

LAMPLIGHTER

20 Kislev
Parshas
Vayeishev
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

At first glance, this week's Torah portion, Vayeishev, chronicles the circumstances leading to Joseph's appointment as second in command over Egypt, subordinate only to Pharaoh. Yet, upon examination, we find that Joseph's story is synonymous with the history of the Jews.

Joseph, the pride of his father, at the age of 17 is suddenly plucked from his secure environment, family, and his country. Sold into slavery and finding himself in a foreign land, he must now cope with the most adverse circumstances. Joseph is not to blame, for all this has come about through no action of his own.

A lesser individual would have surely succumbed to bitterness, depression or indifference. But Joseph realized that he must deal with the reality which presented itself. As the servant of Potifar, he fulfilled his duties to the best of his ability. It soon became apparent even to Potifar that it was in Joseph's merit that his household enjoyed its material blessings.

This, then, is the task of every Jew: No matter how adverse the circumstances, each Jew must live up to his full potential and fulfill his duties to the best of his ability.

But how was Joseph repaid for his loyalty? He was thrown into prison! Why? Because he refused to betray his master by succumbing to the advances of the master's wife. Not only didn't Joseph's honesty and integrity bring him any positive benefits, these very qualities caused him to be incarcerated. Was Joseph discouraged? Did he reject his lifestyle and renounce his high standards? Joseph's response to adversity was to continue in the same path, acting honestly and in good faith. Eventually his behavior and virtue drew the attention of his jailers.

This is the history of the Jew as well: No matter how deprived and corrupt his surroundings, he remains undeterred from his faith in G-d and His Torah.

When Joseph noticed that two of his fellow inmates, Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, were distressed for some reason, he rushed to their aid, without thought of rejoicing at their misfortune or of taking revenge for the role they played in his downfall. Joseph could not bear to see people in need, and so he immediately offered his assistance. He was able to bring them relief by interpreting their respective dreams.

In return, Joseph did not ask for monetary payment or special treatment. He merely requested that the chief butler mention his name to Pharaoh when he was freed, which he didn't do. In his unbending faith in the goodness of man and in ultimate justice, Joseph believed that fairness would prevail if only Pharaoh was presented with the facts.

This theme has been played out time and again in Jewish history. Joseph learned the hard way that this world is full of lies and deception. Yet when he later found himself in a position of almost unlimited power, he refused to exact revenge on those who had harmed him. This is not the way of the Jew. Joseph faithfully used his office to steer the Egyptians and the whole world from potential catastrophe during the years of famine, enacting, for the first time, the historic role the Jews have played during their exile among the nations.

The Child in the Pit

By Yossy Goldman

There is high drama in the Bible this week as we read the story of Joseph and his brothers. Technicolor dream coats, sibling rivalry, snake-infested pits and attempted fratricide dominate the Parshah proceedings.

When the brothers plot to actually kill Joseph, Reuben, the eldest, makes a valiant effort to save Joseph's life, and suggests that instead they throw him into a pit. That would be sufficient to teach him a lesson, and no blood need be shed. In fact, according to Rashi, the Torah itself testifies that Reuben's intention was to save Joseph from his brothers and bring him back to their father.

But destiny had a different plan.

While Reuben was away, the brothers sold Joseph into slavery. When he returns to rescue him, the boy is gone and he rends his garments in grief.

But where was Reuben when the sale took place? Why wasn't he there with his brothers at the time? Where did he suddenly disappear?

Rashi gives two possible explanations: 1) It was his turn to go and serve his aged father. The brothers had a roster, and Reuben's time had come, so he was back at the ranch. 2) Reuben was busy doing teshuvah (repentance), with sackcloth and fasting, for the sin of interfering with his father's marital life (as per Genesis 35:22).

