

LAMPLIGHTER

29 Teves
Parshas Va'eira
Shabbos Rosh
Chodesh
1280
27 January
5777/2017

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Va'eira, we read about the plagues G-d brought upon the Egyptians. On the simplest level, the plagues were intended to punish the Egyptians for enslaving the Jews and refusing to set them free. But the Torah tells us there was an even deeper purpose behind them: "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the L-rd."

The Egyptian people did not believe in G-d; the plagues were meant to educate them about the Creator and His power. As Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel explained, Pharaoh denied three things: the existence of G-d, the concept of Divine Providence (that G-d oversees and is intimately involved in everything that goes on in the world), and G-d's ability to perform miracles that transcend the laws of nature. When G-d brought the plagues upon the Egyptians, all three of these erroneous beliefs were publicly disproved: The first three plagues demonstrated that G-d exists; the second three plagues established His Divine Providence; and the next three plagues taught Pharaoh that G-d can indeed act in a supernatural manner.

Significantly, however, the Torah mentions an additional reason for G-d's having brought the plagues: to teach the Jewish people about His greatness: "That you may tell in the ears of your child, and of your grandchildren, what things I have done in Egypt...that you may know that I am the L-rd." In other words, in addition to the effect they were supposed to have on the Egyptians, the plagues were meant as a lesson for the Jews, that they should "know that I am the L-rd." As Rashi notes, "The Holy One, blessed be He, brings punishment upon the nations in order that Israel should hearken and fear."

But why wasn't punishing the Egyptians and refuting their religious misconceptions enough of a reason? Why was it necessary for the Jews to be brought to a greater awareness of G-d?

The answer has to do with the reason G-d created the world in the first place. Our Sages teach that G-d created the world "for Israel and for the Torah." Accordingly, everything that happens in the world - every event and every little detail - has a direct connection to the Jewish people and the Torah, and is intended for their benefit.

For this reason, there had to be more "justification" than simply punishing the Egyptians and refuting their beliefs; the plagues would somehow have to be advantageous to the Jews. In fact, it was only when they caused the Jews to have a greater awareness of G-d that the Egyptian plagues completely fulfilled their objective.

The Greatest Miracle of All

By Naftali Silberberg

Miracles, miracles, and more miracles. That is the story of this week's Torah portion. Sticks transforming into serpents; water turning into blood; hail pellets with a core of fire; dreadful plagues of frogs, lice, wild beasts, pestilence and boils.

"Fairy tales," declares the skeptic. "Isn't it so convenient that all these miracles happened more than three thousand years ago? I'll believe it when I see it with my own eyes! Why didn't G-d send ten plagues upon the Nazis? What's with all the terrorists who blow up men, women and children? Did G-d perhaps forget how to make miracles?!"

The believing Jew, too, asks the same questions—albeit in a more respectful tone. Yes, he understands that G-d controls nature as well as the supernatural; but why did G-d choose to flip the switch, deciding to abandon the course of miracles and to run the world entirely through the laws of nature?

The book of Exodus introduces us to the era of openly nature-defying miracles, an era which lasted roughly a millennium. The Scriptures are filled with stories of prophets and miracles; in fact, it seems that the laws of nature were temporarily defunct. This era ended with the destruction of the first Holy Temple. Afterward, there were a few brief glimpses of the supernatural—such as the miracle of Chanukah—but after a few centuries these too vanished. For the past two thousand years we live in a double exile: physically, we were banished from our homeland; spiritually, we cannot perceive the G-dly hand which creates and directs all of creation. The reason for the emergence and subsequent disappearance of miracles is linked to the purpose of our very existence. Life in the Garden of Eden was idyllic, because evil was not yet part of the human character. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge imbued Adam and Eve with an intimate knowledge of physical and material desire. The moment they were expelled from the Garden is the moment when the story of the perpetual human struggle began: the struggle of choosing between the G-dly (good) or the opposite (egotism, hedonism, etc.). And actually, this is what G-d really wanted from the moment He considered the idea of creation: a free-choosing human being who would struggle with the evil and self-centeredness which are natural parts of his personality, and would triumph.

