

Lamplighter

17 Tevet

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

"I will give this people favour in the eyes of the Egyptians, and when you depart, you will not go empty," G-d tells Moses in our Torah portion, Shemot.

According to the Midrash, G-d promised that the Egyptians would willingly pay the departing Jews with gifts of gold and silver "so that Abraham would not be able to claim that G-d had fulfilled the first part of the covenant - 'and they will be enslaved and tortured' - but not the second part - 'and afterward they will leave with great wealth.'"

This explanation, however, is insufficient. How could this be the only reason G-d fulfilled His promise? Doesn't G-d fulfil His promises all the time, as it states, "For G-d is not a man who tells falsehoods"?

To explain:

The huge amount of gold and silver that was given to the Jews just prior to the Exodus served a dual purpose: to punish the Egyptians for their cruelty, and to reward the Jews for their 210 years of suffering. But which one of these was the primary purpose - reward or punishment?

Was the benefit derived by the Jewish people secondary to the main objective of punishing the Egyptians, or was their enrichment the primary goal, and the loss it represented to the Egyptians only secondary?

The Talmud relates that in the time of Alexander the Great, the Egyptians demanded that the Jews return the riches they had acquired generations before.

The response of Geviha ben Pesisa, the leader of the Jews, was that the gold and silver rightfully belonged to the Jews as "the wages of the six hundred thousand whom you enslaved in Egypt."

This answer provides us insight into why it was necessary that the Jews "find favour in the eyes of the Egyptians," and why Abraham's potential claim had to be refuted:

For there to be the fullest measure of justice, G-d wanted the Jewish people to be rewarded in the same open manner as Abraham's service was conducted in the world.

Just as all mankind was witness to the Jewish people's enslavement, so too was it necessary for the entire world to see the Egyptians making reparations of their own free will.

Chasidic philosophy explains that the inner meaning of the "great wealth" that was taken by the Jews when they left consisted of the "sparks of G-dliness" that were hidden in Egypt. The service of the Jewish people enabled these sparks to be redeemed and restored to their G-dly source above.

Nonetheless, the primary objective of the entire experience in Egypt was the betterment of the Jews themselves, whereas the elevation of the sparks was only secondary. For the inner purpose of the exile was the spiritual elevation that was achieved thereby, the main reason for the Jews' going into exile in the first place.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Moses' Mother

By Yanki Tauber

One of the colourful figures in the Talmud is a certain Rabbi Yirmiyah, famous for his incessant, unrelenting questioning. No sooner is a law cited, than Rabbi Yirmiyah has a half-dozen scenarios with which to test it: what if the situation were reversed? what if it were bigger, smaller, darker, lighter, nearer, farther?

At one point, the patience of his colleagues reached its limits. They were discussing a certain law regarding food preparation on the festivals which differentiates between a pigeon found within 50 cubits (approximately 75 feet) of the pigeon house, or more than 50 cubits from the nest. "What would be the law," asked Rabbi Yirmiyah, "if the pigeon is standing so that one of its legs is within the 50 cubit limit, and the other leg outside?" Rabbi Yirmiyah was ejected from the study hall.

But Rabbi Yirmiyah has a point. Conventional wisdom would argue that a thing is either near or far — it can't be both. But somewhere there is a boundary, a line that separates the near from the far, the within from the without. If you can straddle that line, if you can stand with one foot inside and the other foot outside, you can be both.

And often, in the trajectory of our lives, we must be both. And in the history of a people, there must be leaders and visionaries who are both.

The Torah tells us that when Jacob and his family came to Egypt, they numbered "seventy souls". But the detailed list given by the Torah (in Genesis 46:8-27), includes only 69 names. Our sages explain that when Jacob's family departed the Holy Land, there were only 69 Jews; but upon their arrival in Egypt, they numbered 70. Who is the mysterious 70th soul? It is Jocheved, the mother of Moses, born "between the boundary walls" as the first Jewish family entered our first *galut* (exile).

If you are outside of a problem, you can't solve it. If you are part of the problem, you can't solve it either. You need to be both.

The woman who gave birth to and raised Moses could not have been of the generation that was born in Egypt, the generation for whom *galut* was the reality. She could not have been of the generation born in the Holy Land, for whom *galut* was never real. She had to be both.



