

LAMPLIGHTER

4 Teves
Parshas
Vayigash
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Vayigash, Joseph, viceroy of Egypt, dramatically reveals his true identity to his incredulous brothers. Joseph reassures them that the entire sequence of events, beginning with his being sold into slavery to his eventual rise to power, was the hand of G-d guiding him from above. "It was not you who sent me here, but G-d," he tells his brothers. Joseph then asks them to carry the following message back to their father, Jacob: "G-d has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me (to Egypt); do not tarry."

At first glance, Joseph's choice of words seems odd. If Joseph's intent was merely to convince Jacob to undertake the lengthy journey, why would he imagine that his elderly father would be swayed by the news that his son now occupied a high political office?

Rather, Jacob knew that the Jewish people was destined to go into exile in Egypt. When informed of Joseph's rise to power, he understood that this was an integral part of that process. Once that stage was reached it was time for Jacob to follow and the next phase to begin.

Many years before, G-d had explained the objective of the exile in Egypt: "Afterwards (after the exile), they will emerge with great wealth," G-d promised Abraham. Under Joseph's tenure, Egypt was transformed into a wealthy nation. In exchange for the food he had so cleverly stockpiled, Joseph collected much of the world's riches—all done in order for the Jews to eventually depart Egypt "with great wealth." Indeed, the accumulation of wealth was one of the prime reasons behind the entire 210-year exile.

Yet the concept of "great wealth" must be understood on a deeper level as well, not only in the literal sense. The material riches accumulated by the Jewish people was only a reflection of the great spiritual wealth with which they left Egypt. For the Jews were sent into exile for the purpose of extracting and refining the sparks of holiness hidden within the most morally degraded and degenerate place on earth - Egypt. Those sparks of purity, once freed from their prison within Egypt's "49 gates of impurity," were the ultimate riches derived by the Jews during their exile.

The accumulation of "wealth" is likewise the purpose of our present exile as well - extracting the good from the material world and transforming it into holiness by utilizing physical objects for the purpose of Torah and mitzvot.

This process is now complete. Over the thousands of years of exile, the Jewish people have uncovered and elevated all of these sparks of holiness, dispersed throughout the four corners of the earth. According to Divine plan, the time has therefore come for G-d to fulfill His promise and send Moshiach, NOW!

The Defining Haircut

By Naftali Silberberg

The Talmud tells us that before Jacob agreed to travel to Egypt, he sent ahead his son Judah to establish a yeshiva, a Torah academy, in Goshen, the Egyptian territory where Jacob and his sons would settle. Knowing that his descendants would face challenging times in Egypt, Jacob realized that only a proper Jewish education would give them a strong Jewish identity, enable them to withstand all difficulties and persecutions, and insulate them against the threat of assimilation.

From the Jewish standpoint, education is not so much the imparting of data and information as much as instilling within our youth integrity, kindness, and Jewish values. Information alone – even the holy teachings of the Torah – would not have preserved the Jews throughout the difficult years of Egyptian slavery. It was the code of conduct and ethics that were taught in the yeshiva that truly distinguished them from their immoral and cruel taskmasters.

Unfortunately, many of today's "institutes of education" are actually "institutes of de-education." While they impart to their students much important and necessary information, the underlying principle of moral relativism that they espouse throws in doubt all the vital ethics that we strove to implant within our children. Nothing is more destructive than the trendy notion that right and wrong are inherently subjective.

This fact of life increases the importance of providing our children with a rock-solid and concrete set of Jewish values. This education begins at home but is given crucial reinforcement by sending our children to Jewish schools that teach the same values – schools that would make Patriarch Jacob proud.

The very first value we wish to teach our children is the importance of a fierce pride in their beautiful and unique heritage. We are different and unique. We are privileged to be G-d's "ambassadors of light" to a dark and difficult world, a privilege that countless of our grandparents died to protect. And despite all the hardships, pogroms and persecution that we have endured, we are thankful that we are the Chosen People.

