

# LampLighter

10 Tevet  
Vayechi  
**961**

17 December  
5771/2010

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Vayechi, we read that before Jacob passed away he called all his children together. He told them, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which will befall you in the last days." But we find that Jacob did not reveal the future. Our Sages explain that the Divine Presence left Jacob, and with it, the knowledge of the end of days. In other words, G-d prevented Jacob from revealing the date of the Final Redemption.

We can be sure that Jacob did not intend merely to satisfy their curiosity; rather, Jacob thought that he would be doing the Jewish people a favour by revealing when the end of days would come. However, this revelation would not have brought any tangible benefit, but would have actually caused Jacob's descendants harm: Had the fledgling Jewish nation learned that the Final Redemption was not to come for thousands of years, they would have despaired. Why would Jacob want to reveal something that would have caused them to despair?

In order to explain what really took place, we must understand the two different ways in which the Redemption can come about. The Talmud teaches that although G-d has fixed a definite date in history for Moshiach to come, if the Jewish people are worthy, Moshiach will arrive before the appointed time. If the Jews, through their actions, merit the Redemption sooner, they will not have to wait until the specified date.

Jacob did not plan on revealing the final date by which time the Redemption would have to occur; he wanted to give his children a far closer one by which time Moshiach would come if they so merited. It is quite possible that Jacob was referring to a time only a few years after that very day. Why was this not allowed to happen?

The answer lies in the fact that had Jacob been successful in revealing the date, the Redemption would have had to occur then. Once the Divine Presence was withdrawn from him, the opportunity to speed the process was taken away, and we still await the Redemption today.

Had the Jewish people known that the Redemption was so near, they would surely have perfected their actions and been worthy. The knowledge would have encouraged and inspired them to remove all obstacles to Moshiach's arrival, and we would not still be waiting.

Obviously, this was not meant to be. G-d prevented Jacob from revealing the secret, for the Final Redemption must come about purely on the merit of our efforts, working within the limitations placed on us by the physical world. Jacob's revelation would have affected the quality of man's worship and changed the Divine plan. G-d therefore caused His Presence to depart from Jacob.

Jacob, for his part, knew all this, but tried to hasten the Redemption anyway. Although G-d has ordained otherwise, the request of a tzaddik (righteous person) is never in vain and the ramifications of Jacob's actions are felt today: Every Jew must demand that G-d bring the Final Redemption in our own time, and this very insistence will infuse us with determination in our mission. When we say, "We want Moshiach now" and "Moshiach is on the way," we automatically improve our behaviour in our desire for the Redemption to finally come.

*(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

## The Invisibly Improving Economy

By Naftali Silberberg

The fox was hungry. On top of one of the trees in the forest sat a group of birds, plump and delicious—but completely out of the fox's reach.

With foxy slyness, the animal struck up a conversation with the fowl: "Have you heard the great news?" he asked with a huge smile. "The Messiah has just come! No longer do you need to fear hitherto dangerous predators like myself— all now live without fear; global harmony prevails! Come on down from your high perch, together let us celebrate this historic moment..."

The naïve birds were about to take the fox up on his offer when suddenly the forest was filled with the sound of barking dogs.

"What's the matter?" asked the birds, noticing the fox's startled and frightened expression.

"Those are hunting dogs," the fox huffed. "They're conducting a fox hunt."

"So, why are you panicking? The Messiah has arrived; surely no one will harm you!"

"True," responded the fox before rushing off, "but the dogs have not yet been notified of this very recent development..."

Nearly two decades ago, the Rebbe began proclaiming: "The time of Redemption is upon us. We are the last generation of *galut* (exile), the generation that will experience the Redemption."

As a nation, this was not the first time that we've heard a *tzaddik* (righteous person) convey such an assurance. Sadly, however, to this date, none of the prior declarations have actualized, for reasons known to G-d alone.

