

LampLighter

7 Cheshvan
Lech-Lecha
952
15 October
5771/2010

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The seventh of the Jewish month of Marcheshvan is always in the week of the Torah portion of Lech Lecha.

On the seventh of Marcheshvan we begin to pray for rain, for it is the day on which the last pilgrims who had come to the Holy Temple for Sukkot returned home. We wait until this date to ask G-d for rain so as not to cause undue hardship for the pilgrims who are still travelling.

The seventh of Marcheshvan is thus symbolic of descent, for it signifies the Jews' departure from the Temple - the epitome of holiness - and their return to their own places.

Lech Lecha, by contrast, is symbolic of ascent. In this Torah portion, Avraham leaves the land of his birth - Charan - and goes to the land of Israel. It thus signifies the ascent from Charan to the higher level of holiness, the land of Israel.

What exactly did the Jews do during their thrice-yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem? They basked in the Temple's holiness, witnessed the Ten Miracles that occurred there regularly, and in general perceived G-dliness in a revealed manner. The enjoyment that was derived, albeit of a sublime and spiritual nature, was nonetheless a personal enjoyment.

The Jews' return home marked an end to this exclusive preoccupation with G-dliness, Torah and mitzvot, and Divine service. Each person had to resume the more mundane labours of his livelihood, ploughing and sowing his individual plot of land. Yet G-d wants the Jew, through his actions, to establish a "dwelling place" for Him in the "lower realms" - the material plane of this physical world.

Thus, in essence, the seventh of Marcheshvan - the "descent" of the Jew from the holiness of Jerusalem to the more ordinary affairs of his daily life - is actually a very great "ascent," for it is only upon his return home that he can begin his task of establishing a "dwelling place" for G-d in earnest.

It wasn't until Avraham arrived in the land of Israel that his work to reveal G-dliness within the world commenced on an unprecedented scale. True, Avraham had strived to foster an awareness of G-d even prior to this time, but his efforts had been more limited in scope.

The seventh of Marcheshvan always coincides with Lech Lecha to teach us that the descent it symbolizes is really a step up, providing us with a lesson we can apply in our lives:

Although the Jewish people are in exile, this should not cause us to be saddened or despair. On the contrary, it is precisely through the "descent" of exile that we may affect the greatest "ascent": fulfilling the will of G-d by serving Him within the context of the physical world, thereby making a suitable "dwelling place for G-d" in the lower realms.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Give Me the Soul!

By Yossy Goldman

The weekly Parshah is enlivened these days with the arrival of Abraham on the Biblical scene. Our founding father brings new life to the world as he spreads the message of monotheism in a hitherto pagan society. He also shows his prowess as a fearless fighter for justice and puts his own life on the line to save his nephew, Lot, when Lot is taken captive in the world war of the day.

It was after Abraham rescued his nephew that the King of Sodom thanked Abraham for liberating the other prisoners of war—the king's soldiers and citizens—at the same time. The king offers Abraham the spoils of war and asks only to have his men back. *Ten li hanefesh*, he says. *Give me the people, and take the possessions for yourself.*

Twenty-five years ago, I heard a powerful and passionate call by my saintly mentor, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It was Simchat Torah, the festival Yom Tov when we celebrate the gift of Torah in a spirit of boundless joy. He had appealed for charity to be given in the same heightened spirit, i.e. beyond normal limitations or the usual budgetary considerations. Later, he explained his call to have been one of *Ten li hanefesh*, which, literally, means *give me the soul*. It was a special moment and what he was demanding of his followers was a genuine outpouring of soul, a sincere act of pure faith, beyond reason or issues of affordability. The Rebbe had called for a total, unconditional commitment.

The call, *Give me the soul* still reverberates. And it applies to everything we do. We are all composites of body and soul. But more often than not, our physical selves get all the attention while our spiritual side is neglected. How many times do we hear Jews, especially young Jews, complaining that Judaism lacks spirituality; that their synagogues and temples are devoid of any real feeling or atmosphere of sanctity? And then we bemoan them trekking off to the Himalayas to find purpose, depth and all the things we never gave them.

How many Bar Mitzvahs and weddings have been reduced to empty shells of materialistic one-upmanship with friends and neighbours compelled to outdo each other in garish extravagances, which miss the whole point of what the celebration is about?

And G-d calls out, *Give me the soul!* Give me back what is mine. Put some spirit back into Judaism. Enough with the Mickey Mouse routines and rituals, the song and dance gimmicks. Get beyond the external and the plastic. Give me some soul!

