

LAMPLIGHTER

12 Iyar
Parshas
Emor

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion of Behar, we read, "Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruit. But in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of rest to the land, a Sabbath for the L-rd." This seventh, Sabbatical year is known in Hebrew as "Shemittah."

Commenting on this verse, Rashi explains that "Sabbath for the L-rd" means "for the sake of G-d." In other words, the practice of allowing the land to lie fallow in the seventh year must be done solely because it is a Divinely-ordained mitzva.

At first glance, allowing the land a periodical rest appears to be a natural means of rejuvenating the earth. It is a well-known fact that not cultivating the land for an entire year serves to enrich its soil and improve the quality of its future yield.

Nonetheless, the Torah demands that we not keep Shemittah for the purpose of land improvement. The only reason we allow the land to rest is "for the sake of the L-rd," for G-d has so commanded us.

When Jews refrain from working the land in the seventh year, they thereby attest to G-d's mastery over the world. Observing Shemittah demonstrates openly that our involvement in the pursuit of a livelihood has not caused us to forget the Creator.

The mitzva of Shemittah trains us to remember that no matter what we do, everything in life is "for the sake of G-d." Even those things which are considered "natural," i.e., eating, drinking, sleeping and going to work, must be done purely for the sake of heaven.

When a Jew eats, he must do so "for the sake of G-d." He consumes food in order to be strong and healthy, to be able to perform more of G-d's mitzvot.

When a Jew sleeps, he sleeps "for the sake of G-d." He knows that the body must rest to recoup its strength, that he be fully alert and capable of observing the commandments.

Such must be the attitude toward every detail in life: We must always remember that all facets of existence are "for the sake of G-d."

Acting in such a manner brings down G-d's blessing, as it states, "And I will command my blessing upon you," ensuring that G-d will grant us only goodness from His full, open and holy hand.

Adapted for Maayan Chai from Likutei Sichot, vol. 7

Can I Have Some Food, Please?

By Elisha Greenbaum

Some kids are into candy, others like chocolates, but when my sister was a little girl all she ever wanted was marble cake.

Our parents were generous with their treats, but it's not healthy for a child to forswear vegetables and meat for empty carbohydrates, so they rationed her indulgences and only doled out her favourite snack for special occasions. It quickly became a regular game in our household: my mother would bake cake for Shabbat and hide it somewhere around the house and my sister would find it and eat as much as she could, as quickly as possible, before being caught and, inevitably, rebuked.

Was my sister's self-serving rationale any more ridiculous than what we all do on a daily basis? One time they left me babysitting while the rest of the family was out of the house. Before she left, my mom warned my sister: "You're not to take any marble cake without asking." Unfortunately, I got caught up in a good book and wasn't paying due attention to my duties. It was only some 20 minutes later when I became conscious of the fact that the house had been too quiet for a while. I wandered into the kitchen and saw a half-empty cake pan on the countertop, with a begrimed and be-crumbed little girl teetering on a chair in front, carving out her 5th or 6th huge chunk of cake.

When I challenged her, she swore she hadn't done anything wrong. "Mummy said I wasn't allowed to have any more without asking, and before I took each piece I asked G-d if I could have it!"

Was my sister's self-serving rationale any more ridiculous than what we all do on a daily basis? The stated reason for reciting a blessing before indulging is that all food belongs to G-d and that partaking of His bounty without requesting permission is analogous to stealing.

But you've got to ask, what does your blessing really accomplish? So you said a blessing and asked G-d for some of His food-did you get an answer? Isn't it still His, no matter how nicely you asked? What does muttering a few Hebrew words before partaking really accomplish?

The book of Leviticus discusses the privileges and responsibilities of the Priesthood. Kohanim (priests) are special, public servants. As such, they're supported off the public purse and enjoy a varied menu of public hand-outs and private donations. While some of these gifts may be shared with whomsoever the kohen wishes, most of them are considered holy, and are restricted to kohanim and their immediate families. No matter how religious or holy I am, or how friendly I get with my neighbouring kohen, he's not allowed to invite me over to share his food.

