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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Jewish people, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are often referred to by the name of another of our great forebears, Joseph. "Listen, O Shepherd of Israel, You Who leads Joseph like a flock," sings the Psalmist. Rashi explains that every Jew is called "Joseph," "because he (Joseph) sustained and provided for them during the famine," a narrative of which appears in this week's Torah portion, Vayigash.

At first glance, this seems to be an insufficient explanation. Why call an entire nation after one individual, no matter how exalted, just because he was instrumental in aiding the Jewish people during a certain short period in their history?

Chasidic philosophy teaches that every phenomenon in the physical world exists only because of its spiritual root above. Indeed, the physical manifestation in this world is only a reflection of the true spiritual reality. The fact that Joseph sustained the fledgling Jewish people with food (as well as the rest of the known world at the time), reflects the fact that it was he who imbued his people with the spiritual nourishment and sustenance they needed to survive in exile, as well. The lack of food, the famine which hit Egypt, was accompanied by a spiritual famine, for the exile in Egypt was a time of great darkness and trouble for the Jewish people. It was Joseph who gave his descendants the strength to deal with the hardships and adversity of exile.

Joseph, in his role as second in command to Pharaoh, broke new ground and paved an innovative path in the service of G-d. Joseph's brothers were shepherds, an occupation which gave them plenty of time to pursue a spiritual life. By contrast, Joseph lived a life of involvement in the world, first as the manager of Potifar's household, later when he was in charge of his fellow prisoners in jail, and finally, when he was appointed second in command over all of Egypt. Although Joseph was always intimately involved in the day-to-day details of the physical world, as was dictated by his various positions, his greatness lies in the fact that he never severed his spiritual connection to G-d, and in fact, emerged even stronger in his service and commitment.

Much of Joseph's life was spent in exile, in the center of the most cosmopolitan society of his time. Yet, he remained untouched by the lure of the material world and unbowed in his religious faith.

Joseph therefore symbolizes, more than any of the Patriarchs or the rest of the 12 tribes, the essence of the Jewish people. As we stand on the threshold of the Messianic Era, we look back on the thousands of years of Jewish exile spent under the dominion of the nations of the world. Although we have, of necessity, concerned ourselves with the daily, mundane details of our lives, our relationship with G-d has remained as strong as ever. Indeed, our goal in life is not to withdraw from the world to concentrate solely on the spiritual; a Jew's task is to combine the two realms, imbuing the physical world with holiness. It is in our forefather Joseph's merit that we have been given the power to withstand any spiritual "famine" which could possibly threaten our existence as "Joseph's flock."

The Challenge of the Rich

By Elisha Greenbaum

They say a rich man is nothing but a poor man with money.

Joseph wasn't just rich, he was fabulously wealthy. Viceroy of Egypt, chief financier of Pharaoh, placed in charge of taxation and sanctioned by law to take a cut off the top on every financial transaction, he could easily have been forgiven for indulging in the temptation to let his bankroll control his brainwaves.

If absolute power corrupts absolutely, can you imagine the temptations implicit in being simultaneously invested with wealth, might and brains? What couldn't he do—and, more ominously, what could possibly stop him from doing so?

That Joseph managed to overcome these moral challenges is admirable; that he managed to utilize his talents for the common good is commendable; that he managed to triumph over the injustices that he had personally suffered and still approach the world with integrity is remarkable.

Joseph had suffered horribly. Kidnapped as a youth and sold into slavery, he had been left decaying in a dungeon for years, the victim of false accusations. No one would have been surprised had these assaults on his person and spirit left Joseph with a twisted personality, determined to take his every revenge on a cruel world.

Joseph's ability to disregard these insults to self, and to set about saving the world from famine, is commemorated to this day. The Jewish people as a whole are compared to Joseph, and we are enjoined to emulate him, the "great provider" (Psalms 80:2).

Joseph was known as the great provider not only for the humanitarian aid he extended to the impoverished, but also because of the spiritual legacy he left behind, standing in good stead for us, his spiritual heirs. We can speculate that the personality traits that helped Joseph live through the hard times, maintaining his faith while impoverished and in pain, were the very qualities that allowed him to maintain a true perspective even when the hand dealt to him in the great card game of life changed for the better.