I remember hearing the Lubavitcher Rebbe ask: According to the second opinion, Reuben left Joseph in the pit to go and busy himself with "sackcloth and fasting," i.e. his own repentance for his sins. So let's take a look and see what happens as a result. Reuben is absent, so Joseph is sold into slavery and taken down to Egypt. There he is imprisoned on false charges and, one day, rises to sudden prominence by successfully interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. He becomes viceroy of Egypt, then meets his long-lost brothers when they come searching for food during the famine. After revealing his true identity, he brings his father Jacob and the entire family down to Egypt, where he supports and sustains them.

And that is precisely how the Jews became slaves in Egypt. It all started with Joseph being taken from the pit and sold to the Egyptians. Why? Because Reuben decided to be busy doing teshuvah! I remember the Rebbe thundering, "The whole Egyptian exile can be traced to Reuben's ill-timed teshuvah! When a young Jewish boy is languishing in the pit, this is not the time to be worrying about your own spiritual state. That is the time to save a Jewish child!"

Of course, teshuvah is a wonderful mitzvah. In a way, it is the greatest mitzvah of all, because it can repair the damage done by failing to observe all other mitzvahs. And yet, there is a time to do teshuvah and a time to save lives. And when a life is in danger, even teshuvah really must wait.

The analogy of the Jewish child in the pit resonates powerfully today. It is about saving lives not only physically, but also spiritually. How many millions of Jewish children are at risk spiritually? And how many Jews, indeed how many rabbis, are preoccupied with their own personal spiritual upliftment and ignore the plight of young people "in the pits"?

It is a sobering thought, and one that demands a response.

Slice of LIFE

Protestant-B. Not.

The experience of Mike Neulander as written
by Debra B. Darvick

Dog tags. When you get right down to it, the military's dog tag classification forced me to reclaim my Judaism. In the fall of 1990 things were heating up in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. I'd been an Army Captain and a helicopter maintenance test pilot for a decade and received notice that I'd be transferred to the First Cavalry Division which was on alert for the Gulf War. Consequently, I also caught wind of the Department of Defense "dog tag dilemma" vis a vis Jewish personnel.

Then as now, Jews were forbidden by Saudi law to enter the country. But our Department of Defense flat out told the King of Saudi Arabia, "We have Jews in our military. They've trained with their units and they're going. Blink and look the other way." With Kuwait occupied and the Iraqis at his border, King Fah'd did the practical thing and blinked. We shipped out, but there was still the issue of the dog tag classification.

Normally, the dog tags of Jewish servicemen are imprinted with the word "Jewish." But the Department of Defense, fearing that maintaining this customary marking for Jewish soldiers would put them at further risk should they be captured on Iraqi soil, substituted the classification "Protestant-B" on the tags, "B" being a secret code for Jew. I didn't like the whole idea of reclassifying Jews as Protestant anything and decided to leave my dog tag alone. I figured if I were captured, it was in G-d's hands. Changing my tags was tantamount to denying my religion and I couldn't swallow that. In September 1990 I went off to defend a country I was prohibited from entering. The "Jewish" classification on my dog tag remained, clear and unmistakable as the American star painted on the hood of every Army

truck.

A few days after my arrival, the Baptist battalion chaplain approached me. "I just got a secret message through channels," he said. "There's going to be a Jewish gathering. Simkatoro or something like that. You want to go?"

"Simkatoro" turned out to be Simchat Torah, a holiday that hadn't registered on my religious radar screen in eons. But it registered then and there. Services were held in absolute secrecy in a windowless room in a cinderblock building in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Rabbi Romer, the chaplain who helped keep us together during the war, led a swift and simple service. We couldn't risk singing or dancing, but the rabbi had managed to smuggle in a bottle of Manischewitz. Normally I can't stand the stuff, but that night the wine tasted of Shabbat and family and seders long gone. My soul was warmed by the alcohol and by the memories swirling around me and my fellow soldiers.

Soon after that service, things began coming to a head; the next time I was able to do anything remotely Jewish was Chanuka. Maybe it was coincidence, or maybe it was G-d's hand that placed a Jewish Colonel in charge of our Division's intelligence unit. Colonel Schneider's presence enabled him to get messages of Jewish gatherings to us immediately. When notice of the Chanukah party was decoded, we knew about it right away.

