

LampLighter

19 Adar II
Shemini
Parah
975
25 March
5771/2011

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Shemini, contains three seemingly unconnected incidents and ideas. The portion opens with an account of the eighth day of the consecration of the Sanctuary, moves on to the death of Aaron's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, and concludes with a list of kosher animals and the prohibition against eating insects and reptiles.

On each of the first seven days of consecration, Moses built the Sanctuary only to take it apart again later that very same day. Only on the eighth day ("shemini") did he put it together, and it remained standing. On the eighth day, a fire came down from Heaven and consumed the sacrificial offerings. The eighth day thus had an advantage over the previous seven.

The two sons of Aaron were on an extremely high spiritual level. According to Chasidic teachings, their yearning for G-dliness was so powerful that their souls could simply not remain in their physical bodies, and they died. Although this is obviously not something G-d wants or expects from us, it nonetheless attests to their exalted spiritual stature.

After the Torah relates what happened to Nadav and Avihu it warns us against emulating their actions. From this we learn that the Jewish people were on such a high spiritual level at the time that a warning was necessary.

It is therefore surprising, at first glance, that after recounting two situations relating to exalted spiritual levels - the eighth day of consecration and the deaths of Nadav and Avihu - that the same Torah portion also contains the prohibition against eating insects and reptiles. The law against eating creatures in this category is perfectly understandable to the human mind; it is only human nature to find them repugnant. Why, then, does the Torah find it necessary to warn us about something that is so obvious?

The answer is that regardless of a Jew's spiritual standing he must always have *kabalat ol*, acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. Despite whatever spiritual attainments he may have achieved, in the end there is nothing as important as *kabalat ol*. A person must never think that because he is on a high spiritual level, he is automatically "immunized." Without genuine acceptance of the yoke of Heaven there is always the danger of deterioration - even to the point of eating insects and reptiles, G-d forbid!

Accordingly, the Torah's prohibition against eating creeping things immediately follows the other two incidents to teach us that *kabalat ol* is required in all circumstances and situations in life.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Will Climbing Mt. Everest Get Me Closer To G-d?

By Levi Avtzon

Three hermits move into a cave together. The deal is that they don't talk more than one sentence in seven years. One morning a horse runs by the mouth of the cave.

Seven years later, the first hermit says, "That was a pretty white horse that ran by."

Seven more years elapse, and the second hermit says, "That horse wasn't white; he was black."

Yet another seven years go by, and the third hermit starts packing his bags. The other two look at him and he says, "If all you two are going to do is argue, then I'm leaving."

Under the influence of the world's major religions, many have been led to believe that spirituality translates as "shunning the physical and living an ascetic existence." The further people distance themselves from worldliness and physicality, the closer they are to the divine.

Or so they say.

A man sitting atop a mountain clothed in rags, eating only the bare minimum and meditating for hours on end, impresses us as "Mr. Spiritual." A guru who hasn't uttered a syllable in a decade is hailed as a "holy man." And a caveman living a BCE existence impresses us as the ultimate. Celibacy is ideal and starvation a virtue.

Or so they say.

Judaism has a very different opinion on the matter.

Let me introduce you to Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron the High Priest, and supremely righteous individuals in their own right.

They enter the biblical spotlight just as the portable sanctuary for G-d had been erected in the desert, and a fire comes down from heaven to consume the offerings on the altar.

At that moment, Nadab and Abihu are so inspired that they enter the Holy of Holies chamber of the sanctuary and burn incense "which they were not commanded." The heavenly fire subsumes their souls, leaving their bodies perfectly intact. They die a death of passion, and one of the most awesome moments in history becomes forever coloured by tragedy.

Where did they go wrong? Their wish to escape the mundane world was too extreme. Their striving to become one with the Creator was taken out of context.

Certainly, we must have a yearning and a passion for the divine, but we must balance it with the recognition that G-d wishes that we live in this world and to work with it, *not against it*.

Hence we celebrate Passover, the holiday of freedom and independence, with matzah and bitter herbs. On Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment, the hours spent in prayer in the synagogue are followed by a festive meal. (Not to mention the fact that a Torah lesson without bagels and lox is just not complete...) This is our way.

You would think our religion was concocted by some chef...

That is the Jewish way. Eyes are useful for looking at the correct things. Fame is an asset if it leads to positive things. Technology is awesome if it is channelled for holy things. Marriage is sanctified. And food is the bedrock of any Jewish ceremony.