If I pray to G-d during the times of sorrow, said Joseph, trusting that this too is a stage in the divine plan, shouldn't I draw on those reservoirs of faith and be there for others when my circumstances change for the better?

Without Joseph's example, most of us would at best hope to maintain a muddled equilibrium on our journey. Play it safe. Don't stick your head up too high, in fear of getting it blown off. Live life small. True, the highs are not so stupendous, but neither will the troughs be too intimidating.

It takes a Joseph to demonstrate the strength of character we must aspire to, to live a life of faith, nobility and courage, even in times of hardship and poverty, and to keep the faith even when the good times are rolling.

Slice of LIFE

Tefillin in Dachau

by Rabbi Yosef Wallis

While he was in Dachau, a Jew who was being taken to his death suddenly flung a small bag at Judah Wallis. He caught it, thinking it might contain a piece of bread. Upon opening it, however, he was disturbed to discover a pair of tefillin. Judah was very frightened because he knew that were he to be caught carrying tefillin, he would be put to death instantly. So he hid the tefillin under his shirt and headed for his bunkhouse.

In the morning, just before the roll call, while still in his bunkhouse, he put on the tefillin. Unexpectedly, a German officer appeared. He ordered him to remove the tefillin, noted the number on Judah's arm, and ordered him to go straight to the roll call.

At the roll call, in front of thousands of silent Jews, the officer called out Judah's number and he had no choice but to step forward. The German officer waved the tefillin in the air and screamed, "Dog! I sentence you to death by public hanging for wearing these!"

Judah was placed on a stool and a noose was placed around his neck. Before he was hanged, the officer said in a mocking tone, "Dog, what is your last wish?" "To wear my tefillin one last time," Judah replied.

The officer was dumbfounded. He handed Judah the tefillin. As Judah put them on, he recited the verse that many say while winding the tefillin around the fingers: "I will betroth you to me forever and I will betroth you to me with righteousness, and with justice, and with kindness, and with mercy, and I will betroth you to me with fidelity, and you shall know G-d."

In silence, the entire camp looked on at the Jew with a noose around his neck, and tefillin on his

head and arm, awaiting his death for the "crime" of observing this mitzva. Even women from the adjoining camp were lined up at the barbed wire fence that separated them from the men's camp, compelled to watch this ominous sight.

As Judah turned to the silent crowd, he saw tears in many people's eyes. Even at that moment, as he was about to be hanged, he was shocked: Jews were crying! How was it possible that they still had tears left to shed? And for a stranger? Where were those tears coming from? Impulsively, in Yiddish, he called out, "Yidden (Jews), don't cry. With tefillin on, I am the victor! Don't you understand? The victory is mine!"

The German officer understood the Yiddish and was infuriated. He said to Judah, "You dog, you think you are the victor? Hanging is too good for you. You are going to get another kind of death."

Judah, my father, was taken from the stool, and the noose was removed from his neck. He was forced into a squatting position and two large rocks were placed under his armpits. Then he was told that he would be receiving 25 lashes to his head - the head on which he had dared to place tefillin. The officer told him that if he dropped even one of the rocks from his armpits, he would be shot immediately. In fact, because this was such an extremely painful form of death, the officer advised him, "Drop the rocks now. You will never survive the 25 lashes to the head. Nobody ever does." "No," Judah responded, "I won't give you the pleasure."

At the 25th lash, Judah lost consciousness and was left for dead. He was about to be dragged to a pile of corpses, and then burned in a ditch, when another Jew saw him, shoved him to the side, and covered his head with a rag, so people wouldn't realize he was alive. Eventually, after he recovered consciousness, he crawled to the nearest bunkhouse that was on raised piles, and hid under it until he

was strong enough to come out under his own power. Two months later he was liberated.

During the hanging and beating episode, a 17-year-old girl had been watching from the women's side of the fence. After the liberation, she made her way to the men's camp and found Judah. She walked over to him and said, "I've lost everyone. I don't want to be alone any more. I saw what you did that day when the officer wanted to hang you. Will you marry me?"

