

LAMPLIGHTER

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion, Shemini, discusses the pure animals that we are allowed to eat, and the impure ones that we are forbidden to eat. The Torah gives two signs to recognize a pure animal: it chews the cud and it has split hoofs.

One of the reasons offered for the dietary laws is that everything a person eats is transformed into blood and flesh, becoming an integral part of that person. The Torah thus prohibits certain foods in order to prevent man from assimilating the evil characteristics of the forbidden food.

If there is a prohibition against eating animals which do not chew the cud and do not have a split hoofs, it follows that the proper conduct for man should be one that embraces the concepts of a split hoof and chewing the cud.

The hoof must be split entirely, from the top to the very bottom. The hoof is divided into two, to indicate that our walking on this earth, i.e., our mundane involvements, must include two basic principles: drawing near to oneself that which is good and proper, and pushing away that which is not.

But the sign of a split hoof by itself is not sufficient. There must also be the sign of chewing the cud.

One must very carefully "chew over" every mundane activity which one intends to undertake. One must clarify and determine, once and again, whether to do it altogether, and if so, how to do it. Only then will the action itself be a "pure animal" - something which can and is used for our spiritual mission in life.

Regarding fowl, we do not rely on signs alone, but we also require a tradition affirming that species' purity. Off hand, one could ask why we need such a tradition. Observing the signs would seem sufficient. However, this comes to teach us that one cannot rely on one's own intelligence. It is possible to study the Code of Jewish Law, and even follow a course of behavior, which one's own intellect determines to be "beyond the letter of the law."

One must follow the tradition. The Hebrew word for tradition is 'mesora', which is related to the word 'mesira' - devotion and being bound together. In order to follow the Jewish tradition we must be devoted to and bound together with other Jews and Torah leaders who can teach us the ways of our tradition.

And Aaron Was Silent . . .

By Tali Loewenthal

In the course of life, sometimes, startling and shocking events take place. Some might be close at hand, affecting people we know. Yet we learn how to respond to such tragedies from our sacred Torah, which tells of events happening thousands of years ago, and of responses which are eternally relevant.

In this week's Torah reading a very unexpected and tragic event is described. At the moment of the final consecration of the Sanctuary, two of Aaron's sons were killed. Without consulting Moses, they let themselves be overcome by their enthusiasm and had come too close to the infinite power of the divine which was revealed in the Holy of Holies. In effect, they died as a result of their own unbridled ecstasy.

The Torah portion describes how Moses comforted Aaron, and that Aaron accepted what had happened: "And Aaron was silent"

The power to be silent at certain moments in life is an important strength. It expresses the awareness that G-d is infinite, and cannot be encapsulated in our human conceptions of what should take place.

Language, speech, signifies comprehensibility. Melody is beyond language, expressing moods which words cannot describe; and silence is yet higher.

The Talmud tells of a case when Moses himself was told by G-d to be silent. G-d showed him in a vision all future generations of the Jewish people, and the leaders of each generation. Moses was greatly impressed by the wisdom of Rabbi Akiva. Then he saw the way the Romans tortured him to death. "Is this the reward of his Torah knowledge?" Moses asked. G-d answered: "Be silent; thus it arose in My thought."

Before the event, assuming that there is some warning, one must do everything possible to prevent tragedy. Once it has happened, though, through our spiritual "silence" we reach a special closeness to the divine. Rashi tells us that because Aaron was silent, he was rewarded by G-d speaking directly to him later in the Parshah.

However, this silence is only in terms of our intimate, personal relationship with G-d. In terms of our practical lives, even the worst and most horrific event is a call to action. It may be a call to do all one can to alleviate the suffering which has been caused. It may be a call to rebuild homes which have been lost. Or it may be a call to "rebuild" in a more spiritual way.

The Jewish people have confronted a physical Holocaust, and also various forms of spiritual damage through intermarriage and assimilation. How do we respond to this? Not through passive silence, however mystical that might be; but with supreme effort, action and joy, through which we try to help every Jew turn towards their Jewish heritage and rebuild Jewish family life and Jewish knowledge around the globe.

Today, as Jews, we also face onslaught in Israel and elsewhere, through political action, media attacks and also sickening violence. Here, not silence, but the right voice defending Israel's right to exist is required: to exist healthily, with secure borders.

