

LAMPLIGHTER

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The number seven is a recurring motif in the Torah: Shabbat is the seventh day of the week; Shavuot falls exactly seven weeks after Passover; the Shmitta (Sabbatical) year is the seventh year; and the Jubilee year comes after every seven Shmitta years. We see the significance of this number in many other instances as well.

Seven symbolizes the cyclical nature of the world, which was created in six days; the seventh day completed the creation. The whole cycle of the world revolves around the number seven.

At the end of last week's Torah portion, we find mention of the number seven - the "seven days of consecration" of the Sanctuary.

But at the beginning of this week's portion, Shemini, we come across an entirely new theme, the concept of eight. Shemini - meaning "eighth" begins with the words: "It came to pass on the eighth day."

The seven days of consecration culminated in the dedication of the altar on the seventh day. The next day, referred to as "the eighth day," the dedication of Aaron and his sons took place - something not directly related to the consecration of the Sanctuary itself. Why then is this considered the eighth day, since there seems to be no connection to the previous seven?

The question appears even more valid when we look at what eight symbolizes. While seven stands for wholeness and completion within nature, eight symbolizes that which is on an even higher level than nature - the aspect of G-dliness which is not confined to the laws of creation. We learn that on the eighth day "G-d appeared unto you" - there was an even greater revelation of G-dliness. If this is so, why did the supernatural revelation (the number "8") come as a continuation of what occurred on the first seven days? Why did the supernatural revelation come only after the revelation of G-d in nature?

Furthermore, all of the great revelations of G-dliness that are to take place after Moshiach comes, are dependent upon our deeds now. How can it be that our actions, which take place in this limited, finite world, can bring about revelations of holiness that are above the laws of nature?

G-d asks of us only that which we are capable of doing. If we give G-d our whole effort, our complete dedication, then we receive the G-dly revelations as a gift from Above. If we give G-d the whole "seven" of our natural abilities, He will grant us the revelations of holiness indicated by the number eight.

The revelations in the Sanctuary which occurred on the eighth day were only possible after the Jews did all that was required of them during the first seven. Even though G-dliness, as it exists above nature, is infinitely higher than what we can attain through our own deeds alone, G-d supplied the rest after we did our part.

And this power every Jew has - the ability to relate to G-d even as He exists above natural law.

No Deposit, No Return

By Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

What would one expect to grow from an untilled field? Surely nothing more than thorns and weeds. It would take a miracle for useful crops to grow.

How about if a store is left untended? No purchases will be made and the merchandise might even be stolen. Certainly, no profit will be made.

These examples reflect a dynamic woven into the fabric of our existence. As the soda bottle profoundly teaches: No deposit, no return.

This concept is reflected in the personal realm, as well. There is no such thing as spirituality without sacrifice. A person cannot expect to develop himself and grow unless he invests effort.

Sefirat HaOmer, the counting of the Omer, which joins the holidays of Passover and Shavuot, teaches precisely this lesson. Before the exodus, G-d told Moses: "When you have led the people out of Egypt, you will serve G-d on this mountain." Like schoolchildren ticking off the days until vacation, the Jews eagerly counted the days until they received the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Ever since, our people have counted the 49 days from the second day of Passover until Shavuot in fulfillment of G-d's command to count the Omer.

We are, however, not only counting days. Our mystic tradition, the Kabala, teaches us that our emotional makeup consists of 49 different attributes. Each of the days we count corresponds to one of these attributes. When counting the Omer, we should also be refining ourselves and our characters, working to make ourselves more complete and more sensitive.

This is also alluded to by the Hebrew word "sefira" which mean "counting." Every night we count one of these 49 days. But sefira also means "shining." During these 49 days, we should endeavor to make our personalities shine.

On Passover, G-d liberated the Jews from slavery; they witnessed Divine miracles of immense magnitude. Nevertheless, the people's inner selves - who they were and how they thought - remained unchanged. G-d took the Jews out of Egypt, but He did not take Egypt out of the Jews. That task, the cultivation of their spiritual personalities, He left to the people themselves.

This pattern is not merely a story of the past. Every year on Passover, G-d takes us out of Egypt, giving us the opportunity to experience spiritual liberation. But after Passover, He asks us to internalize that experience, to make our spiritual heights part of our own conceptual framework. And the responsibility for this endeavor He entrusts to us.

