had other problems as well that made it impossible for him to function normally. The Doctor gave him a thorough check-up and saw that the prognosis was very bleak.

So he consulted with some of his colleagues and they concluded that the only chance that the old fellow had to live out the month was to undergo a complicated operation. But realistically the probability was slim that he would make off the operating table! The operation would be long and taxing and poor Greenbaum hardly had the strength or stamina for it.

Dr. Stein dutifully reported the dismal news to his patient but he was surprised to see that Greenbaum took it calmly; he just thought for a few seconds and said,

"Listen doctor, I can't make a decision like that on my own. If it's okay with you, would you be willing to go with me to my Rabbi and talk to him?" He told the doctor that his Rabbi was the famous Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (ob'm) whose headquarters were not far away.

Dr. Stein was interested. First of all he was curious to see how a Rabbi would answer. Second he had seen this Rabbi Feinstein's name in the papers a few times and was interested

in meeting him, but there was something else.

Dr. Stein was a Jew, but only in name. In fact he had virtually no idea what Judaism was all about. He was vaguely aware that there were such things as religious Jews but it never interested him to meet one. He was brought up in a typical assimilated American family where religion was associated with something dead and impractical... more interested in the afterword than this 'real' one. He was pushed to be a doctor, a success. And he made it.

But here was a chance to investigate something else.

So the next day he and his patient were seated in the office of Rabbi Feinstein and he was trying to explain the problem and his proposed solution with as few complicated medical terms as possible.

He figured he would be out of place as a non-religious Jew... but he wasn't at all, in fact he was pleasantly surprised by the genuine warmth and friendliness that the Rabbi showed to him. He was also surprised that Rabbi Feinstein seemed to understand everything; even the most complicated ideas and asked exactly the right questions.

But what really astounded him was that after he finished explaining he figured that the Rabbi would smile and say something like "Well Mr. Greenbaum, it doesn't make much difference whether you're in this world or the next does it ... so, why not take the chance!"

But instead, the Rabbi turned his face and began.... weeping! In fact Rabbi Feinstein wept so uncontrollably that although he tried, he couldn't speak for almost twenty minutes. Here was a man that simply couldn't bear to see another person suffer.

Never had the doctor seen such a

thing in his life. But what really knocked him out, or rather 'in' was what happened next.

Rabbi Feinstein apologized and asked them to give him a day to think. Tomorrow he would give his reply. He said that the doctor didn't have to come but he is welcome.

The next day they both returned, the Rabbi thanked the doctor warmly for coming, invited them to be seated turned to Mr. Greenbaum and said.

"I have decided that you should go ahead with the operation. Now you are not able to function. If the operation succeeds it will improve your health and you will be able to do more commandments, say more blessings and answer Amen to other people's blessings. All these will create angels, even the saying of Amen. And these angels will protect and shield you. Not only that but in the merit of all these good deeds and words you will merit to long life."

A few days later Mr. Greenbaum underwent the operation, returned to good health and lived many more years. Just as Rabbi Feinstein said.

But perhaps even more miraculous was the change that occurred in the doctor. The atheist Dr. Stein began to become a 'religious' Jew! Never before had he linked Judaism with life. He had learned that religion, Judaism included, was a product of weak human minds and personalities that couldn't cope with life.

But suddenly he realized that Torah is bigger than life, indeed, the source of life. Not just because of how he saw it enlivened Mr. Greenbaum but even more, because he saw with his own eyes that Rabbi Feinstein seemed to somehow be an embodiment of that source; to emanate the living reality of Judaism.

Today Dr. Stein is a happy observant Jew alive with Jewish enthusiasm.

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ISSUE 1225

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

G-d said to Moses, "And I will also fulfil the promise I made with them, to give them the land of Israel." (Ex. 6:4) To whom had G-d made a promise? To our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But if they had already passed away, how could they receive the land of Israel? This is one of the sources whence we learn about Techiyat Hameytim - the resurrection of the dead in the Messianic Era. Even though our Patriarchs are no longer alive, the land will still be given to them because in the days of Moshiach, our ancestors, and all Jews, will come back to life. (Yalkut Shimoni 6:176)



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

This letter was addressed to R. Shmaya Krinsky, a ritual slaughterer in Boston.