The exclusion to this exclusivity is the servants belonging to the kohen. Even though they are not of priestly stock and in fact they're not even Jewish, they get dragged in on their master's coattails and get to partake of all the holiness-while the rest of us Jews stand outside looking in. How extraordinary a concept; the food and offerings might be intrinsically holy, but since a master has responsibility to feed his own servants, they can partake of his pleasures.

A blessing is not just a mealy-mouthed request for indulgence and that's one of the reasons why we recite blessings before eating. When we say a blessing we announce "Adnai elokeinu melech ha-olam..." "G-d is our G-d, King of the universe." We're His servants. He made us. We belong to Him.

A blessing is not just a mealy-mouthed request for indulgence, but an acknowledgement that we and everything we own belong to Him. When we submit to G-d's authority and accept Him as our lord and master, then we know that we have His permission to enjoy the fruits of this world-and even to come back for second helpings of holiness.

Slice of LIFE

In May of 1948, shortly after Israel declared statehood, the Jordanian army surrounded Jerusalem with their best trained, best armed forces and sealed it hermetically for several weeks. Several futile attempts were made by the fledgling Israeli army to break the siege but they all failed tragically and after a while the Jews of Jerusalem were suffering from hunger and thirst.

Only a few hundred Jewish soldiers with light weapons were defending the city and everyone knew that at any moment the Jordanian high command would give the word, Jerusalem would fall into their hands and all its inhabitants would be massacred (as had happened in Kfar Etzion a few weeks earlier).

Nothing stood between the enemy and total victory.....almost.

Miraculously the few attempts the Arabs made failed. For instance just a few days before Lag B'Omer they sent an expeditionary force of two tanks followed by several tens of soldiers to wreak havoc in the city.

The small force of Jewish defenders with no anti-tank devices seemed helpless against this armoured force rumbling unhindered through the streets until, suddenly, one of the Jewish soldiers bravely jumped from nowhere onto the first tank, lifted the hatch, which miraculously was unlocked, threw in a makeshift Molotov Cocktail and jumped off unharmed all under a hail of bullets. The tank crew made a hasty escape, the tank blew up blocking the road and the invaders retreated.

But everyone knew it wouldn't last long. Every day another Jew died from the incessant Arab mortar fire and the Jordanians had the most modern and well organized army and weaponry including artillery of all the 6 or 7 Arab nations attacking Israel - and they were motivated!

That Thursday (May 28th that year) would be Lag B'Omer when, almost 2,000 years ago, Rashbi revealed his deepest mystical secrets and declared it a day of

rejoicing just before he passed away!

They had to make a fire and rejoice....but how!?

A fire at night (Jewish holidays begin at nightfall) would be suicide; it would draw enemy artillery and everyone would be killed! (Previously the Jordanians had not used extensive artillery on Jerusalem because they were certain it would soon be theirs. But a fire at night would be an invitation for target practice!)

Then someone had an idea! In Jerusalem it is the custom to light Shabbat candles 40 minutes before nightfall; there was no reason they couldn't do the same with the Lag B'Omer fire! They would light it early while it was still light outside and then they could rejoice a little and do it quietly so as not to draw attention.

About thirty Chassidim showed up. They bought bottles of oil, several bags of old rags and even a few pieces of wood for the fire and made a 'parade', singing quietly, fearing every step, from the Synagogue of the Chassidim until the yard before the Shul of the Perushim.

There they quietly arranged their materials in a pile, lit the fire, held hands, formed a circle around the fire and resumed their stifled singing.

But then, something happened. Suddenly they weren't afraid....only happy! They sang louder, began clapping their hands, smiling, dancing and jumping with the joy of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Before they knew it they were singing at the top of their lungs, drenched with sweat and dancing with their eyes closed. A half hour had passed! It was getting dark!