We cannot expect spiritual growth and heightened consciousness to happen by itself or to be granted to us from Above on a consistent basis. Instead, Judaism has always put the emphasis on personal initiative. It is we ourselves who will change ourselves.

Counting the Omer represents a systematic attempt to better ourselves. It is a time to focus on who we are, where we are going, and how that transition can be made in a systematic manner which will produce lasting change. It is a time to integrate our "selves," the way we usually think and feel, with our "super-selves," the innate spiritual potential which we all possess. This prepares us for Shavuot, reliving our acceptance of the Torah, which enables us to transform ourselves and our environment into a dwelling for G-d.

Slice of LIFE

Stories of Divine Providence

by Rabbi Uriel Vigler

Over seventy years ago, the Nazis tried to destroy our nation. They succeeded in killing six million of us.

Seventy-two years ago, a little girl, Jacqueline Levy, was born in Paris, France. A beautiful Jewish princess. An infant whose life was in peril simply because she was born Jewish, in Europe, in 1940.

The Nazis searched for her. They wouldn't allow even one little baby to live. She was forced to live in hiding with a Christian family until the end of the war. She was forced to conceal her Jewish identity, required to live a double life, but ultimately she survived. Her entire extended family was massacred. But although Jacqueline lived, moved away and raised her own family, she was never able to fully re-embrace her Jewish identity.

Until now. Fast-forward to December, 2012. Jacqueline's grandson, Sam, only 13 years old, found his own way back to Judaism. He has been coming to our Chabad Israel Center on the Upper East Side together with his mother Julia. So strongly did he want to commit to it, he underwent a brit mila (circumcision), despite his age and the pain he knew it would involve. He reclaimed his Jewish heritage - 72 years after his grandmother lost hers. He embraced the covenant of Abraham, forging an eternal bond with G-d and His commandments.

We often think we're in charge of our lives, but it's important to remember that G-d has the final say. And sometimes He reminds us of that. The evil Nazis sought to kill this baby girl, and while she was fortunate to live through those hellish years, they did manage to snuff out her connection to Judaism. Nevertheless, the same way G-d redeemed the Jews from Egypt and made them His nation, He led Jacqueline's grandson back as well.

May Sam's courage and commitment

serve as a lesson for us: A reminder that it's never too late, and that G-d has a way of bringing His children back, even decades later.

And when Sam became Shmuel, and a full-fledged member of the Jewish nation, that was a true victory over the Nazis, 72 years later.

My friend Trevor* recently travelled to China for a month. He took a full four weeks off from work so he could really enjoy the beauty and history China has to offer.

Before he left I suggested he spend Shabbat at the Jewish center there, and asked him to send my warmest regards to the Chabad rabbi, Shimon Freundlich.

Now, Trevor is far from religious. He frequents our Chabad Center because he's a dear friend of mine (and because we have great Kiddush food!), but he actually considers himself an atheist. Naturally, tracking down a Chabad rabbi in China wasn't exactly on his agenda. After all, this was a vacation - an opportunity to escape day-to-day life. In his own words, "Rabbi, there are approximately 1.4 billion people living in China. What are the odds of me meeting the Chabad rabbi while I'm there?"

Well, when Trevor showed up at shul upon his return, we asked him to share some of his experiences with us.

"Before I left," he began, "Rabbi Vigler asked me to visit the Chabad rabbi in China. I refused and I thought that was that. I had a great month away, and it was time to head back to the US. I went to the airport and who do I see? A rabbi who looks pretty much like my rabbi. I was sure he must be Chabad. So I asked him, 'Excuse me, are you Chabad?' And he was! It was Rabbi Freundlich. Imagine my surprise when not only did I meet him, but we were on the same flight sitting right next to one another for the 14 hour journey back home. And guess what we ended up discussing for most of those 14 hours? Religion, of course. Unbelievable!"

Unbelievable is right.

Nine and a half years ago, my wife and I moved into an apartment in the Normandie Court on 95th and 3rd. We were thrilled to be able to open our Chabad center out of our apartment. We hosted Shabbat dinners and Torah classes, but it quickly became apparent that we simply didn't have enough space for all the activities we wanted to do!

For the last couple of years we have been searching for a bigger apartment, and a few weeks ago we finally found something to our liking. After we looked at

the apartment and decided we were satisfied with it, we gave our paperwork to the broker.

