

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas
Yisro
1333
2 February
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The name of this week's Torah portion is Yitro, despite the fact that only a small part of the reading is actually devoted to Yitro (Jethro), Moses' father-in-law. Most of the portion pertains to the preparation for and giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which took place seven weeks after the Children of Israel had left Egypt. Certainly the Giving of the Torah is much more significant than the story of Yitro, "the priest of Midian" who "heard all that G-d had done for Moses and for Israel His people" and decided to become Jewish.

In truth, the Giving of the Torah is the central, most definitive historical event in Judaism. This week's portion includes many different narratives, and even contains the Ten Commandments. Nonetheless, the name of the Torah portion is Yitro.

This may be understood in light of the explanation in the Zohar (the mystical text authored by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai) that Yitro's conversion to Judaism and his statement, "Now I know that the L-rd is greater than all gods," made it possible for the Torah to be given to the Jewish people.

Accordingly, the entire Torah portion (including those chapters which speak of the Giving of the Torah) is named after Yitro because of the central role he played in the giving of the Torah.

From this we learn a wonderful lesson to be applied in our day-to-day service of G-d:

Yitro is symbolic of the body and animal soul, whose only desire is the pursuit of physical pleasure. Every Jew possess this "Yitro" within him; it strives constantly to arouse his interest in material things.

When a Jew decides to utilize his "Yitro" for holy and spiritual purposes (as did the original Yitro), it is that much easier for him to learn Torah and perform mitzvot, for the animal soul assists him instead of hindering his actions.

This is within the reach of every Jew, as the Torah was given to each and every one without exception. Every Jew can actually induce his animal soul to want the same things his G-dly soul desires: to live a life of Jewish content and meaning, to perform mitzvot and study the Torah.

Furthermore, when a Jew successfully affects his animal soul in this manner, success will be his in all his other endeavors.

Is G-d Religious?

By Simon Jacobson

The polls are mixed on that count. Recent surveys show that as much as 80-90% of Americans will say that they believe in G-d, but 40-50% will say they do not practice a religion.

Indeed, if G-d is all-powerful and infinite, and religion is a set of laws and rituals and a list of things that one must or must not do, it would seem that G-d could hardly be described as "religious." Nor would it seem that being religious will bring a person closer to G-d. If G-d transcends all limitation and definition, why would the way to relate to G-d be to impose further restriction and definition on our already finite and constricted lives?

Yet this paradox is not confined to the religious-spiritual aspect of the human experience. Throughout the ages, whenever man has endeavored to escape the bounds of the mundane and the everyday, he did so by submitting to a structured, even rigid, code of behavior.

My favorite example for this is the discipline of music. There are just so many musical notes on the scale, and no one--not even the greatest musician--can create additional notes or subtract any. Anyone who wishes to play or compose music must conform to this absolute, immutable system.

And yet, by submitting to this framework, the musician will create a piece of music that touches the deepest place in a person's heart---a place that cannot be described, much less the defined. By using this very precise, mathematical formula, the musician will create something that transports the listener to a place high above the confines and fetters of everyday life, high above the strictures of physics and mathematics.

Imagine, then, a musical discipline whose laws are dictated by the inventor and creator of life---by the one who has intimate knowledge of life's every strength and every vulnerability, of its every potential and its every sensitivity.

The only question remaining is: but why so many laws? Why must this discipline dictate how we are to wake and how we are to sleep, and virtually everything in between?

Because life itself, in all its infinite complexity, is our instrument of connection with G-d. Every "scale" on its "range" must be exploited to achieve the optimum connection.

Music being our metaphor, we cannot but quote the famous anecdote in which Archduke Ferdinand of Austria reputedly says to Mozart, "Beautiful music, but far too many notes." To which the composer replied, "Yes, your majesty, but not one more than necessary."

Slice of LIFE

Unpublicized Miracle

by Tuvia Bolton

The scene is London 1963 three religious bearded Jews are sitting around a table and one, a noted Rabbi and community leader by the name of Rabbi J. was weeping.