So we see that in the case of any kind of tragedy, G-d forbid, there is a time for "silence" like that of Aaron; yet there is also a call to respond, through action, love and determination, and thus to rebuild a shattered world. Through this we too, like Aaron, will merit divine revelation. G-d will bring the Messiah, rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, and bring everlasting peace to the world.

Slice of LIFE

Inspired in the Hospital

By Devorah Lustig

After finishing my phlebotomy course, I was placed in Richford Hospital for two weeks of clinical work. During my second week, Emma, one of the phlebotomists, approached me and my proctor, Stacey.

"I need blood drawn from a few patients on the pediatric floor. Do your mind coming up and helping me?" Emma asked.

To draw on the pediatric floor you must be specially trained, and neither Stacey nor I had that certification. I had never even been on the floor.

But we figured we could assist Emma, who was trained, and headed upstairs.

When we had finished with the first patient, Emma said she had two more rooms on that floor: Room 35 and Room 13. "Which room do you want to go to, Stacey? Neither of them are little children, so you can draw from them."

"Either one," Stacey said. "It doesn't really matter; I guess we'll go to Room 35."

Emma thanked us, and we walked down the hall.

Standing outside the room with our cart, I proceeded to print out the labels for the tubes of blood. Watching the labels come out of the small printer, I froze. I recognized this name. Ahava. I knew this girl from my community. A few weeks ago I had received her full Hebrew name, with a request that I pray for her health.

Thinking quickly, I decided not to enter the room. I didn't want to compromise her privacy. Maybe she didn't want anyone to know she was in the hospital. I didn't say anything to Stacey, but I waited outside while she went in to draw the blood.

"This is so strange," I thought to myself. "Of all the floors in the hospital, of all the rooms on this floor, we were given this room? This patient?"

Standing right in the doorway, I peeked through the curtains to make sure I was right. There she was, a beautiful, 16-year-old girl looking pale, weak and frail. I quickly turned away. How could it be? My heart went out to her.

Suddenly I heard Stacey calling me

from inside the room. "Devorah, can you bring me a transfer device?"

I became numb. What could I do? I didn't have a choice. I had to go inside.

Holding the transfer device tightly in my hand, I slowly entered the room and pulled the curtain aside. Our eyes met, and Ahava's face burst into the biggest smile I have ever seen.

"Oh my goodness, it's so good to see you!" she said.

Handing the transfer device to Stacey, I walked over to the side of her bed, and we began to talk.

Before I left, I promised I would visit, and told her I would continue to pray for her.

The next day I was in the local kosher supermarket when I heard someone call my name.

"Devorah," my friend said, running over to me, "You should just know how you made her day."

At first I wasn't sure what she was talking about. Then I realized that she was good friends with Ahava.

"As soon as you left she texted me, 'You'll never believe who was just in my room!' You really made her day, Devorah."

My friend told me that Ahava would be in the hospital over Passover, and we decided that we would walk over to visit her on Sunday, the second day of the holiday.

The next day, I found myself looking forward to my lunch break. Instead of spending the hour with my colleagues, I headed upstairs to visit her, as I had promised. We took a walk down the hall together and found a bench near a large window.

Sitting in the sunlight, she mentioned that she was going to be in the hospital over Passover.

"Oh," I said, trying to look like this was news to me.

"Yes, and we're hosting a Passover Seder for the whole floor. The hospital has never had a Seder before, and they are all very excited. I sent out invitations to all the rooms. Everyone is invited."

"Wow, that's amazing!" I said.

Just then her father came by. "Hi, sweetie," he said. "I just got off the phone with Jerry Cohen from Superb Kosher Catering. He heard you're in the hospital, and how you're running a Seder for the whole floor. He called me up to say he

wants to donate all the food for the Seder, and any food we're going to need over Pesach."

Ahava's smile of joy spread through her whole body. Her happiness was contagious, and all of us felt our moods lifted.

Looking at my watch, I saw my lunch break was almost over. I said goodbye, and promised I would visit again.

As arranged, on the second day of Passover my friend and I made the hour-long walk to the hospital.

We found a security guard at the front desk and asked him how we could get upstairs without using the elevator. He explained that we could only take the staircase up to the fourth floor. Because there are infants on the fifth floor, the door is kept locked.

