

LAMPLIGHTER

3 Shevat
Parshas
Bo
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

Our Torah portion, Bo, begins with G-d sending Moses to Pharaoh to ask him again to release the Jewish people. G-d tells Moses: Bo el Paroh, "Come to Pharaoh," i.e., come with Me. The commentaries explain that Moses hesitated before accepting the mission and agreed to go only after G-d promised that He would accompany him.

On a simple level, it is explained that Moses was afraid and G-d's promise to accompany him assuaged those fears. On a deeper level, however, the unwillingness of Moses to proceed on his own gives us a glimpse of the uniqueness of Moses' personality and the secret of his success as a leader.

Moses did not want to face Pharaoh on his own, because then there would be a confrontation between two men: Moses, representing human aspirations for good, and Pharaoh, who represents man's tendency for evil. In such a one-on-one confrontation, Moses did not know who would emerge victorious. He wanted to approach Pharaoh with a power that transcends the human sphere and, therefore, he waited until G-d promised to accompany him.

This was not a one-time event, but a motif that characterized Moses' approach at all times. What made Moses effective? His ability to put his own self aside and be no more than a medium to communicate G-d's message. Whether speaking to Pharaoh or to the Jewish people, Moses did not speak his own words. He spoke in G-d's name, as our Sages' say: "The Divine presence spoke from Moses' mouth."

When the image of leadership that a person projects is based on his own individual power, it may be effective in motivating certain people. But for a person to inspire a people as a whole, he should harness himself to a power much greater than his individual self. For in the long run, what is going to motivate other people is a mission that is transcendent in nature, one that gives them a goal above their individual selves. And the only way a leader can honestly impart such a mission to his people is when he has a similar sense of mission himself.

That was Moses' unique ability. When the people complained to him, he told them: "... and we, what are we? Your complaints are not against us, but against G-d." He did not see himself personally as part of the picture at all. He had one goal: to communicate G-d's message and motivate others to carry it out.

In our own lives, each one of us can be a Moses in a certain sense, for we all have spheres of influence where others look up to us for guidance and direction. If what we give them is ourselves, then our message will have a limited scope. But if we can rise above ourselves and communicate G-dly truth, our message will have universal appeal.

One might question: But what if I do not feel Divine inspiration? Of course, I'd like to communicate G-d's truth, but I don't know how? I don't know what G-d would want me to say now.

In this, we can also draw guidance from Moses. Moses is patient. He does not go to Pharaoh until G-d tells him that He will accompany him. Not only is he willing to serve as a medium for G-d when he feels he has a G-dly message to communicate, he will not approach Pharaoh on his own. He waits until G-d promises that He will accompany him.

Light in the Darkness

By Yitzi Hurwitz

It is already several years now since G-d has chosen to give me and my family tremendous hardships. For me, it is physically paralyzing. For my wonderful wife, Dina, it can at times be emotionally and mentally paralyzing. My children are also subjected to an unwanted roller-coaster ride. I wish and pray all the time that I will be cured, but I am grateful to G-d for the positive experiences that come from our situation. Dina and I have been blessed with an outpouring of love from so many, and our writings and Dina's talks have been uplifting people all over. All of this would not have been possible without the darkness we have undergone, as it brought to the fore love and abilities we never knew we had.

How can we not be grateful?

In this week's parshah, Bo, we read about the plague of darkness. There were three days of darkness, and three days where the darkness was tangible and rendered the Egyptians immobile. At the same time, for the Jewish people, there was light.

Everything that the Torah tells us is a lesson, even the plagues. What the Torah tells us about the Egyptian exile and exodus is particularly a lesson on how to deal with our present exile and future exodus.

What lesson can we draw from the plague of darkness, especially from the fact that there was darkness and light at the same time?

Egypt is "Mitzrayim" in Hebrew, related to the word maytzarim, which means boundaries, constraints or limitations. It is symbolic of the limitations we experience in this physical world.

