

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas
Re'eh
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion of Re'eh is always read on the Shabbat preceding the month of Elul, or on the first day of Elul. Elul, the month before Rosh Hashana, is dedicated to repentance and seeking forgiveness for our sins. This portion illustrates the great power that teshuva, or returning to G-d, can have.

In general, the Torah is very stringent when it comes to laws concerning idolatry. Indeed, idol worship is one of the three transgressions, along with incest and murder, for which we are required to give up our very lives rather than commit. And in certain circumstances, the Torah decrees capital punishment for those who worship idols. Re'eh discusses the possibility of an entire town that has been led astray and is engaging in this transgression, and refuses to repent of its evil. In such a case, the entire village is destroyed.

Maimonides explained that if the inhabitants do teshuva and return to the One True G-d, then the town is not destroyed.

There is something very unique about this law. In every other instance of wrongdoing where a Jewish court is empowered to mete out punishment, the sinner's repentance has no bearing on and in no way prevents the sentence from being carried out. But in the case of the "town which was led astray," if the people do teshuva the town is allowed to remain in existence.

The explanation for this lies in the unique category created by the "town which was led astray." When an entire populace is misled to serve false gods, the town attains the status of an idolatrous community. No longer are the inhabitants viewed as individuals who are sinning, but rather the entire community, as a community, is considered as deserving the harsh punishment entailed in the Torah. But if all the people sincerely repent, they revert to their former status as individuals, and their town therefore avoids having to be destroyed.

This underscores the immense power of repentance, which can nullify even the harshest of decrees. We also learn from this chapter, if albeit in a negative fashion, the power inherent in unity. When we stand united and dedicate ourselves to good and positive causes, we can attain great heights. Conversely, when a group of people join together and unite to do evil, it causes the greatest damage and destruction.

The Jewish People draw their solidarity from the fact that all Jews the world over comprise one entity. We are likened to one soul which is divided and then put into the several million physical bodies which we inhabit. True repentance therefore reveals a Jew's inherent unity with his fellow Jews and with G-d Himself.

Why Do Good Things Happen to Bad People?

By Rochel Holzkenner

The Torah portion of Re'eh talks about a false prophet. There are three steps in this scenario: 1) "If there will arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of a dream, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, 2) and the sign or the wonder of which he spoke to you happens, 3) [and he] says, 'Let us go after other gods which you have not known, and let us worship them.'" Then, G-d concludes, 4) "You shall not heed the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of a dream; for the L-rd, your God, is testing you, to know whether you really love the L-rd, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul".

A good old con-artist is one thing, but this prophet guy really comes through. And then, based on his proven track record, it is only logical to follow his lead. Unfortunately, he steers his followers away from G-d.

Chassidic masters use this description of the false prophet to resolve an age old conundrum: Why do bad things happen to good people, and good things to bad people (like the popular guy who walks all over people, or the millionaire who is fraudulent in business)? What bothers us most about this injustice is that it simply confuses us. Why would G-d back up the false prophet by validating his prediction? Why would G-d reward an immoral person with success? It makes us doubt the validity of our own moral compass. If that person achieved success, maybe I should forgo my scruples and play by his rules. The false prophet has proven his success, and those around him will naturally follow his lead.

Indeed, the question is puzzling. Why does G-d allow sinful people to prosper? Of course, it is hard to know who is truly happy and prosperous. What appears to be a life of perfection and bliss may look quite different from the inside. But, still, why would G-d make the sinner appear to prosper and initiate a crisis of faith in those around him?

And so the Torah concludes, "G-d is testing you to know whether you really love Him."

If reward and punishment were so transparent then there would be no test. Following in G-d's ways would be the most logical and beneficial decision one could make. But when G-d's justice seems askew, it becomes more challenging to make G-d-centered decisions. So G-d tests the waters to measure the depth of our love. Do you love Me? Do you trust Me? Or are you only in it for you?

There is one final question to be asked. If He really is G-d, does He really need to test us to know whether or not we love Him? Can't He read our hearts like an open book? The third Chabad Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, answers this question. The test is not so much for G-d to know us, as it is for us to know G-d, to breed "daat," an intimate knowledge of G-d's omnipotence. Within every false prophet, within each test of faith, G-d plants a seed. When we remain firm in our belief despite the evidence that success lies outside of G-d, the shell of the test simply falls away and the seed emerges. This seed is the gift of deep, intimate knowledge.

We don't go looking for tests. But if they come our way, we should appreciate that it is critical to our success as G-dly human beings and committed Jews that we face up to the challenge.

Slice of LIFE

My Mother

by Debra Krauthamer

Two decades ago, my mother (of blessed memory), was dying of cancer in a Seattle hospital, and I was privileged to be able to spend a lot of time with her during those weeks. I had grown up in a completely secular home, and as an adult had become observant.

