

LAMPLIGHTER

24 Adar Aleph
Parshas Vayakhel
(Shekalim)
Shabbos Mevarchim
Adar Beis
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

For the past several weeks the Torah readings have dealt with the Mishkan (Sanctuary) and its numerous vessels. The requirements were very exacting, involving many different types of building materials and complicated instructions on how to make the Sanctuary's various parts.

The Torah portions of Teruma and Tetzaveh contain G-d's detailed command to erect the Sanctuary and fashion its components. Immediately afterward, the portion of Vayakhel which we read this week, and Pekudei that we will read next week, speak of the actual building of it.

A question is asked: Why is it necessary to devote four separate Torah readings to the subject of the Sanctuary?

Every word of the holy Torah is deliberate and precise; not one word or letter is superfluous. If so, why does the Torah devote so much space to what seems to be a repetition? Surely the Torah could have enumerated all the details of the Sanctuary and then simply stated that the Jews followed them to the letter. From this we would have understood that the Sanctuary was built according to G-d's instructions.

However, in his commentary on the Torah (Genesis 24:42), Rashi explains a general principle: Whenever something is particularly beloved to G-d, the Torah goes to great length in its description, and indeed may repeat itself several times, even if nothing new is added by the repetition.

The Sanctuary and its vessels were extremely beloved by G-d. The Sanctuary was also especially important to the Jews, for it was the means by which G-d's Presence rested among them, as it states, "And they will make Me a Mikdash (Sanctuary) and I will dwell among them."

Moreover, to the Jews the Sanctuary was particularly beloved, for it testified that G-d had forgiven them for having made the Golden Calf. That is why it was called "the Mishkan of Testimony."

It is precisely because of its great significance, both to G-d and to the Jewish people, that a full four Torah portions are devoted to the Sanctuary: Teruma, Tetzaveh, Vayakhel and Pekudei.

The Jewish people's dedication to the Sanctuary expressed itself in their overwhelmingly enthusiastic response to the call for donations. In fact, they contributed so much of their personal wealth and possessions that an order had to be given for them to cease!

In a like manner, it is not enough to be content with the simple performance of mitzvot. Each one of G-d's commandments must be precious and dear to us, observed with willingness and devotion, and performed with alacrity and love.

Time to Be More Inclusive!

By Chana Weisberg

For years, the trend in education was to segregate children with special needs, but nowadays, we try to include them in conventional classrooms as much as possible.

Inclusion, mainstreaming, integration—these are all different ways of how children with different needs are included in traditional classrooms.

So, is inclusion beneficial, and for whom?

Research over the last 15 years indicates that with the necessary support and proper training, its benefits seem to be overwhelmingly positive for everyone.

Students with special needs gain from increased social opportunities, higher expectations resulting in increased skills and achievements, increased self-respect and confidence, and better preparation for adult life.

But the benefits surprisingly were equally shared by students without special needs. They too gained in greater academic success, enhanced feelings of self-esteem from mentoring students, increased appreciation of their abilities, and a greater acceptance that all people have unique abilities. They learned sensitivity and empathy as well as strong collaborative skills.

In the workforce, a similar idea is gaining traction, as employers are starting to acknowledge the importance of diversity. The effectiveness of human resource systems designed for a homogeneous workforce is being questioned, as employers recognize the contributions of all different kinds of intelligences and talents.

So it looks like we were created as diverse human beings for a reason: we all have what to contribute.

In the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Moses gathers the nation of Israel and lists the various materials that they can contribute to the Tabernacle, G-d's home on earth.

"Take from yourselves an offering for the L-rd; every generous hearted person shall bring gold, silver, and copper..." (Exodus 35:5)

The Rebbe explains that each of these materials represent a different persona in the nation. Gold represents the purity of the tzaddik, the fully righteous individual. Silver (kesef in Hebrew, which also means "yearning") represents the baal teshuvah, the returnee. Copper, the least expensive of metals, represents the sinner.

We might have thought that only a tzaddik who is removed from the enticements and ensnarement of this world has the ability of transforming it into something holy. Or, we might believe that only a baal teshuvah, who intimately knows the negativity of this world, can transform its lowliness into loftiness. But the Torah teaches us that even the sinner must be included in this endeavor and has what to contribute.