The previous day he had called the home of Rabbi Bentzi Shem Tov, one of the most outstanding Chabad figures in all London and, when Rabbi Shemtov's son in law Rabbi Nachman Sudak answered the phone, asked if he could meet with them at the place of their choice.

Now they were sitting together in Rabbi Shemtov's home and Rabbi J. dried his eyes and began his story.

"About a half a year ago I began feeling very weak. At first I thought it might be fatigue. I rested up, took vitamins, took a vacation but it just got worse. So I went to a doctor and he didn't have good news. It was cancer in its advanced stages and he said that at best I have another month or so to live.

"I was devastated. I didn't want to believe it but I had no choice. It wasn't long before I didn't have enough strength to even get out of bed and only with the greatest effort could I move my arms and legs. The end was near.

"I started going over my life from as far back as I could remember to see if there was maybe something I should fix up. Then I remembered that about twenty years ago, in the middle of the war when things were really in turmoil I happened to meet a Chabad Chassid by the name of Yitzchak Horwitz. He was a fantastic Torah scholar and unique personality. I even heard that he was so devoted to learning Torah that he slept only two hours each night. Anyway, I don't remember why, but he gave me a Chabad book called the Tanya that he said would bring Moshiach and I put it on my shelf. .

"To tell you the truth I was never really interested in Chabad. so it just sat on my shelf for all these years. But then a few

days ago I opened it for the first time and read the first chapter.

"I couldn't believe what happened. It took a few minutes but suddenly I felt my body fill with life. I felt good! I got out of bed for the first time in months, walked around the house, I even opened the window and took a deep breath of cool air. It was unbelievable! So I began reading the second chapter.

"Believe me, I got half way through and felt so happy that I actually put a record on the phonograph and danced! My wife thought I was losing my mind and... to tell you the truth, so did I! But I didn't care.

"The next day I rose early and went to the Synagogue as usual, I hadn't told anyone of my illness so no one knew what was happening but when my good health continued for yet another day I decided that it wasn't just an accident.

"By this time I had already read several chapters of Tanya and it wasn't difficult to realize that all these years I was missing something. "That's why I'm here. I've decided I want to be a Chassid, a follower of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and I want you to tell me how to do it."

They spoke for a while and finally decided that first he should return to his doctor and if the doctor would allow it, he should travel to Brooklyn and see the Rebbe in person. There was no substitute for seeing the Rebbe.

Rabbi J. consulted several doctors, they took tests and surprisingly agreed! They all told him that there was no medical explanation for his improvement, gave him directions what to do if his condition reversed and gave their okay.

Several weeks later he was standing before the Rebbe. It had all come about so suddenly, he had always shuddered in revulsion at the name Chabad and now it was so obvious that the Rebbe was unequalled in holiness and knowledge that he was actually shaking with excitement.

But the Rebbe wasn't enthusiastic about his idea of becoming a Chassid.

"Chassid?" he answered, "I am willing to accept you as a partner. But not a Chassid. A Chassid is something totally different."

That Shabbat he attended the 'Farbrengen' (gathering) of the Rebbe.

The Rebbe spoke for several hours and among his subjects was his disease. The Rebbe pointed out that it was a result of cells that we might think are healthy and normal, increasing in dangerous numbers and although this disease had existed previously, it was now becoming so prevalent that science was desperately trying to find a way to eliminate these extra cells.

The Rebbe compared it to the spiritual world. Brazen egotism have existed since the beginning of time but they are now increasing so rapidly and are so widespread that there must be a solution. And the solution is learning Chassidic teachings. This eliminates these 'extra' and false qualities.

Rabbi J. was elated. After the Farbrengen he told everyone he met of the amazing miracle that was happening to him; how just reading the Tanya and seeing the Rebbe completely cured him of the worst disease and made him young again. When the Shabbat was over he called home and told his wife to advertise the miracle until everyone knew.

The next day, after much requesting and lobbying, he again got an audience with the Rebbe and again repeated his request to be his Chassid. But this time the Rebbe answered more positively, "A Chassid is like a soldier; always ready to sacrifice himself to improve the entire world around him. Are you ready for this?"