Although not Lubavitchers ourselves, my husband and I were members of the Seattle, Washington, Chabad Shul and I had become active in the Chabad Women's Organization there. In my talks with my mother, I told her about the support and strength I had received from the Chabad community.

My mother, who was Jewishly uneducated and had been uninterested in religion her whole life, suddenly became interested in learning more about Moshiach. She was fascinated by the idea that we are truly on the verge of the Messianic age, and she wanted to know more about the signs which have led Lubavitchers and many others to expect Moshiach's revelation and the Redemption at any moment.

I borrowed a book from one of the Rabbis at Chabad House, and she read it. She said she didn't quite understand it, but found it interesting.

Not long afterwards, she was in such incredible pain that the doctors had to put her into a drug-

induced coma to keep her comfortable. The day they brought her in an ambulance to the hospice and hooked her up to the high dosage IV of morphine, I was told by a nurse that this was really the end. She said that my mother's bodily systems would start to shut down, and that it might be just a matter of a day or two. I prepared myself and davened [prayed], and began the grieving process. But strangely, she stayed in this state of unconsciousness for five weeks.

I asked Rabbi Sholom Ber Levitin [one of the Rebbe's emissaries in Seattle], to whom my husband and I had become very close, what could be the purpose of her lingering in this state for so long. His answer comforted me immensely and will stay with me always. He said that we don't know exactly what it will take to "push us over the edge" in terms of our readiness for Moshiach. Who knows if the final level of readiness might be reached by one thought in the subconscious of a person in a coma.

I knew at that moment why euthanasia isn't G-d's way, it's humans trying to play G-d. I realized that until my mother breathed her last breath and her soul returned to G-d that there was a purpose to her existence, and that the purpose might have universal implications.

You might say that philosophically I became a chasid at that moment. I really began to believe that what we do and think does affect the Divine Presence. This, I believe, is the

essence of the Chasidic worldview. Finally, my mother passed away as my step-father and I stood by her bedside and watched her breathe her last breath. I was shaken, but relieved that her suffering had come to an end, and that she would be going to a place free of pain.

My mother had not known anything about Torah Judaism and had requested certain secular customs regarding her burial and funeral. As soon as she died, my stepfather and I had the difficult task of deciding whether to follow her requests, or to follow Jewish law. Again Rabbi Levitin and I spoke, and the way became very clear. He told me that no matter what a Jew believed while he/she lived, once the soul had gone to its Source, it received complete and total understanding of Torah, and it was the mitzva of the mourners to carry out a proper burial according to Jewish law because this would most honor the deceased.

We had to stop thinking about my mother the way she had been while she was alive, and concentrate on her soul, now freed from earthly ignorance and cultural influences. A decision had to be made quickly, and we made the decision to call the Chevra Kaddisha [Jewish burial society] and start the process of arranging for a proper burial.

I am so glad that my mother was buried in a proper burial. We set a beautiful headstone on her grave near the end of our year of mourning, and I look forward to visiting her grave on my next trip back to Seattle.

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

You Say You're an Atheist . . .

I am in receipt of your two recent letters.

With reference to the other topic of our correspondence, namely my suggestion that one's protestations against G-d are in themselves proof of belief in the existence of G-d—perhaps I did not make myself clear, in that it is not the negation which I consider to be proof, so much as the manner in which it is expressed. For when one declares his atheism once and for all, affirming that henceforth he has no place for G-d in his thoughts, lexicon and daily life, then the matter is settled and closed. However, when one asserts that G-d does not exist, yet at the same time on seeing an injustice in the world experiences pain and promptly demands, "Where is G-d?" his harping on the same theme again and again is proof that deep in his heart he believes in G-d—which is precisely why he feels so hurt and outraged. More importantly still, not only does he believe in a Supernatural Being in general, but also in One who has all the qualities that Jews attribute to Him, among them that He takes an interest in human affairs, although "If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him," etc. Furthermore, He is a G-d who intervenes in the daily life of each and every individual, even to the extent of listening to prayer. And prayer, as the Jew conceives of it, serves the function neither of tranquilizer nor any other means of emotional relief likely to meet with the approval of a psychiatrist. Every such deception is contrary to the spirit of all religions, particularly our Torah, which is called *Torat Emet* [the Torah of truth]. The daily Amidah includes the prayer for "wisdom, understanding and knowledge," from the One "who bestows the gracious gift of knowledge," just as it includes the prayer for healing from the One "who heals the sick of His people Israel"—in the plain sense of these words. Of course, I do not need much convincing that our prayers include profound meanings and esoteric allusions in the realm of Kabbalah, etc., but that should not obscure the fact that first and foremost our prayers are the direct expression of our dependence upon G-d for the satisfaction of our elementary needs, "bread to eat and raiment to wear."