But the Rebbe's declarations contained an element that was never heard before. The Rebbe insisted that he wasn't speaking of an event that *would* transpire, but of an event that was already in the making.

Don't trust me on my word alone, the Rebbe entreated. Look around and see what's happening in the world around us. Open your eyes and you'll see that this era of G-dliness, unity and harmony that we've awaited for thousands of years—it's happening! The world is slowly becoming a better and holier place.

But, we ask, if the world is getting better, if we are approaching the Messianic Age, why is there still disease? Why is there still war?

Here's where we need to look at the larger picture: How many diseases have been eradicated? How many cures have been discovered for illnesses that a short while ago were considered certain killers? Was there *ever* a time when so many nations were committed to peace and human rights? Look at the cooperation between so many nations—all for peaceful purposes that benefit all of humanity! Has there ever been a time when G-dly wisdom – the Torah – has been so readily available to all? When was the last time that nearly 100% of our brothers and sisters lived in lands where they were free to serve G-d as they wished?

Perhaps the birds in our story were naïve. But if we were to climb up to the top of the tree and take a bird's eye view of our forest, perhaps we would see that the foxes are changing their dietary habits after all.



## The Rebbe Brought Me Back

By Shneur Elias

R' Moshe Katan is a Chabad emissary in Givat Shaul in Yerushalayim Israel. He goes from store to store and encourages Jews from all walks of life in their religious observance.

In the course of his work, Moshe started a class with some people from the business district. The class takes place every Thursday and lasts for about half an hour.

Just one year ago one of the participants approached Moshe after the class. The man is religious but not a Lubavitcher, sporting a black yarmulke and a beard. We'll call him Yitzchok. "I have a story for you that I think you'll find very interesting," Yitzchok began. "It is also the reason that I began attending classes with Chabad.

"I was born in a typical French home to parents who were Holocaust survivors. After their world was destroyed, they started life anew in France and blended in well with non-Jewish society, completely dropping their Jewish identity. I grew up like any French kid and didn't give a thought to the fact that I was Jewish.

"I met a local non-Jewish girl and had no qualms about deciding to share our lives together. We rented an apartment in Paris, moved our furniture and possessions, and settled into our new home together.

"After a very short time, for no apparent reason, something inexplicably changed within me. One day, I was sitting in the apartment when I was suddenly struck with an irrationally strong Jewish feeling. I felt a tremendous urge for Judaism, and knew I had to find a synagogue nearby where I could give expression to these strong religious sentiments.

"I got to synagogue when they were praying the afternoon prayer (Mincha) and I immediately felt calm. It was at this synagogue that I took my first step towards Judaism.

"When I got home, something within me urged me not to let things remain as they were. I had to do something about my relationship. I spoke to her a bit and explained that since I was Jewish and she was not, there was no future for a relationship like this.

"After we broke up, I got more and more involved in Judaism, participating in Torah

classes and confident that I was on the right track. "A few months went by and I decided to make aliya in order to progress on my newfound path. I settled in Tzfas Israel, where I worked as a dentist. I was involved with various Chassidic groups and attended many classes, but I stayed away from Chabad.

"Over the years I observed something odd; every *baal t'shuva* (a Jew of secular or not fully observant background who has decided to undertake full Torah observance) had someone to whom they credited their becoming religious, but I had no such person. Twenty years had passed and I was still wondering how an assimilated French Jew like myself had been inspired with such a strong feeling, out of the blue.

"About two years ago I came across a French newspaper. While leafing through it, a fascinating article caught my attention. It was about the Lubavitcher Rebbe getting a degree in Paris. The article mentioned where the Rebbe had resided in Paris – Rue de Beaulard No. 9 in the 14th arrondissement – and bells began going off in my head. I tried and tried to figure out why that address was familiar to me.

"The matter dominated my thoughts for an entire day. When it finally came to me, I was stunned by my astonishing discovery. The Lubavitcher Rebbe's first floor apartment was precisely the address that I had rented, where I had experienced that baffling spiritual urge towards Judaism! That was the explanation for the sudden dramatic change in my life!