Amazingly, G-d's home on earth is not complete without each of their contributions.

No matter our spiritual standing, no matter our intellectual abilities or our emotional intelligences, we were all handcrafted by our Creator to make our world a home for G-d.

And, whether we consider ourselves low or high, righteous or wicked, someone with limited abilities or someone extremely talented, we are all needed. As unintuitive as it may initially seem, each and every one of us has what to gain from the other!

What a golden (or is that copper?) idea!

Slice of LIFE

In a Ward on a Hill

By Mordechai Lightstone

On an overcast morning one Fourth of July, sullen clouds hinting to the imminent fall of rain, I came to a Forensic Psychiatric Ward in Northern Connecticut.

Nestled on a hill and bordered on the side by a dilapidated red brick factory, the gray walls of the building were nearly camouflaged, wedged between brown grass and a turbulent heaven.

"Some Fourth of July this will be," I mused to myself, "stuck with the criminally ill, on a stormy day..."

Entering with my friend Mendel, we passed through a relatively posh waiting room and came to the security clearance.

In the narrow hall that separated the outside world from the one within, all pretenses of fancy and beauty, the paintings and flower vases that had lined the waiting room, are dropped. Here everything is for a purpose, an x-ray machine, a booth for the security guard, cubbies to place items not permitted to enter the ward.

We go through the check list with the guard: our cell-phones must be left outside, the Jewish Art Calendar can come in and be given to the patient, our Tefillin must stay outside since the leather straps could theoretically pose a danger to the patient...or to us. Knots begin to form in my stomach. The hats must also stay behind.

We're ready to go.

A thick metal door slides open revealing a vestibule. Entering, we now hang in limbo between the two worlds. The door slams behind us with an electronic click and a new door in front of us opens, ushering us into the ward proper.

Following the guard, we walk briefly down a long hallway towards the visitor room. He opens the door, watches us go in, and then returns to his office.

Inside a room that could have been the reading room of some local branch of the public library sits a lone Jew. He's dressed in baggy jeans and a blue polo-shirt. I notice that his shoes are Velcro; laces are meaningfully absent.

We shake hands. His are large and fleshy, and the one shaking mine easily engulfs it. Chancing a glance into his eyes, they seem to have a medicated glaze to them, partially concealed behind large, scratched glasses.

I think how every Jew is a Jew, and try very hard not to think about his crime.

Mendel and I sit on a well-used tweed couch, which, in other circumstances I would even have ventured to call comfy. Our friend returns to his own chair.

We speak.

Nervous introductions give way to small talk, and then finally to meaningful discourse.

He's interested in learning Torah, in performing all the mitzvot he can. He has a collection of Jewish books, and reads avidly, despite the paucity of material available to him.

"The local Chabad rabbi tells me that I have the soul of a chossid," he says with a grin. "I've read the Tanya, but I consider myself more of a mussar'nik -a follower of the works Nineteenth Century ethicists."

He mentions several times his guilt, how he won't get out. When he does his eyes turn down, revealing a deeper character that I hadn't at first noticed - failed to notice, I chide myself.

"Here they keep you for a very long time, but at least it's safe." He says with a sigh, caught somewhere between remorse and a sense of security.

I tell him that every Jew is connected to Above on two levels: one revealed, one hidden.

On the revealed level we connect to G-d via mitzvot, if we miss out on a mitzvah, we miss out on a connection. If we go against the Torah, we have separated ourselves from our source, G-d.

But on a deeper level, every Jew, no matter what he has done, has a connection to G-d that transcends the connection through Torah. Therefore, even if he is guilty, Teshuvah (returning to G-d) can bring forgiveness. It re-forges the bond that was destroyed by tapping into the eternal bond that each of us possess.

This is a bond so strong that it is deeper than the Torah. Once this bond has been re-forged, the person continues to connect via the normal

path of Mitzvot.

Suddenly an awful cackle, the maniacal kind that one would think could only come from a psychiatric ward, is heard over the intercom.

The words cling to the inside of my throat.

"What was that?" I finally ask.

"Oh," our friend says, "Just someone having fun with the intercom."

Right...fun.

The conversation goes on.

We focus on which mitzvot can be done practically in a place where wearing tzitzis is forbidden for the same reason as wearing shoelaces.