Suddenly the enemy cannons opened up and fire and explosions woke them from their ecstasy. Never had they experienced such a barrage of artillery! Destruction was everywhere. The Jews scattered in all directions, obviously this was the attack on Jerusalem they had expected and dreaded. Each man ran to his home to his family.

Buildings were falling; bombs were bursting with horrific destructive force. Close to a hundred Jews, rushed to the safest place they knew - the Synagogue! There G-d would save them!

The one writing this true account, Rabbi Avraham Yonaton Gottlieb, recalls

how one Rabbi, Zev Isenbach, stood at the podium and read Psalm 91, 91 times begging G-d for mercy and protection. And it worked!

Suddenly another Jew, Rav Yosel Eichler, appeared in the Shul with a large bag on his shoulder and began distributing its contents, small loaves of bread dipped in oil, saying, "Don't forget that today is a holiday! This is for the joyous meal in honour of Rabbi Shimon!!"

After over an hour the bombardment stopped. Not one person had been injured and it was totally silent! The dreaded Jordanian attack never came.

Suddenly one of the Jewish soldiers, who happened to be religious, ran in, waving his arms, with a wild, look screaming, "What did you do?! What did you do?! Are you crazy?! Are you all insane?! Did you light that fire and sing!? Was it you!?"

He calmed down and continued. "You don't know what happened! The Jordanians retreated!! They must have been much closer than we supposed but when they heard your singing and saw the fire they became afraid! They figured the only thing that would make you so happy was that reinforcements with new weapons must have arrived and were about to attack them! So they ran away! One of the Arabs told us!

"That's why they fired all their cannons! Their commander ordered them to cover the retreat as they were pulling back to keep us away!! It was a miracle! A miracle from Rabbi Shimon!! If it wasn't for your singing they would have killed all of us for sure!"

On Friday, the day after Lag B'Omer, both chief Rabbis of Jerusalem; Rabbi Minzberg and Rabbi Chazan, raised white flags and entered the Jordanian camp with an offer to surrender Jerusalem. But only on certain conditions; that all the populace would be allowed to leave unharmed.

Amazingly the Jordanians agreed to all the terms! It seems they were still under the effect of the Lag b'Omer scare and were happy they had not been attacked by the imaginary Jewish 'forces'.

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ISSUE 1244

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Pesach Sheini (the "Second Passover") occurs one month after Passover. It is for those who were ritually impure or too far away to offer the Passover sacrifice on Passover. It represents the second chance available to each Jew to reach one's spiritual goals. Why would a Jew who brought the Passover offering at its correct time need to mark Pesach Sheini? Jews are always awaiting Moshiach's arrival and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. If the Holy Temple is rebuilt during the time between Passover and Pesach Sheini, we will have to bring the Passover offering on Pesach Sheini. The commandment to await Moshiach obligates all of us to prepare for Pesach Sheini immediately after Passover. *(Dina Fraenkel, Kosher Spirit)*



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Continued from previous issue

You will surely gather that the preceding paragraphs are in reference to the beginning of your letter, in which you express your discontent at the lack of deeper knowledge of the various aspects of the Torah.

Besides, you surely recall the saying of the wisest of all men about true wisdom, "The more the knowledge, the more the pain." For, in regard to the knowledge of the Torah, which represents the infinite wisdom of the Ein Sof, the more one learns, the more one becomes painfully aware of the distance which is still to be covered, a distance which is indeed infinite.

As a matter of fact, even in the so-called exact sciences, every discovery uncovers new unexplored worlds and raises more questions than it answers. Yet, this is what provides the real stimulus and challenge to learn and probe further. How much more so in regard to the Torah, Toras Chaim, the true guide in life, both the physical and spiritual life.

Incidentally, the present days of Sefira, which connect the festivals of Passover and Shavuot, have a bearing on the subject matter. For, just prior to the departure from Egypt, the Jews were in a state of slavery in its lowest form, being slaves in a land which the Torah calls "The abomination of the earth."

