

LampLighter

23 Iyar
Bamidbar
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

Throughout the thousands of years of Jewish history, countless men, women and children have willingly given up their lives rather than deny their Jewishness. Not only scholars and learned Jews went to the auto-da-fe, with the "Shema" on their lips; simple and untutored Jews also chose to die sanctifying G-d's name without hesitation.

This irrational willingness to give up one's life for the sake of G-d seems odd in light of the dictum which states that "nothing can stand in the way of repentance." With the sword at their throats, who could have faulted our ancestors had they agreed to bow down to whatever idol worship was being forced upon them? Why didn't they save their lives by uttering some meaningless phrase or performing some other seemingly insignificant gesture demanded by their tormentors? Could they not have later fully repented and returned to G-d?

This question may be answered by understanding the special nature of the Jewish soul and the relationship it enjoys with G-d. That inner spark of Jewishness, described in Chasidut as "an actual part of G-d above," exists on a plane above time and space. It cannot bear to be severed from its Source for even a moment; the threat of separation from G-d is always utter and absolute. The willingness to give up one's life rather than lose that connection is a consequence of the soul's very nature.

This concept is well illustrated in this week's Torah portion, Bamidbar, in which G-d commands that a census be taken of the Jews. Rashi, the great Torah commentator, notes that because of the great love G-d has for His people, "He counts them at every moment."

This comment must be interpreted beyond its literal meaning, for since the exodus from Egypt, there have only been nine censuses of our people. The tenth census will be taken after the Final Redemption. What then, does it mean that G-d counts the Jews "at every moment"?

The act of counting reduces the objects being counted to their common denominator; both great and small are counted as one. The common denominator among all Jews, without regard for educational status, societal standing or wealth, is the Jewish soul, which exists in every Jew to the same extent and renders all Jews equal.

G-d unceasingly "counts" His children and holds each of them dear, all the time. This love is so overwhelming that the Jew cannot endure being cut off from it for even a moment, even with the knowledge that his later repentance has the power to restore the relationship to what it had been. It is G-d's perpetual "counting" of His children which reveals the innate power of the Jewish soul.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

In the Desert

By Yanki Tauber

In the desert there are no office buildings or factories. So if you lived in the desert, chances are you wouldn't have a job. There'd be no boss bossing you, and no underlings under you.

In the desert there are no towns or neighbourhoods—you'd be neither on the right nor on the wrong side of the tracks. There aren't any department stores or grocery stores—you'd eat manna from heaven and wear the same pair of shoes for forty years.

Which is why, say our sages, G-d gave us the Torah in the desert.

Had He given it to us on Wall Street, He would have had to decide whom to appoint to the board and who should retain a controlling interest. Had He given it to us in the Holy Land, He'd have had to decide if He wants it in religious Jerusalem, mystical Sefad or hi-tech Tel Aviv. Or perhaps He'd have preferred a Marxist kibbutz or even a neo-Zionist settlement?

G-d wanted no shareholders in his Torah, no corporate structure, no social or political context. In fact, no context whatsoever. Just us and the Torah.

Wouldn't it have been great to stay in the desert?

But as soon as G-d was sure that we'd gotten the message—that we understood that the Torah is not the product of any particular age, environment or cultural milieu, and that it belongs, absolutely and unequivocally, to each and every one of us—he sent us to the cities and the towns of His world, to its farms and marketplaces, to its universities and office complexes. He told us that now that He's done His part, it's up to us to make His Torah relevant in all these places and in all these contexts.

Still, it's nice to come back to the desert once in a while. At least for a visit.



The Rebbe Came To Me

Mr. Yirmiahu (Jerry) Yarden was an American businessman on the way up. His business was doing well, his social life was fine, he had friends, a nice house and everything a man could desire - until the pain began.

At first he just took a few aspirins and thought everything would be fine. But when it didn't go away he went to a doctor who suspected something serious and sent him to be x-rayed. The x-rays ended his American dream.

It was about as bad a disease as they come but Jerry wasn't going to go down without a fight. He went to the best doctors in the best private hospital, spared no money and it paid off; the operation was a success. He was free from disease and pain for a few months.

The pains returned and his new x-rays showed that so had the disease. He immediately returned to the same hospital and requested the same excellent doctors. But that surgeon happened to go out of the country. He would return only in two weeks and all the experts that saw the x-rays agreed that the operation couldn't wait.

Jerry even sent the x-rays special delivery to the surgeon to get his opinion, but he too agreed that they must not delay.

A well known professor was chosen to operate in his place and the operation was set for the next day.

Jerry was wheeled into the operating room half sedated and when the anaesthetist gave him a larger

injection and he lost conscious, the operation began.