This idea is demonstrated by the Upsherin, the traditional "first haircut" ceremony held on a boy's third birthday. This ceremony that marks the start of the child's education is highlighted by leaving peyot, the distinctively Jewish side curls, and the child starting to wear a kippah and tzitzit (four cornered fringed garment). We thus tell the child, "You are yet young and have much to learn. But the first lesson we wish to teach you is that you are a Jew and must never be embarrassed to act and dress as a Jew. Your nation has the most glorious history, a history of teaching the entire world ethics and morals, and an even more magnificent future awaits our people. Come what may, always be a proud Jew!"

Slice of LIFE

How to Become Religious Without Losing Yourself

by Mindy Rubenstein

About 10 years ago my husband and I, along with our two toddlers, attended a beautiful Chabad Shabbat dinner, where I fell head over heels in love with Judaism. I admit, initially it was not a mutual infatuation. I saw a holy, meaningful—and exciting—lifestyle, and wanted to jump in with both feet. My husband, however, was respectful yet hesitant. Together, over the next decade, we navigated what would become an all-encompassing lifestyle. We started somewhat slowly, from lighting Shabbat candles and having challah and chicken soup, to eventually fully observing Shabbat, keeping kosher in and out of the home, and adhering to family purity laws. We also had more children, in essence doubling the family size to which we were both accustomed.

In time, we acted and dressed the part of observant Jews.

Looking back, however, it was not the most seamless and thought-through transition. I was at times judgmental of our extended families, for example, for not having given us “more Judaism,” and then for not embracing our newly found nirvana.

Those of us who “find” religion often go through changes, as we examine parts of our inner selves we didn't know existed, says Rabbi Aron Moss, co-director of Nefesh Shul in Sydney, Australia, in his article *Is Judaism a Cult?* As a result, we may re-evaluate ourselves and our lives. All growth is accompanied by some upheaval and instability. But when we make sudden changes, we may

leave part of ourselves behind.

This is not the Jewish way, Rabbi Moss says. Any life changes should be done gradually and with thought, as they integrate with your personality rather than overcome it. In other words, religion should enhance and deepen your identity to make you a better you. That's what G-d wants, I think. To serve Him, but not to lose yourself in the process. And since I was already married with children at the time, it meant also preserving and respecting my relationship with my husband. To work together in slowly and methodically embracing the mitzvahs in an effort to retain peace within the home.

When we started keeping kosher, I was very vocal at our families' homes about it, essentially using food to separate myself from them. I have learned over the years, through my mistakes, that there are ways to keep kosher yet still participate respectfully and lovingly in family get-togethers. Observing mitzvahs shouldn't be a source of stress or contention—if it is, it's not being done the right way.

Partway into our evolution, when I announced proudly that I wanted to stop driving on Shabbat, my rebbetzin warned me, “Don't take the decision to keep Shabbat lightly. Once you cross that line, you don't want to give it up because it becomes too difficult.” So we waited until the right time.

I understood her wisdom when, early on in my observant lifestyle, I went and bought a wig, the traditional way many Jewish women choose to cover their hair. It was gorgeous. But I didn't consult my husband first, or a rabbi or rebbetzin, or make a plan for observing the mitzvah. Over the years that followed, I struggled with this mitzvah. Because it wasn't done gradually, with thought.

As I look at myself in the mirror, sometimes I don't recognize the free-

spirited, creative, earthy young woman my family once knew. And now I understand better why they may have balked at our new lifestyle. It wasn't so much that we adopted unfamiliar Jewish rituals, but rather that I had in essence closed a door on my former self, rather than integrate her into my new life.

As someone once told me, “It's better to be on the outside looking in than on the inside looking out.” After working so hard to be in the fold of observant Judaism, I suddenly found myself staving off a feeling of resistance. As if these mitzvahs, this lifestyle, were being forced upon me, even though I had so passionately embraced them. Perhaps I had left behind, or ignored, parts of myself that needed tending.

