

LampLighter

2 Shvat
Bo
964
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The ninth plague to befall Egypt was the plague of darkness, as described in this week's Torah portion, Bo: "They did not see one another, nor did any rise from his place for three days; but all the people of Israel had light in their dwellings."

The Midrash explains that the plague of darkness entailed two separate miracles: a supernatural darkness that enshrouded the Egyptians and "glued" them in place for three days, and a miraculous light that enabled the Jewish people to see.

By the light of this illumination, the Jews were able to enter the homes of the Egyptians and locate the treasures that were hidden there. Later, when the time came for the Jews to leave Egypt and G-d commanded them to borrow "vessels of silver and vessels of gold," the Egyptians were unable to refuse their requests, as the Jews knew exactly where everything was hidden.

This second miracle came about in order to fulfil G-d's promise to Abraham years before, when He told him that his descendants would be enslaved in Egypt: "And afterwards they will go out with great wealth." In the merit of this light, the Jews were able to "empty" Egypt of its treasures, in fulfillment of G-d's command, "And you shall plunder the Egyptians."

Chasidic philosophy explains that the material wealth the Jews took with them from Egypt was an expression of the spiritual wealth they derived - the tremendous number of "holy sparks" that had fallen to the morally depraved country. By going through the Egyptian exile, the Jewish people were able to redeem these sparks and restore them to their Divine source.

The fact that G-d performed a special miracle to facilitate the process demonstrates that He actively helps us in our service of "redeeming the sparks." G-d gives every Jew a "special light" that enables him to penetrate the "depths of Egypt" and withdraw the spiritual "wealth" that needs redemption.

Even now, in our present exile, the Jewish people are occupied with redeeming "sparks of holiness." Whenever a Jew utilizes a physical object for its Divine purpose, he elevates the sparks it contains and restores them to their original source.

Moreover, G-d continues to perform miracles that help us in our Divine mission. For even though we are still in a time when "darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the people," with the help of this special light, every Jew can prepare himself, with joy and gladness of heart, for the time when "the L-rd shall shine upon you": the full and complete Redemption with Moshiach.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

L'chaim to Chutzpah!

By Shimon Posner

Taking the Jews out of Egypt was the easy part for G-d; He's in the miracle business. Taking the Egypt out of the Jews, now that's hard. And Egypt was very into the Jews; the pharaohs had enticing culture and entertainment (abomination in both sleazy and non-sleazy flavours); the Jews desperately wanted to shed immigrant status and blend in. They pretty much did.

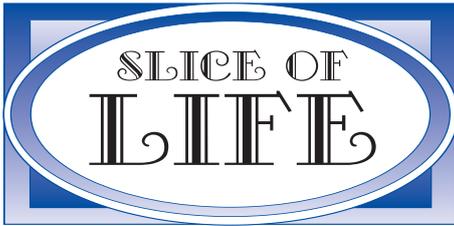
One of the most adored of the Egyptians' adorations was... the sheep (no, I don't know why.) It was the portent of, oh I don't know, the television? Now imagine your coming home one day, taking the beloved idiot box and throwing it out the window! Now picture doing that when you work for the networks and your boss came over to watch the news with you. We call it chutzpah.

That's why the Jews had to slaughter the sheep for Passover. Hours later they were ready to leave Egypt behind, a deflated, emasculated shell of a has-been. The chutzpah they kept. The gall to define reality and live by what is right: not comfortable, logical nor even possible, but what is right.

The Jews who survived Europe sixty-five years ago and started having families at an unprecedented rate demonstrated an awesome, enviable, breathtaking chutzpah. The Jews who were not in Europe who were bombarded with "The Disappearing Jew" series that every magazine was mouthing, but nevertheless opened day schools and Chabad centres were totally ignoring reality and doing their own thing!

The Jews (0.0005% of the population) are not defined by their surroundings and challenges (the Hebrew word for that is metzarim — the same as the Hebrew word for Egypt). The Jews are defined by whatever G-d wants them to define themselves. ("Mitzvhas" are often called signs/definitions).