Indeed, anyone familiar with the conditions in Egypt in those days knows how depraved the Egyptians were in those days, and much of this had tarnished the character of the Jews enslaved there. Yet, in the course of only fifty days, the Jews rose to the sublimest height of spirituality and true freedom, both physical and spiritual.

Furthermore, the spiritual freedom which the Torah had brought them, and which has also illuminated to some extent the rest of the world, was linked with material freedom, namely freedom from any material problems, as the Torah tells us that the children of Israel had the Manna and the Well, and all their material needs were provided in a miraculous way.

The narratives of the Torah are not simply stories for entertainment, but are in themselves a part of the general instruction and teaching which the Torah conveys in all its parts. And in these narratives we find also the answer as to how the situation might be under certain conditions at some time in the future. If the conditions would be similar to those which existed at the time when the children of Israel left Egypt, with complete faith in G-d, following the Divine call in the desert, leaving behind them the fleshpots of Egypt and the fat of the land, not even taking any provision with them, but relying entirely on G-d, and in this state of dedication to the truth, they followed the Pillar of Light by day and by night - should these conditions be duplicated, or even approximated, then one may well expect a most radical change, not only over a period of years, but in the course of a number of days.

Pesach Sheini, 5723 (1963)

Lag B'Omer is a particularly fitting day for celebration by Jewish children in the manner and spirit sponsored by the Lubavitch House...

The history of Lag B'Omer is well known.

Our Sages of the Talmud explain that the days of the counting of the Omer (Sefira) were saddened by the tragic consequence of the failure of the thousands of disciples of Rabbi Akiva to respect and love each other, which brought emptiness and desolation into Jewish life.

The 33rd day of the Sefira ("Lag" B'Omer) stood out as a bright exception.

Later, Jewish life was revived again by the surviving disciples, especially Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who unlocked the secrets of the Torah and gave us the holy book, the Zohar. Lag B'Omer is the day of his yahrzeit.

Lag B'Omer reminds us that disunity and separateness among our Jewish people is caused by the neglect of Torah and mitzvot in our daily life.

It also reminds us that Ahavas Yisroel - love of our fellow Jews - is the "Great Principle" of the Torah, as taught by Rabbi Akiva, and further explained by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and (in more recent generations) by Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov and Rabbi Shneur Zalman [founder of Chabad Chasidism] and their successors.

Lag B'Omer calls upon each and every one of us, young and old, to strengthen the oneness of our people, through the study and practice of the one Torah, given to us all by the One G-d.

May G-d grant that the forthcoming Lag B'Omer celebration will inspire each and every one of you to a greater measure of love of G-d, the Torah and the Jewish people, to be expressed in your personal daily life and conduct, and in growing efforts to spread the Torah and Mitzvot [commandments] among our people everywhere.

This will surely bring you, and your near and dear ones, a greater measure of Divine blessings, and the fulfillment of your hearts' desires for good, materially and spiritually.

CUSTOMS CORNER

The Laws of the First Blessings

- One should say a blessing before partaking of any food, no matter how small the amount may be.
- Prior to saying the blessing one should hold the food upon which the blessing is said (or the spoon or fork containing the food) in his right hand (left-handed people should hold it in their left hand) and only then say the Blessing. If he did not hold the food but it was before him when he said the blessing he does not need to say the blessing anew.

A WORD

from the Director

Lag BaOmer is a day of rejoicing on which Jews celebrate their unity by gathering Jewish children together. Significantly, it is the yahrzeit (the anniversary of the passing) of the great Talmudic sage, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, whose teachings highlighted the concept of unity by drawing attention to the verse, "How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to sit together."

Unity stems from shared roots, as with brothers who are bound together because they "share" the same father. Although they lead separate and sometimes very divergent existences, their fundamental common identity remains.

This concept is reflected in the vision of the prophet Zachariah in which the menorah symbolizes the Jewish people. The candelabrum which extends in seven branches symbolizes seven different paths of Divine service. Yet it was made of a single piece of gold, indicating that the Jewish people remain one unified entity despite their different qualities.