Miracles are comparable to training wheels. In the early years of our nationhood, G-d assisted us in our struggle by frequently and very openly interfering in the happenings of this world. A miracle opens the eyes to a higher truth, and motivates a person to want to connect to this higher reality through Torah and mitzvot. Ultimately, however, we need to mature. We need to be able to ride the bike with our own two wheels; we need to face life's struggle with our own strengths. The messianic era is the consummation of our relationship with G-d, and to earn this privilege we have to prove that the relationship is real to us, so real that we maintain this relationship even in the absence of any revealed reciprocation from G-d.

We are greatest miracle of all: our ability to steadfastly remain loyal to G-d throughout two thousand years of temptation, despite the spiritual blackness which surrounds us.

Slice of LIFE

The Letter that Changed my Life

by Nosson Avrohom

Rabbi Avraham Feiner, a prominent Belzer chasid, director of Beis Malka Educational Institutions for Women, and a councilman for the city of Jerusalem, is one of the more outstanding public figures of Orthodox Jewry in Jerusalem.

While he is fully occupied with work from morning until night, nevertheless, every person who asks for his help, receives a reply. "If my phone identifies the number, I get back to the caller as soon as I have time," he explains when I expressed my surprise that he got back to me within a few minutes of my own call.

"I grew up in Afula, situated in northern Israel. My parents were the only members of their entire extended families who survived the Holocaust. They chose to establish their residence in Afula, and as their only son, I decided to remain there after my wedding.

"The story I want to tell took place 36 years ago, several years after I got married. It began when our eldest son, our second children complained he was not feeling well. When his pains continued to intensify, we brought him to the HaEmek Hospital, located near Afula.

"The doctors examined and then re-examined him, and their diagnosis was far from positive. We never imagined that the situation could be so serious. The head of the department called us to his office to present us with the one and only available option: a complicated operation. The doctor added that even if the operation was successful, the child would sustain permanent damage. We were thunderstruck. The doctor explained to us that to delay the operation would literally constitute a danger to our child's life.

"The doctor scheduled the operation for the following week. In the meantime, as worries engulfed us, we continued our daily routine.

"I continued to attend the daily Talmud class held in Afula's central synagogue. Among the participants were several Chabad chasidim who had settled in the city at the direction of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. They included the Segal brothers, the Rosenbergs, and the Kaminkers, and they saw all too well my crestfallen state.

"They asked me to explain the reason for my mood. I decided to open up and tell them what was happening with our son and his serious medical condition.

"What's the problem?' they said. 'Write a letter to the Rebbe, with all of the details. The Rebbe has performed many a miracle with his holy blessings.'

"I listened to their words said with tremendous faith. Without wasting any time, I composed a letter about our son's medical condition. I added the doctors' recommendation and their opinion on the future damage that our son will suffer even if the operation goes well, and I asked that the Rebbe answer our plea with a blessing. The Lubavitchers told me not to become dejected if I didn't receive an immediate reply, encouraging me that the very fact that I sent the letter will guarantee the blessing.

"Thus, it came as quite a surprise when just three days after sending the letter, I received a reply. I couldn't imagine that an answer would come so quickly. The answer opened with, 'I will mention him in an auspicious hour at the Tzion of my holy and revered father-in-law, the Rebbe,' and then the Rebbe added in his own handwriting: 'Good news.' After the Rebbe's signature were another two typewritten lines:

"Postscript: He surely keeps the study schedule of Chumash, Tehillim, and Tanya [the custom established by the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe to study daily "Chitat," a section of the weekly Torah portion, Psalms and the basic book of Chabad philosophy, Tanya] and prays according to our custom.' Every day since receiving the Rebbe's

answer, I have studied Chitat and prayed according to Chabad custom.

"Two days after receiving the Rebbe's answer, we arrived at the hospital for the operation. Before the doctors brought our son into the operating room, they did another comprehensive series of tests. I was waiting at the entrance to the operating room, and I noticed a sudden commotion as they called in more doctors to review the results. At first, I didn't understand what all the excitement was about. Had the situation become worse? It turned out that just the opposite was true.