So is Mt. Everest closest to G-d? Well if you're eating your kosher Shabbat meal at its 27,352 foot peak, then, hey, I guess you're as close to G-d as you can get...



THE SMILE IN THE PICTURE

Elimelech and Tzivia had only one child at the time, but they were quite proud of him. Menashe was diligent in school and did very well. Therefore, when there was a sudden downturn in his efforts, they were taken by surprise. His teacher told them that Menashe wasn't paying attention or doing his assignments. At first they figured that all he needed was some rest, but after a short time they were informed by the school that Menashe's participation and performance had fallen off so drastically that there was a significant possibility that he would not be promoted at the end of the year.

Now the parents began to worry in earnest. They decided to take Menashe for a routine medical check-up, just in case. The doctor's serious visage after examining the boy gave them only a moment's warning before the bombshell.

"I detect a swelling inside his skull," he reported solemnly. "This may be an indication of a brain tumour. He must go for tests."

The frightened parents immediately made all the necessary arrangements with a good hospital. A battery of diagnostic tests followed with discouraging results, until finally the doctors required that Menashe be hospitalized.

Although Elimelech was from a traditional family, over the years he had strayed somewhat from mitzvah observance. Recently, however, even before the problems with Menashe, he had had a change of heart and was slowly climbing his way back. In the process, he had established a relationship with the rabbi of the local Chabad House, and it was to him that he now turned in this time of crisis, in order to enlist his help to ask the blessing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The worried couple looked forward impatiently to the Rebbe's response.

Thankfully, it came soon. "Azkir al hatziyon"- "I'll mention [his name in prayer] at the tomb." At least twice a week the Rebbe used to travel to the burial place of his predecessor and revered father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, where he would pray, often for many hours at a time, for all those people who had petitioned him for help.

The response wasn't at all what they expected. In fact, Elimelech was somewhat disappointed. He had looked forward to a specific guarantee, such as, "The child will get completely well soon; there is no need to worry." This three-word reply seemed vague and tepid, Elimelech thought. Still, as he assured Tzivia, the Rebbe had responded promptly and said he would pray for them, so that in itself was encouraging.

This new hope lasted only as long as it took to get the results of the latest tests. The doctors said it was now indisputable: Menashe had terminal cancer of the brain. Their final diagnosis was that there was no hope for recovery and that the boy had only a few more weeks to live.

The parents were stunned. They could barely function. A desperate Elimelech hurried to "770" (Lubavitch world headquarters). He chokingly explained the situation to one of the Rebbe's secretaries, and pleaded and wept that he should please ask the Rebbe for a more explicit and positive answer—a promise, not just a prayer.

The secretary said he would relay the request. He came back soon with the Rebbe's response: "Azkir al hatzion." The same thing again. Elimelech could barely accept it. This time he complained about its vagueness to the secretary who had delivered it. The latter explained to the distraught father that it was just as if the Rebbe had said, "Everything will be all right." This made Elimelech feel much better, and he returned to the hospital with renewed hope.

His new feelings of optimism survived for only a few days. Menashe's condition did not improve. Instead, there were signs of significant deterioration. That night, after Tzivia came to relieve him, he went

home discouraged and exhausted by the long hours and days of vigil at Menashe's bedside.

As soon as he came in the door, he threw himself down on the couch. He was so tired he didn't even bother to untie his shoes, impatiently forcing them off while still knotted. At that moment, his glance took in the large photo of the Rebbe, hanging on the wall facing him.

"Your blessings don't help at all!" he screamed towards the picture. "He is getting worse instead of better." Crying, his narrowed eyes focused on the Rebbe's broad smile, and he became even more frustrated. "Why can't I smile too, Rebbe?"

He balled his fists tightly. Then, suddenly, almost without thinking, he snatched up one of his shoes and flung it straight at the picture on the wall...!

More time went by. Miraculously, the doctors' dire predictions were not borne out, as Menashe's condition changed radically. He began getting better slowly, and then more quickly. Finally, he was healthy once again and their lives resumed their normal patterns: Elimelech and Tzivia returned to their jobs full-time, and Menashe to his classes.

Two years after that fateful first visit to the doctor, on a Sunday morning, the family was standing on the long line outside of 770, waiting to receive a blessing from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, as well as a dollar to pass on to charity.

Finally their turn came to pass in front of the Rebbe's table. Before they could say a word, the Rebbe looked up at them with a warm smile and said, "Nu, how is Menashe?"