Difference need not lead to division. On the contrary, true unity comes from a synthesis of different -- and even opposite -- thrusts. Thus, we see that the patriarchs Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov represented different approaches to Divine service -- Avraham represented the love of G-d; Yitzchak, the awe of G-d; and Yaakov, the harmony between these opposites. Yet together, they established the one and unique spiritual heritage of our people.

This unity has a broader scope, encompassing all of mankind - non-Jews and Jews. Indeed, it extends beyond the human realm to include the totality of existence, since we all are G-d's creations.

This unity is not even bound by time as Judaism has always emphasized the importance of the continuity of tradition, denying the justification for a gap between generations. Rather, every family -- be it Jewish or non-Jewish -- should be an integral entity, communicating and passing down true values from generation to generation.

On behalf of the Chabad House of Caulfield, I wish our readers and the community a very joyous Lag B'Omer - may its inspiration be a guiding light throughout the year.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Czarist Russia was, arguably, the most totally and fanatically religious country in history. Everyone, including intelligentsia, government officials, and the royal family, was devoutly and insanely Russian Orthodox. So it wasn't a surprise that they threw themselves wholeheartedly in 'weaning' Jews from Judaism.

One way they tried to do it was through the army. Young Jewish boys were snatched from their homes at the age of ten or even less and 'trained' to be 'good' Russian soldiers i.e. with no Judaism. These soldiers became known as Cantonists.

The cruel program never really worked totally but it lasted some fifty years before it was dropped and resulted in large numbers of soldiers who were fiercely loyal to the Czar but nevertheless still aware of some Jewish identity.

Simultaneously there was another enemy of Judaism; the Maskilim. These were assimilated Jews who had chosen to 'illuminate' as many of their brethren as possible into progressive world of the gentiles and away from the Torah and its commandments.

Their main battlefield was Jewish Torah schools where they all too often succeeded in posing as religious teachers only to poison the minds of their unsuspecting pupils.

But occasionally they tried their hands at government levels as well; attempting to convince the Czar or one of his ministers to secularize or even totally outlaw Jewish education.

One year they succeeded in convincing the government to pass such a series of laws and the Tzemach Tzedek (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the third Lubavitcher Rebbe) was called by the other Chassidic Rabbis of Russia to plead their case in Petersburg to the higher government ministers and convince them that such a plan would never work.

In the course of the several weeks that the Rebbe was there he was put under house arrest some twenty times for defying court procedure, disrespecting the judge, refusing to agree with the government and more, but miraculously his self-sacrifice paid off and he was successful.

It just so happened that near Petersburg was a fortified city by the name of Kronshtot which was the site of a huge army base of several thousands of soldiers. And a few hundred of them were Cantonists.

Although these soldiers had almost no connection to Judaism, except for a few Hebrew prayers some of them knew by rote. Nevertheless, when they heard that the famous Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch was in close proximity something pushed them to request from their officers to invite him to speak.

It's not too clear why but the officers passed the request up to their general who passed to Minister of War and, to their amazement, he agreed!

Some say he hoped to influence the Rebbe to agree to some of their demands and soften his uncompromising stand on genuine Jewish education.

But, as we will see, they were wrong.

The Minister of War passed the request to the Minister of the Interior who sent an official entourage to the Rebbe in Petersburg to invite him.

The Rebbe agreed and, sure enough, a month later the Rebbe with an impressive entourage of over fifty Chassidim was entering the gates of the fortress.

He was taken to a large auditorium where several hundred Jewish soldiers from the infantry, navy and cavalry had been gathered and said before them a Chassidic discourse about the importance of 'returning' to G-d and observing His commandments.

He then quoted and explained in Russian, several sayings of the Talmud about the importance of self-sacrifice for the Torah.

The Rebbe finished his talk by telling them that although they were in exile from the Holy Land until Moshiach brought them back, nevertheless it was their obligation to pray for the welfare of Russia and its leaders while they were there.

A while later, when the Rebbe successfully finished his work in Petersburg the soldiers somehow got wind of his plans to return home to Lubavitch and made a second request to their officers. They wanted to hear the Rebbe again and thank him for the trouble he had taken for them.

