

LAMPLIGHTER

15 Adar Beis
(Shushan Purim)
Parshas Tzav

1392

22 March
5779/2019

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Tzav, we read about the eight-day consecration of the Sanctuary. All the instructions for building the Sanctuary had been followed. The utensils and altar were ready for use, and the Jews began to bring the various types of sacrifices. Yet, "the Divine Presence did not rest on the work of their hands." For the first seven days, the Sanctuary was erected. But each day it was taken down again. Only on the eighth day of the consecration, when the last trace of spiritual impurity caused by the sin of the Golden Calf was removed, did the Heavenly fire descend and the G-dly Presence rested on the Sanctuary.

We see here two components to the perpetual fire which burned on the altar. On the one hand, a fire came down from Heaven to consume the offerings. But the priests were nonetheless commanded to bring ordinary fire, too. The act of bringing the fire served as a preparation for the G-dly flame which came from Above. Only after human initiative had been taken could the G-dly fire descend. And only at that point did the Sanctuary attain permanence.

Why could the G-dly fire be drawn down only after the human component of the worship was perfected? What special nature of the G-dly fire brought permanence to the Sanctuary?

Human beings are finite. No matter how high their aspirations, they can reach only a finite level of spirituality. And, being finite, human beings cannot reach a level of permanence in their worship without the assistance of G-d, Who is infinite and unlimited. Permanence cannot be attained solely through human effort. The G-dly intervention added a permanence that could not be achieved by human endeavor. The Sanctuary no longer needed to be disassembled.

The fire teaches us that we, as finite beings, must first complete our own tasks and achieve as much as our limited capabilities allow, in order for G-d to provide the spiritual edge which we cannot reach alone.

The completion of the first seven days of the consecration also symbolizes the limitations of the physical world. A week constitutes a recognized, full cycle symbolizing the spiritual limitations inherent in the corporeal world. The eighth day of the consecration symbolizes the infinite attribute of G-d which cannot be contained in the natural order of seven. This is the level of "perpetual fire" which burned on the altar, showing that finite beings could transcend even time itself, through the perfection of their worship of G-d.

The verse concerning the perpetual fire reads: "A perpetual fire shall burn on the altar - it shall not go out." This means that our enthusiasm and warmth towards Judaism must remain kindled and never be allowed to diminish. It is not enough to rely on our spiritual achievements of the day before, or even a minute ago. We must be ever vigilant to ensure that the innate spark of the love of G-d in every Jewish soul never grows cold.

Every single Jew is a sanctuary to G-d, as it states, "And they shall build me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst" - in the midst of each and every Jew. If we always keep the spark of the love for G-d and Judaism glowing, we can ensure that the Divine Presence finds a dwelling place in this world below.

The New You

By Menachem Feldman

Each and every morning, the first service of the day in the Holy Temple was for the kohen (priest) to remove a small portion of the ashes from the altar, and place it on the floor just next to the altar. The verse in the Torah portion of Tzav states:

"The kohen shall don his linen tunic, and he shall don his linen trousers on his flesh. He shall lift out the ashes into which the fire has consumed the burnt offering upon the altar, and put them down next to the altar."

The purpose of this ritual was not merely to tidy up the ashes left over from the fire that had burned all night, for if that were the case, the commandment would have been to remove more than just a symbolic amount of ash. In fact, after the priest would remove a small portion of the ashes, the other priests would place the remainder of the ashes in a large heap in the center of the altar.

What, then, is the significance of lifting and removing the ashes? Why is it so important that it is the first ritual performed in the Temple, the first step in the service of G-d?

Ashes are what is left over from the previous day's service. Yesterday, your service may have been perfect. Yesterday, you may have actualized your G-d-given potential. Yesterday, you may have achieved all that you possibly could have achieved with your opportunities, talents and strengths.

That was yesterday.

However, if you offer the identical service today, if you do not grow spiritually, if you don't become more loving, more compassionate, more patient, more thoughtful, more committed, then you are stuck in the past. The first step in serving G-d each morning is the realization that the ashes that represent "the old me" must be removed, in order to clear the way for "the new me," for the me that will actualize today's even greater potential.

That is why each night, the chassidim of the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Chabad movement, would tell themselves, "Tomorrow will be totally different." They did not say "a little bit different," they said "totally different." They did not feel guilty for not realizing that day's potential, because they did realize it; rather, they understood that the next day's potential would be so much greater.