So yes, the next time you read some cutting-edge report about the demise of Israel or see a documentary or news feature you think is slanted negatively, don't get annoyed. Think chutzpah (it's also good for the blood pressure). It's not our reality. Turn it off. Feel free to throw it out. Then wonder how you could have possibly lived with that thing for so long. And know how it feels to leave Egypt behind.



The Sword from Stalin's Army

Some fifty years ago the day before Yom Kippur Rabbi Betzallel Shif was in the airport terminal of Tbilisi (Capital of Georgia- Gruzia) on the way home to Kiev. He suddenly discovered that he had misplaced his flight ticket. He left the line, searched but found nothing. He would have to spend the night in the airport hotel and hope to catch a plane the next morning.

He was given a small two bed room in the terminal hotel, slept restlessly and woke at dawn to discover that someone else, was sleeping in the other bed. He quietly put on his Tefillin and Talit and prayed the Morning Prayer.

But when he finished he was surprised to see that his 'roommate' had woken and was sitting in a chair, fully dressed in an army uniform, staring at him intently. In Communist Russia this only spelled trouble.

The marks on his uniform indicated that he was a colonel. The colonel asked the Rabbi what he was doing. The Rabbi explained and as he was talking he noticed that the officer's eyes were red and a stream of tears ran down his cheeks. When the Rabbi finished explaining, the colonel blew his nose, dried his eyes and asked...if he could put on the Tefillin as well!

Rabbi Shif helped him put them on and after he finished praying and returned the religious items, he shook the Rabbi's hand and asked if he needed anything.

Of course Rabbi Shif explained that he desperately needed a flight to Kiev. The colonel told the Rabbi to follow him, took him outside. He approached a soldier that was apparently standing guard, said a few words to him, turned to Rabbi Shif and said, "Tell this soldier where you want to go and he'll make sure they take you there. Just please do me a favour and give me your address before you leave."

Rabbi Shif gave the colonel his address, boarded the plane and made it home in time for Yom Kippur.

Months passed and he almost forgot the entire incident until just a week before Passover, there was a knock on his door and when opened it there stood the colonel! They shook hands then hugged each other warmly. Rabbi Shif invited him in and he was straight to the point.

"Rabbi, I want you to return home with me and show my two children and wife what a real Passover Seder night is like. What do you say?"

But Rabbi Shif had to refuse saying he couldn't leave his old mother alone for Passover. When the Colonel heard this he again almost burst into tears. "OY! Your mother! Oy! Because

I didn't honour my parents they suffered so!" and he began to tell his sad story.

He had been born and bred in a Chabad family. His grandfather had been a well-known, gifted Chassid by the name of Rabbi Peretz Chein, and his parents who had great hopes for him, gave him the same name.

But it wasn't to be. When pogroms struck the big cities and his family had to flee to the suburbs where there weren't so many Jews, he became distant from Judaism and close with a lot of gentiles, especially a fellow his age called Peter.

Peter's grandfather had been a ranking officer in the Czar's navy, and his goal in life was to be just like him and, unfortunately he eventually got Peretz enthused as well.

Peretz's parents protested but they were helpless. Together he and Peter enlisted in the navy and began to rise up in the ranks until both became officers, each receiving a coveted golden handled sword made of the finest tempered steel.

This sword became Peretz's pride and joy to the point that several times a year he would return home in full uniform, his glistening sword dangling from his side showing off to the Chassidim who pretended to be interested but in fact couldn't have cared less.

But all this was in total rebellion against his parent's wishes; they begged him not to join the navy and pleaded with him to leave as soon as possible, but he ignored them.

Each time he returned home all the Chassidim tried to just say hello and be friendly so as not to drive him away but finally one Chassid by the name of Itzci Raskin couldn't hold himself back.