Jerry relates:

"Suddenly in the middle of the operation I woke up. I felt myself and my body, I was clearly conscious but I didn't feel any pain. I looked around and even sort of sat up and saw the doctors standing around my body operating on me.

"But then I noticed that standing at the foot of the bed was someone that didn't belong in the operating room...it was the Lubavitcher Rebbe! I thought that for sure it was a dream and would change in a second or two, but it didn't. The Rebbe looked warmly into my eyes, smiled and said, 'Tell the professor who is operating on you that if he puts on Tefillin every day his daughter will recover from her disease.'

"I said I would try to pass on the message and....poof! The vision disappeared.

"The nurse heard me mumble a few words, probably those that I said to the Rebbe, and frantically informed the doctor that she thinks the anaesthesia is wearing off. The doctor told her to give me another shot because if I wake I won't be able to stand the pain and it will be dangerous.

"The nurse approached with another syringe full of anaesthetic but I refused. I said I had a message to give over to the professor and wanted to talk to him.

"The operating staff was astounded. There I was laying on the operating table cut open like a fish holding a conversation like it was my birthday party.

The doctor, who couldn't believe his eyes asked me a few questions to see if I was conscious and coherent and as he saw I was, his eyes

widened like saucers; he had never seen or even heard of such a thing in his life.

"That is when I got up my courage and asked him if he had ever heard of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He replied that he had but what does it have to do with the operation?

"I told him that a few seconds ago the Rebbe was here and told me to tell the doctor that if he puts on Tefillin every day his daughter will get better. I breathed deeply and the next thing I remember is waking up early the next morning in the recovery room with no memory of the conversation.

"But the Doctor reminded me. He came to visit me, held my hand and with tears in his eyes said that I changed his life.

"He began weeping and telling me of his young daughter that had a disease that none of the doctors could heal. Even he himself the great professor that could heal everyone was helpless. In fact he felt so helpless that today he woke in the morning and did something he hadn't done since his Bar-Mitzva almost forty years ago, he prayed. He actually begged G-d, who till today he wasn't sure even existed, to save his daughter and to send a sign that his prayer had been accepted.

"'You are the sign!' the professor said, 'I don't know how you got here or how the Lubavitcher Rebbe got involved but for sure It's a sign that my daughter will live'.

"Sure enough, the professor bought a pair of Tefillin that very day and began putting them on each morning until his daughter began feeling better."

The end of the story is happy. Both the girl and Jerry recovered completely and the professor recovered his Judaism.

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ISSUE 984

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Since we are essentially "one nation," it would seem appropriate that this oneness be reflected in the Jews' geographic location as well. Nevertheless, this is not so and our people are dispersed throughout the entire world. However, this dispersion was intended to give the Jews the potential to elevate the entire world through following the directives of the Torah. After this mission is completed, in the Messianic redemption, G-d will collect and unite all the Torah actions that were performed throughout the world and bring them as one to the Holy Land. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 9 Sivan, 1989)

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



25th of Iyar, 5712 [1952]
Rabbi S. Carlebach,

Recently you brought to my attention a letter addressed to you by ———, a student at Colgate University, Hamilton, New York. In this letter the writer professes to be a true scientific thinker and an unbeliever in the supernatural; he also asserts that all facts seem to be in contradiction to the existence of G-d, professes to be a "liberal Jew," etc., etc.

Not knowing the background of this student, nor the field of science in which he specializes, I cannot deal with the subject in detail, especially in the course of a letter.

There are, however, several general observations that I can make, which the said student has apparently overlooked, and which he would do well to consider carefully:

1. Science does not come with foregone conclusions and beliefs with the idea of reconciling and adjusting facts to these beliefs. Rather the opposite, it deals with facts, then formulates opinions and conclusions. To approach a subject with one's mind made up beforehand is not true scientific thinking but a contradiction to it.
2. Science requires that no conclusion can be valid before a thorough study and research was made on the subject. The question therefore presents itself: How much time and effort had the above-mentioned writer devoted to the study of religion to justify his conclusions on the subject?
3. A fact is considered any event or phenomenon testified to by witnesses, especially where the evidence is identical and comes from witnesses of varied interests, education, social background, age, etc. Where there is such evidence, it is accepted as a fact which is undeniable even if it does not agree with a scientific theory. This is the accepted practice in science even where there are several reliable witnesses and certainly scores of them, hundreds and thousands.

The Divine Revelation at Mount Sinai was a fact witnessed by millions of people, all of whom reported it to its minutest detail, accurately, for the whole people of Israel stood at Mount Sinai and witnessed it.

We know that this is a fact because millions of Jews in our day accept it as such, because they received it as such from their own parents, and these millions in turn received the evidence from the previous generation, and so on, in an uninterrupted chain of transmitted evidence from millions to millions of witnesses, generation after generation, back to the original millions of witnesses who saw the event with their own eyes.