Slight problem.

Since our new apartment is bigger, and therefore more expensive, than our current apartment, the broker wanted to know, "Who will be your guarantor?"

My mind immediately jumped to that week's Torah portion, which happened to be Yitro, where G-d asks the Jews "Who will be your guarantor?" for keeping the Torah. At first the nation replies "Abraham!" but that is not good enough. "Isaac? Jacob? Moses?" they keep guessing but each time G-d says, "No, not good enough." Finally, they tell G-d, "The children will be our guarantors. Our children will ensure we pass on the Torah to the next generation and the generations after that," and at last G-d is satisfied and accepts their bid.

With this story fresh in my mind (I had been reading it to my children the night before!), I told the broker, "My children will be my guarantor." She might have thought I was crazy, but patiently said, "That definitely won't work..."

So I explained. In the Torah, the world "child" can also refer to a person's good deeds. So I was suggesting that our reputation for doing good deeds could be our guarantor.

"Chabad Israel Center has a strong track record and sterling reputation for helping people and spreading warmth and kindness. We are honest people who stand for morality and integrity. This is the backbone of our faith. If we say we will pay the rent then we will pay it. Ask around about us and you can find out," we suggested. Our broker looked taken aback and highly skeptical, but agreed to try the landlord.

Well, lo and behold, last week the broker phoned us to let us know that our offer was successful and we would soon be moving into our new apartment!

We look forward to making our new apartment a place where we can again host Shabbat dinners, Torah classes, and other community events.

Rabbi Uriel and Shevy Vigler direct Chabad Israel Center on the Upper East Side. These stories are from Rabbi Vigler's blog on chabadic.com.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Importance of Assisting Brides and Grooms

Excerpt from a letter written to the Montreal Jewish Institute for Brides & Grooms

I hope that you are making efforts not only to maintain your activities in high gear, but also to extend them from time to time. For, needless to say, a marriage in Jewish life is an institution which is called Binyan Adei Ad—an “everlasting edifice.” And in order that it should be so, it is necessary that everything connected with a marriage of a bride and groom should be in full compliance with the instructions of our Torah, which is called Toras Chaim, because it is not only the source of everlasting life in the Hereafter, but also the true guide in life on this earth. The analogy of a marriage to an “everlasting edifice” is not merely a figure of speech, but there is an important idea and instruction in it. It is that just as in the case of any structure, the first and most important thing is to ensure the quality and durability of the foundation, lacking which all the efforts put into the walls and roof and decorations, etc., would be of no avail, and so it is in regard to a Jewish marriage which, first of all, must be based on the foundation of the Torah and Mitzvoth; then follows the blessing of the joy and rejoicing of the beloved couple for the rest of their life.

In view of the above, it is also clear that there is a standing obligation upon everyone to help a bride and groom to establish such an everlasting edifice, and it would be totally unjustified to think that it is a matter of their own personal life, in which no one has a right to interfere. Surely when one sees someone bent on harming herself or himself and their children, or about to do something which might lead to self-destruction, G-d forbid, one will not consider it “interference” or “encroachment” to try to prevent that person from harming himself. Similarly, when there is an opportunity to help someone with a lasting benefit, surely it is an elementary duty so to do, how much more so where the benefit is a truly everlasting one.

I send you my prayerful wishes to continue your good work in helping young couples to establish truly Jewish homes, homes that are illuminated with the light of the Torah and Mitzvoth, above all with the observance of the laws and regulations of Taharas Hamishpocho. May you do so with deep inspiration and with ever-growing Hatzlocho.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

Lost Tribe in New Guinea?

Question: Did you see the video of the tribe in Papua New Guinea singing the Shema Prayer in Hebrew? I found it fascinating! Are they one of the lost tribes of Israel?

Answer: It's a cute clip, but don't be fooled. Their ability to sing Hebrew songs doesn't make them Jewish. I can sing Awimbawe but that doesn't make me a long lost African. And anyway, parts of that clip just don't add up.

If indeed they were a lost tribe of Israel, clutching to their traditions for thousands of years in spite of their dislocation from other Jews, why do they chant the Shema in a distinctively modern European tune? Why do they sing it in English after singing it in Hebrew? And what is the explanation for the placards they display with English quotes from the Bible?