We were stuck. But we weren't about to give up. We explained that we had come to visit a friend, and that we had walked an hour just to get there.

"You girls are Jewish, is that right? Orthodox, hmm, yeah, I know," he said. "Hold on, let me make one quick phone call."

My friend and I exchanged smiles as he picked up the phone and began dialing. "All right, girls," he said, hanging up. "Come with me. I'm gonna walk you up and unlock the doors for you."

"Thank you, Hashem," we whispered.

"Actually, my name is John, but you're welcome," he said. "You Jews are amazing; I can't believe you walked all this way."

When we saw her radiant face, we knew the walk had been worth it.

"Tell us about the Seder!" we said in unison. We sat down and she began recounting the highlights. The patients sat together, sang, told stories and shared a delicious meal. A wonderful time was had by all.

Being in the hospital can be lonely and depressing, but this 16-year-old girl took the opportunity to bring light and joy to others. We never know why we are placed in certain situations. I don't know why G-d wanted me to see Ahava in the hospital. But I do know that I was touched and inspired by her courage and optimism. I am truly grateful that I was given this opportunity to learn from her.

A few days after Passover, we learned her diagnosis. A once young and carefree Jewish teenager is slowly losing her eyesight and her mobility. I tremble when I think about her. I can't even imagine what she's going through. It's with our prayers that we can make a difference.

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B"H

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

The Rebbe's commitment to fulfill the requests made of him

This letter was sent to R. Michael Lipsker, one of the Rebbe's shlichim in Morocco.
14 Menachem Av, 5711,
Brooklyn.
Greetings and blessings,

I duly received your letter from Wednesday, the week of Parshas Mattos-Masei, but because of my many preoccupations, the answer was delayed until now.... In general, with regard to all the letters that are received that contain a request or the like: I try to fulfill the request according to my capacity. But a [written] response to the letters is held back against my will, due to the immense amount of work and the preparation for publication of the Chassidus of the Nesiim, the Rebbeim. Thus my request for the future is that you write frequently about all the positive activities that you carry out without being affected by the delay of my response. Moreover, at times, it is necessary here to know the exact number of the institutions we are maintaining in Morocco, and also, the approximate number of the male and female students who study in each one of them. Therefore, when a new institution opens or the number of students increases noticeably, please inform me at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you for your effort in procuring holy texts for my library. Certainly, you will continue these efforts in the future, for according to reports heard, many holy texts — texts of Kabbalah and texts of Nigleh — have been printed in North Africa in the last years. Undoubtedly, it would be possible to receive the overwhelming majority of them as gifts to my library or, at the very least, in exchange for books from Kehot Publications.

The kuntreis for Yud-Beis Tammuz was sent to you at the proper time.

With blessings for success in your holy work and with greetings to all those who join with you,

N.B. For the recent Festival of Redemption, Yud-Beis Tammuz, a letter and a kuntreis were sent to Rav Toledano. Undoubtedly, it was duly received.

I would also motivate you to check whether there is a newspaper in your community that is printed daily, weekly, or monthly that would be willing to print, from time to time, [articles] about Chassidism in general and our work there in particular.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

How Does 'Forgiveness' Work?

By Tzvi Freeman

Question: *Lately I have been having a lot of confusion trying to figure out if and how G-d can forgive people of their sins. Suppose someone sins by killing another person or setting someone's house on fire, and then that person genuinely repents and desires to do all that he/she can to repair the damage. Suppose G-d and also the victims of the sin forgive the sinner. But the person who was killed is still dead and the house burnt still needs to be built! How can the person be forgiven if the effects of his or her crime still exist?*

Answer: Much of your quandary arises from confusing two related issues: forgiveness and healing.

If one of my children would spill red paint from her social studies project all over the living room carpet and then come crying to me, saying, "Daddy, I made a big mistake! I feel so bad!" —I would probably forgive her pretty fast. But I would still ask her to clean up the paint.

Which means: I haven't held out on forgiving her until she cleaned up the mess. I've forgiven her entirely. It's just that it's her mess, so she has to clean it up.