We decide that saying the Modeh Ani, the prayer of thanks said upon rising in the morning, is fitting. It requires neither physical precepts to perform nor lengthy tomes from which to read; it can even be said with unwashed hands.

What is more, it expresses the inner connection of the soul. Other prayers must be said in a place of purity and cleanliness. Like the essence of the soul that can never be defiled or lost, a beacon of G-dliness in even the darkest places, the Modeh Ani, however, can always be said. Simple, pure, untouched.

The guard taps on the window. Our time is up.

We leave with a second, more personal handshake.

As I walk through the long hall, I look out the window to the inner courtyard set aside for patient exercise. The grass outside is almost as gray as the sky.

But I'm no longer looking out, I'm looking in.

For I know there's a ward on a hill, bordered on the side by a dilapidated red brick factory, and surrounded by gray walls. Look deeper still and I will find that through layer upon layer, door behind door, and room within room is found a room that could be the reading room of some local branch of a public library. Within that room on a tweed couch that could otherwise be called comfy sits a lone Jew. He looks out to the world from behind a large pair of scratched glasses with two large eyes, and within those eyes can be seen a soul.

The eternal soul of the Jew that is always aflame with the Creator.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Recite daily portion of Tehillim after prayer & study portion of Chumash with Rashi; difference between written & engraved letters

Greetings and blessings,

I was happy to hear from Mr. ... about you and your good work on behalf of Yiddishkeit. Mr. ... also writes that now you are in need of a recovery.

Last Monday, Yud-Beis Tammuz, when I was at the gravesite of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, I mentioned you for a blessing for a recovery. I hope that you will be able to share with me the good news that you are feeling better. I will be thankful for such good tidings.

I want to motivate you [to begin observing] the practice ordained by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, to recite the daily portion of Tehillim as the book is divided up according to the monthly cycle, every day after prayer in the morning. In this manner, over the course of the month, one will recite the entire Tehillim at least once. Similarly, [I would like to suggest] that you study a portion of Chumash with Rashi's commentary every day. I hope that, without binding yourself by vow, you see to it to recite Tehillim and study Chumash with Rashi's commentary. These two daily study sessions bring blessing and success into a Jew's life.

In the Torah reading from the previous week that we read on Shabbos, its first verse is: "This is the statute of the Torah." In Chassidus, it is explained that the term *chukas*, "statute," has another meaning: engraving. It alludes to the idea that a Jew must study the Torah and observe its mitzvos in a manner of "engraving." This is in contrast to writing, where the ink is one entity and the surface on which one writes is a second entity, and later the two entities are combined. Instead, the person should study the Torah and observe its mitzvos in a manner of "engraving." When letters are engraved on a stone, the letters are part of the stone itself. They are not an added, foreign entity. So too, a Jew must fulfill the mitzvos and study the Torah in a manner of "engraving," [such that] the person, and the Torah and mitzvos that he carries out, are one thing. When a person carries out the Torah in such a manner, the Torah promises us: "If you proceed in My statutes — *bechukosai*, which connotes engraving— I will grant your rains in their season and the land will produce its yield."

With blessings for a speedy recovery,

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

Is There a Shortcut to Belief?

Question: I envy you. You have faith. I can see how people with faith have clarity and strength that others don't have, especially in hard times. I don't have that strength, and I want some of it. Is there a quick fix for faith?

Answer: There is a quick fix for faith. You should eat a piece of chocolate every day. Seriously.

This is an ancient Jewish remedy for strengthening faith. It is a pity so few people know about it, because if they did, their lives would be so much better. And it really isn't so hard. Just eat a piece of chocolate.

But before you eat the chocolate, you should say the blessing over chocolate. It goes like this:

"Blessed are you L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, for everything exists by Your word."

If you say these words and actually think about them for a few seconds, you will shift your entire perspective on life. Everything exists by His word. What G-d says goes. Nothing happens by accident. We didn't make ourselves, and we are not alone. We are in good hands.

Contemplate those words for a minute a day, and you will have the strength to face whatever life throws at you. Because it's not life throwing it at you, it's G-d.

So go eat some chocolate.

Note: Technically, you don't need to eat chocolate. The same blessing is said on a glass of water, a mushroom, a piece of herring and many other foods. But you have to consume something after saying the blessing. Faith needs to be ingested.