The portion of Tzav is always read in close proximity to the holiday of Passover. Indeed, the message of the ashes is the reason why remembering the exodus from Egypt is so central to Judaism.

In Hebrew, Egypt is Mitzrayim, which means "constraints." You may be a great human being, but if today you are in the same spiritual space that you were in yesterday, you are in Egypt. The Torah therefore insists that you "remember the day you left Egypt all the days of your life." Each morning when you wake up, remember to remove the ashes. Do not limit yourself to the person you were yesterday.

Remember the Exodus and break free.

Slice of LIFE

Breaking Through The Clouds

By Bracha Goetz

Harvard University, April 25, 1977. I am standing at a turning point - one I can almost see, while still feeling dizzy from all the turning.

It is the spring of my junior year here, and I've just gotten back from one of Harvard's most exclusive garden parties. Somehow I was invited to the Gem Club's big bash. Maybe it's because my boyfriend, Christopher, has been doing a lot of "power-seeking" lately, making friends in high places.

I was thrilled to be invited, but terrified, too; terrified that someone would discover the mistake that had been made. What would they do if they found someone Jewish at the garden party, throw me out?

Why would anyone suspect me of being different, though, once I was already there? My name isn't especially Jewish, and I don't really look Jewish anymore. My nose is nice, my hair is straight, and I'm tanned and thin now. All those years of dieting have been worth it. What a culmination - I could be as slim and rich-looking as every other woman there.

When I got to the party, all I kept thinking was, "This is it. I have made it." I'd thought I had made it to the top before, but, wow, way up here you can really get light-headed. I was at the garden party most people don't even dream of attending. Me! A one-time chubby, frizzy-haired, middle-class Jewish girl from Queens. Me! Brushing my bony shoulders past the sons and daughters of the most powerful people in the world. It was such a joy to revel in standing there, classically poised in my white sundress. I fit in!

So I figured I'd just stroll on over and talk with some old chums -

Caroline Kennedy and her cousin, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Then I'd kind of glide over by the dainty tea sandwiches and chat for a bit with the Rockefellers and Moynihans. The only problem was that I couldn't move. I was afraid even to breathe. Could I do it casually? And if I blinked, would this whole scene disappear? It looked straight out of some fantasy, or *The Great Gatsby*. So I just stood there, thinking: How did I get to be here on this hedge-enclosed, perfectly trimmed lawn among these people? Then the answer hit me: by running away.

I started running away years back, slamming the door on mediocrity. Tentacles to oblivion were trying to suck me in - but I wouldn't let them. I was different. I was un-Jewish and airy. I was the kind of person who loved to run through meadows and forests and across beaches in the wind, barefoot, hair flowing, and in my beautiful patched jeans. And I was going to get out of the clutches of the tentacles and become something great. Something un-Jewish, rich, beautiful, and famous.

So five years later, there I was at the garden party, unable to imagine any place higher. And all I was doing was standing there feeling relieved that nobody was noticing me.

Slowly, very slowly, I started moving from one group of people to another. I was dying to hear what the very rich and beautiful said to each other.

After a while, though, it began to dawn on me that everybody there was doing the same thing I was doing. Everyone looked like they were dying to hear words of significance. Everyone's eyes were darting about, straying far from the people talking to them.

I did, at one point, find a singular group of people talking animatedly. They were discussing a *Newsweek* article - just as anybody could! Each moment felt frozen, and too clichéd to

be real. But then, I guess that's how clichés come about - by describing the way things actually are. There, atop the peak of fame and fortune, was nothing. The ice cubes clinking in the glasses everyone was holding seemed to have more warmth than the people holding them. Everybody at this elite party was bored through and through. And it was exhausting having to look expressionless for so long.

Suddenly, I felt that a gigantic cloud had been lifted. It was really odd that I felt that way, because actually more and more storm clouds were suddenly filling up the sunny sky. "There honestly is nothing special about the big shots in the world," I kept thinking. "I've been given the chance to see that they also have nostrils close up - but almost no breath of life inside. And a half hour ago, I would have sold my soul to be one of them."

So, what was left to strive for, then? If there was nothing up here on this peak, was there nothing at all above it?

It sounds too unreal even to put in a movie, but right then the clouds burst! A terrific thunderstorm came pouring down on all the skimpy white dresses and tanned, bony shoulders. It came down on all the perfectly spread tea sandwiches. The whole shebang instantly became one big, slushy mess. All the guests frantically ran off the manicured lawn to find shelter, so their perfectly styled hair wouldn't get ruined. The privileged garden party had just collapsed before my eyes!