There are times in this exile when you experience darkness in the form of heartbreak, health problems, oppression, etc. Sometimes, it seems there is no hope, and that no amount of light can overcome this darkness. Other times, it is worse; it can seem completely paralyzing. The struggle and pain we experience are very real and hard to get through.

G-d is telling you that in this place of darkness can be found a great light—greater than anything you've experienced before. This light is transformative; it gives new perspective and brings out new abilities. The greater the darkness, the greater the light that is to be found within.

This doesn't mean that darkness is good, but if you experience it, then search for the positive. Use the new light to brighten your surroundings and make a difference.

That said, we have all had enough darkness in our lives. Now it is time for Moshiach to come and for the darkness to end.

Let the light shine uninterrupted in our lives!

Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz—father of seven, husband of Dina, and spiritual leader at Chabad Jewish Center in Temecula, Calif.—has been rendered immobile by ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). Unable to speak or type, he uses his eyes to write heartfelt thoughts on the weekly Torah portion.

Slice of LIFE

Above Down-Under

by Yehudis Cohen

The following article about Rabbi Groner appeared in the first issue of the L'Chaim Monthly newspaper, January, 1989.

The list of Lubavitch programs and institutions in Melbourne, Australia, seems endless. Every item flows easily from Rabbi Yitzchok Groner's lips. He speaks of each with the same pride one would hear from a grandfather whose grandchildren have given him much nachas (pleasure).

One might wonder what Rabbi Groner's goals were when he stepped foot on Australian soil. "When I came to Australia, 30 years ago, I had no goals, no aim, except," he states with a serious, sincere tone of voice, "to spread Yiddishkeit (Judaism) and help as many people as possible. My first visit to Australia was in 1947. I came as a shaliach (emissary) of the P Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe. Rabbi Groner's main objective was to raise funds for various Lubavitcher projects. Again, in 1954, Rabbi Groner visited Australia. But it wasn't until 1958 that he actually settled in Melbourne with his wife and six children.

"A shaliach of the Rebbe has a certain responsibility. 'A shaliach of a person is like that person, himself.' A shliach's goals," continues Rabbi Groner, "are to do what the Rebbe wants, and the Rebbe wants what G-d wants - to bring Judaism to every Jew. A shliach must effuse a love of every Jew which is in a manner of 'shtus d'kedush' - beyond all limitations. In addition, a shliach cannot be passive. He must work

beyond his strength and ability. Then, and only then, will the Rebbe's blessing for success come into actuality."

Although this interview is supposed to be about Rabbi Groner and all of his accomplishments in helping build the Jewish community in Melbourne in general and the Lubavitch community in particular, time and again, Rabbi Groner goes back to the subject of the personality of a shaliach and the fact that a shaliach is truly a conduit for the work of the Rebbe.

Rabbi Groner is described by former students and relatives as someone totally butel (nullified) to the Rebbe. However, when Rabbi Groner enters a room, his presence is felt. He is a large man, and his voice booms when he speaks to a crowd, especially when he speaks passionately, which is often. People have said that, when hearing him "at his best" - gesturing, his voice thundering to emphasize his point - one could almost picture Moses on Mount Sinai, rebuking the Jewish people.

One might think that such a person would make a formidable and intimidating boss. Yet Rabbi Groner makes sure to allow all those who work under him to express themselves in their own way. Whether Chabad House director in Perth or a teacher at Ohel Chana, he encourages them to grow in the most appropriate way for their situation.

Rabbi Groner remembers that when he came to Australia in 1947 there was a group of Jews who said that Lubavitch would never be able to attract the Australian youth. "No until hair grows on your palm," was the expression they used. They have been proven wrong, Lubavitch has attracted the "youth" and turned them into caring, responsive and committed Jews.

Time and again, in the course of

conversation, Rabbi Groner constantly veers back to his favorite subject - the responsibility of a shliach. It is as if he wants to ensure that a story about Rabbi Yitzchok Groner will not be about Rabbi Yitzchok Groner. It will be the story of any shaliach who is truly dedicated to the Rebbe and his work.