When our faith is superficial we look as foolish as the pathetic thief described in the Talmud. *The thief, at the mouth of the tunnel, calls out to G-d.* Here is a criminal, about to enter the tunnel he has dug to rob a bank, but before he goes in, he prays to G-d for success. What a chutzpa! He is about to violate G-d's express command not to steal and has the audacity to still ask G-d to help him do the job?!

But such is the effect of superficiality. He has faith, our Talmudic thief. It just hasn't penetrated. Because this shallow pseudo-religiosity hasn't permeated his inner being, he is blissfully unaware of the hypocrisy of his actions. So what's wrong with stealing and praying at the same time?

The truth is that we all believe, even the thieves among us. The challenge is for the penny to drop; for that faith to reach into our core, to touch our souls. Let us heed the call, *Ten li hanefesh - Give me the soul*. Let us move beyond superficial Judaism to something deeper, profound and real which will touch our own souls and inspire our children.



A Jew In Brooklyn

Chaim Tzvi Schwartz was not a Lubavitcher Chassid — before the war, his family had been followers of the Rebbe of Munkatch — but a certain day in 1946 found him seeking the counsel of the then Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson. Rabbi Schwartz was a young refugee who had lost his entire family, and the only world he knew, in the Holocaust, and was at a loss as to what to do with his life.

“Speak to my son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson,” said the Rebbe, and gave Chaim his blessing.

The Rebbe’s son-in-law suggested that the young Rabbi take up residence in a certain city in Brazil.

“Brazil?”

“There are a great number of Jewish refugees settling in Brazil. Due to the tribulations that our people have undergone in the last few years, most of them lack even the most basic rudiments of a Jewish education. Already, many have fallen prey to assimilation and intermarriage. It is the responsibility of every Torah-educated Jew to prevent the spiritual dissolution of our people. Go to Brazil and help build a community of knowledgeable and observant Jews.”

Chaim accepted the mission, moved to Brazil, and founded a Jewish day school there. Much effort and toil were necessary to find the funding, train the teachers, and convince the parents of the importance of granting their children a Jewish education. Over the years, Rabbi Schwartz saw his school flourish and grow, and its graduates form the nucleus of a community of proud, committed Jews.

Rabbi Schwartz maintained an infrequent but warm contact with the man who had sent him to Brazil, who had meanwhile assumed the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement following the passing of his father-in-law in 1950. From time to time, Rabbi Schwartz would seek the Rebbe’s advice on various challenges and decisions he faced in the course of his work.

It was on one such occasion, several years after his arrival in Brazil, that Rabbi Schwartz

truly realized the scope of the Rebbe’s concern for his people. Rabbi Schwartz related this incident to a Lubavitcher Chassid he met on a flight from Brazil to New York:

One day—he began his tale—I received a call from the parents of one of the children in my school, requesting a meeting. While this was a fairly common request, the anxiety in the voices on the phone told me that this was no simple matter. I invited them to meet with me in my home that evening.

“This does not concern our son,” began the father, after they had settled in my study, “who is doing wonderfully in your school, but our eldest daughter, who grew up here before you came. As you know, we are not very observant, but it is important to us that our children should retain their identity as Jews. This is why we send our son to you, despite the fact that your school is considerably more ‘religious’ than ourselves.

“To get to the point, our daughter has informed us that she has fallen in love with a non-Jew and that they intend to marry. We have tried everything to dissuade her, but our arguments, appeals, threats and tears have all been to no avail. She now refuses to discuss the matter with us at all and has moved out of our home. Rabbi! You are our only hope! Perhaps you can reach her, perhaps you can impress upon her the gravity of the betrayal against her people, her parents and her own identity in what she intends to do!”

“Would she agree to meet with me?” I asked.

“If she knew that we had spoken to you, she’d refuse.”

“Then I’ll go speak to her on my own.”

I took her address from her parents and rang her bell that very evening. She was visibly annoyed to learn of my mission, but too well-mannered not to invite me in. We ended up speaking for several hours. She listened politely and promised to consider everything I said, but I came away with the feeling that I had had little effect on her decision.