I skipped home alone, not bothering to find out where Christopher had run off to. It must have been years since I had gone skipping through the streets. But on this suddenly transformed, rainy afternoon, Cambridge was glistening for me. I skipped all the way back to my dorm, singing out loud, splashing in puddles, and thinking, "There is something more, something more than being rich or famous or beautiful. Something even more exclusive than Harvard's Gem Club. The next generation's potentially most powerful had been at the party. And even they couldn't stop the rain from falling down."

Published by **The Chabad House of Caulfield** in conjunction with the

Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.

Editors: Shmuel Kesselman,
Zalman Serebryanski

P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

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ISSUE 1392

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

A condolence letter

This letter was addressed to R. Avraham Eliyahu Axelrod, an active communal Rabbi in Baltimore.

8 Menachem Av, 5711,
Brooklyn.

Greetings and blessings,

With sorrow, I heard of the passing of your wife, Rebbitzin Brachah Niesha, May it be G-d's will that from now on, you suffer no more grief or sorrow, Heaven forbid. During these days, the mourning that exists from past history will certainly, speedily in our days, be transformed into gladness and happiness. So too, [all] new mourning will be forgotten from the earth because "those who lie in the dust will arise and sing joyous praises."

Just now, the kuntreis [entitled] Reshimos al Megillas Eichah from the Tzemach Tzedek was brought from the bindery. Included in it is [also] a maamar from the Rebbe Maharash, a maamar from the Rebbe Rashab, and a maamar from my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe. According to the attributes of G-d, which are revealed "measure for measure," may it be G-d's will that in the merit of your bringing "the luminary of the Torah" and "the light of the Torah" to thousands of Jewish homes that there shine for you, in a brilliant manner, actual and revealed good. May you see much nachas from your daughter and from your son, the Rav.

Enclosed are two kuntreisim. You will certainly notify the office how many other copies to send to you.

May it be G-d's will that we merit the long-awaited fulfillment of the prophecy: "I will transform your mourning into joy," and these days will be transformed into gladness and celebration. Amen. So may it be His will.

With blessings for proper health and that there be good tidings concerning this.

N.B. Your letter from 3 Tammuz was duly received. You have certainly already received all the receipts [sent to you] according to the lists included in that letter.

A WORD

from the Director

The holiday of Purim (which we have just finished celebrating) is connected to three ideas: shleimut ha'am (the complete Jewish people); shleimut haTorah (the complete Torah); and shleimut ha'aretz (the complete Land of Israel).

The "complete Jewish people" means the recognition that we are one nation. Haman's decree was directed against all Jews, "from young to old, men, women and children." By coming together in true unity, Haman's evil decree was nullified.

The "complete Torah" means the whole Torah -every single part of it. In the Megila, Mordechai is referred to as "Mordechai Hayehudi," "Mordechai the Jew." The term "Yehudi" implies the rejection of idol worship. When a Jew rejects idolatry, he is declaring that the entire Torah is true. In the days of Mordechai, the Jewish people were called "Yehudim", because they clung to the totality of Torah, every single detail, without compromise.

The "complete Land of Israel" means that all of the Holy Land belongs to the Jewish people. The events of Purim occurred during the 70 years between the First and the Second Holy Temples. Although by that time work had already begun on the new Temple, it was interrupted by order of the Persian King. Mordechai knew that learning the laws connected to the Temple would nullify the decree to stop building. He gathered the Jewish children together and studied these laws, and his efforts were successful. The Temple was completed, and the Land of Israel was in Jewish hands.

As we have celebrated the holiday of Purim, let us ponder the fact that all of the Holy Land was given to every single Jew by G-d Himself. We must therefore behave in a way that makes us worthy of the name "Yehudim," declaring the truth of our whole Torah, and remain strong in our faith in G-d. Doing so will win the respect of the nations and bring true peace, culminating in the Final Redemption with Moshiach, speedily in our day.

J. I. Gutnick

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

Is the World Really Getting Better?

By Tzvi Freeman

Question: *You are always talking about how the world is ready and prepared for the Age of Moshiach. I don't see it. It looks like a pretty awful world to me. Looks like we've got a long way to go.*

Answer: That's because you don't see where it's coming from, what it used to be and how much it changed.

Let me illustrate: Nowadays you can call anywhere from anywhere. Imagine a call to the past. Say you called up your great-grandparents.

"Hi, great-grandma, great-grandpa! This is your great-grandchild calling from a hundred years later!"