He never felt better in his life. He exclaimed that he was ready. It had been almost two months now that he was healthy and he felt it would last for ever.

"I'll begin by telling everyone about my miraculous recovery!" He exclaimed enthusiastically.

But the Rebbe emphatically stopped him. "No! You must tell no one! The first tablets containing the Ten Commandments were given with miracles and thunders and they ended up getting broken while the Second Tablets were given quietly and they endured."

But it was too late. It had already been advertised.

He returned home a different man, full of life and Chassidic joy and began several projects to spread and teach Chassidut but after a few months he contracted a cold which developed complications and, as the Rebbe foresaw, he passed away.

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Between One Alien Thought and Another

By the Grace of G-d
25 Menachem Av, 5738 [August 28, 1978]
Brooklyn, N.Y.
Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your letter of Av 5th, in which you ask about the apparent contradiction in regard to the matter of "alien thoughts" between Tanya ch. 28, where it is stated, "...This refutes the error commonly held by people, who mistakenly deduce from the occurrence of the foreign thought that this proves their prayer to be worthless...." and the source in the Testament of the Ribash, to the effect that "the man who is praying... if he is unworthy, he is driven forth: an alien thought is thrown him, whereupon he leaves of his own accord."

The explanation of this apparent contradiction is two-fold:

Sometimes a "foreign thought" may be provoked by the individual himself, who, while praying, diverts his attention to it. This is the kind of alien thought to which the second of the above sources refers. On the other hand, the foreign thought that occurs to a person during prayer may be the work of the Nefesh Habahamis [evil inclination] to distract and disturb his concentration on the prayer, and this is the kind of foreign thought that the Tanya speaks of, and counsels to ignore it, as if a Goy [gentile] was standing there to distract him.

There may also be a sort of an "intermediary" situation, where the individual has not yet mastered complete control of his thoughts. In such a case, when an alien thought occurs to him, he lacks the strength to dismiss it immediately. Thus, while the alien thought was planted in his mind by the Nefesh Habahamis, he becomes an accessory and is at least partly to be blamed if he allows the alien thought to linger in his mind.

Seeing that you take such an interest in your studies, with attention to detail, etc., I trust that this is expressed also in the practical aspects of the learning, in both quantity and quality, namely, the kind of learning that leads to action, the fulfillment of the Mitzvos with Hiddur [beauty], and the general conduct in actual practice. May G-d grant that you should go from strength to strength in all of this.

With blessing,
M. Schneerson

A WORD

from the Director

Many of our Sages make reference to the fact that a person's name indicates something about the person and can teach us about him or her.

If this is true for each of us, how much more so is it true for someone like Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (the wife of the Rebbe), whose yahrzeit is commemorated this week on the 22nd of Shevat (February 11 this year). In fact, the Rebbetzin's name teaches us not only about her holy life, but about our lives as well.

On the Rebbetzin's first yartzeit, the Rebbe spoke about her name, as well as the significance to us of the date of her passing:

"Chaya" means "life." The Rebbetzin's life was filled with mitzvot and acts of goodness and kindness. But her deeds did not remain in the realm of the spirit and were not for a select few. Her deeds affected even the lowest points of this world as indicated by her second name, "Mushka" - a name in a foreign language. This indicates that the Rebbetzin brought holiness into the world, even into the lowest parts of this world.

The 22nd of Shevat is the day of the Rebbetzin's passing. The number 22 alludes to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Jewish teachings state that G-d created the world using these letters. These 22 letters, in their myriad combinations, contain the essence of all bounty and good. The intent is to reveal in all matters of the universe the letters of the Torah which are inherent in the created world.

From the Rebbetzin's name and from the date of her passing we can take one combined lesson for ourselves and our lives. We should fill our days with acts of goodness, kindness, and charity that are not merely surface or peripheral but that permeate and penetrate even the lowest parts of this world.

With each individual working toward this end, we will soon see that G-dliness truly permeates this world with the revelation of Moshiach and the commencement of the long-awaited Redemption.

J. I. Guterlich

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

Is Jealousy Always Bad?