"That's when I realized that the Rebbe's holiness in that place had aroused my G-dly spark. Now, twenty years later, I know to whom I need to say thank you. I went to Rabbi Abuchatzera and told him the story behind my *t'shuva* (return).

"Why are you surprised that you became a *baal t'shuva* when you lived in the Rebbe's house?" he responded."

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## Creme de la Krim - The Story of a Brit

By Leah-Mindle Lipszyc

(co-director of Chabad-Lubavitch of Crimea (Ukraine), headquartered in Simferopol.)

One year ago, I spoke to a new boy in our school about undergoing a *brit mila* (circumcision). During Communism, performing a circumcision was illegal. Afterwards most people either didn't know that Jewish baby boys should have a *brit* when they're eight days old, or didn't know to whom to turn. The result is that almost no Jewish males in Crimea had been circumcised for 90 years. Since our arrival, we have made nearly 100 *britot* to date, from babies, to school children, to adults and old men.

The boy readily agreed, and I met with his

guardian, who signed the permission slip. I contacted the *mohel* who would do the circumcision. As is usual, he asked me to put together a group of people so that he would not have to travel such a long distance just for one *brit*. We did that, but one thing and another kept happening to prevent his coming to Simferopol to perform the *britot*. During this time, unfortunately, one of the men moved to Germany, and another "chickened out." However the original boy kept asking me "When am I going to have my *brit* already, Leah?"

Finally, we thought everything was going to work out, when I got a text message from the *mohel* that he had accidentally overslept, and would be late. Okay - there was still enough time left for him to get to us before sundown. Then he sent another SMS - his wife was out of town, and his babysitter had not shown up! He had to feed and dress his children, find another babysitter, etc.... He wouldn't be able to arrive till the evening, and had to return early the next day, so he'd have to do the *britot* at 7 a.m. in the morning.

I knew that if the boys were going to be there on time, they'd need to sleep over at my house, and they were overjoyed to hear that! The boys came straight from school to my house. When they arrived, I offered them some Lemon Fanta, one of the few kosher drinks available here. "Wow!" they said, in awe, "We fell into heaven! Leah, will you adopt us?" they kept repeating.

After dinner, I took the boys downtown to pick up some small electronic games for them to play with during the *brit*. It's been awhile since I've had little boys in the house, and I had to keep my eyes wide open as the three of them ran around, while we searched high and low to find something. We went home in a taxi - another new and "luxurious" experience for them!

The next morning, 357 days after the first permission slip had been signed, the boys had their *brit*. Artur became Aharon Sholom. Nikita chose three names - one that he liked, one that his mother liked, and one that his older sister liked - becoming Aharon Eitan Daniel! And Maxim became Menachem Mendel, or Mendy.

Before the *brit*, as per the advice of Rabbi Eliyahu Shain, a leading American *mohel*, I told the boys they should refrain from caffeine - coffee, tea, cola, and chocolate - for three days, but that I would compensate them by giving each one a two-litre bottle of Coke, a bar of chocolate, 100 points at the school "store," a new *yarmulka* with his Hebrew name, and a present. One of the boys excitedly said, "That's great - can I have a *brit* every day?" Now that it's over, he's fine with having had it once, which of course is as it should be!

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ISSUE 961

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Maimonides relates that ultimately all the fast days will be transformed into festivals and days of celebration, implying that their inner message is positive. Indeed, as Rabbi Shneur Zalman mentions in Iggeret HaTeshuva, a fast day is a "day of will." Among the positive dimensions of fast days are that they are days of teshuva (repentance, return). Teshuva has the power to end the exile and bring the Redemption, for "Israel will be redeemed only through teshuvah." "The Torah has promised that ultimately, Israel will turn [to G-d] in teshuva,... and immediately, she will be redeemed." (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 10 Tevet, 5752-1991)

# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



**"You ask whether the gates of Heaven have been closed (G-d forbid) and why the way of the worthless prospers."**

By the Grace of G-d  
25 Shvat, 5715 [1955]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

This reply relates to your letter of 12 Shvat. There you write of the financial state of your family and of your difficulties in earning a living, particularly since you have to support other family members, and hence you ask whether the gates of Heaven have been closed (G-d forbid) and why the way of the worthless prospers.