"So wonderful to hear from you! How is life in the 21st century? Do you have enough to eat?"

"Well, when I want to eat, I go to my refrigerator. It keeps all the food cold and fresh."

"You only eat cold? Poor thing!"

"No, I stick it in my microwave for a minute and it comes out warm and cooked."

You go on to describe your menu, including produce and packages from every part of the world. And not just food, but people, too: You can take a cute little device out of your pocket and have a conversation with someone anywhere in the world, anytime. And if you need a piece of information, or to study any subject, you have access to millions of computers and many helpful people around the world-without even stepping out the door.

Your home is warm in the winter and cool in the summer. No Cossacks come to burn it down. In fact, the government provides subsidies so your children can study Judaism. Even in Moscow, the government helps build places of worship for Jews, as well as people of all faiths. The people around you teach their children tolerance and love of peace. The world produces enough food to feed each of its six billion citizens. Scientists, rather than challenging faith, point out the mysterious wonders of the universe and its essential oneness. For the first time in history, war is looked down upon and world peace is a value.

To them, you are describing a miraculous world. A world more distant from their world than theirs was from the ancients. They could only reach one conclusion: You must be calling them from the Times of Moshiach.

Yes, you left out a few details. For example, that you still owe the bank for that house. That the food produced is not reaching those who need it. That the information superhighway is often used for trash and pornography rather than for the wisdom it is destined for. That the world is still filled with much evil and suffering. But the point is, the stage is set, all is in place. Never before has the world been anywhere near this position. All that's left is for the curtains to be drawn and the lights to shine on the scene.

IT HAPPENED



The Baal Shem Tov in Heaven

By Yitzchak Buxbaum

Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov was one of the greatest disciples of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism. Many years after the Baal Shem Tov's passing, Rabbi Yechiel Michel's young son Yosef became critically ill, and his condition steadily deteriorated until he was on the verge of death. Just then, news reached Rabbi Michel that opponents of the Baal Shem Tov were planning to burn the chassidic book Toldot Yaakov Yosef ("The Generations of Yaakov Yosef") in a certain city. This book, written by another great disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, was the first book, and at that time the only one, that contained the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov.

Rabbi Yechiel Michel realized that this was an attempt to suppress the new chassidic movement, and that the situation was urgent. He decided to travel to that city and try to prevent this terrible desecration. He instructed his family that if (G-d forbid) his son died when he was gone, they should delay the burial until he returned home. Shortly after he left, Yosef entered a deep coma. He seemed to have stopped breathing, and they thought he was dead, but they delayed his burial as they were told. After three days, however, Yosef began to perspire. He opened his eyes and told this story:

"When I went into the coma, I felt my soul leave my body. Immediately, an angel came to take me to a certain heavenly palace. Since the angel was not permitted to enter that palace, I entered alone and stood by the door. Inside, the heavenly court was in session, and I saw two angels arrive with a book that contained a record of all my sins. It was so large and heavy that it was difficult for them to carry. As I looked on, another angel came with a thin book of my good deeds, but they were not equal to the sins, which outweighed them. Then a third book was brought in, of my sufferings, and they caused many of my sins to be erased. Nevertheless, because of the sins that remained, the court decided to condemn me to die from my illness, and they were about to pronounce the sentence and write the decree.

"At that moment, my father—who had made a soul-ascent to protest before the heavenly court—came to that palace, entering with a commotion and loudly complaining about those who wanted to burn the book with the Baal Shem Tov's teachings. He vigorously protested, saying, 'It will be a terrible chillul ha-Shem (desecration of the divine name) if it's burned. It can't be allowed!'"

Just then, Rabbi Yechiel Michel noticed his son standing near the door, and said, "Yosef, why are you here?" "Father, I don't know," he said. "But please speak to the court on my behalf." "I certainly will," his father answered. Then Rabbi Yechiel Michel continued to protest about the book burning as before, and pleaded passionately that it not be permitted. But the court answered, "This matter belongs to a higher jurisdiction"—because in heaven there are higher and higher courts, one above the other—an appellate court, a supreme court, and so on. Rabbi Yechiel Michel then left to make an appeal to a higher court, and completely forgot about his son Yosef.