"What is that stupid sword doing on you?" he shouted at Peretz in front of everyone. "Aren't you ashamed?! The grandson of Peretz Chein with a sword? Phhheh!"

Peretz left the room blazing with anger and at that moment decided he would cut the cord. He changed his name to Pheter, and resolved to erase his 'useless' Jewish identity.

Years later, after he and his friend Peter rose to the level of majors they got a pleasant surprise; it was announced that Stalin (cursed be he) was going to make a personal visit to their base.

While preparing, unexplainably, Pheter's bosom friend Peter disappeared for over a week. Pheter asked around for an explanation but the only one given was that he had been drafted for a top secret job.

One day before the awaited visit, a group of KGB agents visited the base which was routine before such an important occasion. They began questioning the officers one by one in private but when it came Pheter's turn things turned a bit sour.

They began telling him details of his life that no one knew, except for his friend Peter. Obviously they just wanted to show him who was boss. There was nothing in their tone that was incriminating or unfriendly but it was

certainly embarrassing. Peter had betrayed their friendship!

Pheter went to his room, thought about what happened and began to get angry. After all he had done for Mother Russia! was this a way to be treated? Who needs this crazy government?!

Suddenly the words of Itzci Raskin rang in his ears "What is that stupid sword doing on you? Aren't you ashamed? The grandson of Peretz Chein with a sword? Phhheh!"

In a fit of insanity he pulled out the sword, stuck it deeply into the wooden floor until it broke almost in half. Then he took the unbroken half and began hacking away madly against a metal pipe until it was dull, chipped and almost useless and his anger subsided.

Suddenly a whistle blew! Stalin was here! Pheter, came to himself, put the half-sword back in it's sheath, and rushed out the door.

But when he arrived in the greeting room Stalin wasn't there, only the KGB agents...and Peter.

They read aloud, "The following officers will follow us for intensive interrogation." And they read out five names, one of which was Pheter's."

The Admiral of the base stepped forward and angrily shouted at the agents. "What do you want from these men!? What is their crime?!?" "Their crime?" said the KGB agent, looking knowingly at Peter, "Their crime is...Conspiracy to murder Comrade Stalin!!"

But the Admiral did not lose his composure. He angrily replied, "Nonsense! Pure nonsense! And tell me, comrade, tell us all, how, in your imagination did they plan to carry out this crime?"

"How?" Replied the agent with a smirk. "With THIS!" he exclaimed as he approached Pheter, deftly pulled Pheter's sword from its sheath and held it up victoriously. He narrowed his eyes as he hissed at Pheter. "You thought no one would suspect your sword didn't you?!"

But suddenly he felt that something was wrong, he looked at what he was holding in his hand and gasped.

"No one could kill anyone with such a sword! The Admiral yelled angrily."

"No, no!" The KGB agent tried to think fast. "he knew we suspected him! That's why he broke the sword."

"Fool!" Yelled the Admiral, "If he really had such a stupid plan and really thought you suspected him then he wouldn't have brought his sword at all! Now get out!"

Pheter continued, "It was a miracle! And the shouted words of that Chassid Raskin saved me! On that day I decided to return to Judaism but I didn't know how. I simply kept putting it off for years until I saw you back then in the airport I knew it was another miracle.

Pheter kept in contact with Rabbi Shif. He changed his name back to Peretz and returned totally to Judaism and, as a sign of appreciation, gave Rabbi Shif his broken sword as a present.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The name of this month, Shevat, relates to the Hebrew word shevet meaning "staff" that is associated with the concept of authority and kingship as it is written, "The shevet will not depart from Judah." The most perfect expression of this concept will be in the Era of the Redemption, with the assumption of sovereignty by Moshiach. And thus on the verse, "And a shevet will arise in Israel," Maimonides comments, "This refers to the King Moshiach." (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 28 Tevet, 5752-1992)

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



A WORD from the Director

14 Teves 5731 [1971]

Prof. & Mrs. Abraham S. Luchins

Greeting & Blessing:

This is to thank you for Vols. II and III of Wertheimer's Seminars Revisited, which I have just received. While I have had no time as yet to look into them more closely, I have thumbed through the pages. In doing so, I was again reminded of the saying of our Sages to the effect that "if anyone says the nations of the world have a Torah, do not believe it; but if one says that they have science, do believe it."