B"H, 19 Tammuz, 5708  
Greetings and blessings,

Your son-in-law, R. Yehoshua Goodman, conveyed your questions to me. In response to them:

- a) What is the source for our Sages' statement quoted by *Ramban* in his Commentary on the Torah, *Bereishis* 2:9: "Three told the truth and perished from this world: the snake, the spies, and Doeg the Edomite?"

It appears that his source is the *Midrash, Pirkei Rabbeinu HaKadosh*, ch. 3, sec. 47. Nevertheless, the version of *Ramban* differs from the version before us [in the present edition of that text]. For in the text I saw (at the conclusion of *Sefer Kolbo* and in *Otzar HaMidrashim*, [edited by R.] Eisenstein), the wording is: "Three told the truth and perished from this world and the World to Come: the spies, Doeg the Edomite, and the sons of Rimmon of Baeros."

[Some points] to note:

- i) The Alter Rebbe cites this statement of our Sages in his letter of Tuesday, [*Parshas*] *Nitzavim*, 5571 (printed in *Beis Rebbe*, ch. 20). It is, however, impossible to verify which version [he favours], since he mentions only [the person] relevant to the point under discussion [there], Doeg.
- ii) One should not question this statement of our Sages on the basis of the statements of *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 19, which state that the snake spoke falsehood. For both points are true. He perished from the world because he told the truth, but in order that his lures be accepted by Chavah, he also spoke lies. See also the *maamar* entitled *VehaNachash Hayah Arum in Torah Or* and in *Toras Chayim*.
- b) You question the fact that in some letters that you saw, the day of the week is not mentioned, merely the day of the month, while *Ramban* (*Shmos* 20:8) states: "The Jews count all the days for the sake of the *Shabbos*, the first day of the *Shabbos*, the second day of the *Shabbos*, etc. For this is part of the *mitzvah* we have been commanded concerning it (the *Shabbos*), to remember it always, every day."

I do not consider the above problematic, [because]:

- i) Even according to *Ramban*, the *mitzvah* [to recall the *Shabbos*] does not apply throughout the entire day, like the *mitzvah* of Torah study. Instead, by recalling it once, one fulfills his obligation. And one says before the Song of the Day: "Today is the first day of the *Shabbos*."
- ii) In my humble opinion, it is clear that *Ramban's* opinion is not to obligate one to count every day for the sake of the *Shabbos*, but merely if it happens that he is counting the days of the week, he should count them for the sake of the *Shabbos*, paralleling the *mitzvah* of [constructing] a guardrail.<sup>2</sup> [In *Ramban's* statement that] this applies "continually, every day," "every day" means "not only on *Shabbos* and Friday." This explains why the dates mentioned in the *Tanach* do not mention the day of the week (see *Rosh HaShanah* 3a).
- c) It appears that *Ramban's* opinion is not accepted even as an initial preferred approach, for he, nonetheless, forbade counting the days of the week in any manner other than for the sake of the *Shabbos*. And I have never heard people taking care not to say or not to write Sunday, Monday, etc.

Our emissaries, R. Uri Mashtilin<sup>3</sup> and R. Noson Gurary are presently in your community. They have certainly told you about the *sichos* of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe *Shlita*, with regard to the great importance and necessity of these travels. There is no doubt in my mind that despite your other involvements, you will lend assistance and endeavor that this visit to your community will bring about the desired outcome to the fullest extent, involving all details, indeed even minute details. I am writing about this only as an additional measure.

Concluding with wishes for everlasting good in all matters,  
Rabbi Menachem Schneerson

Afterwards, I found our Sages' statement: "Three told the truth..." in the *Machzor Vitri*, in the portion of the manuscript printed at the conclusion of *Menoras HaMeor* by R. Y. Alnakavah (Vol. IV, p. 568). There it states: "Three acknowledged the truth and perished from this world and the World to come. They are: Doeg the Edomite, the sons of Rimmon of Baeros, and the spies. Rabbi Meir states: 'Also the son of the Amalekite convert.'"

The notes there cite *Avos DeRabbi Nasan*, version 2, ch. 45; *Pirkei Rabbeinu HaKadosh*, Sheinblum Publications (in the text *Sheloshah Seferim*), p. 27a; *Akad HaAggados*, Horowitz Publications, sec. 133.