The rest is history. The couple walked over to the Klausenberger Rebbe and requested that he perform the marriage ceremony. The Klausenberger Rebbe, whose own Kiddush Hashem is legendary, wrote out a ketuba (marriage contract) by hand from memory and married them. I, Rabbi Yosef Wallis, their son, keep and cherish that ketuba to this day.

After the above story appeared in "Sichat Hashavua," Lamplighter's sister publication in Israel, a subscriber called the Sichat Hashavua office. Mr. Lasky, a 95-year-old man, asked for the phone number of Judah Wallis's son, Rabbi Yosef Wallis, Director of Arachim. When asked why he wanted the number, Mr. Lasky stated, "I was in Dachau, together with this Judah Wallis. However, I never knew that he survived the beating. I always wanted to thank him for letting me put on his tefillin in Dachau. Now, at least, I can thank his son."

After receiving the phone call, Rabbi Wallis visited Mr. Lasky. Mr. Lasky then thanked him for the tefillin his father had lent him.

"I am certain," said Mr. Lasky, "that the tefillin that I wore in Dachau protected me in the camp and gave me long life and health."

Rabbi Wallis commented, "Until now, I never found anyone to validate my father's story. Now I have an eye witness. The circle of history has now come full circle."

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ISSUE 1277

SOUL COFFEE

Every moment that your soul inhabits this world, she can provide delight to her Maker above.

After 70, 80, maybe 120 years, your soul will ascend to a place above, a place of ecstasy as great as your soul can experience without dissolving into nothingness.

And what is that ecstasy?

No more than a trickle of the pleasure G-d has from the labor of your soul here, now.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

I stopped Believing in G-d After the Holocaust

The following is a freely translated excerpt from a letter by the Rebbe to a young woman who wrote to him with several questions regarding faith and religion, and prefaced her letter with the statement, "I do not believe in G-d, having found no convincing proof of His existence." In his reply the Rebbe discusses at some length the logical and moral necessity for belief in G-d, and addresses her questions, which included the protestation "Where was G-d during the Holocaust?" He then adds:

... I have written all of the above in reply to your letter. In truth, however, not only do I not believe you when you say that you do not believe in G-d (G-d forbid), but it is also clear to me that you do not believe so either.

My proof of this is that on every occasion that you witness injustice in your surroundings, or when you think of the Holocaust perpetrated by Hitler (may his name be blotted out), as you mention in your letter, you are outraged. But if it were the case that the world has no Ruler and Planner, why should it surprise you that there transpire unjust things, and that whoever is bigger and more powerful than his fellow swallows him alive?

This applies not only to events on the scale of the Holocaust, but to the routine flow of our daily lives, in which every time we perceive something that is wrong and unjust, this disturbs our tranquility, since we are convinced that things should not be this way. But why shouldn't they? The physical substance of the universe is not moral, and neither are the plants and animals . . . Obviously, our outrage over the injustice we see derives from something higher than the physical reality—higher, even, than man. This "something" exists within every human heart and is the source of the conviction, shared by every human being, that there is right and wrong, and that the world ought to conform to what is right. Thus, when we witness a wrong, we immediately seek an explanation: Why is it so? What has caused something to be other than what it ought to be?

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

Ego Issues

Question: *How can I rid myself of my ego? As hard as I try, it keeps coming back. I have meditated, fasted, taken vows of silence - but after years of work, my ego is still there.*

Answer: Fighting your ego is like trying to think about nothing. The harder you try, the further you get from your goal. As long as you are taking yourself so seriously, you are feeding into your ego. Even if you are fighting your ego, it's still all about you.

A desire to be spiritual can also be self-centered. Fasting can be just as self-satisfying as a good meal. As long as it is you who calls the shots and decides what is high and holy, then you remain under your ego's spell.

There is only one way you can truly transcend your ego: do a mitzvah. A mitzvah is a divine command as communicated in the Torah. Doing a mitzvah means doing something just because G-d wants you to, and for no other reason.