The first thing we saw when we entered the tent were care packages from the States, cookies, latkes, sour cream and applesauce, and cans and cans of gefilte fish. The wind was blowing dry across the tent but inside there was this incredible feeling of celebration. As Rabbi Romer talked about the theme of Chanukah and the rag tag bunch of Macabee soldiers fighting off Jewry's oppressors thousands of years ago, it wasn't hard to make the connection to what lay ahead of us. There in the middle of the desert, we felt like we were the Macabees ourselves. If we had to go down, we were going to go down fighting.

We blessed the candles acknowledging the King of the Universe

Who commanded us to kindle the Chanukah lights. We said the second prayer praising G-d for the miracles He performed "in those days and now." And since it was the first night of Chanukah, we also sang the third blessing, the "Shehechyanu," thanking G-d for keeping us in life and for enabling us to reach this season.

We knew war was imminent. All week we'd received reports of mass destruction, projections of the chemical weapons likely to be unleashed. Intelligence estimates put the first rounds of casualties at 12,500 soldiers. I heard those numbers and thought, "That's my entire division."

I sat back in my chair. There we were in the desert about to go to war, singing songs of praise to G-d Who had saved my ancestors in battle. The feeling of unity was as pervasive as our apprehension, as real as the sand that found its way into everything from our socks to our toothbrushes. I felt more Jewish there on that lonely Saudi plain, our tanks and guns at the ready, than I'd ever felt with talit, prayer book and yarmulke in shul.

That Chanukah in the desert solidified for me the urge to reconnect with my Judaism. I felt religion welling up inside of me. Any soldier will tell you there are no atheists in a foxhole and I know a good deal of my feelings were tied to the looming war and my desire to get with G-d before the unknown descended in the cloud of battle. It sounds corny but as we downed the latkes and cookies and wiped the last of the applesauce from our plates, everyone grew quiet, keenly aware of the link with history, thinking of what we were about to do and what had been done by soldiers like us so long ago.

The trooper beside me stared ahead at nothing, absent-mindedly fingering his dog tag.

"How'd you classify?" I asked, nodding to the tag. Silently he withdrew the metal rectangle and its beaded chain from beneath his shirt and held it out for me to read. Like mine, his read "Jewish."

Somewhere in a military supply depot I'm sure there are boxes and boxes of dog tags, still in their wrappers, all marked Protestant "B."

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Erect a Chanukah Menorah on Public Property?

Debate raged in a small New Jersey town. It was 1980, and a large Chanukah Menorah had been erected in the garden of the courthouse in Hackensack, New Jersey. The Menorah attracted Jews, and heightened the holiday awareness and celebration in the area.

By that time, public Menorahs were on display in cities across the United States of America, including one in the nation's capital, in front of the White House.

The following year, the Teaneck Jewish Community Council reached a unanimous decision opposing the erection of a similar Menorah outside City Hall, which the local Chabad rabbi was planning to erect. They planned to raise the issue with the town council.

The local Chabad emissary responded that nonetheless he was planning to erect the Menorah, as permitted by American law. He continued to dedicate his time to planning the project.

Larry Jaffe, at the time a JCC board member, wrote a warm letter to the Rebbe, on behalf of the entire board, explaining their position.

The Rebbe responded to his letter on November 22, 1981:

No doubt you have received my message in reply to your letter of Nov. 18 on the matter of placing a Chanukah Menorah on public property in Teaneck. For the record, I will also reiterate here in writing, briefly at any rate.

The subject matter in general is not a new idea requiring investigation as to constitutionality, public reaction, etc. All this has already been fully weighed years ago, resulting in overwhelming support for the idea, and in the actual erection of a gigantic Chanukah Menorah on public property in Manhattan, in the City of New York, the largest in the USA; also in Washington, the nation's capital; as well as Philadelphia, the birthplace of America's independence. Chanukah Menorahs are on display in many cities throughout the Union.