## CUSTOMS CORNER

### How to Properly Answer Amen

1. The proper intention of the word Amen changes with the bracha. When answering Amen to *Birchos HaMitzvah* or *Birchos HaNehenin*, one's intention should be to affirm the truth of the bracha and one's belief in it. When answering to *Birchos HaShevach*, one should have in mind that one is affirming the truth of that praise. When responding Amen to *tefillot* one's Amen should be a request of Hashem to fulfill that prayer.
2. One should not answer Amen louder than the bracha itself unless one is doing so in order to motivate others to answer Amen.
3. If one hears two brachot, one should answer Amen VeAmen rather than AmenAmen.

## A WORD

from the Director

This week is the beginning of the month of Shevat. The Torah specifically mentions *Rosh Chodesh Shevat*, relating:

"On the first day of the eleventh month in the fortieth year, Moshe spoke to the children of Israel regarding all that G-d had commanded him for them.... Moshe began to explain this Torah, saying..."

The *Megillah* states, "These days are remembered and carried out." The *AriZal* explains that when a day is "remembered" properly, all the spiritual influences which were originally expressed are "carried out" again. Thus, by remembering the events of "the first day of the eleventh month," we cause the spiritual influences of that day to be expressed again.

Furthermore, based on the principle, "always advance in regard to holy matters," we can assume that, each year, these influences are expressed on a higher level.

Moshe made this address to the Jewish people in the fortieth year after their leaving Egypt. At the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai, G-d revealed Himself to the Jews. In contrast, Moshe's address to the Jewish people was made "in his own words." Thus, our Sages state that Moshe related the book of *Devarim* independently. This is not to be interpreted to mean that this book is not a revelation of G-d's Torah. Surely, it is. Rather, our Sages' intent was that, in this instance, G-d's Torah enfolded itself within Moshe's intellect to the point that the words he spoke were simultaneously G-d's and his own. This, in turn, made it possible for these words to be grasped and comprehended by the intellect of the Jewish people and, in this way, to permeate through their powers of comprehension.

Thus, each year, on *Rosh Chodesh Shevat*, the Moshe of each generation -- and the spark of Moshe which each Jew possesses within his soul -- declares that the service of receiving the Torah and the *Mitzvos* has been completed and he is prepared to lead them into *Eretz Yisroel* in the true and complete redemption.

J. I. Gutnick

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Chassidic Judaism teaches that every Jew is obligated to try, and has the potential to succeed, to improve the entire world through G-d's commandments.

And one of the most outstanding examples of this teaching was the third Rebbe (leader) of the 'Chabad' Chassidim called Rabbi Menachem Mendel (nicknamed the Tzemach Tzedek 1789 - 1866).

He brought all of his followers to the highest levels of self-fulfilment and many of them had followers of their own. Especially his sons.

For instance, once he sent two of his six sons; Rav Zalman and Rav Shmuel to speak to government officials in Petersburg to and to nullify decrees that were threatening Judaism. The work was demanding, dangerous and difficult and miraculously they succeeded. But before they left they were approached by two respectable looking Jews and invited to preside over the wedding ceremony of their children.

Usually the Rabbis would not have agreed; their time was precious and there was no shortage of capable Rabbis in Petersburg but strangely they agreed. That very evening Rabbi Zalman the older of the two, readily wrote the marriage certificate, made the blessings and he and his brother even participated briefly in the festivities.

The families were overjoyed that such prestigious Rabbis attended the wedding of their children and couldn't thank them enough.

In fact, early the next morning they brought the newlyweds to the Rabbis' hotel room and requested that they bless the couple again.... And they even brought along some cakes, drinks and one of the musicians of the wedding band, a violinist, to make things merry.

The violinist played a merry tune, the food was arranged on a table and Rav Zalman and his brother blessed the couple. But then Rav Zalman pointed to the violinist, and when he stopped playing, praised him for his music in a way that implied he would like to make a request.

The father of the groom understood the Rebbe's hint and immediately jumped in. "Perhaps the Rabbi like to hear a particular melody? The violinist knows many Jewish melodies!"

Reb Zalman answered, "Ahh! Nu! Good, Can he play Kol Nidre?" (The first and opening prayer of 'Yom Kippur'; The Day of Atonement, sung in synagogues across the world).

"Of course, I can. I'm also a Jew!" the violinist answered with a smile and a nod at the family members. Then he closed his eyes and began to play the familiar melody, his body swaying with great feeling at every phrase of music.

Reb Zalman lowered his head between his hands on the table before him in great rapture and as the last notes faded away in the silence he raised his head and said, quietly almost intimately, "Once more."