Whether the mitzvah feels good, like resting on Shabbat, or seems totally weird, like wrapping tefillin on your arm; whether it is as easy as putting up a mezuzah on your doorpost or as hard as honoring your parents, when you do a mitzvah you go beyond the parameters of human and touch the divine - you are doing not what you feel like but rather what G-d asks of you.

The mitzvah life is about not taking ourselves so seriously, because we are only here to serve others - both G-d and our fellow human beings. Even self-improvement, in the mitzvah world, is only important because G-d wants us to refine ourselves.

Do a mitzvah today and focus not on yourself, but on your purpose. When you do, the weight of ego is lifted off your shoulders, and you are free.

A WORD

from the Director

We are currently in the month of Tevet. The word "Tevet" is related to the Hebrew word "tov," meaning "good." Early on, it contains the happy date of "Hei Tevet" when the ownership of the Lubavitch Library was legally affirmed.

However, we also commemorate sad events, most especially the Tenth of Tevet. The Tenth of Tevet (this year coinciding with January 8) is the day on which the evil king Nebuchadnezzar laid siege upon Jerusalem, which eventually led to the destruction of the first Holy Temple, and the Babylonian Exile. The tenth of Tevet is considered an especially solemn day, because it is the first in a series of events which led to the present exile. Therefore it is a day to reflect upon all of those events and the actions that led to them, and to reflect upon which of our own actions need improving in order hasten the end of exile and prepare for the imminent Redemption.

And yet, as stated previously, Tevet is connected to good. We see from this that we have the power to transform bad into good, sorrow into joy, darkness into light, and exile into redemption. Since Tevet marks the beginning of the calamitous events which befell our people, our Sages named this month "Tevet" to inspire the positive energy that is within every one of us.

Tevet has the added significance of being connected to the number ten, as Tevet is the tenth month of the year. Additionally, we commemorate the siege of Jerusalem on the tenth day of the tenth month.

Ten is a number of great power. Yom Kippur is on the tenth day of Tishrei. G-d gave us ten commandments. The Torah mentions nine times that the Jews sang to G-d and the tenth song will be song with the coming of Moshiach.

We must harness this additional power to fulfill the service of Tevet, which is to transform the darkness into light.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

The eighth, ninth and tenth days of the month of Tevet are each considered dark days in the history of Israel. At one time each of the three days was observed by a fast. Today we fast only on the tenth. What happened on these three days?

The 8th of Tevet marks the completion of the translation of the Bible into Greek, known as the Septuagint.

The 9th of Tevet marks the passing of Ezra and Nechemiah who led the Jews exiled in Babylon back to Jerusalem.

The 10th of Tevet marks the beginning of Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in the year 586 BCE.

Ptolemy II ruled over the Land of Israel with a friendly attitude toward his Jewish subjects. He was a great friend of books, and his gigantic library contained hundreds of thousands of volumes of all the creative authors of ancient times.

At the suggestion of his librarians, he approached the Jewish people for a Greek translation of the books of the holy Bible. Elazar, the High Priest, who was then at the head of the Jewish state in the Holy Land, sent him seventy of the greatest Jewish sages. They were well versed in the Greek language and knew all the meanings and interpretations of the text of the Bible in the Written and Oral tradition.

When the sages arrived at his palace, King Ptolemy gave them a royal welcome. He honored them with feasts and gifts. He then sent them off to a small island not far from Alexandria. There, each sage was placed in a separate room. "Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher," he commanded each one. They were to translate the Bible into Greek while confined to their rooms. None of the sages was allowed to communicate with each other.

Miraculously, each individual translation agreed on every point, even on the most difficult passages in the Bible. There were a number of places where each sage intentionally altered the literal translation. Yet, in the end, all of the sages had made the same changes despite the fact that they could not communicate with each other.

For instance, the first verse of the Torah, "B'reishit Bara Elokim" could have been translated literally - "In the beginning created G-d." This might easily have been misinterpreted to mean that a deity "In the beginning created G-d." However, every sage translated the verse: "G-d created in the beginning...." They also translated "we will make man" to "I will make man," lest people say that G-d has a dual nature.