The explanation is simple. These tribesmen are not performing an ancient rite; they are singing the Hebrew songs that missionaries have taught them.

Jews do not missionize. We don't believe in converting the world to our ways. Non-Jews don't need to fulfill the 613 commandments given to the Jews. But there certainly is an ethical obligation of monotheism - belief in one G-d Who expects us to live morally. In fact, this is actually what they are declaring in the shema prayer they are singing, “The L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One.” If you continue your search for this tribe and need some ideas of what to teach, tell them about the Seven Noahide Laws for all mankind.

A WORD

from the Director

We are now in the period of "sefirat ha'omer" (the counting of the omer), the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot. In the same way the Jewish people could hardly wait until the Torah was given at Mount Sinai after they left Egypt, so too do we count each of these 49 days in eager anticipation of the festival.

The Hebrew word "sefira," which is usually translated as "counting," is also related to the word "sapir," "sapphire," connoting illumination and the diffusion of light. The days of sefira are dedicated to purifying and refining our character traits, each day representing a different aspect of our soul-powers to be illuminated. Regardless of our "success rate" in the past we must never give up, for there is nothing in the world that cannot be improved by an infusion of spiritual light.

This is also one of the reasons it is customary to study Ethics of the Fathers on Shabbat afternoons between Passover and Shavuot. A compendium of the moral advice and counsel of our Sages, it is especially appropriate during this seven-week period of self-improvement.

Individual character refinement is the preparation for the giving of the Torah on Shavuot. The Torah was given to make peace in the world. Its purpose is to sanctify the material plane of reality, and unify all of the world's disparate elements. Before we receive the Torah on Shavuot, it is therefore appropriate to prepare ourselves in microcosm, by working on our character traits and increasing our sense of Jewish unity.

In general, the counting of the omer is intended to refine our souls as well as the world at large, ultimately leading to the Final Redemption. At that time, we will proceed together with the entire Jewish people "on the clouds of heaven" to the Land of Israel, to Jerusalem, and to the Holy Temple.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

There was once a Jewish family too poor to pay their rent to the local poritz (landowner). As a result they lost their home and were thrown into debtor's prison. Every day, bread and water were lowered down into the pit by means of a rope.

After a while, the guard in charge of providing them with food took pity on the unfortunate family. One day, after the poritz had left, he yelled down to them to tie themselves securely to the rope when he lowered it. He hoisted them up and set them free. The grateful Jews thanked the man and fled, but in their haste to escape they did not take their newborn son along.

The poritz was furious when he found out what happened. He went into the pit so he could investigate for himself. Much to his shock, there was a tiny baby, swaddled and crying in a dark corner. The poritz's manager, who had no children of his own, asked the poritz for permission to adopt the abandoned infant. The poritz agreed and the child was raised in the gentile home, calling the man and woman who reared him Father and Mother. He was never told that he was adopted.

Growing up, the child was frequently taunted by the local children, who called him "Zhid" (Jew). Everyone in the insular village was aware of his origins except for the child himself. As he grew older he realized that something about his past was deliberately being kept from him, but his parents always managed to avoid giving him direct answers to his questions.

Finally, one day the boy cornered his mother and was especially persistent. Thus he found out that he was not the couple's biological son, and learned how his Jewish parents had escaped from the pit.

Although the youngster was not sure what a Jew was, he decided that one day he would join his brethren. His opportunity came a short time later, when he fled the village and ran to the next town. He approached the first person he met, who, it turned out, was the custodian of the local synagogue. "I am a Jew, and I want to be among Jews," he announced in Russian to the startled man. The custodian took him home, treated him like his own son, and taught the boy alef-beit. The eager student soon became proficient in Yiddish, learned how to pray and began to study Torah as well.

When he was ready to enter cheder the custodian warned him not to reveal anything about his past. At the age of Bar Mitzva, the custodian bought him a pair of tefilin. He continued in his studies until, several years later, he was already considered a great scholar. His new "father" sent him off to a yeshiva of higher learning in another city, where he quickly became one of the best students.

The young student roomed at an inn that was owned by a Chasid of the Chernobeler Rebbe. The Chasid proposed that the promising young man accompany him on his next trip to his Rebbe. The youth agreed.

Before going home they went to the Rebbe for a blessing. The Rebbe turned to the young man and said, "I am giving you an amulet. Wear it around your neck at all times. You and the rabbi

must open it together on your wedding day."