This may be the reason that some baalei teshuvah (returnees to observant Judaism) veer off the path completely. It's so important to find a rabbi or rebbetzin to guide you, and to consult with them throughout the ongoing process. And I don't think we are all meant to jump so fully into a life-transforming version of Judaism. Learn about the mitzvahs, about Judaism and Torah, and surround yourself with growth-minded people. But go slowly, and do what makes sense for you. And, most importantly, whichever mitzvahs you choose should be done with love and respect for those around you.

For me, I think the key to embracing my identity as an observant Jewish woman was to create a balance, where my old self could come back again, but with an enhanced depth and direction. I realized that my creativity and talents should not be shunted away, but should be utilized within a framework of Torah to reveal the unique aspects of myself and the role G-d has placed before me.

Sometimes, it seems, you do have to lose a bit of yourself to really find yourself again.

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
7 Av, 5713 [19 July, 1953]
Brooklyn, NY

Certain areas in the field of commerce are currently not realizing expectations. Undoubtedly we must view this is a test from G-d. Though He knows that the Jewish heart is always open, and at all times ready to heed the call of Torah and mitzvot, still, He tests us in order to satisfy the reluctant-to-believe angels of the Heavenly Court. G-d therefore says to them:

"See, despite the natural tendency to decrease in tzedakah when business is not as it once was, here is a wise Jew, who understands that this is only an attempt to test him. He also understands that when he will withstand the test – and will then understand the real intent behind it all – not only will his business be as prosperous as beforehand, but it will be better than before.

"For a father loves when his son understands the true intention of his father's actions; and the more the child demonstrates his wisdom, so much greater are the gifts that he receives from his father."

Businesspeople say that a veteran in the field has a better grasp of commerce concepts. As you are in business already for a long time, you should be able to understand G-d's intention in this all.

Just as you would stand firm with any good investment, the same applies here. Not only should we not decrease G-d's share, to the contrary, we should give even more on His account. Then G-d will fulfill his assurance stated in the Torah: Aser bishvil shetisasher" – "Give a tenth to charity in order that you become wealthy" – and He will give His "partner" an even greater income than before.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

Side with My Mother or My Wife?

Question: Dear Rabbi,
Things have flared up between my mother and my wife. My mother insists that the family be together every Friday night dinner at her house, but my wife wants to be able to host dinners at our place too. I never missed a Shabbat dinner at home in my life, but now I am caught between my parents and my wife. And we are married only two months! Where should my loyalty be?

Answer: It is horrible to be caught between two people you love. But there is no question where your loyalty should be. The answer is found in the wedding ceremony.

When a couple gets married, they are led to the chuppah, the wedding canopy, by their parents. But once the chuppah is over, bride and groom leave their parents behind, and walk towards their new life together. This is the choreography of shifting allegiance: you come to your wedding as your parents' single children; you leave it as a couple.

Your parents will always be your parents. They brought you into this world with love, raised you with selfless devotion, and gave you the freedom and autonomy to get married and start a family of your own. But often, this last stage is the most difficult for them. They will always see you as their little darling, and as much as they want to, it is hard to let go.

But let go they must, as the verse says (Genesis 2:24), "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

You can help them let go. Make it gentle. Make it clear to them that you are not cutting off or rejecting them; you are just adjusting to the new reality of being married. Do it in gradual steps rather than sudden changes. I am sure your mother will be more open to you doing your own thing one Shabbat per month, if you reassure her that the other weeks you will be with the family. In time, you can review it.

More important than anything, husband and wife must be a unit. In every situation, you must present a united front. It is not your wife who wants to make Shabbat; it is you, as a couple, who want to make Shabbat. Never let your wife feel stranded and alone in your parents' company.

Your parents led you to the chuppah, their faces beaming with pride. They are now watching you leave the chuppah, their hearts torn with mixed emotion. Be sensitive and give your parents their well-deserved respect. Remember, it was their Shabbat dinners that shaped the person you are today.

A WORD

from the Director

We are currently in the month of Tevet. The word "Tevet" is related to the Hebrew word "tov," which means "good." However, in this month, we commemorate many sad events, including the Tenth of Tevet. This year, the tenth of Tevet occurs this coming Thursday, January 1.