For several days I pondered the matter, trying to think of what might possibly be done to prevent the loss of a Jewish soul. Then I thought of my last resort — the Rebbe. I called the Rebbe’s secretary, Rabbi Hodakov, related to him the entire affair, and asked for the Rebbe’s advice as to what might be done. A few minutes later the phone rang. “The Rebbe says to tell the young woman,” said Rabbi Hodakov, “that there is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because she intends to marry a non-Jew.”

The unexpected reply confused me, and I failed to understand what Rabbi Hodakov was

saying. “Who is this Jew?” I blurted out.

Then I heard the Rebbe’s voice on the other extension: “His name is Mendel Schneerson.”

I slowly returned the receiver to its cradle, more confused than ever. Could I possibly do what the Rebbe suggested? Why, she’ll slam the door in my face! After agonizing all night, I decided to carry out the Rebbe’s instructions to the letter. After all, the fate of a Jewish soul was at stake, and what did I have to lose, except for my pride?

Early the next morning I was at her door. “Listen,” she said before I could utter a word, “whom I marry is my own affair, and no one else’s. I respect rabbis and men of faith, so I heard you out when I should have shown you the door. Please go away and stop bothering me.”

“There is one more thing I need to say to you,” said I.

“Then say it, and go.”

“There is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because you intend to marry a non-Jew.”

“That’s what you came to tell me?!” she said, incredulous, and proceeded to the close the door.

Midway she stopped. “Who is this Jew?”

“A great Jewish leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe,” I replied. “The Rebbe is greatly concerned about the material and spiritual well-being of every Jew, and agonizes over every soul that is lost to its people.”

“What does he look like? Do you have a picture of him?”

“I should have a picture somewhere. I’ll go and get it for you.”

To my surprise, she didn’t object, and indicated assent with a mute nod. I rushed home and nearly turned the house upside down in search of a photograph of the Rebbe. I finally found a photo in a desk drawer and hurried back to the young woman’s apartment.

One look at the Rebbe’s likeness and her face turned pale. “Yes, it’s him,” she whispered.

“All week long,” she explained, “this man has been appearing in my dreams and imploring me not to abandon my people. I told myself that I was conjuring up an image of a Jewish sage and putting those words in his mouth as a reaction to what you and my parents have been saying to me. But no, it was no conjecture. I have never met this man in my life, seen a picture of him, or even heard of him. But this is he—this is the man I have been seeing in my dreams...”

Published by The Chabad House of Caulfield in conjunction with the Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.

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ISSUE 952

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Down to Earth By Tzvi Freeman

When it all began, Heaven was here on Earth. The physical plane, more than any of the higher spiritual worlds, was the place where the Divine Presence yearned to be. But Man, step by step, banished the Divine Presence from its home, with a tree of knowledge, with a man who murdered his brother, with all those things that human beings do... Since Man chased it away, only Man can bring it back. And this began with Abraham, who proclaimed Oneness for all the world. And it ends with us. Our generation will bring Heaven back down to Earth.

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



The Rich

The following is a free translation of a letter by the Rebbe, dated Tishrei 25, 5719 (October 9, 1958)

I acknowledge with thanks your letter of Elul 17 and the books you kindly sent for my library; my hope is that you will continue to make available to us the books you will publish in the future. Please forgive my delay in responding, which is due to the busy days in the interval.

Many wonder about the saying by our sages that "Rabbi [Judah HaNassi] honoured the rich."

To me, the meaning is clear and well-understood, based upon one of the fundamental principles in the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, which is:

Everything in the world, even the most minor thing, is by divine providence, and especially things that affect a great number of people.

The rich are people whom divine providence has granted the means to achieve much good in G-d's world. Accordingly, they certainly have also been granted the spiritual faculties necessary to fulfil this role—a role many times more demanding than that of a person of average means or a pauper. Rabbi [Judah HaNassi] lived in a period in Jewish history that was a time of transition from a relatively tranquil life to a life of persecution, and he had to rally all the forces within the people of Israel to enable them to withstand these trials and emerge intact and invigorated. So his was the task to appraise each and every individual and seek to utilize all their potentials. Thus he expressed his reverence toward those whom the Almighty had granted greater potentials, which were certainly utilized to preserve all that is holy for Israel, for this was the aim of all Rabbi [Judah HaNassi]'s works.

It is only that, in keeping with the manner in which G-d conducts the world, every Jew has been given freedom of choice, and "G-d tests him to know whether he loves G-d... keeps His commandments and heeds His voice"; as the Torah writes, "See, I have set before you today the life and the good...." A rich man also has the choice of choosing to fulfil the conclusion of the above verse, "and you shall choose life," or G-d forbid, the opposite.