Thus it has been long recognized in the USA that the erection of a public Chanukah Menorah is a positive thing because of its universal message of freedom of the human spirit, freedom from tyranny and oppression, and of the ultimate victory of good over evil, just as "a little light dispels a lot of darkness." These fundamental human aspirations and principles, as visibly symbolized by [the] kindling of the Chanukah lights, are surely shared by the vast majority of Americans.

Indeed, so enthusiastically welcome has the public Chanukah Menorah been that its inaugurals have been graced by the personal participation of the president of the United States in Washington, and of the highest city and state officials and dignitaries wherever the Chanukah Menorah made its annual appearance.

As an attorney of law you know, of course, the force of precedent, especially one that has recurred many times, in every court of law.

Incidentally, the said public Chanukah Menorah has already become a familiar sight, since it has usually received good coverage by the media.

Your personal effort in this matter is sincerely appreciated.

With esteem and blessing,

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

The Gender Gap

Question: I have often heard that Judaism sees women as more spiritual than men. This is supposed to explain why men have more religious obligations than women—men need these things to become closer to G-d, women are there already. But do we really believe that? Is it not just a patronizing way to avoid the issue of the different gender roles in Judaism?

Answer: I remember as a child being told that men and women are equal. I had a big problem with it. I asked, "If men and women are equal, why do men and women never compete with each other in sports? You never see a man playing against a woman in tennis, or women's soccer teams facing men's, or a mixed-gender 100-meter sprint. If we are all equal, why can't we compete together?"

The answer I received was unsatisfying: "Men are on average stronger physically than women. It would not be fair for them to compete against each other in sports which require bodily strength, because men would always win. But in every other way, men and women are equal."

This did not sit well with me. If men are superior to women in physical strength, but equal in all else, then men and women are not equal. Men have an edge. Unless there is some other area of human endeavour in which women are superior, we are not equal.

This bothered me for years. Until I discovered Judaism's attitude to women.

Women are more soulful than men. While men may excel in physical prowess, women are far ahead when it comes to spiritual strength. Women are more sensitive to matters of the soul, more receptive to ideas of faith, more drawn to the divine than men. The feminine soul has an openness to the abstract and a grasp of the intangible that a male soul can only yearn for. This is why G-d told Abraham, the first Jewish man, "Whatever Sarah your wife tells you, listen to her voice." She was the greater prophet, her soul more intuitive than his.

When I first heard this idea, it suddenly all made sense. There is indeed a balance between men and women. Men have stronger bodies, women have stronger souls.

Of course there are exceptions. Some women could beat any guy in an arm wrestle. And some men are more spiritually attuned than the women around them. But for the most part, men have bigger muscles, women have deeper feelings.

The Torah gives men more physical mitzvahs to tame the body and give the soul extra power. Women don't need this help, because although men can jump higher in the air, women can reach higher into the heavens.

A WORD

from the Director

This week begins Chanuka, when we celebrate the miracle of the small Jewish army's victory over the powerful Greek war machine. Just as importantly, it is the miracle of a small cruse of oil, enough to last for one day, remaining lit for eight days until new oil could be procured. Our Sages in the Talmud describe the miracle of the oil as follows:

"During the occupation of the Holy Land by the Greeks, the latter entered the Inner Sanctum of the Holy Temple and defiled all the oil there. When the Hasmoneans defeated them, one cruse of oil was found, however, which had not been touched by the Greeks. It contained oil sufficient for one day only. The Menorah was rekindled and the oil miraculously lasted for eight days."

If the Greeks wished to prevent the Jews from lighting the Menorah, why did they merely defile the oil and not destroy it? The Greeks did not want to prevent the rekindling of the Menorah. Rather, they wanted the Menorah to be rekindled, but with defiled oil. They purposely left a supply of defiled oil in the Inner Sanctum - rather than in its regular storage place - to make it easily available for this purpose.