"The head doctor called us again into his office, where all the doctors were standing, and he said that he had never seen anything like this before. He held the results of the new tests together with those from the first time we had come. He informed us that everything had disappeared as if it had never been there... Not even a sign of a problem remained.

"When I heard the doctor's emotional words, said by someone who usually spoke with the utmost composure, I started to laugh from the release of tension. I took the opportunity, with all the doctors present, to tell them, 'I want to tell you the real reason for this development.'

"I told them about the letter we had sent to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and the reply that followed shortly thereafter.

"The senior physician gripped my hand and said that based on his experience, ailments like this just don't disappear into thin air!

"If I would have heard such a tale from someone else - that would be another matter entirely, but this was a miracle story that I experienced for myself. All of my friends have heard this story and are closely familiar with the facts involved.

"I'd just like to add," Rabbi Feiner concludes, "that this son grew up, got married, and is the father of six children. One of the medical diagnoses was that he would be unable to have children, but there's a Great Healer who runs the world. With the help of G-d Alm-ghty, his daughter will be getting married next month.

Published by **The Chabad House of Caulfield** in conjunction with the **Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.**

Editors: Shlomo Chaim Kesselman and Mendel Bacher

P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

The Lamplighter contains words from sacred writings. Please do not deface or discard.

ISSUE 1280

SOUL COFFEE

Why do parents love their children?

Because the lower world reflects the higher world. And above, there is a Parent and He loves His children.

Why do parents of an only child have such unbounded love for their child?

Because this is the truest reflection of the world above: Above, each one of us is an only child, and His love to us is unbounded.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

The Beard

I trust that it is unnecessary for me to emphasize to you at great length that marriage is, in accordance with the text of the blessing, "An everlasting edifice" (Binyan Adei-Ad), and that everything connected with it is not only of immediate and vital concern to the bride and bridegroom, but has a bearing also on their children. Therefore, it is self-understood that the maximum attention should be given to those factors which are essential to ensure a happy life partnership and an everlasting Jewish home. It is of no importance whatever in such a case to pay attention to the opinion of a neighbor or an acquaintance. An obvious example would be in the case where a deal is under consideration, involving a million dollars, when it would be foolish to pay attention to nickels and dimes, and thereby overlook essential conditions which affect the whole deal.

With specific reference to the matter about which you write in your letter and which seems to worry you, let me say this: When a young man has got the strength of will and the strength of character to wear a beard, and has done so for several years, even at a time when wearing a beard was not such a popular thing as it is now, not only in Orthodox circles but even in circles which have nothing to do with religion, it surely shows great courage and conviction, as well as a loyalty to obligations - all of which are essential qualities to ensure a happy family life.

It is surely also unnecessary for me to add that where religious boys do not wear a beard, it is not because they have the strength of character and conviction, rather because of the lack of them.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind what is written in the Zohar and in other holy sources, that this is a special channel and vessel to receive additional G—d's blessings, materially and spiritually.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

Is Deja-vu Real?

Question: I often get *déjà vu*, the sensation that I have already lived this moment before. It has happened when I travel to new destinations with people I have never met, and I feel that I have been there in that place, with the same people, hearing that very conversation before. Is there a Jewish explanation for this?

Answer: Some suggest that *déjà vu* is a sign of reincarnation. You feel you were here before because you were, in a previous life. Others explain that you had a predictive dream of the scene before it happened, and now you are seeing your dream materialize.

Maybe. There is a more mundane explanation. In my personal experience, I get *déjà vu* only when my brain is a little tired. What seems to be happening is that my conscious mind is idle, but my memory is working in the background. So I am feeling the sensation of remembering the scene in front of me before I actually experience it in the present. It is as if the scene has slipped past my awareness and gone straight into my memory.

There is a simple test to see whether *déjà vu* means you really have seen this before, or your mind is playing tricks on you. Can you blurt out what someone else is about to say before they even say it? If so, that must come from somewhere beyond intellect. But if you feel like you knew what they were going to say only after they already said it, I'm not so sure it means anything, except that you need to get some rest.