It is obvious that if the above applies to those who are rich in gold and silver, how much more so does it apply to those who have been blessed with a wealth of talent and ability to influence their immediate and distant surroundings.

Also obvious is that it is not at all sufficient to merely refrain from using one's "wealth" toward undesirable purposes. Since there is a Master to the world and nothing in it is in vain, there must be an active, positive utilization of one's wealth. Failure to do so would disrupt the entire edifice of creation, which was formed so that all its parts should actively contribute toward its all-inclusive, unified goal.

Surely it is superfluous for me to point out that I am speaking of the true purpose of our people, the people of the G-d of Abraham, as a community and as individuals—namely, life in accordance with our Torah, the law of life, Torah in its entirety without compromise. For the greatness of Torah is that it is "learning that brings to deed"—the actual observance of the mitzvot in everyday life, as it is said regarding [the mitzvot]: "and live by them."

Please forgive me for touching on this most basic point immediately in my first letter to you. Perhaps this arouses wonder in you: do I indeed expect to bring about the desired results with these lines? But there are several explanations for this:

Firstly, we are living in a time replete with occurrences that but a short while ago were in the realm of the impossible: anyone who contemplates them, if only briefly, sees things that transcend the reasonable every step of the way. How true are the words of our sages, "Do not discount anything."

Secondly—and this is a point whose truth is absolute and rooted in the teachings of Chassidism—it is in the nature of every Jew and the constitution of his soul that when one speaks to him regarding the Torah and the optimal observance of mitzvot, one does not need to achieve any "change" in him, since his deepest self agrees to it. One need only remove whatever might be obstructing the "garden spring, a well of living water" (as the verse refers to every Jew) so that it may gush forth on its own. And this can occur, in the words of the Zohar, "in a single hour and a single moment."

Another basic point: you have been granted, by divine providence, influence over many people, and since many of these people are themselves leaders and wielders of influence in various circles; so if these lines would have any amount of actual effect, this would be disseminated and be magnified many times over...

A WORD from the Director

On the eleventh day of Cheshvan (next Tuesday, Oct. 19), the Matriarch Rachel, Jacob's wife, passed away. She was not buried in the cave of Machpelah with our other Matriarchs and Patriarchs, but was buried en route from her father Laban's house. Jacob chose this spot because he knew in the future that his descendants, the Children of Israel, would pass on their way into Babylonian Exile. Her grave in Bethlehem has always been a holy site, where Jews pray for their individual or communal needs.

When the Jews in fact went into exile, Rachel wept before G-d on behalf of her children who were crying by her grave. G-d replied to her, "Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is reward for your labour...and the children shall return to their boundary."

This is related to this week's Torah portion, in which G-d promises Abraham that the land he travelled through, the Land of Israel, will belong to his children, the Jewish people.

Throughout the generations we have had to struggle to claim the land that has always been ours, as we see in the Torah a Divine "transfer of ownership" of Israel to our ancestor, which is to be handed down to each and every one of his descendants. G-d comforts Rachel by telling her that we will be returned to the land that is rightfully ours.

We carry G-d's promise to Rachel with us today and pray that very soon, our mother Rachel will rejoice as we, her children, are "returned to our borders." At that time, when we will be living in the Holy Land in security and peace, we will be governed by Moshiach and will be experiencing the wonders and glory of the Third Holy Temple, may this be speedily in our times.

J.I. Gutnick

Sanctification of the Moon

Once a month, as the moon waxes in the sky, we recite a special blessing called *Kiddush Levanah*, "the sanctification of the moon," praising the Creator for His wondrous work we call astronomy.

Kiddush Levanah is recited after nightfall, usually on Saturday night. The blessing is concluded with songs and dancing, because our nation is likened to the moon—as it waxes and wanes, so have we throughout history. When we bless the moon, we renew our trust that very soon, the light of G-d's presence will fill all the earth and our people will be redeemed from exile.

Though Kiddush Levanah can be recited as early as three days after the moon's rebirth, the Kabbalah tells us it is best to wait a full week, till the seventh of the month. Once 15 days have passed, the moon begins to wane once more and the season for saying the blessing has passed.

It Happened Once...



When the Baal Shem Tov lived in the town of Medzhibozh, there lived there, too, a poverty-stricken Torah scholar whose entire life was devoted to studying the Torah. Unfortunately, he was not blessed with wealth, in fact, he and his family existed only through the tzedaka (charity) of his fellow townspeople.