There is surely no need to explain at length that the question of not only why the way of the worthless prospers, but even the way of the wicked, was already asked by Moshe Rabbeinu (see *Berachos* 7a). Now, since that time a few thousand years have passed. During this time the Jewish people have been following the path of the Torah and its commandments, and specifically for that reason our nation has survived. As it is written, "And you who cleave to the L-rd your G-d" — specifically for this reason and only for this reason — "are all alive today."

The same applies to every one of us, man or woman. If there are things that are achieved with difficulty, especially with regard to making a living, this is not (G-d forbid) because one observes the Torah and its commandments. Quite the contrary. By fortifying one's trust in G-d, Who "provides nourishment and sustenance for all," "with lovingkindness and with mercy," one lessens these difficulties, and ultimately the state of one's livelihood also improves. The spiritual remedy to secure this is likewise an increase in one's Torah study and in one's observance of the *mitzvos*. As it is written, "If you walk in the ways of My statutes and observe My commandments....," then "I will grant [your rains in their season, and the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will yield their fruit]."

You no doubt know of the practice instituted by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz] — a daily reading from the Book of *Tehillim*, as apportioned for the days of the month. From now on, at least, you should observe this practice, and may it be G-d's Will that this, too, will bring about a speedier improvement in your situation.

With blessing.

**"Despairing, and seeking miracles especially for one's battles with the [Evil] Inclination — these are simply the wiles and the incitement initiated by the [Evil] Inclination."**

By the Grace of G-d  
5 Menachem Av, 5715 [1955]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In your letter of 28 Tammuz you write that after receiving my letter you were spiritually aroused; for a period you maintained that arousal in your study and prayer and conduct, but this later weakened; and since then there have been ups and downs, resulting in a growing despair, and so on.

As I have written to a number of young men in a similar situation, their answer is provided in a number of places in *Tanya*. One of those places is ch. 27 and the following chapters. All in all:

Despairing, and seeking miracles especially for one's battles with the [Evil] Inclination — these are simply the wiles and the incitement initiated by the [Evil] Inclination. As is the case with all the tactics it employs, the most effective strategy from the very outset is not to become involved in any debates or discussions with it. Instead, one should muster strength, extensively and energetically, with regard to "the three pillars [on which the world stands]" — Torah study, *avodah* (and the observance of *mitzvos* in general), and the practice of kindly deeds. If one acts in this way, he may rest assured that the darkness will be lessened and banished. What a pity that people waste time on *discussing* the issue! In addition, if you utilize the influence you have on people younger than yourself to bring them, too, close to the service of G-d, you yourself will be granted increased help from Heaven.

[...]

With blessings.

# A WORD from the Director

We are currently in the month of Tevet. The word "Tevet" is related to the Hebrew word "tov," which means "good." However, in this month, we commemorate many sad events, including the Tenth of Tevet.

The tenth of Tevet (Friday) is the day on which the evil king Nebuchadnezzar laid siege upon Jerusalem, which eventually led to the destruction of the first Holy Temple, and the Babylonian Exile. The tenth of Tevet is considered an especially solemn day, because it is the first in a series of events which led to the present exile. Therefore it is a day to reflect upon all of those events and the actions that led to them, and to reflect upon which of our own actions need improvement in order to hasten the end of exile and prepare for the imminent Redemption.

And yet, as stated previously, Tevet is connected to good. We see from this that we have the power to transform bad into good, sorrow into joy, darkness into light, and exile into redemption. Since Tevet marks the beginning of the calamitous events which befell our people, our Sages named this month "Tevet" to inspire the positive, good energy that is within every one of us.