He begins, "The mazel, the zodiac sign of the month of Shevat [the month this interview took place] is a bucket, d'lee. A bucket symbolizes the essence of the Jewish people. A Jew goes down, draws substance, and gives to others. About Abraham's servant and disciple it says in the Talmud, 'Doleh u'mashke mitoraso shel rabo - He draws and is quenched by the teaching of his master - Abraham.'

"A shaliach is a d'lee. He is nothing but an empty vessel. He has to go down to the dark recesses of the well, where it is cold and damp. His main objective is to draw the water - the teachings of the Rebbe - up and use it to quench the thirst of others. And then, what happens to the d'lee?" Rabbi Groner asks with a smile. "That," he says decisively, "is a shaliach."

Bringing an example from his surroundings to further illustrate his point, Rabbi Groner motions out the window, toward Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway where major construction on the city's pipes is underway. "Do you see the pipes?" he asks. "When they're put underground, they will be put as deep as possible. They will be hidden from sight. A shaliach is like a pipe. The more hidden, the more butel he [his ego] is, the more he accomplishes."

Rabbi Groner concludes with one last thought on what a shaliach is. "The old Chasidim in Lubavitch used to say, 'it's 100% for sure that what the Rebbe wants to accomplish, he will accomplish. Hashem should help that a little of what needs to be accomplished will come through me.'"

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

The Jewish Accountant

By the Grace of G-d
In the Days of Selichos 5716 [September, 1956]
Brooklyn, N.Y.
Blessing and Greeting:

As we approach the close of the old year and the onset of the new, every earnest individual makes an audit of the past year, upon which to base his resolutions for the year to come.

In order that the audit should be accurate and the right resolutions be made, one must be careful not to overstate one's virtues and achievements. It is no less important, however, not to exaggerate one's deficiencies and failings. For feelings of despondency--not to mention despair, G-d forbid--are one of greatest hindrances in a person's endeavor to better himself.

Unfortunately, it is possible that, even if one does not exaggerate one's faults, an honest accounting will show the negative side of one's spiritual and moral balance scale as quite formidable--perhaps, even, as outweighing one's positive side. But also in such a case, a person has no cause for despair.

For (in addition to the deep regret over the past and the firm resolve for future change which the audit should elicit) one must always remember that everything good and holy is eternal and indestructible--as these stem from the soul, the spark of G-dliness within man--while negative deeds are only temporary, and can be rectified and eradicated through true and proper teshuvah (repentance).

The appreciation of the above truth should call forth in every individual, regardless of what his stocktaking of the previous year shows, a feeling of encouragement and hope for the future--knowing that only his good deeds are eternal, and have illuminated his own life and that of his family and of all Israel (for "all Jews are accountable for each other," bound to each other as a single entity).

From this it is also obvious that even if one sees signs of a general decline--that humanity, as a whole, is not getting any wiser or more virtuous--in truth, the good in the world grows greater and more powerful every year, every day, and every moment. For each moment's good deeds are added to the accumulating good in the world.

So even if the not-good seems to be prevailing, this can only be temporary. Ultimately, the good shall gain the upper hand and the negative shall be utterly nullified. For the Creator and Ruler of the universe has decreed that, ultimately, all will do teshuvah, and that He will accept their teshuvah, so that "none shall be forsaken."

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

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

This week's Torah portion, Bo, contains the very first commandment given to the Jews as a people - the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh, the new moon. According to Jewish law, the new month is determined by witnesses who testify to the appearance of the new moon. The Jewish court then formally establishes and sanctifies it as Rosh Chodesh.

In general, the main effect the commandments have on the world is to imbue it with G-dliness. When a mitzvah is performed with an object, the object itself becomes holy, and materiality is sanctified.

The mitzva of the new moon is unique in that instead of physical objects, it relates to the dimension of time. Through this mitzva, a "regular" day is transformed into Rosh Chodesh, a day with special sanctity. When the Jewish court decides to establish a particular day as Rosh Chodesh, time itself is elevated and made holy.