The violinist nodded, lifted his bow and the beautiful tones again filled the room as Rav Zalman returned his head to his hands as though in another world.

When the music finished he straightened up, smiled again, looked dreamily at the musician and said, "Once again".

The violinist understood. The Rabbi probably wanted to hear the tune three times as it is always repeated on the evening of Yom Kippur. So he put all his energy into this third and final time.

Truly it was magic; more melodic and with more feeling than the first two. But as he finished, lowered his bow and began to take the violin from his shoulder Reb Zalman lifted his head and said, "Again!"

The family looked at each other in bewilderment, almost ashamedly. If it was

anyone else they would think he was mad, but it was the honourable Rabbi. Probably he really loves this song. Or perhaps it's the performance. In any case they hoped four times would be enough.

But when he finished playing Rav Zalman commanded him to play again a fifth time, then a sixth! And a seventh!!!

Suddenly the violinist, stopped. He stood there and began trembling as though he remembered something terrible that shook his entire being. He lowered the violin, looked at the Rebbe with horror and tears in his eyes and tears streamed down his cheeks for several speechless moments. He wavered as though he was about to fall to his knees and finally the words came out,

"Rebbe help me!!! How can I repair my soul!!?"

Reb Zalman motioned for the violinist to wait, bade the other visitors Mazal Tov and after they left spoke to him for several minutes alone.

Later the violinist told them what had happened.

Some twenty years ago he and his friends began drinking, playing cards and playing music the day before Yom Kippur and enjoyed themselves so much that they continued on well into the night... after the Holiday had begun and the Cantor had sung ..... Kol Nidre.

Before that evening he had been an observant, albeit not enthusiastic, Jew but it was that party that began his 'descent' and estrangement from Judaism.

"Somehow the Rabbi sensed this and that is why he wanted him to play that melody over and over again until it brought him back to his Jewish senses".

## Thoughts THAT COUNT

I will bring you out, I will save you, I will redeem you, I will take you (6:6-7)

The four expressions of redemption (represented at the Passover seder by the Four Cups of wine) relate to the four aspects of our liberation from Egypt:

- 1) "I will bring out" -- our physical removal from the geographical boundaries of Egypt;
- 2) "I will save" -- our delivery from Egyptian hegemony (Egypt was a superpower that enslaved and oppressed many nations and peoples outside its borders);
- 3) "I will redeem" -- the elimination of any future possibility of enslavement by the "great judgments" inflicted upon the Egyptians;
- 4) "I will take you to Myself as a nation, and I will be to you a G-d" -- our election as G-d's chosen people at Mount Sinai, the purpose of the Exodus. (*Nachmanides; Soforno*)

And Moses spoke before G-d, saying: "Behold, the children of Israel have not listened to me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me?" (6:12)

The previous verse, however, states the reason that the Children of Israel did not listen to Moses -- "for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." Why, then, did Moses deduce from this that Pharaoh would not obey him?

But Moses knew that the power of a leader derives from his people. If he had not succeeded in penetrating their hearts, he would not be able to achieve anything on their behalf. (*Sefat Emel*)

And the magicians brought up frogs on the land of Egypt (8:3).

Only "on the land of Egypt" -- their frogs did not jump into the ovens. (*Be'er Mayim Chaim*)

### CANDLE LIGHTING: 8 JANUARY 2016



BEGINS	ENDS
8.28 .....MELBOURNE .....	9.32
8.15 .....ADELAIDE .....	9.17
6.30 .....BRISBANE .....	7.27
7.00 .....DARWIN .....	7.52
6.29 .....GOLD COAST .....	7.27
7.09 .....PERTH .....	8.08
7.52 .....SYDNEY .....	8.53
8.04 .....CANBERRA .....	9.06
8.30 .....LAUNCESTON .....	8.38
8.26 .....AUCKLAND .....	9.29
8.39 .....WELLINGTON .....	9.47
8.34 .....HOBART .....	9.44
7.30 .....BYRON BAY .....	8.28

### CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD  
PARSHAS VA'EIRA • 27 TEVET • 8 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8.28 PM
	MINCHA:	8.35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9.05 PM
SHABBOS	TEHILLIM:	8.00 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.48 AM
	THE MOLAD FOR THE MONTH OF SHEVAT	
	WILL BE ON SHABBOS	8.03 (13 chalakim) PM
	FARBRENGEN FOLLOWING DAVENING	
	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