My Visit to Crown Heights

Reprinted from the *Jewish Post and Opinion*

By Susan Rubin Weintrob

In a New York airport's television monitor, I saw a woman dressed in a mid-calf khaki skirt, long-sleeved top and vest, and beret that covered most of her hair. It took a moment for me to realize it was me, dressed for my visit to the Lubavitch community in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

From the taxicab, I watched the small, closely placed houses of Queens give way to the more citified Brooklyn. Soon, as we entered Crown Heights, brownstone houses appeared, and with them, the feel of a neighbourhood. As we turned onto beautiful President Street, with its large, stately houses, I saw my home for the next few days.

Dinner was waiting for me. Mrs. G. chatted about a recent trip to Paris and about the bi-monthly Lubavitch women's magazine she was working on. She gave me several copies to read. She had turned her basement into a mini-publishing centre, with computer, printer, copy machine and layout table. The back half was filled with workout equipment. Like most of us over 40, she worked on staying in shape. This was not what I had expected.

After a tour of the house, Mrs. G. and I went up to the roof. The darkened sky outlined the light of Manhattan's skyline. "It's a different world up here," my hostess told me. I nodded, thinking more about Crown Heights than the roof top.

I had read somewhere that Chasidic men would not talk to me, that these "right-wing Orthodox" communities never accepted Jews not like themselves. Some liberal rabbis warned that the Chasidim were shut-ins, keeping to themselves, away from the rest of the world. Some described them as zealots, right-wing fanatics, fighting for control of the Jewish world. I braced myself, waiting to be

confronted with narrow-mindedness. I never was.

Friday morning I accompanied Mrs. G. on errands, walking everywhere. The sidewalks and streets were filled, as all prepared for Shabbos.

It was a paradox, I admitted to myself, listening to conversations in Hebrew, Yiddish, Spanish, French, Russian, and a variety of English language accents. Crown Heights has its physical boundaries, yet it seemed quite international. Its community adheres to a strict and defined way of life, yet there was more diversity here than I had imagined.

To a certain extent, the people I met were curious about my life in Muncie, Indiana. While I was encouraged to include more observance, people did not demean my observance. The members of the Lubavitch community that I spoke with had definite ideas about life, but, during my short stay, I heard language that was non-judgmental.

The Lubavitch community is well-known for reaching out. Visitors from around the world come to these few square blocks — they are welcomed, fed and housed. Questions were answered; room was made for those who decided to stay. Community members were also cared for.

I was told of the custom at weddings of setting up a table for the poor to share the meal. One of my hostesses was part of a committee which visited new mothers and brought meals for the first week after the baby's birth.

I arrived at a home on Carroll Street after services Saturday morning; I saw the front door open and my hostess praying, so I assumed the door was left open so as not to disturb her. I was mistaken. I noticed when we sat down to eat that there were a few extra places set. I assumed some people had not shown up. I was again mistaken. The door was open and the extra places set for unannounced guests. In fact, one man showed up, and was immediately invited to lunch. The host and hostess were parents of several small and active children, but the appearance of yet another guest was greeted with pleasure. This attitude had been shown also the evening before.

Six of us had been invited to a home with three small children — the other four

were at summer camp. During dinner, I learned that the wife was expecting their next child within two weeks, and was planning an older son's bar mitzva that week, but our dinner with them was viewed as normal Shabbos hospitality.

There was an inner quality of strength and spirituality among so many whom I encountered. In an odd way, the Lubavitch-style mezuzah became a physical symbol of the community's values. I must have been staring at the mezuzah on the kitchen entry in my host's home. Like mezuzahs in the other houses I had visited in Crown Heights, the case was a large, plain white case. As I looked at it, my hostess answered my unasked question.

"You are wondering why we have such plain cases for the mezuzahs. It is a custom among Lubavitchers. It is what is inside that counts, not the case." This was symbolic of the best in the Lubavitchers' way of life. Unlike the elaborate and often artistic cases I had seen on many people's doors, here the mezuzahs, simple and unadorned, were on every door, inside and out, holding the carefully handwritten verses from the Torah.

The synagogue as well, including the main one at 770 Eastern Parkway, were plain by comparison to many synagogues, which have fancy sanctuaries, elaborate social halls, and multiple administrative offices. However, many have poor attendance at daily and weekly services. Here in Crown Heights, the synagogues, simple to the point of being rustic inside, were filled every day.

Mr. G. discussed this deliberate simplicity. "It's like fancy clothes that you save up to wear only on special occasions as compared to your everyday clothes. Our synagogues are for every day."

As I was ready to leave, I was introduced to yet another person among the many entering the home I stayed in. When she learned that I would be writing about the Lubavitch community, she sighed. "Don't be too hard on us."