In fact, I had an occasion to discuss the subject at the farbrengen [Chasidic gathering]. The point of the said statement is that in the non-Jewish world it is possible to find outstanding thinkers and philosophers who might find solutions to the various problems confronting humanity, yet they can go through the process of thinking with complete detachment, so that the solutions which they come up with remains theoretical, and do not touch upon their own lives. Indeed, the thinker or philosopher or scientist might, in his personal life, act quite contrary to the high moral and ethical concepts which he expounds.

It is quite different in regard to our Torah, which is our wisdom and science in the eyes of the nations. For to us Torah means teaching and guidance (from the word horo'ot), that is to say, that it penetrates and permeates our lives. This is because it has the power to compel, as it were, the Torah student and follower to translate the solution which it provides into practical deed. It gives the Torah Jew the strength to resist and subjugate the yetzer hara [evil inclination], as our Sages of blessed memory express it: barati yetzer hara, berati Torah tavlin ("I have created the yetzer hara, but I have also created the Torah as an antidote").

With all good wishes for your hatzlocho [success] in your work, as well as in your good influence to spread and strengthen the light of the Torah and mitzvot [commandments] to the utmost of your capacities.

With blessing.

P.S. I was pleasantly surprised to see in the press that your son actively participated in the Convention of the Union of Orthodox Congregations in Washington.

Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5715 [1955]

You write that although you believe in G-d and His closeness, you are endeavouring to find your own way of serving Him. This is a long and round-about way. It is analogous to the person searching for the secrets of the functions of the physical body, e.g. how food is converted into blood, tissue, energy, and sustains life; it would surely not be the right approach to stop eating and drinking, pending his arrival at the conclusions of his study. Even a reduction in necessary calorie intake would weaken his powers of reasoning and research and handicap him in his ever attaining his objective. Similarly, in an effort to find a way of serving G-d, one must not postpone such service until one has completed one's search, and, moreover, the absence of the religious practice itself handicaps the powers of the intellect to grasp the truth. Furthermore, since the human intellect is by its very nature limited, while the subject it desires to grapple with is related to the Unlimited, it is only with the aid of the Infinite G-d that one hopes to be lifted across the unbridgeable chasm separating the created and the Creator, and such Divine aid can come only through Divine service.

Finally, there is obviously no contradiction here to the principle of the freedom of personal choice. The real issue here is the proper approach and method to be undertaken now, until one has arrived at the stage where one's intellect becomes sufficiently clear to confirm the established truth. The key to the solution is "Na'aseh v'nishmah," ["We will do and then we will understand"] where "Na'aseh," practical religion in daily life, is the pre-requisitive condition for "Nishmah," study and understanding.

This week's Torah portion, Bo, opens with G-d's command to Moses to "Go to Pharaoh." Moses followed G-d's order fearlessly. He boldly approached the mighty Egyptian ruler and demanded that Pharaoh release the Jewish people. Moses was not afraid of Pharaoh; Jewish lives were at stake, the Jewish people were counting on him. Moses was not concerned with the general (Egyptian) public opinion, either. "What will the neighbours think?" did not even enter his mind.

Moses was the epitome of the Jewish leader, showing selfless concern for each and every single person. He served as an example for all future leaders of the Jewish people. Moses' approach and attitude toward Pharaoh and the Egyptians should therefore be the position of every Jewish leader. A Jewish leader's only concern must be with the Jewish lives entrusted to him/her. Public opinion is not a consideration when dealing with the spiritual and physical aspects of Jewish lives.