A WORD

from the Director

This week we take out an additional Torah scroll on Shabbat and read what is known as "Parshat Shekalim." We read of the "shekalim call", whereupon every Jew contributed a half-shekel to the Sanctuary chest which provided the public sacrifice on behalf of all the Jewish people.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, known as the "Tzemach Tzedek", in discussing the mitzva of the half-shekel coin, offers some insights. The mitzva requires no more and no less than half a shekel. This indicates that when a Jew makes a contribution toward a sacred cause, it is immediately matched by a similar benevolence from G-d to him, in accordance with the principle that human initiative acts like an impulse, which calls forth a corresponding impulse from on High. The two together constitute the complete Shekel ha-Kodesh ("holy shekel").

Moreover, though human endeavor must be voluntary and spontaneous, the assurance has been given that where there is a resolute intention, the person receives aid from On High to carry it to fruition in the fullest measure.

The mitzva of the half-shekel teaches us, among other things, that human effort, provided it is sincere and resolute, is "met half way" by divine grace. Thus, though the goal may, at first glance, seem too ambitious or even beyond reach, we are not limited to our own human resources, since our initial effort evokes a reciprocal "impulse" from On High, which assures the attainment of even the "unattainable."

May we merit to actually contribute the half-shekel this year in the Holy Temple with Moshiach, NOW!

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED



Do You Have a Father?

By Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveichik

Related by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveichik in a lecture at the Lincoln Square Synagogue, New York, May 28, 1975.

I recall an experience from my early youth. Let me give you the background of that experience.

I was then about seven or eight years old. I attended a cheder in a small town on the border of White Russia and Russia proper. The town was called Khaslavichy; you certainly have never heard of it. My father was the rabbi in the town. I, like every other Jewish boy, attended the cheder. My teacher was not a great scholar, but he was a Chassid, a Chabadnik.

The episode I am about to relate to you took place on a murky winter day in January. I still remember the day; it was cloudy and overcast. It was just after the Chanukah festival, and the Torah portion of the week was Vayigash. With the end of Hanukah ended the little bit of serenity and yomtovkeit (holiday spirit) that the festival brought into the monotonous life of the town's Jews.

As far as the boys from the cheder were concerned, a long desolate winter lay ahead. It was a period in which we had to get up while it was still dark and return home from the cheder with a lantern in the hand of each boy, because nightfall was so early.

On that particular day, the whole cheder, all the boys, were in a depressed mood — listless, lazy, and sad. We recited, or I should say chanted mechanically, the first verses of Vayigash in a dull monotone. We were simply droning the words in Hebrew and in Yiddish. So we kept on reading mechanically: Then Judah approached him [Joseph].... My lord has asked his servants, saying: "Have you a father, or a brother?" And we said to my lord: "We have an old father, and a young child of his old age..." Permit me to use the interpretation of the Targum Yerushalmi of the words yeled zekunim ("a young child of his old age"), namely a talented boy, a capable, talented, bright child. "We have an old father, and we also have a talented little child."

The boy, reading mechanically, finished reciting the question: Ha-yesh lachem av? Do you have a father? and the reply: Yesh lanu av zaken veyeled zekunim katan, We have an old father, and a young child of his old age. Then something strange happened. The melamed (teacher), who was half-asleep while the boy was droning on the words in Hebrew and Yiddish, rose, jumped to his feet and with a strange, enigmatic gleam in his eyes, motioned to the reader to stop. Then the melamed turned to me and addressed me with the Russian word meaning "assistant to the rabbi," podrabbin. Whenever he was excited he used to address me with this title, "assistant to the rabbi." There was a tinge of sarcasm and cynicism in his using the term, because this Chabad chassid could never forgive me for having been born into the house of Brisk which represented the elite of the opposition to Chassidism. Although I must say that I cannot accept responsibility for this fact because it was an accident of birth.

Then he said to me: "What kind of question did Joseph ask his brothers, Ha-yesh lachem av? Do you have a father? Of course they had a father, everybody has a father! The only person who had no father was the first man of creation, Adam. But anyone who is born into this world has a father. What kind of a question was it?"

