

Lamplighter

1 Sivan
Naso
Shavuot
985
3 June
5771/2011

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

"It came to pass on the day that Moses had finished setting up the Sanctuary..." As we read in this week's Torah portion, Naso, after the Jewish people had finished constructing all of the Sanctuary's different components, they brought them to Moses so that he could erect it. For the massive wooden planks were just too heavy; even working together, the Jews were unable to build the Sanctuary by themselves.

Recognizing the dilemma, Moses asked G-d how human beings could be expected to perform such a difficult task. G-d told him to put his hand on the enormous boards; they rose by themselves, and the Sanctuary was erected in a miraculous manner. But why was it necessary for G-d to perform a miracle?

According to historians it was the Jewish slaves who built the pyramids in Egypt. Indeed, the Torah tells us, "And they built treasure cities for Pharaoh, Pitom and Raamses." Each individual stone of the pyramids weighed several tons, yet, as depicted in ancient hieroglyphics and paintings, the slaves nonetheless managed to drag these tremendous weights and build the colossal edifices that continue to exist till this very day.

The wooden planks of the Sanctuary weighed far less than these stones. Why then did the Jewish people find it impossible to lift them? Why was it necessary for the Sanctuary to be erected by means of a miracle?

The answer lies in the fact that the pyramids were built by slave labour, by "avodat perach" (back-breaking, rigorous work). The only reason the Jewish slaves were able to move the stones was because Pharaoh compelled them to.

The Jewish people had no choice; they obeyed Pharaoh's commands out of fear. This fear motivated them to tie themselves together with rope (as seen in the paintings) and perform the seemingly superhuman feat.

Building the Sanctuary involved a different type of work entirely. The Sanctuary was to be erected willingly, with joy in being able to execute G-d's command. But the wooden planks proved to be too heavy for the Jews to lift.

G-d didn't want the Sanctuary to be built out of a sense of compulsion. Its erection was a happy event, not a sorrowful one. He therefore made a miracle to express this concept, and the Sanctuary was erected with a feeling of true freedom and liberation.

So it is in the erection of our own individual "Sanctuaries" - the performance of G-d's commandments. Observing G-d's commandments should never be considered "back-breaking labour"; rather, we carry out G-d's command willingly, joyfully, and with the full assistance of the Holy One, blessed be He.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Hello, Am I Home?

By Baruch Epstein

Every teenager has asked himself at some point, "Who am I?" Chassidic thought teaches us to ask an even more fundamental question: Am I?

Can I genuinely exist in a world created by the Infinite? Does G-d's omnipresence leave any room for me?

In the Ten Commandments, G-d declares "Anochi" — "I Am." I truly am; I preceded Creation and am independent of it. As mere humans, your existence is fleeting. Your "I am" is subject to accomplishment and is all too easily erased like sand castles swept away by the tide.

G-d continues. He has not simply come to boast of His superiority. He invites us to share in His authentic existence: "Who am I? I am the one who took you out of slavery — in order to entrust you with My mission and grant you substantive existence through heeding My instructions."

It's as if G-d is saying: "Let's get one thing straight from the beginning: I am. The stars and the planets, the animals and the green trees and even humanity exist only because I am, and to serve My 'I am.' If you follow these Ten Commandments, you will join me in 'I am.'"

So (with apologies to all English teachers), we "am" because G-d — the genuine "I am" — has enabled us to be. G-d's existence is genuine, not fleeting. He is not created. Human existence is granted substance through connecting to — not competing with — G-d. It may be counterintuitive, but the more compliant I am, the more "I am."

The essence of conflict is competing assertions of self: I want, I deserve, all derivatives of "I am." Fearing a loss of one's "I am" can lead to aggression.

Being in a relationship means putting aside my "I am" for the other's "I am" and — here is the most difficult part — *trusting* that the other in turn will care for my "I am." It means allowing the other to be, and not fearing being diminished thereby.

That's what happened at Sinai. We accepted this responsibility without reservation. When I am only willing to trust 90%, holding 10% back to ensure I control my "I am," the result is an equal and opposite reaction; G-d "withholds" from us. Panicked, we begin to withhold even more, and so it spirals. The "I am" statement asks us for total commitment, implying that G-d will offer the same to us.

A Chassidic student once asked an elder for a path towards humility. Sensing the sincerity of the question, the rabbi advised him to try an exercise: Remove the word "I" from your vocabulary for a week. Replace "I studied an interesting lesson" with "There is an interesting lesson."

Every year on Shavuot, G-d assembles us, reveals Himself to us, beckons to us to partner with Him, to transform the world through caring for His and others' "I am."



The Story of Shavuot

Dawn of the sixth day of Sivan, in the year 2448 after the creation of the world.

Thunder and lightning rent the air, and the sound of the shofar was heard growing strangely louder and louder. All the people in the camp of Israel trembled.

Then all was quiet again. The air was very still. Not a sound was to be heard. No bird twittered, no donkey brayed, no ox lowed. Every living thing held its breath. Even the angels interrupted their heavenly praises. Everybody and everything kept silent . . . waiting.

Suddenly G-d's mighty words were heard from one corner of the earth to the other:

"I AM G-D, YOUR G-D!"