Question: Dear Rabbi,

It says in the Ten Commandments, "Do not be jealous." Does that mean that if I see my friend wearing a dress that I really like, I can't be jealous and want the same dress, even if I don't say anything to my friend?

—An Eight-Year-Old Inquirer

Answer: We are all jealous. It is impossible not to be. As long as we are human, we see what others have and wish we could have it too. But that isn't always bad. There are three types of jealousy: wicked jealousy, dangerous jealousy and good jealousy.

If you want your friend's dress and you don't want her to have it, that is wicked. Why should it bother you that your friend owns something nice? Even if you want the same thing, you should be happy for her that she has it. To want it, and that she not have it, is plain mean.

So, let's say you don't mind that she has her dress, just that you want one too. Is that okay? Well, it's not wicked, but be careful. When you focus too much on what others have, it leads to being unhappy with what you have. Instead of being satisfied with all the good G-d has given you, you always want more. This has no end. Eventually, you'll have bad feelings toward your friends when you can't have it all. So this type of jealousy is not wicked, but it is dangerous.

But then there is a jealousy that is good. That is being jealous of someone else's good deeds or fine character. When you see a friend who is kind, generous, forgiving, disciplined or trustworthy, and you say, "I wish I were like that," this is good jealousy. In fact, this is why we have jealousy in our nature. It can make us want to be a better person.

The Talmud teaches, "The world cannot exist without jealousy." Without it, we would have no drive to become anything. It just depends on how you use it. Be jealous, but for the right things. Your friend's dress will one day go out of fashion. Goodness never will.

Thanks for a great question. I wish I asked such good questions when I was eight years old. I am glad you are my daughter. Otherwise, I'd be jealous.

IT HAPPENED



The Man Who Did Not Get a Blessing

The businessman was at his wits' end. For years, he had eked out a living through the small concession that the Polish government had granted him. And now, his license was suddenly revoked, and he had no idea where his next few zlotys would come from.

But for a chassid, all is never lost. With hope in his heart, he traveled to the great Rabbi Chaim of Sanz, known far and wide as a man of G-d.

He told the saintly man of his troubles, hoping for a blessing, or perhaps even a piece of Divinely-inspired advice. But all he got were questions. "What's your name? What was your father's name? What was your grandfather's name?" And so it went. The rabbi asked the names of the troubled man's relatives, and he dutifully answered.

And with that, the audience ended.

Moments later, the chassid found himself outside the rabbi's study, greeted by the group of poor people who, in exchange for a few copper coins, would bless those leaving that the rabbi's words be fulfilled.

"I'm sorry," he told the would-be well-wishers, "but I was given no blessings from the rabbi for you to confirm, and have nothing to give you in exchange for your blessings."

They tried their best to persuade the chassid that even being in the sage's presence and having him listen to his problems surely constituted a blessing, but he would hear none of it.

Distraught, the man went to the adjacent study hall where he sat and sobbed. In the meantime, Rabbi Yitzchak, one of the most prominent and well-regarded chassidim of the Rebbe of Sanz, entered the study hall and asked the man what was wrong. After hearing the businessman's tale of woe, he too tried to convince him that the great rebbe had surely blessed him, but the man insisted on entering the rebbe's chamber a second time, hoping for a more reassuring blessing.

And so, Rabbi Yitzchak went to the rebbe's room and told him about the man outside, and about his abiding sadness and worry.

"Let me tell you what is going on," said the Rebbe of Sanz. "And please invite the poor businessman to come in as well. He can also hear this story."

"It happened when I was a young man. A group of more than 10 of my peers and I traveled by foot to the city of Lublin to bask in the presence of the great Seer of Lublin. We decided among ourselves that we would not ask anyone for food. Rather, we would go to the kindly people who put up wayfarers like us and gladly rest our bones. If they gave us food, good. And if not, we would continue onward.

"On Sunday, the first day of our trip, we were greeted warmly, but no food was proffered. On Monday, the same thing happened. By that night, I was feeling so weak that I could barely walk, and my friends had to constantly wait for me to keep pace with them. And so it continued all of Tuesday, the third day of our self-imposed fast.