Elimelech and Tzivia were both astonished. How did the Rebbe know who they were? Why should he remember that distant episode with their son?

Elimelech emerged from his shock first. "Boruch Hashem, thank G-d, Menashe is just fine—all in the merit of the Rebbe's holy blessing."

The Rebbe's smile broadened at hearing the good news. "Nu, boruch Hashem!" he confirmed.

Then, in a voice so low that only Elimelech could hear, he added, "But I still feel the blow."

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P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA
Phone (04) 3039-5770

Email: lamplighter_weekly@hotmail.com
Web: rabbinicalcollege.edu.au/Lampighter

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ISSUE 975

MOSHIACH MATTERS

"Furthermore, the children of Ishmael will evoke many battles around the world invoking Edom [the descendents of Esau] into fierce battles at sea, on land and near Jerusalem. They will attack and conquer each other...and additional armies will join the battle...Until God 'will grab the corners of the Land [and the wicked will be shaken from it]' (Job 38:13). He will remove the children of Ishmael from the Land...Then, 'I will transform all the nations into a pure tongue, that all shall call in G-d's Name and serve Him in unity (Zephania 3:9)." (Zohar II, 32a)

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



Freely translated and adapted
11 Menachem Av, 5710 (1950)
Greetings and blessings,

...With regard to what you wrote - that you wanted to write a longer letter but refrained from doing so because I am very busy: I want to assure you that I am always happy to receive detailed letters and I read them with the appropriate concentration. It may, however, happen that my reply will be delayed because of the large amount of work. I would like that, in such an instance, you should not be offended and indeed, you probably will not become offended.

In continuation of my previous letter, whose content emphasized working with others, I would like to add several lines about the nature of the work which every person must and can achieve with himself. As my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe (hk"m), once said in his talks: "We must work with others, but we may not forget about ourselves."

Nevertheless, the yetzer hara (evil inclination) is aptly called "the clever one," and therefore approaches every individual according to his particular character. If it sees that a person has abilities in communal activities (the field of social work), it tells him: "Why should you work on yourself? Saving lives supersedes everything. And besides, if you can make others more observant, there is no need to take care of one's own Divine service."

This is what the Rebbe sought to clarify, that one can't let himself be convinced by the words of "the clever one": one must always examine oneself to see if all the aspects of his conduct are as they should be, as mandated by the Torah and its mitzvos (commandments), as clarified by Chassidus.

In general, one's Divine service with one's own self involves three dimensions: Torah study, service (prayer), and deeds of kindness. All of these must be performed as avodah, labour, working on oneself with strenuous exertion. As long as one does not exert himself, his Divine service is not being conducted as it should. As stated in Tanya, ch. 15, the battle with the yetzer hara requires that one struggle to advance in his Divine service far more than his nature motivates him. Only then is he referred to as "a servant of G-d."

Every person must carefully judge the extent to which he carries out the awesome battle with the yetzer hara, as clarified at length in Tanya, ch. 30.

I hope you will not take offense at my writing openly. I await hearing good news from you, both in your work on yourself and your work with others.

Wishing you all forms of good and with blessing to you and your household.

23 Menachem Av, 5710 (1950)
Greetings and blessings,

In reply to your letter of the Friday preceding Shabbos Nachamu which brought the news that you are settled in an appropriate position:

Thank you for the good news. May G-d grant you the merit of always bearing only good news both regarding your individual situation and your surroundings.

I mention "your surroundings" based on the ruling of Maimonides (Hilchos Deos 6:1) which states that: "Man's inherent tendency is that his character and conduct are influenced by his friends and comrades.... Therefore a person should join together with the righteous and reside with the wise...."

There Maimonides is speaking about a person's character as a recipient, which is the first stage of his development. Immediately thereafter, he must also become a source of influence for others, as my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe (hk"m) requested in his talk printed in Kuntres Yud-Beis Tammuz, 5710, sec. 3: "See to it that you yourself are alive and make others alive."

Since this goal is demanded of us, we are certainly given the potential to achieve it. If he would only desire, each one of us will be able to shine light within his surroundings. The meaning of "light" in this context is solely the Torah and its mitzvos (commandments), as it is written: "For a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah, light."

Signing with blessings and with greetings.