I am, of course, aware of the objections raised to the above, some of them mentioned in your recent article, and in earlier pieces. Specifically it is asked, how is it possible for a Being who is incorporeal, formless, unchanging, etc., to be swayed by prayers for rain in a time of drought, or by other such requests? But the fact that the human intellect cannot comprehend something proves nothing more than that: the intellect is limited, and we were already told long ago that "He is incomprehensible to those who comprehend by the senses." There is no need, therefore, to harp upon a problem with which Jews and Gentiles have been grappling from time immemorial, and which continues to challenge us today. I am certain that it is not because of this bothersome question that the unbeliever lost his faith, but to the contrary: having lost his faith, he seeks to appease his conscience by cooking up this problem.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

My Wife Won't Speak to Me!

Question: *This is a totally hypothetical situation that would never really happen. My wife is angry at me. She thinks she told me to pick her up from the train station, and I never showed up. She waited in the rain for half an hour, couldn't find a taxi, and in the end had to call a friend because my phone was off. I am absolutely sure she did not ask me to pick her up. Now she won't speak to me until I apologize. Can I apologize when I don't believe I did anything wrong?*

Answer: I don't usually answer such far-fetched, made-up scenarios. But this time I will make an exception.

When we say, "I am sorry," we are making a statement about ourselves: I am remorseful, I regret my actions and I hope not to repeat them.

But an apology is not just about you and your feelings. It is about the person you hurt. You don't apologize just to absolve yourself from guilt, but to acknowledge that you are the cause of someone else's pain, and to take responsibility for your role in that.

That means that even if you are completely in the right and really did nothing wrong, even if the other person misinterpreted your words or actions, even if you did nothing to regret, nevertheless if someone else is hurting, you need to apologize for that.

Only G-d knows who is right and who is wrong in your case. But we all know who is hurting.

But beware. If you say, "I am sorry for any pain you felt," your words will come across as empty. It will sound like you think she has a problem and you feel sorry for her. You need to arouse true feelings of empathy for her, and real regret for your part in what happened.

Just imagine her standing in the rain, drenched and dejected, calling your unresponsive phone and not knowing what to do. And in her mind, you caused all this. You owe her a sincere apology. Hypothetically.

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbat is actually the last day of the month of Menachem Av while Sunday is the first day of Elul.

In addition to being the name of a Jewish month, the word Elul is an acronym for five verses from the Bible which are connected to the five different types of service, each identified with our new month. The Rebbe enumerated these five verses:

Prayer - "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine." For it is through prayer, the "duty of the heart" that our relationship with G-d is enhanced and intensified.

Torah study - "It chanced to happen and I set aside for you a place." This verse describes the Cities of Refuge to which a person who killed unintentionally can flee. But it also refers to Torah study for "the words of Torah provide refuge."

Deeds of Kindness - "A person [gives presents] to his friend and gifts to the poor." In this verse the concept of deeds of kindness is clearly expressed.

Teshuva - "And G-d your L-rd will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants." For the service of teshuva--returning to G-d wholeheartedly, is primarily the service of changing one's inner self, the feelings of one's heart.

Redemption - "And they said, 'We will sing to G-d' " This phrase is taken from the Song of Redemption sung at the Red Sea.

The first three services are identified with the three pillars of man's service. These services must be permeated by the service of teshuva and by the service of redemption and thus, they will be endowed with a boundless quality that surpasses the limits of a person and the world at large.

J. I. Gutterman

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Seven Dollars

By Tuvia Bolton

Rabbi Shlomo Chazan was a Torah genius with an unusually productive history. When he arrived in Israel from Morocco, he was immediately chosen to be the dean (Rosh Yeshiva) of a well-known Torah institution in Haifa called Yeshiva Od Yosef Chai. In the years he was there, he taught and raised hundreds of pupils that today are spiritual leaders all over the Holy Land.

Then he decided that he could no longer ignore the ignorance and lack true Judaism all around him. The time had come to stop limiting himself to talented students and begin working with all types of Jews. He left his prestigious position and became the rabbi of the simple Israeli town of Shlomi.

It wasn't long before he became respected and beloved by everyone there and began transforming the entire place to a center of Torah and brotherly love.

But then, at the height of his career, tragedy struck.

He began feeling weak with terrible head and stomach aches. At first he thought it was just flu but the pain began to spread through his entire body and only with the greatest difficulty was he able to function.

He went to the doctor who sent him to the hospital for more thorough examination. And the diagnosis was the worst . . . he had a terrible, incurable disease and had only a short time to live; in a matter of months, perhaps weeks his life would all be over.