Among these original witnesses there were many who were initiated in the sciences of those days (viz. Egypt), many achievements of which are still baffling nowadays; among them were philosophers and thinkers, as well as ignorant and uneducated persons, women and children of all ages. Yet all of them reported the event and phenomena connected with it without contradiction to one another.

Such a fact is certainly indisputable. I do not believe that there is another fact which can match it for evidence and accuracy.

To deny such a fact is anything but scientific; it is the very opposite of science.

Parenthetically, it is unfortunate that this basic difference between the Jewish religion and those of others is so little known, for the Jewish religion is the only one that is not based on a single founder or a few, but is based on the Divine Revelation witnessed by all the people, numbering several millions.

This answers also ———'s statement that "the acceptance of the Torah as being the only truth is dangerous" since "its authors were only men... and as men they could not have been infallible."

Jews accept the Torah precisely because it was given by G-d, not by man, and it was given in the presence of millions of people who had seen it and heard it with their own eyes and ears. That is why the Torah is the absolute truth, for G-d is absolute.

I am enclosing an extra copy, should you wish to forward it to your correspondent.

A WORD from the Director

This week we begin Bamidbar also known as Numbers because it begins with G-d's command to Moses to count the Jewish people. However, in an earlier parsha we read that the Jews were told not to count them directly. Rather they were each to contribute a Half-Shekel, which would then be counted to determine the number of Jews.

This setup is puzzling. If G-d wanted them counted, why couldn't Moses count them directly?

To understand the dynamics of counting, Chassidic thought focuses on the ideal of Jewish unity. Our sages have declared that the Jewish nation is inherently one unified and inseparable entity.

What is it that justifies this assertion? This unity is not based on political uniformity, or cultural harmony, identical language, or any other intellectual, emotional or ideological factors. Indeed, it seems that one can find more divisive influences within the Jewish community than unifying ones. Who has not heard of the story of the Jew who was stranded on a desert island, who built two synagogues, one that he would attend and the other he would never step foot into...

The answer is that our unity derives from our G-dly soul that is our true essence and belies all of our external differences.

While we are outwardly, perhaps the most colourfully divided of people; there is an intrinsic unity that pervades all of us. It is a unity that usually manifests itself in times of crises.

*Counting the Jewish people highlighted their individuality. By **not** counting them directly—but rather by counting a Half-Shekel—it underscored their paradoxical nature. We are the most individualistic and colourful people, and simultaneously we are the most unified people. Each one of us is no more than a half without the other.*

*Through appreciating the individual qualities of every Jew, while realizing that we are all one, we will be prepared for the coming of Moshiach. At that time the prophet says we will return to Israel as a Kahal Gadol, a great **unified** congregation. At the same time, however, we will be recognized as individuals, as the prophet says, "You will be collected for the Redemption **one by one**."*

J. I. Gutnick

How do I make Kiddush?

The Torah states: "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it." This is done through *Kiddush* at the onset of Shabbat and when it departs through *Havdalah*. The Sages instituted that this sanctification be accompanied by a cup of Kosher wine (or kosher grape juice). They also instituted that Kiddush be recited over wine before beginning the daytime Shabbat meal.

The following is a basic overview of the Kiddush ceremony:

1. It is forbidden to eat or drink anything before Kiddush. This prohibition starts at sundown of Friday night, and after the Mussaf prayer of Shabbat morning.
2. If no wine is available, it is permitted to recite the Kiddush on Challah (or any two loaves of bread or Matzah).
3. The Kiddush cup must be rinsed and complete; it is not respectful to use a chipped cup to sanctify the holy day of Shabbat. The cup should be filled with

wine or grape juice to its brim.

4. The Kiddush cup is held in the right hand (unless one is left-handed). When starting the Kiddush it is customary to glance at the Shabbat candles, and when saying the Hagafen blessing one should glance at the wine.
5. The first passage of the Kiddush, vayeichulu, must be recited while standing. The rest of Kiddush (as well as the daytime Kiddush) is recited while sitting or standing, depending on your custom.
6. After finishing the Kiddush, the one who recited the Kiddush must drink at least 1.46 ounces of the wine. It is customary for all those who listened to the Kiddush to also have a sip from the wine.

CUSTOMS CORNER

It Happened Once...



When the Jewish fugitives of the Spanish Inquisition originally settled in Turkey, the Sultan made a pact with them that they would never be drafted into his army. But when Abed El Chamid became Sultan in the mid-1800's, he issued a decree obligating all non-Moslems to enlist in the Turkish army.

Serving in the army, however, involved desecrating the Shabbat and eating non-kosher food. Istanbul's rabbis tried to have the decree rescinded, but they were unsuccessful. Despite its severity, they finally decided to accept the decree, not wanting to provoke the Turkish authorities. The city's Vaad Haruchani (Spiritual Council) even issued a proclamation urging the region's Jews to fulfil their obligations to the Turkish government, and to enlist.