"On Tuesday night, feeling that I had no strength at all, I asked my friends to allow me to ask for food, seeing that I was younger and weaker than the rest, but they refused, saying that an agreement was an agreement.

"On Wednesday morning, I was dragging myself along with my last bit energy, when a man came running toward us. Seeing my sorry state, he dashed into his house and came back with brandy and food for me, observing that my soul was, as he said, 'standing at the tip of my nose.'

"Grateful that I was able to eat the food since it had been offered without solicitation, I ate hungrily and refreshed myself. The kind stranger then

offered food to my companions as well.

"He then invited us all to his home to rest our weary legs. We demurred, saying that we wanted to get to Lublin before Shabbat, and we still had a day and a half of walking ahead of us. He told us that we could still rest at his house and that he would take us to Lublin on his wagon early Thursday morning.

We stayed the night in the kind man's house and readied ourselves for the wagon ride to Lublin. To our disappointment he then told us that some things had come up, and he was no longer able to give us a ride to Lublin as promised.

"Realizing that there was no longer time for us to arrive before Shabbat if we were to travel by foot, we were greatly disappointed and begged the man to keep his word and give us a ride. After much cajoling, he agreed with one stipulation: 'From now on,' the man told us, 'whenever any of you travel to Lublin, you must make it a point to always spend at least one Shabbat at my home, either on your way there or on your return, giving me the pleasure of extending my hospitality.'

"Of course we agreed, and soon found ourselves riding along to Lublin at a steady pace. We arrived in good time, and enjoyed a most delightful Shabbat in the company of the holy Seer of Lublin.

"From then on, whenever I traveled to Lublin I always made sure to spend Shabbat with this man who had saved my life.

"Years passed, and this kind man left this world. Recently his soul came to me and requested a tikkun (rectification) in exchange for the favor he had done for me.

"And so tell me, Reb Yitzchak," said the sage of Sanz, addressing his chassid, "do I not owe him a favor? He saved my life and I wanted to do what I could. But I only knew his first name, not the name of his father, and in the world to come, a person is known by their name and the name of their father. So I prayed to G-d, asking him that a grandson of this man be sent to me so that I can ask him the full name of his departed ancestor.

Rabbi Chaim turned to the businessman and continued: "This man is worried that his business license has been revoked. The truth is that it's nothing. The license was taken from him temporarily so that he could come to me for this purpose. Now that the name of his grandfather is known, there is no need for a blessing. He can return home in peace and with confidence."

And so it was.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, hears of the great miracles which G-d performed for the people of Israel, and comes from Midian to the Israelite camp, bringing with him Moses' wife and two sons. Jethro advises Moses to appoint a hierarchy of magistrates and judges to assist him in the task of governing and administering justice to the people.

The children of Israel camp opposite Mount Sinai, where they are told that G-d has chosen them to be His "kingdom of priests" and "holy nation." The people respond by proclaiming, "All that G-d has spoken, we shall do."

On the sixth day of the third month (Sivan), seven weeks after the Exodus, the entire nation of Israel assembles at the foot of Mount Sinai. G-d descends on the mountain amidst thunder, lightning, billows of smoke and the blast of the shofar, and summons Moses to ascend.

G-d proclaims the Ten Commandments, commanding the people of Israel to believe in G-d, not to worship idols or take G-d's name in vain, to keep the Shabbat, honor their parents, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, and not to bear false witness or covet another's property. The people cry out to Moses that the revelation is too intense for them to bear, begging him to receive the Torah from G-d and convey it to them.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 2 - 3 February	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	8:14	9:14
Adelaide	8:04	9:02
Brisbane	6:24	7:18
Darwin	7:01	7:52
Gold Coast	6:23	7:18
Perth	7:00	7:56
Sydney	7:42	8:39
Canberra	7:53	8:51
Launceston	8:14	9:17
Auckland	8:14	9:13
Wellington	8:23	9:26
Hobart	8:16	9:21
Byron Bay	7:23	8:18

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS YISRO • 17 SHEVAT • 2 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	8.20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	8.50 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	10.02 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	MINCHA	8.10 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	8.15 PM
	MAARIV	9.05 PM