Again their officers agreed. But this time when they went to the Rebbe to convey the soldiers' request they added a warning. They informed him that his previous speech had caused quite a stir among the soldiers and that he better not do it again. One more incendiary word and he would be in danger.

Six hundred soldiers were gathered in a large open square in Petersburg and listened in silence as the Rebbe spoke.

Again the Rebbe said a Chasidic discourse but this time he finished with the following words: "If ever anyone tries to force any Jew to change their religion and deny Judaism, G-d forbid, then that Jew is obligated to actually give his life rather than give in! Even if the King himself demands that you leave Judaism you must sacrifice your life rather than listen to him."

The Rebbe asked the soldiers to advertise his words, blessed them and bade them farewell.

The soldiers were deeply affected by these words but, being that the only connection most of them had to Judaism were no more than vague memories of their parents, there was little chance that the effect would last.

Five years later the entire camp was on its feet; for weeks they had been cleaning, painting and polishing every corner of the fortress in preparation for the ultimate honour. His glorious majesty; the Czar HIMSELF with his royal honour guard and the highest ministers in Russia were coming for an official visit to their camp!

It is hard for us today to imagine the awe, fear and trepidation the very mention of the Czar's name evoked in the heart of every Russian soldier, how much more so a visit from the Czar HIMSELF! The soldiers were in a frenzy.

When the Czar finally arrived the trumpets blared, the band began to play, thousands of soldiers from all branches of the Czars armies stood at attention in shining uniforms holding colourful banners. Then suddenly thirty or so chosen soldiers stepped forward and began to dance and do acrobatic feats before His Majesty.

The Czar was enthralled. He turned to the various ministers at his right and left, a broad smile of contentment on his face, nodding and raising his hands with approval as the soldiers flipped in the air and lifted heavy burdens.

"Who are these men?" He asked the commander of the base, "What are their names?"

The commander raised his hand, they stopped their performance, stood in a line before the Czar, sweating and trying to catch their breaths and he read off their names.

As he read, the Czar's smile faded into a frown, his body stiffened, he leaned forward and hissed "Why, those are Jewish names! Jews!!"

He straightened up, tried to regain his composure but did not succeed... he simply could not control his anger and disappointment. He scanned the soldiers and announced out loud. "Here, sitting with us here is a priest. I command you, all of you, to change your names and your religion NOW!"

The soldiers glanced briefly at one another, briefly behind them, and then straightened their gaze and stood at stiff attention. One stepped forward, saluted the Czar and spoke.

"Your majesty! Five years ago the Rebbe of Lubavitch visited here. He told us that it is forbidden for us to change our religion even if the Czar personally demands it. He said we must sacrifice our lives rather than do that."

And saying this they all turned around, ran as fast as possible to the bridge behind them, climbed over the rail and gracefully dived into the churning river... never to return alive.

When the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, told this story he explained that there are two miraculous details in this sad story. First, that they remembered what the Rebbe said five years earlier. And second, that it affected them so deeply that they actually gave their lives!

CANDLE LIGHTING: 20 MAY 2016



BEGINS		ENDS
4.57	MELBOURNE	5.57
4.59	ADELAIDE	5.57
4.47	BRISBANE	5.41
6.10	DARWIN	7.02
4.44	GOLD COAST	5.42
5.07	PERTH	6.03
4.41	SYDNEY	5.38
4.47	CANBERRA	5.44
4.40	LAUNCESTON	5.41
5.01	AUCKLAND	5.59
4.50	WELLINGTON	5.51
4.35	HOBART	5.38
4.42	BYRON BAY	5.37

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS EMOR • 12 IYAR • 20 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4.57 PM
	MINCHA:	5.05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.30 PM
SHABBOS	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.45 AM
	MINCHA:	4.55 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5.57 PM
WEEKDAYS	SHACHARIS: SUN-FRI	8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	MAARIV:	5.45 PM