So, too, whenever a person messes up in this world, it causes damage to the world, to the soul and to the body. A Jew may spend the first fifty years of her life eating non-kosher food, so that every cell of her body is made of a substance that imprisons the Jewish soul. In one moment, she may regret and ask forgiveness—and she will be completely forgiven. But now she must be careful to keep the kosher laws so that all those cells be changed over to kosher ones.

We call this "tikkun", which means repair—a type of healing of the soul, the body and the world. Not always can it be achieved in a single lifetime. We may have to return again and again until the tikkun is achieved. A tzaddik can often assist a person to find the proper tikkun for specific sins. But, as I said, the first step is to feel true regret and determine to abandon the sin altogether. That alone is enough to procure forgiveness.

A WORD

from the Director

This week we read the third of the four special Torah portions, Parshat Para.

Parshat Para describes the offering of the red heifer (the para aduma) and begins, "This is the decree of the Torah." These words indicate that the significance of the red heifer relates to all Torah and mitzvot.

The mitzva of the red heifer reveals two tendencies in a person's G-dly service: a yearning to cling to G-d, known as "ratzo", and the willingness to return to this world to carry out G-d's will, known as "shov." These two qualities are fundamental thrusts of Torah and mitzvot.

The burning of the red heifer with fire represents the thrust of ascending upward - ratzo. Fire is characterized by activity and a constant upward movement. The use of "living water in a vessel" which was combined with the ashes of the red heifer refers to the service of shov, for water naturally descends from above to below. Furthermore, when found on a flat surface, water remains in its place, reflecting the quality of tranquility.

Ratzo and shov are fundamental thrusts in Torah, not merely because of the unity they can bring about within the world, but because these two tendencies reflect positive qualities which must be emulated in our service of G-d. A Jew must possess the quality of ratzo. He must not be content with remaining at his present level, but must always seek to advance further. He must always be "running to fulfill a mitzva." Even though he has reached a high level, he must always seek to attain higher heights.

In contrast, ratzo alone is insufficient and it is necessary to internalize all the new levels he reaches, making sure that they become a part of his nature. This is reflected in an approach of tranquility and calm ("shov"). It does not however, imply complacency. Rather, the internalization of one level produces the desire to reach higher peaks. After reaching those new peaks, one must work to internalize them, which in turn produces a desire to reach even higher peaks.

May we grow in both areas, until we reach the highest height of all and actually greet Moshiach.

J. I. Gutterman

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

A Court Case in Shpoli

By Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Aryeh Leib, the famed Shpoler Zeide (the "Grandfather from Shpoli," ?-1811) had been rebbe in the town of Shpoli for three years when a terrible famine struck the area. Grain prices soared, and none but the very rich could afford a bit of bread to still their hunger. Rabbi Leib, whose love for his fellow Jews was unbounded, was sick with heartache for the plight of the poor and needy, the widowed and the orphaned.

As the famine spread to the furthest provinces of Russia, rebbes from other starving communities in the area wrote to Shpoli, begging the Zeide to raise a storm in the heavens that the deadly decree be rescinded. For who, if not he, a holy man known to work wonders, could accomplish this?

Rabbi Leib, on his part, wrote to ten of the greatest tzaddikim of his time—including Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli, Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Shipitovka, and Rabbi Ze'ev of Zhitomir—requesting that they come to Shpoli immediately.

They all complied and soon arrived. After they were seated at the long table of the Shpoler Zeide, they heard his awesome words: "Honored rabbis, my masters, I am summoning the Almighty to a Din Torah, a lawsuit in rabbinical court, and you are to serve as the judges. It is true that, according to the law of the Torah, the plaintiff must take his suit to the defendant's locale; but since in this unique case 'there is no place devoid of His presence,' and since, more particularly, 'wherever ten are assembled the Divine Presence rests,' we will hold the court case here."

The holy minyan (quorum of ten) of rebbes accepted the Zeide's argument. They then joined in prayer, their fervent supplications battering the gates of heaven.

The Shpoler Zeide then instructed his aide to announce: "By the order of those gathered here, I hereby proclaim that Aryeh Leib the son of Rachel summons the Almighty to a lawsuit which will be duly conducted in this Beit Din courtroom of Shpoli in three days."