The young man returned to yeshiva. A short time later, someone approached the dean looking for a suitable husband for his daughter. The dean immediately thought of the young man, who quickly found favor in the eyes of his prospective father-in-law. A wedding date was set.

Right before the ceremony the young groom remembered the Chernobler Rebbe's instructions. He went to the rabbi and told him he had something to discuss with him in private. Once they were alone he took out the amulet, related the story, and together they opened it. Much to their surprise they saw the following words written inside: "It is forbidden to take a sister as a wife."

The rabbi was shocked and began to question the young man. The young man told him everything he knew of his early life.

Next, the rabbi spoke with the bride's father. While relating the young woman's life story, he happened to mention that a certain number of years ago (the age of the groom), the family had escaped debtor's prison, leaving an infant behind. At that moment, everyone understood that Divine Providence had led the long-lost son to his parents. The young man was none other than the infant left behind so many years before.

The grateful family was awed by the Chernobler Rebbe's foresight and holiness.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

On the eighth day, following the seven days of their inauguration, Aaron and his sons begin to officiate as kohanim (priests); a fire issues forth from G-d to consume the offerings on the altar, and the divine presence comes to dwell in the Sanctuary.

Aaron's two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu, offer a "strange fire before G-d, which He commanded them not" and die before G-d. Aaron is silent in face of his tragedy. Moses and Aaron subsequently disagree as to a point of law regarding the offerings, but Moses concedes to Aaron that Aaron is in the right.

G-d commands the kosher laws, identifying the animal species permissible and forbidden for consumption. Land animals may be eaten only if they have split hooves and also chew their cud; fish must have fins and scales; a list of non-kosher birds is given, and a list of kosher insects (four types of locusts).

Also in Shemini are some of the laws of ritual purity, including the purifying power of the mikvah (a pool of water meeting specified qualifications) and the wellspring. Thus the people of Israel are enjoined to "differentiate between the impure and the pure."

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

SHABBOS CHOL HAMOED PESACH • 18 NISAN • 14 APRIL

FRIDAY NIGHT: CANDLE LIGHTING: 5:37 PM
MINCHA: 5:45 PM
KABBOLAS SHABBOS: 6:10 PM

SHABBOS DAY: LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: 9:29 AM
SHACHARIS: 10:00 AM
MINCHA: 5:30 PM
SHABBOS ENDS: 6:33 PM

MONDAY EREV SHEVII SHEL PESACH: SHACHARIS: 8:00/9:15/10:00 AM
CANDLE LIGHTING: 5:34 PM
MINCHA: 5:40 PM
MAARIV: 6:20 PM

MONDAY SHEVII SHEL PESACH: SHACHARIS: 10:00 AM
MINCHA: 5:35 PM
MAARIV: 6:20 PM
CANDLE LIGHTING: after 6:30 PM

TUESDAY ACHARON SHEL PESACH: SHACHARIS: 10:00 AM
YIZKOR: after 11:30 AM
MINCHA: 5:00 PM
FOLLOWED BY MOSHIACH SEUDAH
YOM TOV ENDS/MAARIV: 6:29 PM

WEEKDAYS: SHACHARIS: 8:00/9:15/10:00 AM
MINCHA: 5:35 PM
MAARIV: 6:25 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING

	Shabbos April -		Pesach April -		
	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th
	Begins	Ends	Begins	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	5:37	6:33	5:34	6:30*	6:29
Adelaide	5:35	6:30	5:33	6:27*	6:26
Brisbane	5:14	6:06	5:12	6:04*	6:03
Darwin	6:24	7:13	6:23	7:12*	7:12
Gold Coast	5:12	6:04	5:10	6:02*	6:01
Perth	5:39	6:32	5:37	6:30*	6:29
Sydney	5:16	6:10	5:13	6:07*	6:06
Canberra	6:23	6:17	5:20	6:15*	6:14
Launceston	6:24	6:22	5:21	6:19*	6:18
Auckland	5:39	6:34	5:36	6:32*	6:30
Wellington	5:34	6:32	5:31	6:29*	6:27
Hobart	5:22	6:21	5:19	6:18*	6:16
Byron Bay	5:11	6:03	5:09	6:01*	6:00

*Light after the prescribed time, from a pre-existing flame