In this respect, the mitzva (commandment) of sanctifying the new moon has an advantage over all other mitzvot. The ability of other mitzvot to bring sanctity into the world is limited. For example, an object directly used to perform a mitzva becomes a "utensil of holiness." Other aspects of the physical world are elevated when a Jew uses them "for the sake of heaven." Then there are things that are only considered "tools" as preparation for the performance of an actual mitzva.

However, the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh is more far-reaching. When the Jewish court establishes a certain day as Rosh Chodesh, the effect is felt throughout the month, and indeed throughout the entire year, as the court also determines the occurrence of a leap year.

Time is generally thought of as something over which we have no control. Time cannot be made longer or shorter; it cannot be hurried up or slowed down. Nonetheless, G-d gives the Jew the ability to sanctify time and transform it into "Jewish time," time that is thoroughly imbued with holiness.

"Conquering" time in this way hastens the time when the entire world will be suffused with holiness, in the Messianic era.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED



A Surgical Procedure

By Yerachmiel Tilles

In 1894, Rabbi Yehoshua Rokeach, the Belzer Rebbe, suffered from a succession of mysterious ailments. Although he was in much pain, he maintained a cheerful countenance. His chassidim, however, were greatly worried—not just because of the illnesses themselves, for they were all curable, but because of certain disturbing hints from the Rebbe that he sensed that his end was near.

The next time the Rebbe's condition worsened, they decided to spare no expense and bring him to Vienna. There, in the finest medical facility in Europe, they took him to be examined by top specialists. The doctors announced their diagnosis: an immediate and risky operation was urgently necessary.

The Belzer Rebbe made his preparations. He immersed in the mikveh; he wrote his will; he recited with great emotion the words of the viduy (final confession). Only then did he allow himself to be placed on the operating table.

The surgical team assembled around the Rebbe. All awaited the chief surgeon's signal to the anesthetist to begin his procedure.

Suddenly, to everyone's surprise, the Rebbe called out to one of the surgeons. After confirming his first name, he said: "Moses? You're a Jew, aren't you?" The doctor quietly nodded his head.

Moses, whose given name was actually Moshe Yitzchak, was from a small town called Linden. There he had grown up in a traditional Jewish home. His father had tried his best to provide him a strong Jewish education, but alas, the boy's heart was drawn in a completely different direction. As his head filled with visions of more cosmopolitan, attracting vistas, he grew further and further from the values of his nurturing home. As soon as he was of age, he left Linden and his distraught parents, and headed for the great metropolis of Vienna.

The first step he took in his new life was to change his name to Moses. Next, he enrolled in a secular school, where thanks to his brilliant mind and determined diligence, he caught up to and surpassed his age-mates by absorbing an extraordinary large amount of material in a relatively short period of time.

Armed with his decree, he was accepted to the medical school of the university, and there too he was highly successful. Soon after he became established as a first-class physician and surgeon.

The more he succeeded, the further he drifted from his Jewish roots. No longer could anyone recognize the sophisticated Dr. Moses as the small-town Moshe Yitzchak of Linden.

Although Moses' nod of affirmation of his Jewish identity was small and unobtrusive, it was noticed by everyone in the room. There was absolute silence when the Rebbe continued: "Moses, do you believe that G-d Al-mighty created the world and conducts it?" After a short hesitation the perplexed Moses answered, "Yes, Rabbi, I do."

The medical staff looked on in astonishment, but the Rebbe seemed oblivious to their stares as all his attention was focused on the doctor. "And Moshiach, the righteous redeemer, who any moment will come and redeem our people from the exile? Do you believe that, Moses?"

This time Moses was acquiescent longer. He selected his words carefully. "Uh, I believe that there will come a certain time when there will be a redemption, but I don't believe that it will come about through a Messiah, a single person, who will rule over the whole world and everyone will be in awe and fear of him. Such a thing is not within the realm of rational possibility; so I can't accept it."