From "I Will Write It In Their Hearts," translated by Rabbi Eli Touger

A WORD from the Director

This past Purim, the sounds of the "L'chaim-to life" reverberated throughout the Jewish world. The Rebbe once explained that the word chaim is in the plural form because life is only worthy of its name if it is a life that is shared with others.

Haman wanted to destroy the Jewish nation arguing to Achashveirosh that they are a fragmented people. Why would they deserve the opposite of chaim just because they are a discordant nation? Of course, our question is not about Haman but about the Almighty who allowed this decree to hover over their heads for almost a year.

When the Jewish people are divided they no longer enjoy the deeper dimension of chaim, life in the plural. By having this decree in effect, G-d wished to alert the Jewish people about the importance of unity as the source of true life.

Indeed, one of the reasons we send Shallach Manot/food gifts to our friends and Matanot l'evyonim/gifts to the poor is to refute Haman's accusation. These gifts demonstrate that the Jewish people are one people who feel each other's pain and celebrate each other's joyous events.

Let it be known that in the spirit of Purim the entire Jewish world stands in solidarity with our brethren in Israel, and especially the Fogel family whose lives were so brutally destroyed by the Amaleks and Hamans of our generation. May Hashem avenge their blood.

In the Holiday of Purim we just observed, we demonstrated to the Hamans of the world that we are one people. When we lift our cups of wine to say L'Chaim, we have in mind, as the Rebbeim would say, "L'Chaim with all of its interpretations." Included in those interpretations is certainly the one about true life; life that is permeated with Ahavat and Achdut Yisrael.

In these last moments of Galut, we lift our cups of wine and say to the Almighty, "L'Chaim. We want to see the end of the suffering of our/Your people. Bring us life in all of its meanings, particularly the new dimension of life we will enjoy with the imminent redemption through our righteous Redeemer, Amen!"

L'Chaim!

J.I. Gutnick

Jewish Birthday in a Minute

What's so great about a birthday? Wasn't it more comfy inside the womb?

But the day you were born was the day you became your very own person—no longer just a watermelon in your mommy's tummy. That's why it's a day to ponder: What have I accomplished by being here? Did the world change because I left that womb?

So when the Hebrew calendar comes back around to that wonderful day you were born, try some of these great customs:

- Find an enclave in time-space to think about the past year: what went right, what went not-so-right and what can be fixed.
- Take your life to a new level with a new mitzvah.
- Give some extra charity today. Best just before the morning and afternoon prayers. If your birthday falls on Shabbat or a Jewish holiday, then give before the day begins and after it's out.
- Spend more time in your prayers. Say some extra Psalms. (Yes, Psalms are Jewish—

King David wrote them.) Your *mazel* (luck) shines extra strong on your birthday, so ask for the right things.

- Every year of your life has a corresponding Psalm. It's your age + 1. Learn it today and say it each day for the coming year.
- Add to your Torah study time. Share whatever you learn with friends.
- *Farbreng*. That's when friends sit together, make *l'chaim* and encourage each other to be better Jews. It's also a great way to publicly thank your Creator for creating your life.
- Eat a new seasonal fruit on your birthday just so you can say the *Shehecheyanu* blessing, thanking G-d for granting you life.
- *For men*: Get an *aliyah* on the Shabbat before your birthday. If the Torah is read on your birthday, get an *aliyah* on that day too.

CUSTOMS CORNER

It Happened Once...



A Chassid of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. of Lubavitch (known as the "Tzemach Tzedek" the third Chabad Rebbe) who was a timber merchant once purchased the logging rights for a forest outside the town of Palatsk. Logging on such a large scale was usually done in the winter when the ground was covered with snow, making it easier to penetrate deep into the forest and to bring out the wood from the forest to the river. At the beginning of the summer they would use some of the wood to build rafts, and then float the logs on the rafts downriver to sell them in far-off places. The Chassid had to move temporarily to Palatsk in order to oversee the work.

The merchant spent his days overseeing the timber operation. At night he would attend the local synagogue, and after the Evening Prayer would stay and study for several hours. Several other men also stayed late, engrossed in intensive Torah-study. Mostly they studied in pairs, but one older man always sat by himself, because he didn't feel that any of the others there were worthy to be his study-partner, as he was more scholarly than they were.

When the older man saw that the stranger was studying alone, he presumed it was because he wasn't much of a student, and so was embarrassed to ask anyone to study with him. He walked over to the newcomer and engaged him in a Torah discussion in order to check him out, and soon discovered to his pleasant surprise that the visiting businessman was an accomplished scholar. He suggested that they study together and the Chassid agreed. The arrangement turned out to be mutually satisfying.