His wife was equally devoted to his learning, and she never complained about their poverty. However, when their children reached marriageable age, she went to her husband and said, "Thanks to G-d, we have always managed to live, but now, we must marry off our children. So, I am asking you, my husband, how will we manage to gather the money?"

Her husband listened thoughtfully, but he had no answer for her. His wife, however, had a plan in mind.

"My husband, I know you have not attached yourself to the holy Baal Shem Tov, who lives in this town, but many people have benefitted from his wisdom and the miracles he brings about. So, I am asking you to go to him and tell him of our problem. He will surely advise you well."

The scholar followed his wife's advice and went to the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov listened and then replied: "If you wish to be helped, you must go to the town of K. and inquire there into the whereabouts of a certain Jew. Do not give up until you find him, for only then will you be freed from your burdens."

The man immediately set out for the town which was located quite a distance away. When he finally arrived, he was directed to the town's guest house where he rested and received food. As soon as he regained some strength, he began to question the locals about the person he was instructed to locate. He asked the manager of the guest house, but to no avail; then he went to the shul and asked there, but he was told that no one had ever heard of such a person. The rumour spread through the city that a learned stranger was inquiring after such and such a person.

Just as he had almost despaired of ever finding the man and was about to return to Medzhibozh, a man came to him and said: "Why are you searching for a wicked man who has been dead these 60 years?" And then, he went on to elaborate all the terrible deeds this person had done during his vile lifetime. It seemed that, while alive, this person had neglected no evil.

The scholar went home with a heavy soul. Here he had rushed to follow the instructions of the holy Baal Shem Tov and had gone to K. to find a certain individual who would help him out of his troubles, just to discover that the man was deceased; and not only was he deceased, but he was a known evil-doer. The scholar was anxious to visit the Baal Shem Tov and discover the reason for his seemingly fruitless journey.

The scholar related to the Baal Shem Tov the difficulties of the journey; how he had arrived at the communal guest house, inquired after the

individual in question, and how he had finally received the evil tidings about him. He continued telling the Baal Shem Tov all the terrible things he had heard about the individual he had sought.

The Baal Shem Tov listened and then began to speak. "I know you to be a fine, G-d-fearing person. I am sure that you believe in the teachings of the Kabbala which explain that souls return to cleanse themselves of transgressions committed in a previous lifetime. I want you to understand that you have been given the opportunity to purify your holy soul by returning to this world as a righteous scholar. For your soul, my friend, occupied the man of that outrageous sinner who lived sixty years ago in the town of K.

"You have been granted a great gift by the Al-mighty, for by your righteous life, you have achieved a great tikun [correction]."

The scholar was dumb-struck by this news. His first thought was that his poverty must certainly have been decreed against him to atone for his previous riotous way of living. He returned to his wife and related to her the entire episode. From that time on they strengthened their faith in G-d who helped them out of their troubles. He became one of the Baal Shem Tov's closest disciples and devoted his entire life to the study of Torah and the practice of mitzvot (commandments).

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

"When Abram was 99 years old G-d appeared to Abram" (Gen. 17:1)

Our forefather Abraham fulfilled all of the Torah's laws even before it was given. Why, then, did he not circumcise himself until he received an explicit command from G-d? The answer is that before then, circumcision was forbidden, as the Torah prohibits the shedding of blood. The commandment of mila (circumcision) overrode this prohibition. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

The command to "go out" of one's natural inclinations and become spiritually elevated is directed toward every person individually. No one is required to do more than he is able; at the same time, each person is expected to achieve all that he is capable of. G-d doesn't require Reb Zushe to be a Baal Shem Tov. He does, however, expect him to be a Reb Zushe. (Rabbi Zushe of Anipoli)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS LECH LECHA • 8 CHESHVAN • 16 OCTOBER

WEDNESDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:18 PM
	MINCHA:	7:30 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	7:55 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:49 AM
	MINCHA:	7:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8:17 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	7:30 PM
	MAARIV:	8:15 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 15 OCTOBER 2010



Begins	Ends
7:18	8:17
7:11	8:08
5:37	6:31
6:26	7:16
5:36	6:30
6:09	7:05
6:50	7:46
6:59	7:57
7:13	8:15
7:18	8:17
7:23	8:24

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

צוקללה"ה נבג"מ ז"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.