Tevet has the added significance of being connected to the number ten, as Tevet is the tenth month of the year counting from Nissan. Additionally, we commemorate the siege of Jerusalem on the tenth day of the tenth month.

Ten is a number of great power. Yom Kippur is on the tenth day of Tishrei. G-d gave us Ten Commandments. The Torah mentions nine times that the Jews sang to G-d and the tenth song will be song with the coming of Moshiach.

We must harness this additional power to fulfil the service of Tevet, which is to transform the darkness into light.

J. I. Gutnick

## Why Do We Wear a Kippah [head-covering]?

Question:

Is the *kippah* a symbolic reminder intended to prevent assimilation, or is the kippah a biblical obligation like the *tzitzit*?

Answer:

The tradition to wear a *kippah* is not derived from any biblical passage. Rather, it is a custom which evolved as a sign of our recognition that there is Someone "above" us who watches our every act.

The Talmud relates that a woman was once told by astrologers that her son is destined to be a thief. To prevent this from happening, she insisted that he always have his head covered to remind him of G-d's presence and instill within him the fear of Heaven. Once, while sitting under a palm tree, his head covering fell off. He was suddenly overcome by an urge to eat a fruit from the tree which did not belong

to him. It was then that he realized the strong effect which the wearing of a *kippah* had on him.

In Talmudic times, the practice of wearing a head covering was reserved for men of great stature. In later generations, though, it became the accepted custom for all Jewish men to wear a *kippah* at all times, and especially during prayer. As with all Jewish customs, once they become a universally accepted Jewish practice, they become halachically obligatory.

According to some opinions, since wearing a *kippah* has become a form of distinction between Jews and non-Jews, failure to wear a head covering falls under the prohibition of "you shall not follow their statutes."

# It Happened Once...



A man, a follower of the great tzadik (righteous person), the Shpoler Zeide, came to him weeping bitterly. "Rebbe," he cried, "what am I to do? Stolen property was found in my courtyard, and I am being accused of being a thief. My lawyer tells me that I will not escape with less than three months in prison."

The Shpoler Zeide listened and replied, "I will be a better lawyer for you, and you will receive only one month in prison."

"But, Rebbe," the man continued, plaintively, "I am an innocent man. Why must I be punished for a month?"

"I will tell you a tale of a similar incident which occurred to me, and you will understand. Once I was staying at the home of a very hospitable Jewish customs officer. I became friendly with another guest there, and when the Shabbat ended, we made plans to continue our journey together. Unbeknownst to me, the other man had stolen some valuable pieces of silver from the house.

"As we proceeded down the road, we heard the sounds of a carriage approaching very fast. The man asked me to watch his pack for a moment and he disappeared in the mass of trees. The carriage stopped in front of me and I recognized the customs officer and a gentile officer. "Seize him," the Jew cried. "He is the thief!"

"And before I knew what was happening they threw me into the back of the carriage and we drove away. When I recovered from the initial shock, I tried to explain that it was not I, but the other man who had stolen the silver, but they scorned my words. I accepted it as the will of Heaven.

"I was thrown into a cell full of frightening criminals who found my appearance an occasion for great mirth. They pulled at my sidelocks and beard, and I could only entreat the One Above to rescue me from their evil clutches. They tried to extort money from me, but when they saw I had none, they set out to beat me.

"The first one laid into me as two others held me down. As soon as his hand touched me, he cried out in pain. His hand swelled and gushed with blood. The thieves and murderers who surrounded me took conference with one another. One said I was a sorcerer, another claimed I was a saint; regardless of their opinion, they all agreed to leave me alone.

"When the immediate danger had passed, I looked around at the other prisoners. One, called "Gypsy" turned out to be, instead, a Polish Jew who had been imprisoned for horse-stealing. I realized that I had been incarcerated precisely in order to help this pathetic man repent. Little by little we spoke and I gained his trust. He related a sad tale of being orphaned and then falling in with a band of Gypsies, whose ways he adopted.