The concept of a Jewish leader is not limited to the Moses' of each generation. For, each and every Jew - man, woman and child - is a Jewish leader in some sense. In every part of our lives in which we find ourselves influencing or directing others, we are leaders. We must therefore, behave as did Moses, the Jewish leader par excellence. When dealing with any aspect of Jewish life, ours, our children's or friends', we must boldly and fearlessly demand that we be released from any deterrents to our observance of Judaism.

And, as we read in the end of this week's portion, through this resolute stance, we will eventually be redeemed and ultimately brought to the Promised Land, where we will rebuild the Holy Temple, together with Moses and all of the leaders of all the generations.

J.I. Gutnick

Charity or Righteousness?

"Tzedakah" is charity—charity of money, charity of words, charity of right things. Actually, tzedakah is much more than "Charity." Charity just means checks, cash or change, but "tzedakah" is so much more. "Tzedakah" literally means "righteousness." It means the right response for the situation. If you have a couple of coins for a beggar, that's charity. But if you don't, and you give him a smile and a boost instead... now, that's tzedakah.

Maimonides lists eight levels of tzedakah:

1. Giving financial stability to someone who's down and almost out: a loan, or a job, so that he doesn't need to rely on others.
2. Giving where neither the donor nor the recipient know each other's identity.
3. Giving where the donor knows who the recipient is, but the recipient doesn't know who the donor is.
4. Giving where the donor doesn't know who the recipient is, but the recipient knows who the donor is.
5. Giving before the poor guy says, "Please give me!"
6. Giving after the poor guy says, "Please give me!"
7. Giving less than needed... but with a pleasant, all-smiles attitude.
8. Giving begrudgingly or with a scowling attitude.

How to tzedakah...

- A. Well, now, we would start with your check book, or with that change in your pocket. See that fundraising letter for that Kids-with-Cancer something-or-other that came in the mail? Send 'em a check—they could use it. See that guy on the sidewalk begging for handouts? He may not be mentally equipped for society right now, but until he gets some serious help, he needs to eat, just like you—dump a few coins in his cup.
- B. More spiritual, very kind and wonderful giving of your resources. Use your cables to give a guy's dead battery a jump. Use your connections to get a man a job. Listen with a sympathetic ear. Help an old lady across the street. Give directions to a lost tourist, or direction to a lost soul.
- C. Very spiritual, ultra-kind, do-what's-good giving of yourself. Loan your friend a few thousand when she really, really needs it (don't make a point of asking for it back—she won't forget, believe me). Help a widow put her kids through school. That sort of totally amazing, angelic stuff.

CUSTOMS CORNER

It Happened Once...



The 2nd of Shevat (which coincides with Jan. 7th) is the *yahrtzeit* (anniversary of the passing) of Chassidic Master Rabbi Meshulam Zusha of Anipoli (1718?-1800), a disciple of the 2nd leader of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch.

The two brothers, the famed Rabbi Elimelech of Lyzensk and Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli, often wandered about together posing as simple beggars. They would mingle with the masses; listening, teaching, speaking, helping and guiding whomever and whenever they could.

Once while travelling with a group of vagabonds, members of the group were accused of being thieves, resulting in the entire bunch being thrown into jail. Confident of their innocence and eventual release, the two brothers sat quietly. As the afternoon progressed, Rabbi Elimelech stood up to prepare himself to pray the afternoon service.

"What are you doing?" his brother asked

"I'm getting ready for *minchah*," replied Rabbi Elimelech.

"Dear brother," advised Reb Zusha, "it is forbidden to pray in this cell because there is a pail that serves as a toilet nearby, making the room unfit for prayer."

Dejected, the holy Rabbi Elimelech sat down.

Soon after, Rabbi Elimelech began to cry. "Why are you crying?" said Rabbi Zusha. "Is it because you are unable to pray?" Reb Elimelech answered affirmatively.