I didn't tell her that I had worried that, not being Chasidic, it might be hard for me to come to Crown Heights. I also didn't tell her that I had never realized how hard it would be to leave.

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ISSUE 962

MOSHIACH MATTERS

When the Israelites were unable to endure the harsh exile in Egypt, they cried out to G-d. Indeed, G-d heard their cry and sent Moses to redeem them. So it is with us in our present exile. When we cry out, "Take us out of exile and bring Moshiach!" G-d will certainly hear our cry and send the Redeemer. Moreover, our mere being in a state of readiness to call upon G-d is already enough for Him to respond, as it states in Isaiah, "Before they call, I will answer, and while yet they speak I will hear." (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Parshat Tavo, 5751*)

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



By the Grace of G-d
22 Iyar, 5711 [1951]
Brooklyn
Greetings and Blessings!

In response to the *pidyon nefesh* that you sent me: When I visited the holy resting-place of my revered father-in-law [the Rebbe Rayatz] I mentioned your name in connection with your needs. He no doubt intercedes and arouses Divine compassion upon yourself and your wife - that you enjoy robust health, with peace of mind and body - particularly since, as you write, you have a letter from him with his holy blessing that you settle into a good life.

You *write* that you suffer from an ailment, though without saying what it is, and that at any moment you are likely to undergo a serious heart attack, etc., G-d forbid. (It appears to me that this is not the case, and that - begging your pardon - this is an extreme exaggeration.) You write further that a partition of iron is separating [you from your Father in Heaven] and that your prayers and charitable contributions have had no effect, and so on.

Without a doubt, you yourself also understand that all this is no more than fantasies. For even if there were a partition of iron, the Sages assure us in plain words that "even a partition of iron cannot separate the Children of Israel from their Father in Heaven."

The same applies to what you write about how your prayers and especially the *tzedakah* you distribute have had no effect. I saw in a little book - it's called the *Tanach* - where it is written (*Malachi* 3:10) that the Holy One, blessed be He, says: "Test Me, please, in this," in the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* - that if only people will give *tzedakah*, "I will pour down blessings upon you," and so on. The same applies to prayer, as is explained in many sources in the teachings of the Sages.

Above all, as is clarified in the works of *Chassidus*, this is one of the counsels by means of which the Evil Inclination topples a man into melancholy. And if melancholy stemming from spiritual reasons gives good cause for vigilance, how much more wary must one be of melancholy that comes from some other source, for there is nothing worse than that.

You should insistently fortify your trust in what even the most light-minded of Jews believe - that the Holy One, blessed be He, is not only the Creator of the world but that He also conducts it, and not only long ago, but also presently, every day and at every hour. Moreover, He conducts not only the big world but also all the affairs of the microcosm, man, and He is the ultimate good. Without a doubt, you will then finally see, even with fleshly eyes, that everything will be for the best, even in the kind of good that is manifest. For this, however, one must strengthen one's bonds of *hiskashrus* with the G-d of Life - by setting aside fixed times to study the Torah of Life; by serving Him through the *avodah* of prayer, through which you are benevolent toward your Soul of Life; and by fortifying your observance of the *mitzvos*, and of the comprehensive *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, for "the truth of *tzedakah* is for life."

I hope that in the near future you will let me know of an improvement in your material situation and likewise of an improvement of your spiritual situation - namely, the disappearance of thoughts about a separating partition etc. etc. - and that you will make strenuous endeavours to fulfil the command of the Holy One, blessed be He: "Serve G-d with joy." . . .

Elul 18, 5710 (August 31, 1950)

...Man, like all creatures (including the supernal angels), possesses both a body and a soul. And just as there are those who are poor in body and bodily needs, so, too, are there paupers in spirit and spiritual needs. Thus, the *mitzvah* of charity includes both physical charity and spiritual charity. In the words of our sages: "[It is written:] 'If you see a naked person, you should cover him.' What is the meaning of this? If you see a person who is naked of the words of Torah, take him into your home, teach him to read the Shema and pray, teach him... and enjoin him regarding the *mitzvot*..."

Regarding material charity, the law is that the material pauper is also obligated [to give], for even the most impoverished person can find a way to help his fellow pauper. The same applies to spiritual charity. There is no man or woman in Israel who cannot, in some way, influence his or her fellow Jews and bring them closer to the fear of Heaven, the Torah and the *mitzvot*.