"One morning the man came to me in a state of terror. He had dreamed of his dead parents who told him to do whatever I would

instruct him. They said if he refused, he would die in his sleep. From that moment on he was the most willing penitent.

"Slowly, I instructed him in the Jewish religion. He stopped eating forbidden food, began to recite prayers, and begged the Al-mighty to forgive his errant ways. After several weeks passed, he even began sleeping near me and became completely attached to me in word and deed.

"A few days later I dreamed that Elijah the prophet told me to flee from that place and go to the town of Zlotopoli where I would be offered the position of beadle of the town. But then I remembered the "Gypsy," and my promise not to abandon him. But, I reasoned, if a miracle could come about for me, it could come about for him, too.

"I told the repentant man to follow me. When we came to the first door, we saw it was open. He held my belt and we passed through the door together, and continued into the black night, with no thought as to where we were going. Many hours later, we stopped at the house of a Jew who told us that we had found the path to Zlotopoli.

"Three days later, we arrived in the town, and I was appointed to the position of beadle. So you see, don't complain about the judgements of G-d, for they are very deep and beyond the understanding of men. Just be strong in your faith, for I can assure you that everything that happens, no matter how it appears, is only for the good. And, as I promised, you will sit in prison no more than one month."

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

**And when he saw that the resting place was good...he bent his shoulder to bear. (Gen. 49:15)**

Issachar recognized that although leisure is a good and pleasant thing, it can also be dangerous. In times of peace and tranquility the Evil Inclination intensifies its efforts to lead a person astray, which can lead to disaster. Issachar therefore "bent his shoulder to bear" the yoke of Torah, for Torah study is the antidote to this pitfall. (*Likutei Diburim*)

**Benjamin shall be a wolf that rends. (Gen. 49:27)**

When Joseph was born, Rachel prayed for "ben-acher" - "another son." The task of Benjamin, whose birth ensued from her prayer, is to elevate the "other," the animal soul of man, until it is in the category of a "son" of G-d. For this reason Benjamin is likened to the wolf, which rips into its prey and rends it into pieces. (*Ohr Hatorah*)

### CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

#### PARSHAS VAYECHI • 11 TEVET • 18 DECEMBER

|                  |                           |          |
|------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| FRIDAY NIGHT:    | CANDLE LIGHTING:          | 8:21 PM  |
|                  | MINCHA:                   | 8:35 PM  |
|                  | KABBOLAS SHABBOS:         | 9:00 PM  |
| SHABBOS MORNING: | SHACHARIS:                | 10:00 AM |
|                  | LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: | 9:34 AM  |
|                  | MINCHA:                   | 8:20 PM  |
|                  | SHABBOS ENDS:             | 9:27 PM  |
| WEEKDAYS:        | SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:        | 9:15 AM  |
|                  | MINCHA:                   | 8:30 PM  |
|                  | MAARIV:                   | 9:20 PM  |

#### CANDLE LIGHTING: 17 DECEMBER 2010



| Begins                      | Ends |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 8:21 ..... MELBOURNE .....  | 9:27 |
| 8:08 ..... ADELAIDE .....   | 9:11 |
| 6:22 ..... BRISBANE .....   | 7:20 |
| 6:50 ..... DARWIN .....     | 7:43 |
| 6:21 ..... GOLD COAST ..... | 7:20 |
| 7:01 ..... PERTH .....      | 8:02 |
| 7:45 ..... SYDNEY .....     | 8:47 |
| 7:57 ..... CANBERRA .....   | 9:01 |
| 8:24 ..... LAUNCESTON ..... | 9:34 |
| 8:19 ..... AUCKLAND .....   | 9:24 |
| 8:33 ..... WELLINGTON ..... | 9:43 |

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

### The Lubavitcher Rebbe

צוקללה"ה נב"מ זי"ע

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