Moreover, they actually wanted to bring about the rekindling of the Menorah, in its holy place in the Hechel, whence it should spread its light everywhere as before, except that its light should come from oil that had the Greek "touch."

The battle of the Greeks was not merely a physical battle but a spiritual battle as well. The Greeks were willing to recognize the Torah, or even accept it, as a work of profound philosophy and wisdom, provided it was considered a human creation. It was not the suppression of the Torah that they desired, rather, they strove to deny its Divine origin.

The insistence of the Maccabees to use only pure, consecrated oil was the visible symbol of the holiness of the Jewish way of life.

May we rekindle the lights in the Holy Temple this very Chanuka and celebrate the holiday of light in a world illuminated with the light of Moshiach - may it be now.

J. I. Gutnick

A Story From Our Past

The Man King David Took to Court

In the town of Okop, the birthplace of the Baal Shem Tov, lived a wealthy man by the name of Yoel. He was a G-d-fearing man, an accomplished Torah scholar, and very meticulous in his performance of the mitzvahs.

One day he was overcome with a desire to fulfill the commandment to write a Torah scroll. He would not skimp on any expense, ensuring that his Torah would be the very best. He bought sheep, had them slaughtered, and distributed the meat to the poor. The hides were processed into parchment that would be used especially for this Torah.

Yoel contracted a well-regarded scribe who was known to be as G-d-fearing as he was adept at his craft. Every morning the scribe would immerse himself in the purifying waters of the mikvah before beginning his sacred task. When the Torah was finally complete, Yoel wanted to make a grand siyyum ("completion") celebration with a beautiful meal, and he invited all the leaders of Okop—the rabbis, the communal leaders, the sho'chtim (ritual slaughterers), the chazanim (cantors) and the wealthy patrons of the community.

Now, Yoel was well aware of his own accomplishments as a scholar. So in advance of the event, he began preparing a discourse that he would deliver in front of all his honored guests.

Berel, the water-carrier of Okop, was not invited. He was a simple, hardworking man who got up early every morning and prayed in the Chevrah Tehillim synagogue. Together with his peers, he recited the entire book of Tehillim (Psalms) every morning before spending the day trying to eke out a living.

When Berel heard that there would be a celebration in honor of a new Torah, he naively assumed that he would be welcomed to the joyful event. With a song in his heart, he put on his worn-out Shabbat cloak, cleaned up his appearance and arrived at Yoel's home. Unaccustomed as he was to the niceties of fine dining, he took a seat that was intended for one of the most important guests.

When Yoel saw Berel the water-carrier sitting in a place that was meant for a Torah scholar, he approached him with an angry look and hissed, "Just because you recite lots of Tehilim, you see yourself as a prestigious individual?" Berel understood the hint, and rose and left the house.

The meal and festivities continued as planned: silverware and crystal glasses, candles in elaborate candelabra, braided challah, spiced wine and other delicacies. There was an orchestra that played happy tunes, and the assembled sang and danced in a circle in honor of the Torah.

When the dancers had exhausted themselves, Yoel got up to deliver his talk. It was a masterpiece, and demonstrated proficiency and depth of understanding of Torah, with many sharp insights that delighted the listeners.

That night, Reb Yoel got into bed with a glad heart: "Thank G-d, there were no glitches in the delivery of my talk. It rolled off my tongue without an issue. The learned folk of the town did not hide their amazement at my novel insights into of the mitzvah of writing a Torah scroll."

Still basking in the afterglow of the wonderful day, Yoel closed his eyes and fell asleep.

The angel in charge of dreams paid a visit to the bed of Reb Yoel, and Yoel dreamt that a giant wind blew him to a faraway place. Looking around, he found himself in the middle of a barren desert. In the distance he spotted a well-lit hut. Upon entering, he saw a table occupied by people with long

beards, wearing the robes of judges.

The one who appeared to be the chief judge called Yoel by his name, and told him that he had been summoned to a court case by none other than King David, son of Jesse, the sweet singer of Israel.