The Belzer lifted his head and turned to face Moses directly. He opened

wide his eyes, two shining orbs radiating kindness and goodness, but also power and authority.

The Rebbe's penetrating gaze fastened on Moses. He felt it burning into him. He tried to avert his own eyes but was unable. It was as if they were magnetically attached to those of the Rebbe.

The stunned members of the medical team saw their comrade's face turn deathly pale, then blush bright as a beet. Then again white, again red. His whole body was trembling and his hands had begun to shake. They had no idea what to think of this unexpected bizarre interaction, but they realized Moses must be undergoing some sort of spiritual or emotional trauma.

The tension was palpable. Moses was panting and breathing with difficulty as if he had just completed a long-distance run. He tried his best to calm himself and relax, but found himself unable to. The simple fact that someone had asserted control over him with just a glance kept him in internal turmoil.

Finally, the Rebbe averted his eyes from Moses. The surgeon felt his composure return. Then the Rebbe looked at him again, and studied his face, but this time his gaze was caressing. "Nu, Moses, now do you believe that an individual is capable of arousing awe in all those around him with just a glance of the eyes?"

Moses nodded in silent admission.

"Well, Moses, that is exactly how it will be when Moshiach arrives. G-d's chosen one will rule over the entire world, and everyone will abandon their evil ways and turn towards G-d."

"The Rebbe is right; I was mistaken," muttered the abashed physician.

The drama over, the operation was able to take place. Afterwards, it was pronounced a great success, and thousands of chassidim breathed sighs of relief.

Fifteen days later the Belzer Rebbe was discharged. He boarded the train to return to Belz from Vienna. To the deep sorrow of his followers, however, he never arrived, but went to his eternal reward on 23 Shevat, at age 69, during the course of the journey. Among those that merited to be in the small group of disciples present at the moment that the Rebbe passed on was his devoted chassid, Moshe Yitzchak of Linden.

Biographical note: Rabbi Yehoshua Rokeach (1825-1894) was the fifth son and the successor to his father, Rabbi Sholom, the first Rebbe of Belz. A major leader of Galician Jewry, he was also the founder of Machzikei HaDas, perhaps the first Orthodox Jewish organization to be involved in government politics, and still a force in Israel today.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

The last three of the Ten Plagues are visited on Egypt: a swarm of locusts devours all the crops and greenery; a thick, palpable darkness envelops the land; and all the firstborn of Egypt are killed at the stroke of midnight of the 15th of the month of Nisan.

G-d commands the first mitzvah to be given to the people of Israel: to establish a calendar based on the monthly rebirth of the moon. The Israelites are also instructed to bring a "Passover offering" to G-d: a lamb or kid is to be slaughtered, and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of every Israelite home, so that G-d should pass over these homes when He comes to kill the Egyptian firstborn. The roasted meat of the offering is to be eaten that night together with matzah (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs.

The death of the firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh's resistance, and he literally drives the children of Israel from his land. So hastily do they depart that there is no time for their dough to rise, and the only provisions they take along are unleavened. Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold, silver and garments—fulfilling the promise made to Abraham that his descendants would leave Egypt with great wealth.

The children of Israel are commanded to consecrate all firstborn, and to observe the anniversary of the Exodus each year by removing all leaven from their possession for seven days, eating matzah, and telling the story of their redemption.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 19 - 20 January	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	8:24	9:27
Adelaide	8:13	9:13
Brisbane	6:29	7:25
Darwin	7:02	7:54
Gold Coast	6:29	7:25
Perth	7:07	8:05
Sydney	7:50	8:49
Canberra	8:01	9:02
Launceston	8:25	9:31
Auckland	8:23	9:24
Wellington	8:34	9:40
Hobart	8:29	9:36
Byron Bay	7:29	8:26

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS BO • 3 SHEVAT • 19 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	8.30 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	9.00 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9.53 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	MINCHA	8.20 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	8.30 PM
	MAARIV	9.15 PM