He tried other doctors, but they all said the same thing; the only thing that could be done was to alleviate the pain so his remaining few weeks would be bearable.

But as every Moroccan Jew knows; tzadikim are more potent than doctors. So with his last energy he asked his son Shlomo to escort him to the great Baba Sali (a Moroccan nickname for Rabbi Abuchatsera) in the city of Netivot to ask for a blessing.

They stood in line and finally their turn came to approach the holy tzadik. Rabbi Chazan told the entire story, making sure to stress the doctors' prognoses and waited for an answer.

The Baba Sali looked at him deeply for several eternal seconds as though searching the Upper Worlds for an answer and finally replied:

"I can add one year to your life. If you want more than that, then fly to the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Brooklyn. He is the leader of this generation. He can certainly pray for you."

Rabbi Chazan was already half-dead. He barely made it to Netivot; a trip to America would be next to impossible. But the sight of the Baba Sali and his suggestion gave him a new lease on life.

He bought two tickets, called the Rebbe's office long distance to arrange a private meeting, and within a few days he and his son were in Brooklyn entering the Rebbe's room for Yechidut.

Rabbi Chazan's son tells the rest:

"When we entered the Rebbe's room, I was overwhelmed in a way that I had never felt in my life. The Rebbe looked like an angel and his eyes were so penetrating that I was afraid to look into them. I was almost shaking but at the same time, I felt strangely at home. He listened closely to what my father said, then took a small stack of dollar bills, began handing them to my father one after another until he had given him seven, and concluded with "Blessings and Success!" Then, as we were about to leave, he counted out seven additional dollars into my hand and we left.

"Almost as soon as we were out of the Rebbe's room I could see a change in my father. He was happy, filled with life. At first I thought it was psychological but it wasn't just that.

"By the time we returned to Israel, my father was like a new man; he was filled with energy and there was color in his cheeks. The first thing we did was go to the Baba Sali and tell him what happened and then, after a few days, back to the doctors.

"The doctors simply couldn't believe what they saw; the disease had completely disappeared! I remember them looking at the old reports and the new ones and scratching their heads in confusion. But my father just went home, reported all this back to the Rebbe, and went to work.

He understood he was living on a miracle and made use of every second. He wrote several books, built a new, large Mikva for the people of Shlomi, and was even offered the position of being the chief rabbi of the third largest city in Israel, Haifa, which he considered taking.

But HaShem decided differently; precisely seven years to the day (!) that he received those dollars from the Rebbe's hand, he suddenly felt weak, was forced to lie down in bed, and a few hours later passed away. It was a total shock to his family and to the people of Shlomi but no one had any doubt where those seven years came from.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

"See," says Moses to the people of Israel, "I place before you today a blessing and a curse"—the blessing that will come when they fulfill G-d's commandments, and the curse if they abandon them. These should be proclaimed on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal when the people cross over into the Holy Land.

A Temple should be established in "the place that G-d will choose to make dwell His name there," where the people should bring their sacrifices to Him; it is forbidden to make offerings to G-d in any other place. It is permitted to slaughter animals elsewhere, not as a sacrifice but to eat their meat; the blood (which in the Temple is poured upon the altar), however, may not be eaten.

A false prophet, or one who entices others to worship idols, should be put to death; an idolatrous city must be destroyed. The identifying signs for kosher animals and fish, and the list of non-kosher birds (first given in Leviticus 11), are repeated.

A tenth of all produce is to be eaten in Jerusalem, or else exchanged for money with which food is purchased and eaten there. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor instead. Firstborn cattle and sheep are to be offered in the Temple, and their meat eaten by the kohanim (priests).

The mitzvah of charity obligates a Jew to aid a needy fellow with a gift or loan. On the Sabbatical year (occurring every seventh year), all loans are to be forgiven. All indentured servants are to be set free after six years of service.

Our Parshah concludes with the laws of the three pilgrimage festivals—Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot—when all should go to "see and be seen" before G-d in the Holy Temple.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 10 - 11 August	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	5:22	6:21
Adelaide	5:23	6:20
Brisbane	5:06	6:00
Darwin	6:24	7:14
Gold Coast	5:04	5:58
Perth	5:28	6:24
Sydney	5:04	6:01
Canberra	5:10	6:08
Launceston	5:07	6:08
Auckland	5:25	6:23
Wellington	5:16	6:18
Hobart	5:03	6:06
Byron Bay	5:02	5:57

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS RE'EH • 29 MENACHEM AV • 10 AUGUST

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	5:30 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	5:55 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9:45 AM
	SHACHARIS	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:20 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8:00/9:15/10:00 AM
	MINCHA	5:30 PM
	MAARIV	6:15 PM