Then, one day, the timber merchant noticed that his study partner was stumbling in his speech, as if he wanted to say something but wasn't sure whether to hold back or not. The Chassid said, "Ask me whatever you like; don't hesitate at all."

"I'll tell you the secret that I have been keeping to myself for a long time," the older man said. I have been reading various philosophy tracts, and now I have a lot of questions and doubts. But I don't know who to share them with that could possibly answer me."

"Try me," said the Chassid. "Ask me whatever is bothering you. Perhaps I'll be able to answer your questions and set your mind at rest."

Now a new dimension was added to their study-partnership. Every day the elderly scholar would ask one of his questions based on his philosophy readings, and the Chassid would answer to the best of his ability. In general, the older man was pleased with his answers, and their discussions always lightened his heart and cheered him up.

Months passed. The festival of Passover was on the horizon. The logging and the rafting work drew to a finish. The timber man announced to his friend that he was about to return home. At their parting, the old man started to cry. "I'm so sad you are leaving. Not only were you an excellent partner for text study, I'll also miss being able to confide my problems in you. Your answers were always such a relief to me! What will I do now?"

The Chassid replied immediately. "Don't despair. I have excellent advice for you. Travel to Lubavitch and see the Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek. He'll surely answer all your questions."

The timber merchant went home. Shortly before the holiday of Shavuot, he travelled to Lubavitch, in order to bask in the presence of the Rebbe during the festival. As he was walking in the street, someone came up behind him and placed his hands over his eyes, saying, "Guess who?"

The Chassid quickly identified the elderly scholar from Palatsk. "See," said the latter, "I listened to your advice. Soon after Pesach I made the trip here."

"So what happened?" asked his friend excitedly. "Did you speak to the Rebbe yet?"

"Certainly. I made an appointment for yehidus [private audience] and when I went in, I told the Rebbe that I am troubled by a lot of disturbing questions from my study of philosophy. The Rebbe said to me, 'What is your problem? Abaye and Rava [two outstanding sages of the Babylonian Talmud whose wide-ranging disputes cover both major general issues and intricately detailed matters of Jewish law] were not bothered by such questions of philosophy, so why should you be?'

"As soon as he said that, all my difficulties fell away. Now I am staying on to devote myself awhile to study Chassidus."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

They brought what Moses commanded before the Tabernacle of Meeting, and all the congregation drew near and stood before G-d. (Lev. 9:5)

According to the Kabbalist, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the commandment to love one's fellow Jew must be accepted before beginning to pray. Only when "the congregation drew near" to each other in love and unity, did the Jewish people "stand before G-d" in prayer and supplication. (*Chesed L'Avraham*)

Yet these you may eat. (Lev. 11:21)

The Torah does not content itself with giving us signs of purity to look for when it tells us which animals are kosher, it actually lists each and every one which is permissible. In the thousands of years which have elapsed since the Torah was given, not one animal, bird or creature has been discovered by man to possess those signs, which were not specifically mentioned in the Torah. (*Kuzari Hechadash*)

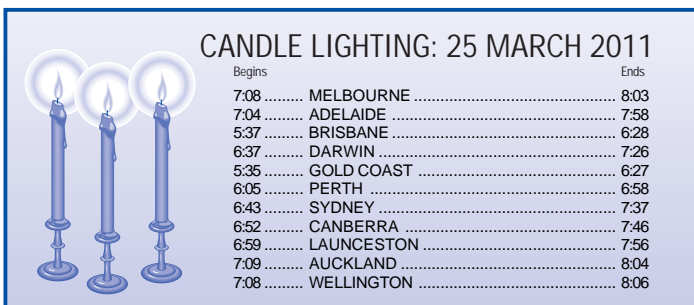
CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS SHEMINI • 20 ADAR II • 26 MARCH

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:08 PM
	MINCHA:	7:20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	7:50 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10:27 AM
	MINCHA:	7:10 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8:03 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	7:10 PM
	MAARIV:	7:55 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 25 MARCH 2011

Begins	Ends
7:08	8:03
7:04	7:58
5:37	6:28
6:37	7:26
5:35	6:27
6:05	6:58
6:43	7:37
6:52	7:46
6:59	7:56
7:09	8:04
7:08	8:06



Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

צוקללה"ה נב"מ ז"ע

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