The plaintiff stood up and began: "I am bringing a complaint against Yoel from Okop for denigrating my book of Psalms, and for publicly embarrassing Berel the water-carrier, who reads Psalms daily with great devotion."

The prosecutor asked the judges to determine a heavy sentence for Yoel's actions: death. Yoel stood dumbfounded, sure that he would never live to the next day.

Suddenly, one of the men asked to speak. It was the Baal Shem Tov himself. "What good will there be if this man dies?" asked the Baal Shem Tov. "No one will ever know the reason for his sudden death, and the richness of Tehillim will never become known. Let him live, and be charged with the mission to rectify his wrongdoing, and let everyone know how sacred and precious the words of King David truly are!"

Yoel then felt another wind blow him right back into his comfortable bed.

When he woke up, he was gripped with fear and soaked in cold sweat.

The next day, during the time of the evening services, Yoel entered the small synagogue of the simple folk, the Chevrah Tehillim. There he stood before all the people whom he had once looked down upon, and asked for Berel's forgiveness. He then told the entire story of what had transpired, including his dream, sparing no detail.

From that day on, a major change overtook Yoel. He stopped bragging about his scholarly acumen, and instead joined the humble Tehillim sayers. Every morning he'd go to Chevrah Tehillim and sit between the simple working folk, and read Tehillim with enthusiasm and warmth.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Jacob settles in Hebron with his twelve sons. His favorite is seventeen-year-old Joseph, whose brothers are jealous of the preferential treatment he receives from his father, such as a precious many-colored coat that Jacob makes for Joseph. Joseph relates to his brothers two of his dreams which foretell that he is destined to rule over them, increasing their envy and hatred towards him.

Simeon and Levi plot to kill him, but Reuben suggests that they throw him into a pit instead, intending to come back later and save him. While Joseph is in the pit, Judah has him sold to a band of passing Ishmaelites. The brothers dip Joseph's special coat in the blood of a goat and show it to their father, leading him to believe that his most beloved son was devoured by a wild beast.

Judah marries and has three children. The eldest, Er, dies young and childless, and his wife, Tamar, is given in levirate marriage to the second son, Onan. Onan sins by spilling his seed, and he too meets an early death. Judah is reluctant to have his third son marry her. Determined to have a child from Judah's family, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute and seduces Judah himself. Judah hears that his daughter-in-law has become pregnant and orders her executed for harlotry, but when Tamar produces some personal effects he left with her as a pledge for payment, he publicly admits that he is the father. Tamar gives birth to twin sons, Peretz (an ancestor of King David) and Zerach.

Joseph is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, the minister in charge of Pharaoh's slaughterhouses. G-d blesses everything he does, and soon he is made overseer of all his master's property. Potiphar's wife desires the handsome and charismatic lad; when Joseph rejects her advances, she tells her husband that the Hebrew slave tried to force himself on her, and has him thrown into prison. Joseph gains the trust and admiration of his jailers, who appoint him to a position of authority in the prison administration.

In prison, Joseph meets Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, both incarcerated for offending their royal master. Both have disturbing dreams, which Joseph interprets; in three days, he tells them, the butler will be released and the baker hanged. Joseph asks the butler to intercede on his behalf with Pharaoh. Joseph's predictions are fulfilled, but the butler forgets all about Joseph and does nothing for him.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 8 - 9 December	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	8:15	9:21
Adelaide	8:02	9:05
Brisbane	6:16	7:15
Darwin	6:46	7:39
Gold Coast	6:16	7:14
Perth	6:56	7:57
Sydney	7:39	8:41
Canberra	7:51	8:55
Launceston	8:18	9:27
Auckland	8:13	9:18
Wellington	8:26	9:36
Hobart	8:22	9:34
Byron Bay	7:17	8:15

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYEISHEV • 20 KISLEV • 8 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA:	8.20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.50 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.29 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.15 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.15 PM
	MAARIV:	9.05 PM