The tenth of Tevet 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, good 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 counting from Nissan. 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 sang with the coming of Moshiach.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED



It was nearly midnight; the wind was howling mercilessly. Severe Siberian cold waves swept across the remote forest region with a vengeance, as the bitter temperature plummeted further to torturous bone-chilling levels. It was week two of his treacherous trek, and the chassid pointlessly struggled to shield himself from the inescapable chill and heavy snowfall, shivering desperately in his fur-lined hat and sheepskin coat. Although he was accustomed to dealing with gnawing cold, he was unprepared for the hardship inflicted by the cruel elements when he undertook to brave winter's bleakest hours to fulfill the directive of his rebbe, the Maggid of Mezeritch.

Reflecting on his last conversation with the Maggid broke up the monotony, as the team of horses hauled the buggy through the deep snowdrifts that engulfed the treacherous and sometimes impassable Ukrainian roads.

"Rebbe," he had asked, "how is it possible to fulfill the Torah dictates that regulate dominion over one's thoughts and feelings? It is difficult, but possible, to achieve mastery over deeds, or even speech. But thoughts and feelings cannot be restrained! They infiltrate one's mind and heart randomly. How can these be restricted? What should a person do when prohibited or depressing thoughts invade his mind or heart?"

Rather than responding, the Maggid instructed him to immediately set out for the village of Zhitomir and the home of Rabbi Zev, one of the Maggid's devoted disciples.

Warmed by his recollections of his rebbe, and inspired by the notion of clarification, the chassid endured the bitter cold with incredible stoicism. The frigid air felt like ice as it scraped the back of his throat, yet he persevered.

Arriving at his destination in the dead of night, the chassid was relieved to see light glowing from a window in Rabbi Zev's home. To his consternation, however, his knocks on the door brought no response. Peering through an open slat, the chassid observed Rabbi Zev surrounded by piles of books, engrossed in study. Minutes turned into hours, as numerous attempts at louder knocking and banging were similarly ignored. Dismayed, but having no other recourse, the chassid remained in the biting cold, repeatedly pounding, to no avail. All the while Rabbi Zev seemed to be in a state of oblivion, burning the midnight

oil, completely unaware of the clamor echoing in the dark.

At long last, just before dawn, Rabbi Zev acknowledged his visitor, making his way to the door and graciously welcoming him in. Thankful to be alive, the speechless chassid staggered in, allowing Rabbi Zev to seat him by the blazing fire and revive him with a glass of hot tea, reveling in the attention. After asking after the welfare of their rebbe, Rabbi Zev escorted the chassid to the most comfortable room he had, to recover his strength after his ordeal. Rabbi Zev continued to extend impressive courtesy to his guest for the next few days, attending to his every need.

Finally, his vitality restored, the chassid revealed to his host the objective of his journey. "The Maggid advised me that only you could provide me with an adequate answer and guidance," he concluded.

Rabbi Zev quietly contemplated this heartfelt request. "My esteemed comrade, does a man have less ownership over his mind and heart than he does over his home? On the night that you appeared on my doorstep, I began to enlighten you. You attempted to gain entry into my home, of which I am the master. I grant admission to anyone I wish to receive. I deny access to anyone I do not wish to tolerate. It is my decision as to whether or not I let someone in."

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 22 - 23 December	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	8:24	9:30
Adelaide	8:11	9:15
Brisbane	6:25	7:23
Darwin	6:53	7:46
Gold Coast	6:24	7:23
Perth	7:05	8:05
Sydney	7:48	8:50
Canberra	8:00	9:04
Launceston	8:27	9:37
Auckland	8:22	9:27
Wellington	8:36	9:46
Hobart	8:32	9:44
Byron Bay	7:25	8:24

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VAYIGASH • 4 TEVES • 22 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	8.30 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	9.00 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9.35 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	MINCHA	8.20 PM
THURSDAY:	FAST BEGINS	4.12 AM
	FAST ENDS	9.16 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	8.30 PM
	MAARIV	9.15 PM