"But why weep?" continued Rabbi Zusha. "Don't you know that the same G-d who commanded you to pray, also commanded you not to pray when the room is unfit for prayer? By not praying in this room, you have achieved a connection with G-d. True, it is not the connection that you had sought. Yet, if you truly want the Divine connection, you would be happy that G-d has afforded you the opportunity to obey His law at this time, no matter what it is."

"You are right, my brother!" exclaimed Rabbi Elimelech, suddenly smiling. The feelings of dejection banished from his heart and mind, Rabbi Elimelech took his brother's arm and began to dance from joy as a result of performing the mitzvah of not praying in an inappropriate place.

The guards heard the commotion and came running. Witnessing the two brothers dancing—with their long beards and flowing *tzitzit*—the guards asked the other prisoners what had happened. "We have no ideal!" they answered mystified. "Those two Jews were discussing the pail in the corner when all of a sudden they came to some happy conclusion and began to dance."

"Is that right?" sneered the guards. "They're happy because of the pail, are they? We'll show them!" They promptly removed the pail from the cell.

The holy brothers then prayed *minchah* undisturbed...

A man once came to Rabbi DovBer, the famed "Maggid of Mezeritch," with a question.

"The Talmud tells us," asked the man, "that 'A person is supposed to bless G-d for the bad just as he blesses Him for the good.' How is this humanly

possible? Had our sages said that one must accept without complaint or bitterness whatever is ordained from Heaven — this I can understand. I can even accept that, ultimately, everything is for the good, and that we are to bless and thank G-d also for the seemingly negative developments in our lives. But how can a human being possibly react to what he experiences as bad in exactly the *same way* he responds to what he experiences as good? How can a person be as grateful for his troubles as he is for his joys?"

Rabbi DovBer replied: "To find an answer to your question, you must go see my disciple, Reb Zusha of Anipoli. Only he can help you in this matter."

Reb Zusha received his guest warmly, and invited him to make himself at home. The visitor decided to observe Reb Zusha's conduct before posing his question. Before long, he concluded that his host truly exemplified the Talmudic dictum which so puzzled him. He couldn't think of anyone who suffered more hardship in his life than did Reb Zusha: a frightful pauper, there was never enough to eat in Reb Zusha's home, and his family was beset with all sorts of afflictions and illnesses. Yet Reb Zusha was always good-humoured and cheerful, and constantly expressing his gratitude to the Almighty for all His kindness.

But what was his secret? How does he do it? The visitor finally decided to pose his question.

So one day, he said to his host: "I wish to ask you something. In fact, this is the purpose of my visit to you—our Rebbe advised me that you can provide me with the answer."

"What is your question?" asked Reb Zusha.

The visitor repeated what he had asked of the Maggid. "You raise a good point," said Reb Zusha, after thinking the matter through. "But why did our Rebbe send you to me? How would I know? He should have sent you to someone who has experienced suffering..."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

With our young and with our old we will go... we are to hold a feast unto G-d. (Ex. 10:9)

For in truth, what kind of a holiday would it be without our children? Any holy celebration that does not include the younger generation is no celebration at all... (*Shem M'ishmuel*)

Sanctify unto Me all the first-born. (Ex. 13:2)

Just as the first-born is especially holy to G-d, so too must the first few minutes of the day be dedicated to G-d and to His Torah. Once a person has established this firm foundation, the rest of the day will likewise be secure. (*Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS BO • 3 SHEVAT • 8 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:28 PM
	MINCHA:	8:40 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:10 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:47 AM
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:32 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	MAARIV:	9:25 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 7 JANUARY 2011



Begins	Ends
8:28 MELBOURNE	9:32
8:15 ADELAIDE	9:17
6:30 BRISBANE	7:27
6:59 DARWIN	7:52
6:29 GOLD COAST	7:27
7:09 PERTH	8:09
7:52 SYDNEY	8:53
8:04 CANBERRA	9:06
8:30 LAUNCESTON	9:39
8:26 AUCKLAND	9:30
8:39 WELLINGTON	9:47

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.