Yosef stood near the door, worried and troubled. Not long after this, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye also made a soul-ascent and came to that heavenly palace where the court was sitting. He entered, and also shouted and pleaded while weeping, complaining about those who wanted to burn his book. Then he noticed his friend's son standing by the door, and said, "Yosef, why are you here?" "Rabbi, I don't know," said the boy. "But please speak to the court on my behalf." "I'll certainly say something on your

behalf," said Rabbi Yaakov Yosef. The court then told him too that the issue of the book was a matter for a higher court. Rabbi Yaakov Yosef immediately left to appeal to the higher court, and totally forgot about Yosef. Yosef, meanwhile, continued to stand there worried and troubled, because he had no one to help him or to be his advocate.

Suddenly, there was such a great commotion that all the worlds trembled, and a proclamation echoed throughout the heavens: "Make way, make way; the holy Baal Shem Tov is entering the palace!" (The Baal Shem Tov, as we said, had already passed away and was in the other world.) As soon as the Baal Shem Tov came in, he saw his disciple's son standing alone by the door, and said, "Yosef, why are you here?" "Holy Rabbi, I don't know," said Yosef. "Could you please speak to the court on my behalf?" "I certainly will," said the Baal Shem Tov, and he immediately went and spoke to the court about the boy, asking them to dismiss his case and let him go in peace. He then returned to Yosef and said, "You can leave now and go home."

By this time, Yosef was curious about what would happen in heaven, and wanted to stay a little longer to see what the Baal Shem Tov would do there. But two burly angels immediately came, took him under the arms and escorted him out. They then took him down, down, down, to the lower world, "until," he said, "I saw a repulsive corpse lying on the floor," for his family, thinking he was dead, had taken him off the bed and put him on the floor with his feet pointed toward the door, according to custom. And the angels said, "Enter that corpse!"—they wanted him to return to his body. But he was disgusted by the body and the suffering in this world, and absolutely refused. He cried and pleaded with them, but they forced him to enter against his will. "Then," he said, "I began to perspire, opened my eyes, and am telling you this story."

Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, the boy's father, forgot about his own son in his zeal to defend the book that contained the Baal Shem Tov's teachings. Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, the author of the book, forgot about his friend's son in defending his book that contained the Baal Shem Tov's teachings. But the holy Baal Shem Tov, whose teachings were in the book, did not forget a Jewish child. A child was more important to him than a book.

Some of the holiest people do not write books. The Baal Shem Tov focused on living the teachings, not recording them. The Baal Shem Tov's legacy was not of books, but of people. What he left behind were disciples and followers in whose hearts burned love of G-d, love of Israel and love of the Torah, with an eternal fire. He never wrote a book, but he never forgot a child.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

G-d instructs Moses to command Aaron and his sons regarding their duties and rights as kohanim ("priests") who offer the korbanot (animal and meal offerings) in the Sanctuary.

The fire on the altar must be kept burning at all times. In it are burned the wholly consumed ascending offering; veins of fat from the peace, sin and guilt offerings; and the "handful" separated from the meal offering.

The kohanim eat the meat of the sin and guilt offerings, and the remainder of the meal offering. The peace offering is eaten by the one who brought it, except for specified portions given to the kohen. The holy meat of the offerings must be eaten by ritually pure persons, in their designated holy place and within their specified time.

Aaron and his sons remain within the Sanctuary compound for seven days, during which Moses initiates them into the priesthood.

CANDLE LIGHTING



| Shabbos 22 - 23 March | | |
|-----------------------|--------|------|
| | Begins | Ends |
| Melbourne | 7:11 | 8:07 |
| Adelaide | 7:07 | 8:01 |
| Brisbane | 5:39 | 6:31 |
| Darwin | 6:39 | 7:27 |
| Gold Coast | 5:38 | 6:29 |
| Perth | 6:08 | 7:01 |
| Sydney | 6:47 | 7:40 |
| Canberra | 7:55 | 7:49 |
| Launceston | 7:03 | 8:00 |
| Auckland | 7:13 | 8:07 |
| Wellington | 7:12 | 8:10 |
| Hobart | 7:02 | 8:00 |
| Byron Bay | 6:37 | 7:29 |

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|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| FRIDAY NIGHT: | MINCHA | 7.20 PM |
| | KABBOLAS SHABBOS | 7.50 PM |
| SHABBOS DAY: | LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA | 10.25 AM |
| | SHACHRIS | 10.00 AM |
| | MINCHA | 7.05 PM |
| | SHABBOS ENDS | 8.07 PM |
| WEEKDAYS: | SHACHARIS | 8.00/9.15/10.00 AM |
| | MINCHA | 7.10 PM |
| | MARIV | 8.00 PM |