"According to the camel's capacity, so is the load." It is the duty of those who are richer in material wealth, and those who are richer spiritually—learned Jews, Torah scholars and yeshivah students—to give generously of their greater wealth and knowledge to rescue, heal and fortify the bodies and souls of their brothers and sisters...

Melaveh Malkah – The meal escorting Shabbat

The Meaning:

'Melaveh Malkah' means 'escorting the Queen' in reference to the Shabbat Queen. Melaveh Malkah is the *Mitzvah* meal eaten on Saturday night after Shabbat ends, to escort away the Shabbat Queen who was with us. This meal is also known by the name (in Aramaic) 'Se'udata d'David Malka Meshicha', 'the feast of David, King Messiah', referring to King David, who established the post-Shabbat meal.

The Meal:

You've finished all the scrumptious Shabbat foods, and can't think about another bite, so... get ready for another irresistible repast. Melaveh Malkah is best eaten as an official meal with bread. If such a feast is not feasible, one may suffice with baked goods, fruit, or even a cup of coffee.

Many are accustomed to lighting candles on Saturday night.

"Tea? Coffee?" A hot beverage on Saturday night is known to be a remedy for both physical illnesses and despondency.

Tell a story of the Ba'al Shem Tov or any Tzaddik, for blessings of all kinds.

The Merits:

The fact that Melaveh Malkah is an oft ignored *mitzvah* due to its difficulty ("What? More food? But I'm stuffed!" and "I've got tons of things to catch up on now that Shabbat ended!") signifies its great importance. The merit of eating Melaveh Malkah is known to grant blessings of health, wealth, easy births for women, and spiritual gain, including strengthened faith. Also, Melaveh Malkah has a great influence over the new week. One explanation of this is that since the blessings of Shabbat are so immense, they require a mediator to make their 'descent' in the weekdays. This is, of course, Melaveh Malkah, via which these lofty blessings can make their mark on the days to come.

So make sure to include Melaveh Malkah in your weekend itinerary!

A WORD from the Director

The *yahrzeit* (anniversary of passing) of Rabbi Moses Maimonides, known as the Rambam, is 20 Tevet (coinciding with Monday, December 27th this year). On numerous occasions, the Rebbe discussed the connection between the Rambam, his magnum opus *Mishna Torah*, and the Redemption.

"The name Rambam is an acronym for the Hebrew words meaning, 'I will multiply My wonders in the land of Egypt,' an allusion to the wonders associated with Redemption. Similarly, the Rambam's spiritual service involved giving Jews in Egypt - in the night of exile - a foretaste of the Redemption.

"Firstly, he lived in Egypt and it was there that he composed his magnum opus, the *Mishna Torah*. As he explains in his introduction, the *Mishna Torah* was composed because of the difficulties of exile, because the Jews were unable to derive halachic rulings from the Talmud and needed an auxiliary source.

"Nevertheless, the text that the Rambam composed gave the Jews a foretaste of the Redemption - reflected in the fact that it includes laws which will only be relevant in the Era of the Redemption when the Holy Temple will be rebuilt, and in the conclusion of the text which focuses directly on the Era of the Redemption.

"Since on the *yahrzeit* of a tzaddik, 'the totality of his deeds, teachings, and service is revealed and...' "Brings about salvation in the depths of the earth," 'it follows that the Rambam's *yahrzeit* grants us further potential to anticipate the Redemption.

"This is particularly relevant in the present age when the Jewish people have completed the service required of them in exile. Everything is ready for the Redemption - all that is lacking is for G-d to open our eyes and allow us to realize that we are sitting at the feast of the Redemption

The Rebbe concluded: "As a catalyst for this, we must reflect an attitude of Redemption in our lives, showing how even within the exile, we can experience Redemption."

J. I. Gutnick

It Happened Once...



The Baal Shem Tov (Besh't) was once sitting with his pupils when suddenly he went 'blank'. His eyes stared at a corner of the ceiling, but he was obviously seeing something else.

The pupils were used to this; their master lived in a world unobstructed by creation; past and future, physical and spiritual, were like one to him.

Suddenly the 'Besh't' stood up and began to dance with ecstatic joy, arms outstretched, spinning, singing joyously. In seconds, all his pupils were dancing with him until they couldn't dance any more.

The Baal Shem sat down, caught his breath and explained the reason for his sudden outburst.

"Yesterday a woman came in to see me and she was weeping; she wanted children. I saw in heaven that it was decreed that she was to be barren. But I decided that I would pray for her anyway. Prayer can transform even the harshest decrees especially prayer with self-sacrifice.