Only one man protested this course of action: Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer Alfandri, otherwise known as the Saba Kadisha.

At the Vaad meeting, he declared: "Since serving in the Turkish army involves Shabbat desecration and the defiling of oneself with non-kosher food, enlisting in the army is considered a chillul Hashem (Desecration of G-D's name). We mustn't yield to Sultan Abed El Chamid. If we are firm, Hashem will help us."

After completing his fiery speech, he burst into uncontrollable sobs. The other members of the Vaad knew that Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer's words were justified. Nonetheless, they feared expressing their opinion in public.

The Jewish community did have one hope, however. One of its wealthy members was particularly influential in the Sultan's court.

But instead of trying to cancel the decree, the Jew collaborated with the Sultan and helped promote it. But when he visited the palace to supervise various aspects of the decree, he suddenly lost consciousness and died.

The following day, a large throng assembled at the wealthy man's funeral. In Istanbul at that time, Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer was always the first to deliver a eulogy at a funeral, and no one dared to precede him. But instead of attending the funeral, Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer remained at home.

The community leaders pleaded with Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer to attend the funeral, or at least to grant others permission to eulogize the deceased. But Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer flatly refused, saying that the man wasn't worthy of honour.

The deceased sons offered Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer a large sum of money, which they said could be used for charity, if only he would relent.

With tear-filled eyes, Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer replied, "Yesterday I visited your father and asked him not to collaborate with the Sultan. But he defied me. Therefore, I cannot honour him."

In the end, none of the city's rabbi's eulogized the deceased. Everyone knew that Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer was right and respected his actions.

When the Sultan learned of Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer's efforts to cancel his decree, he was furious and decided to punish him for inciting the

Jews against him. He immediately summoned Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer to his palace.

Once in the palace, Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer quietly explained his position to the Sultan. The Sultan was very impressed by Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer; in fact, he was so impressed that he accorded him the title of Chacham Bashi, granting him the authority to issue amendments and edicts in the Jewish community.

In the end, the draft decree wasn't implemented due to internal conflicts in the royal court.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

The Levites shall keep charge of the Sanctuary of Testimony. (Num. 1:53)

The Levites, whose job it was to "guard" the Sanctuary and the Holy Temple, were counted in the census from the age of one month. But how can a one-month-old infant possibly "keep the charge of the Sanctuary of Testimony"? "Guarding" the holiness of the Sanctuary refers to spiritual guardianship, not physical protection. The Levites served not by virtue of their physical prowess or outstanding bravery, but because of their high spiritual stature, something that even a small baby had already inherited.

Count (literally, Raise) the heads of the congregation Israel... (Num. 1:2)

When Moses was commanded to arrange a census of the Jewish people, the word used was "seh-oo" more literally meaning "raise" count. This indicates that the counting was actually an elevation for the Jews. The census brought about the resting of the Divine presence on the Jewish nation because it indicated that each individual could affect the destiny of the entire people. Similarly, Maimonides writes: "Each person should consider the entire world as balanced between good and evil deeds. His one action could sway the world to the side of good, bringing salvation to the whole world." (Shaloh)

When a count is taken, no distinctions are made between what is being counted. The great and the small are both equal, each having the value of one. The Torah portion of Bamidbar is always read in close proximity to Shavuot, the holiday on which the Torah was actually given on Mount Sinai, for all Jews stand equal on that day. Our Sages said that if even one Jew had been missing, the Torah would not have been given! (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS BAMIDBAR • 24 IYAR • 28 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT: CANDLE LIGHTING: 4:54 PM
 MINCHA: 5:05 PM
 KABBOLAS SHABBOS: 5:40 PM

SHABBOS MORNING: TEHILIM: 8:30 AM
 SHACHARIS: 10:00 AM
 LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: 9:50 AM
 THE MOLAD OF THE MONTH OF SIVAN IS
 WEDNESDAY JUNE 1, 2011:

2:12& 10 CHALAKIM PM

MINCHA: 4:50 PM
 SHABBOS ENDS: 5:54 PM

WEEKDAYS: SHACHARIS SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
 MINCHA: 5:00 PM
 MAARIV: 5:45 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 27 MAY 2011

Begins	Ends	
4:54	MELBOURNE	5:54
4:56	ADELAIDE	5:55
4:45	BRISBANE	5:39
6:10	DARWIN	7:01
4:42	GOLD COAST	5:37
5:04	PERTH	6:01
4:38	SYDNEY	5:36
4:43	CANBERRA	5:42
4:36	LAUNCESTON	5:38
4:57	AUCKLAND	5:56
4:45	WELLINGTON	5:48



Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

צוקללה"ה נבג"מ ז"ע

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