But then there is a far deeper type of *déjà vu*. It's called resonance. You hear an insight, a teaching, a truth, and although you have never heard it before, you know it is right. The idea rings true, seems familiar and comfortable. You are at home with it. It's what you always knew, but had never put into words. It resonates with you.

This happens when you study authentic Torah. You hear its message, and you know deep down that it is true. This is because you have heard it before. Our souls are taught the divine truths before we enter this world, but we forget it all at birth. However, an imprint remains, a faint memory, so we will know truth when we find it.

There are many false ideas and temporary fads that sound interesting and may gain much popularity, but on the deepest level they do not resonate with us. Our mission on earth is to search for the divine message, to put aside momentary distractions and regain that eternal truth, the truth our soul is waiting to hear again.

This is real *déjà vu*. Have you heard that before?

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbat is Rosh Chodesh Shevat, the first day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. It was on the first day of this month that Moses began his final repetition of the Torah and alluded to the sins of the Jewish people throughout their 40-year sojourn in the desert. Moses completed this repetition over a month later, on the seventh of Adar, the day of his passing.

As "Moses was the first redeemer and Moses will be the last redeemer," it should not come as a surprise that this month of Shevat has many connections to Moshiach and the Redemption.

The name Shevat relates to the Hebrew word "shevet" which means "staff." Shevet is associated with the concept of authority and kingship, as it is written, "The shevet will not depart from [the royal family of] Judah." The most perfect expression of the concept of royalty will be in the Era of the Redemption, when Moshiach will reign. For this reason, on the verse "And a shevet will arise in Israel," Maimonides comments, "This refers to the King Moshiach."

The word shevet also means "branch" or "shoot." In this context there is also a connection to Moshiach. On the verse "A shoot will emerge from the stem of Jesse" which begins a renowned prophecy concerning Moshiach's coming, the Metzudat David commentary states, "a shevet will emerge... the King Moshiach."

The connection between the month of Shevat and the Divine revelations that the world will experience in the Messianic Era is also apparent from the fact that it is the eleventh month. All existence is structured in a pattern of ten, and eleven alludes to a revelation that transcends this structure.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

The city of Nikolsberg, Moravia, was famous for its long chain of great rabbis reaching back almost a thousand years. The last in this line was the great Rebbe Shmuel Shmelke, a pupil of the Maggid of Mezeritch.

Rabbi Shmelke was a great Talmudic and legal genius, his advice was impeccable and his brotherly love was seemingly without limit. But despite his flawless character and selfless nature he was once the center of a controversy that only a miracle was able to quell.

A wealthy Jew in Nikolsberg, whom we will call Groisman, was sued by a poor man. After hearing the arguments from both sides, Reb Shmelke decided in favor of the poor man.

Groisman was livid. He would get his revenge! But he was clever about it. He began quietly complaining and, because he was rich, people listened. At first it was only his family and friends but slowly the circle widened. Within a few months the city became a cauldron of discontent.

Gradually Groisman's claims became public: Rabbi Shmelke is one of the Chasidim. He studies the mystical teachings of the Torah! Maybe tomorrow he'll make up a new religion!

One day, everyone in the city was called to a meeting in the Great Synagogue. The entire city packed into the huge prayer hall. Accusations were made. A heated debate ensued. Eventually, it was decided to take a vote. The vote was in favor of ousting the rabbi. Groisman had succeeded.

Suddenly the voice of the elderly shamash (sexton) rang out. "I must talk!" He waited until there was silence. "Two things I said I would never tell... but now I must." It was about ten years ago, soon after Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke became our rabbi. I was knocking on windows before sunrise to wake everyone for morning services. When I got to the rabbi's house I saw a light in his window. I looked in. He was studying Talmud with an ancient-looking Jew. I thought he might be one of the 36 hidden tzadikim (righteous people). When I saw him there again the next morning, I decided I'd ask.

"Later that day I spoke to the rabbi. 'What? You saw him?' he asked. Finally he answered, 'Well if you saw him I'll tell you. That was Elijah the prophet. But please don't talk about it.'