I began, "Joseph . . ." I tried to answer, but he did not let me. Joseph, I

finally said, meant to find out whether the father was still alive. "Do you still have a father," meaning, is he alive, not dead?

"If so", the melamed thundered back at me, "he should have phrased the question differently: Is your father still alive?"

To argue with the melamed was useless. He began to speak. He was no longer addressing the boys. The impression he gave was that he was speaking to some mysterious visitor, a guest who had come into the cheder, into that cold room. And he kept on talking. Joseph did not intend to ask his brothers about avot d'isgalyim. I later discovered that this was a Chabad term for parenthood which is open, visible. He was asking them about avot d'iscasin, about the mysterious parenthood, the hidden and invisible parenthood. In modern idiom, I would say he meant to express the idea that Joseph was inquiring about existential parenthood, not biological parenthood. Joseph, the melamed concluded, was anxious to know whether they felt themselves committed to their roots, to their origins. Were they origin conscious? "Are you", Joseph asked the brothers, "rooted in your father?" Do you look upon him the way the branches, or the blossoms, look upon the roots of the tree? Do you look upon your father as the feeder, as the foundation of your existence? Do you look upon him as the provider and sustainer of your existence? Or are you a band of rootless shepherds who forget their origin, and travel and wander from place to place, from pasture to pasture?

Suddenly, he stopped addressing the strange visitor and began to talk to us. Raising his voice, he asked: "Are you modest and humble? Do you admit that the old father represents an old tradition?"

"Do you believe that the father is capable of telling you something new, something exciting? Something challenging? Something you did not know before? Or are you insolent, arrogant, and vain, and deny your dependence upon your father, upon your source?"

"Ha-yesh lachem av?! Do you have a father?!" exclaimed the melamed, pointing at my study-mate. I had a study-mate who was considered a child prodigy in the town. He was the prodigy and I had the reputation of being slow. His name was Isaac. The melamed turned to him and said: "Who knows more? Do you know more because you are well versed in the Talmud, or does your father, Jacob the blacksmith, know more even though he can barely read Hebrew? Are you proud of your father? If a Jew admits to the supremacy of his father, then, ipso facto, he admits to the supremacy of the Universal Father, the ancient Creator of the world who is called Atik Yomim ('He of Ancient Days')."

That is the experience I had with the melamed. I have never forgotten it.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Moses assembles the people of Israel and reiterates to them the commandment to observe the Shabbat. He then conveys G-d's instructions regarding the making of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The people donate the required materials in abundance, bringing gold, silver and copper; blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool; goat hair, spun linen, animal skins, wood, olive oil, herbs and precious stones. Moses has to tell them to stop giving.

A team of wise-hearted artisans make the Mishkan and its furnishings (as detailed in the previous Torah readings of Terumah, Tetzaveh and Ki Tisa): three layers of roof coverings; 48 gold-plated wall panels, and 100 silver foundation sockets; the parochet (veil) that separates between the Sanctuary's two chambers, and the masach (screen) that fronts it; the ark, and its cover with the cherubim; the table and its showbread; the seven-branched menorah with its specially prepared oil; the golden altar and the incense burned on it; the anointing oil; the outdoor altar for burnt offerings and all its implements; the hangings, posts and foundation sockets for the courtyard; and the basin and its pedestal, made out of copper mirrors.

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, ST KILDA EAST

**PARSHAS VAYAKHEL (SHEKALIM) SHABBOS
MEVARCHIM ADAR BEIS • 24 ADAR ALEPH • 1 MARCH**

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	7.50 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	8.20 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	TEHILLIM	8.30 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	10.16 AM
	SHACHRIS	10.00 AM
	MOLAD, WEDNESDAY	12.41 (16 chalakim) PM
	MINCHA	7.35 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS	8.39 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	7.40 PM
	MARIV	8.30 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING

	Shabbos 1 - 2 March	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:42	8:39
Adelaide	7:36	8:31
Brisbane	6:02	6:54
Darwin	6:51	7:41
Gold Coast	6:01	6:53
Perth	6:34	7:28
Sydney	7:14	8:09
Canberra	7:24	8:19
Launceston	7:38	8:36
Auckland	7:43	8:39
Wellington	7:47	8:45
Hobart	7:38	8:38
Byron Bay	7:01	7:53