I said, 'G-d, You can do what you want with me, but I demand that You give this woman children!' And it worked! The decree was annulled and it was announced in heaven that she would have offspring.

But that was yesterday. Just now I received a summons to appear before the Heavenly court and after a short trial they decided that I must pay dearly for my importunity; I will lose my place in heaven and will receive no spiritual rewards after I pass away!

And that is why I am so happy," concluded the Besh't. Now I can serve G-d without any interference from ulterior motives!!"

Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua Heschel, the Rebbe of Kopischnitz (1888-1967) was a lover of his people. In post-WWII America, he carried the pain and suffering of countless individuals on his weak and frail shoulders. Indeed, often when he heard the problems of others he would break down in uncontrollable weeping. The grief of his fellow Jews tormented him much more than his own afflictions, and countless times the Rebbe put his name and honour at risk in an attempt to help others.

Once a broken survivor of the Nazi inferno showed up at the Rebbe's door. He had just arrived from Europe and was hoping to settle in America. His wife, however, had been refused entry due to her ill health and was on Ellis Island awaiting imminent deportation. The man was inconsolable and indicated that if his wife was indeed deported, he wouldn't think twice about taking his own life. "Don't worry, please don't worry," implored the Rebbe. "I promise you that by next week your wife will be here together with you!" Upon hearing the Rebbe's words an immediate feeling of calm overtook the distressed man, and greatly relieved, he went away a new person.

Rabbi Morgenshtern, one of the Rebbe's disciples who had witnessed the scene, gathered up his courage and asked the Rebbe

how it was possible for him to make an outrageous guarantee like that with such ease. It was no less than promising a miracle!

"You saw how desperate the poor man was," the Rebbe replied. "My first concern was to calm him down and thank G-d, I succeeded. At least for the next week he will feel better. If after a week he sees that I was wrong and his wife was deported, he will say, 'Avrohom Yehoshua is not a real Rebbe, Avrohom Yehoshua is a liar.' But at least for a week I succeeded in bringing some peace into his life."

With that the Rebbe took his *Tehillim* (book of Psalms) and began to recite its verses with intense emotion. As the tears were streaming down his face he could be heard pleading, "Please, G-d, please, see to it that Avrohom Yehoshua didn't say a lie. I was only trying to help a Jew in a pathetic situation. Please don't let me be a liar..." In this fashion his prayers continued long into the night.

The Almighty heard his prayers. The woman was granted permission to stay in America, and was reunited with her husband.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

And he saw an Egyptian man smiting a Hebrew man. (Ex. 2:11)

Every word in the Bible has an eternal, spiritual meaning as well as a literal significance. The word "Egypt" (Mitzrayim) is linguistically related to the word for limitations and boundaries; the "Egyptian man" therefore, symbolizes the physical body, which does all in its power to gain control over the soul, the "Hebrew man." Moses' actions teach us that when one sees a Jew in danger of losing the battle between body and soul to his lower, physical nature, one must not remain silent. The Moses in every generation gives us the strength to overcome all obstacles and save the Jewish soul. (*Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye*)

And he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the staff of G-d in his hand. (Ex. 4:20)

While Moses certainly demonstrated to Pharaoh the proper honor due a king, he nonetheless "took the staff of G-d in his hand" in all his dealings with him - prideful in his Jewish heritage, imbued with an attitude of G-dly assurance, and without any feelings of inferiority. (*Likutei Sichot*)

And G-d saw the Children of Israel, and G-d knew. (Ex. 2:25)

When G-d saw that the Jews were persisting in their faith - retaining their Jewish names, their distinctive manner of dress and their Jewish language - despite the terrible adversity they encountered in Egypt, He took cognizance of them and brought about their exodus. (*Maayana Shel Torah*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS SHEMOT • 18 TEVET • 25 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:25 PM
	MINCHA:	8:40 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:10 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:38 AM
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:31 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	MAARIV:	9:25 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 24 DECEMBER 2010



Begins	Ends
8:25 MELBOURNE	9:31
8:12 ADELAIDE	9:15
6:25 BRISBANE	7:23
6:54 DARWIN	7:47
6:25 GOLD COAST	7:23
7:05 PERTH	8:06
7:48 SYDNEY	8:51
8:01 CANBERRA	9:04
8:28 LAUNCESTON	9:38
8:23 AUCKLAND	9:28
8:37 WELLINGTON	9:46

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.