"A few days ago I saw him again, but this time it was really frightening. It was late at night and the rabbi was standing at the door escorting some people from his house. When they got to the door I saw them. One was the same Elijah the Prophet but the other... he was a king with royal garments, a crown, even a royal scepter! I was petrified with fear and awe.

"The rabbi escorted his guests a few steps then he returned to his house to continue his Torah study. I still don't know how I became so bold but I knocked on the rabbi's door, told him what I had just seen, and asked him for an explanation.

"The rabbi looked at me for a while, told me to sit down and explained. He said that a few weeks earlier in a certain town in Poland a tragedy occurred. There, there lived a simple Jewish artisan who was obsessed with hatred for idols and idolatry. The third of the Ten Commandments 'You shall not make a graven image...' burned in his heart; he spoke of it constantly.

"One night he ran into town and began smashing every statue he saw, including the ones in front of the church. He was caught by a crowd and beaten to death for his crime. It was with greatest difficulty that the Jewish community was able to convince the non-Jews that he acted alone.

The elders of the community refused to provide for his widow from the widow's fund. They argued that because he knew very well that he would be killed for his actions he was responsible for throwing away his life and his widow should be paid from the communal charity like all the other paupers rather than the more honorable and higher sum from the widow's fund.

"The widow went to the town's rabbis and they brought the case to our rabbi. Rebbe Shmelke was pouring through the holy books for a solution when the two people I mentioned visited him.

"The king was none other than Menasha, the idolatrous son of King Hezikaya! Since his death, over 2,000 years ago, he had been reincarnated time and time again to atone for his sins, among which was putting an idol in the Holy Temple! But his soul found no rest until it became incarnated in this Jewish artisan. His unexplainable hatred of idols was caused by Menasha's tormented soul seeking repentance.

"That is why he came to Rav Shmelke; to explain to him that the artisan was neither crazy nor suicidal, rather he was sacrificing his life to destroy idolatry and sanctify G-d's name; the only thing that would purify Menasha's soul. Reb Shmelke didn't tell me what he would decide but he did ask me to keep the matter quiet but I couldn't.

Now, my friends and brothers." The Shamash concluded. "I felt I had to tell you this so you should know what a holy Rabbi we have. I beg you not to be angry with him and I hope he won't be angry with me for telling." Then turning to Mr. Groisman he said, "Surely if he decided against you it was for the benefit of everyone involved including you...or at least your soul."

The group dispersed and the impeachment was canceled.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

G-d reveals Himself to Moses. Employing the "four expressions of redemption," He promises to take out the Children of Israel from Egypt, deliver them from their enslavement, redeem them, and acquire them as His own chosen people at Mount Sinai; He will then bring them to the land He promised to the Patriarchs as their eternal heritage.

Moses and Aaron repeatedly come before Pharaoh to demand in the name of G-d, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness." Pharaoh repeatedly refuses. Aaron's staff turns into a snake and swallows the magic sticks of the Egyptian sorcerers. G-d then sends a series of plagues upon the Egyptians.

The waters of the Nile turn to blood; swarms of frogs overrun the land; lice infest all men and beasts. Hordes of wild animals invade the cities; a pestilence kills the domestic animals; painful boils afflict the Egyptians. For the seventh plague, fire and ice combine to descend from the skies as a devastating hail. Still, "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he would not let the children of Israel go, as G-d had said to Moses."

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 27-28 January	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	8:19	9:20
Adelaide	8:08	9:07
Brisbane	6:26	7:22
Darwin	7:02	7:53
Gold Coast	6:26	7:21
Perth	7:03	8:01
Sydney	7:46	8:44
Canberra	7:57	8:56
Launceston	8:19	9:23
Auckland	8:18	9:18
Wellington	8:28	9:32
Hobart	8:22	9:28
Byron Bay	7:26	8:22

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VA'EIRA SHABBOS ROSH CHODESH • 29 TEVES • 27 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8.19 PM
	MINCHA:	8.25 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.55 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.58 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.10 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9.20 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.20 PM
	MAARIV:	9.15 PM