The Egyptian ruler and his scholars were amazed at the miraculous feat, and they rightly honored the scholars upon the completion of the translation. The "Septuagint" (Latin for seventy) became one of the most important documents of Jewish and world literature.

It contains not only all the books of the Bible, but also works

not included in the Bible that were largely lost in their original Hebrew.

The Jews of Egypt were greatly elated by this translation of the Bible into Greek. For many centuries they celebrated the day of completion, the eighth of Tevet, as a Jewish holiday.

However, the sages of the Holy Land considered the eighth of Tevet as a day of sorrow for the Jewish people. They all saw an awesome act of G-d in it, for the matter evoked general wonder in non-Jewish eyes. The day was nevertheless considered a day as tragic as the day on which the golden calf was made.

According to the Talmud, the matter was likened to a lion captured and imprisoned. Before his imprisonment, all feared the lion and fled from his presence. Once imprisoned, all came to gaze at him, saying, "Where is his strength now?"

As long as the Torah was in the hands of Israel and was interpreted by the Sages in its own language--Hebrew--it evoked reverence, and many feared to cast blemish upon it. Even a non-Jew who desired to study the Torah had no contact with the Torah until he had acquired a knowledge of the Holy tongue and the prescribed ways for understanding the Torah.

Once the Torah was imprisoned in Greek translation, it was as if the Torah were divested of reverence. Whoever wished could now come and gaze at her. Whoever wished to fault her, could now do so.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Judah approaches Joseph to plead for the release of Benjamin, offering himself as a slave to the Egyptian ruler in Benjamin's stead. Upon witnessing his brothers' loyalty to one another, Joseph reveals his identity to them. "I am Joseph," he declares. "Is my father still alive?"

The brothers are overcome by shame and remorse, but Joseph comforts them. "It was not you who sent me here," he says to them, "but G-d. It has all been ordained from Above to save us, and the entire region, from famine."

The brothers rush back to Canaan with the news. Jacob comes to Egypt with his sons and their families—seventy souls in all—and is reunited with his beloved son after 22 years. On his way to Egypt he receives the divine promise: "Fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again."

Joseph gathers the wealth of Egypt by selling food and seed during the famine. Pharaoh gives Jacob's family the fertile land of Goshen to settle, and the children of Israel prosper in their Egyptian exile.

CANDLE LIGHTING



| | Shabbos 6-7 January | |
|------------|---------------------|------|
| | Begins | Ends |
| Melbourne | 8:28 | 9:32 |
| Adelaide | 8:15 | 9:17 |
| Brisbane | 6:30 | 7:27 |
| Darwin | 6:59 | 7:52 |
| Gold Coast | 6:29 | 7:27 |
| Perth | 7:09 | 8:09 |
| Sydney | 7:52 | 8:53 |
| Canberra | 8:04 | 9:06 |
| Launceston | 8:30 | 9:38 |
| Auckland | 8:26 | 9:29 |
| Wellington | 8:39 | 9:47 |
| Hobart | 8:34 | 9:44 |
| Byron Bay | 7:30 | 8:28 |

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYIGASH • 8 TEVES • 6 JANUARY

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| FRIDAY NIGHT: | CANDLE LIGHTING: | 8.28 PM |
| | MINCHA: | 8.35 PM |
| | KABBOLAS SHABBOS: | 9.05 PM |
| SHABBOS DAY: | LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: | 9.44 AM |
| | SHACHARIS: | 10.00 AM |
| | MINCHA: | 8.20 PM |
| | SHABBOS ENDS: | 9.32 PM |
| TUESDAY FAST DAY 10 TEVES: | FAST STARTS/DAWN: | 4.23 AM |
| | MINCHA: | 2.10, 8.20 PM |
| | FAST ENDS/MAARIV: | 9.17 PM |
| WEEKDAYS: | SHACHARIS: | 8.00/9.15/10.00 AM |
| | MINCHA: | 8.35 PM |
| | MAARIV: | 9.20 PM |