The holy rebbes spent the next three days together in fasting and prayer; no one was permitted to interrupt their devotions. On the fourth day, after they had concluded the morning prayers and were still wrapped in tallit and adorned by tefillin, the Shpoler Zeide solemnly signaled his aide to announce that the court case was about to begin.

"In the name of all the women and children of the Jews of Russia," Reb Leib declared, "I hereby state my claim against the Defendant. Why does the Creator of the Universe not provide them with food, thereby saving them from hunger? Does not the Torah itself say, 'For unto Me are the Children of Israel bondsmen; they are My bondsmen'? Do we not have His promise, recorded by the prophet Ezekiel, that even if His children should someday desire to go in the ways of the nations of the world, they will never succeed in doing so? One is forced to draw the conclusion that the Children of

Israel are the Almighty's servants for all eternity.

"In that case, they should, at least, be in the category of a 'Jewish bondsman,' regarding whom Torah law ordains that his master is required to provide for his bondsman's wife and children. Can the Almighty violate his own Torah so blatantly?"

"Now, I'm well aware that some clever prosecuting angel will argue in defense of the Creator, saying that these servants are remiss in their service, that they don't serve their Master as well as they should. But to this argument I have two replies.

"Firstly, where is it written that if a bondsman is lazy and doesn't work properly, his wife and children may be deprived of their sustenance?"

"Secondly, if these servants are slack in their performance, their Master can fault no one but Himself. For who else gave each servant an evil inclination whose whole job and purpose it is to drive them to abandon their loyalty and to destroy their desire to serve? Why, I can swear that if this evil inclination, which the Master Himself created, would cease to exist, they would become the most perfect servants there could possibly be!"

The ten judges searched their tomes of Torah to ascertain the correct verdict for this unusual claim. After the passage of some time, they stood to deliver their unanimous ruling:

"This court finds in favor of Aryeh Leib the son of Rachel. The Almighty is accordingly required, by whatever means at His disposal (and the whole world is His), to provide for the women and children of His People. And may the Heavenly Court above agree and support the verdict of this court in the World Below."

The court pronounced its verdict three times.

The Shpoler Zeide then asked to have vodka and refreshments served. The tzaddikim toasted l'chaim and ate together in a joyous mood before departing for home.

Five days after the momentous verdict had been reached, the government announced a shipment of thousands of tons of grain. Immediately the grain prices fell, and before long, there were ample fresh supplies of food at reasonable prices. And during the entire following year, bread was bountiful for all.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

On the eighth day, following the seven days of their inauguration, Aaron and his sons begin to officiate as kohanim (priests); a fire issues forth from G-d to consume the offerings on the altar, and the divine presence comes to dwell in the Sanctuary.

Aaron's two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu, offer a "strange fire before G-d, which He commanded them not" and die before G-d. Aaron is silent in face of his tragedy. Moses and Aaron subsequently disagree as to a point of law regarding the offerings, but Moses concedes to Aaron that Aaron is in the right.

G-d commands the kosher laws, identifying the animal species permissible and forbidden for consumption. Land animals may be eaten only if they have split hooves and also chew their cud; fish must have fins and scales; a list of non-kosher birds is given, and a list of kosher insects (four types of locusts).

Also in Shemini are some of the laws of ritual purity, including the purifying power of the mikvah (a pool of water meeting specified qualifications) and the wellspring. Thus the people of Israel are enjoined to "differentiate between the impure and the pure."

CANDLE LIGHTING



Shabbos 29 - 30 March		
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:00	7:57
Adelaide	6:57	7:51
Brisbane	5:32	6:23
Darwin	6:34	7:23
Gold Coast	5:30	6:22
Perth	5:59	6:52
Sydney	6:37	7:31
Canberra	6:45	7:39
Launceston	6:51	7:48
Auckland	7:02	7:57
Wellington	7:01	7:58
Hobart	6:50	7:48
Byron Bay	6:29	7:21

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SHABBOS MEVARCHIM NISSAN PARSHAS SHEMINI • 22 ADAR BEIS • 29 MARCH

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	7.05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	7.35 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	TEHILLIM	8.30 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	10.27 AM
	SHACHRIS	10.00 AM
	MOLAD: FRIDAY	1.25 (17 CHALAKIM) AM
	MINCHA	6.50 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS	7.57 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	7.00 PM
	MARIV	7.50 PM