One after another, G-d proclaimed the Ten Commandments.

During the next forty days and nights, Moses was G-d's disciple, learning all the Commandments, along with the proper meaning of the Torah which was to be handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Afterwards Moses wrote down on parchment all the five books of the Torah, word for word, from the "Bet" of Bereshit to the "Lamed" of Yisrael (the last word of the Pentateuch), as it was dictated to him by G-d Himself.

G-d gave the Torah in the presence of all Israel - six hundred thousand male adults, aged 20 to 60, many more older men, and, of course, women and children, together with a multitude of other peoples (erev rav). In all there were several million living witnesses who saw the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai!

Present also were all the Jewish souls who were ever to come down to live upon this earth. Every one of us then solemnly proclaimed naaseh v'nishma - we shall do and learn. Each one of us was made a party to that sacred covenant between G-d and His people Israel.

The Midrash tells us:

Said Rabbi Yitzchak: The children of Israel should have received the Torah immediately upon their departure from Egypt, but G-d said, "My children have had no convalescence after their bondage in Egypt from which they have just been freed, and cannot receive the Torah so soon." It is like a king whose son had just recovered from a serious illness, and his tutor said,

"Send your son to school." To which the king retorted, "My son has not convalesced at all, and you want him to immediately return to school? No, let him be on a healthy and plentiful diet for two or three months, recover his colour and strength, and then he will return to school."

So said the Holy One, blessed be He: "My children have not recovered yet their colour and strength from their bondage. Let them convalesce for a few weeks with the manna, the well and the quails, And then I shall give them the Torah."

Here is a beautiful parable telling us of the tender mercies of our Father our G-d who cared for us tenderly as a king cares for his only son recuperating from an illness.

But there is something more than that in this beautiful parable. It wasn't so much our physical condition that had to be considered as our spiritual state. Hundreds of years of Egyptian bondage, enslaved to a people that, despite their architectural prowess and military might, had no feelings, no consideration for human beings, no true ethical teachings or morals - such slavery must have made a deep scar

upon our ancestors' moral standards. They had to be cleansed from the "bricks and mortar" of Egypt before they could receive the holy Torah.

The children of Israel understood their situation. They had been told that fifty days after their departure from Egypt they would receive the holy Torah and they knew they had to become worthy of that Divine gift - the most wonderful thing in the world. So they impatiently counted each day, trying to better themselves every day, to improve their conduct and moral standards, to rise higher and higher as the time of the giving of the Torah drew closer.

And G-d Himself helped them to better themselves, as He always does. G-d gave them a wonderful diet that was both a physical and spiritual diet. He rained bread from Heaven in the form of manna. He opened a fountain in the hard rock. He rained meat from the skies - the quails, and He showed them many other miracles any wonders. The children of Israel learned to recognize G-d they saw that He can alter the course of nature for their sake; they realized that they were the chosen people to receive that wonderful gift - the Torah.

For forty nine days, or seven weeks, the children of Israel eagerly prepared themselves for that great event But the last three days before the giving of the Torah were days of the most careful self-examination and preparation. When the great moment of the giving of the Torah finally came, they were clean, pure and holy in body and soul, and ready to receive the Torah. Unanimously they proclaimed: "naaseh v'nishma! - We shall do and we shall hear!"

So must we be pure and clean, in body and soul, if we are to be worthy of the Torah, if we are to appreciate it's sacredness and live up to our name - "a kingdom of priests (G-d's servants) and a holy nation."

Published by The Chabad House of Caulfield in conjunction with the Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.

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ISSUE 985

MOSHIACH MATTERS

If a king arises from the House of David who meditates on the Torah and occupies himself with the commandments like his ancestor David, in accordance with the written and oral Torah, and he will prevail upon all of Israel to walk in [the ways of the Torah] and strengthen its breaches, and he will fight the battles of G-d - it may be assumed that he is Moshiach. (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah Laws of Kings)

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



By the Grace of G-d
16 Shevat, 5724 [1964]
Brooklyn, NY

...One of the basic messages of the Ten Commandments is contained in the fact that they begin with I am, etc., i.e. the profound principle of monotheism, which in itself was a tremendous revolutionary idea in those days of idolatry, dominated by the polytheistic culture of Egypt (as indicated in detail in the Second Commandment, where all forms of idolatry are strictly prohibited). Incidentally, the emphasis on monotheism, and the denial of polytheism, is to be seen not only in the fact that these ideas form the subject of the first two Commandments, but also in the quantity of words and detail which they contain.

At the same time, the Ten Commandments conclude with such apparently simple and obvious injunctions as, Thou shalt not steal, etc.

The profundity of monotheism, with which the Ten Commandments begin, and the simplicity of the ethical and moral laws, with which the Ten Commandments conclude, point to an important lesson, namely:

a) The true believer in G-d is not the one who holds abstract ideas, but the one whose knowledge of G-d leads him to the proper daily conduct even in ordinary and commonplace matters, in his dealings with his neighbours and the respect for their property even if it be an ox or an ass, etc.

b) The ethical and moral laws, even those that are so obvious as, Thou shalt not steal, and Thou shalt not murder, will have actual validity and will be observed only if they are based on the first and second Commandments, that is to say, based on Divine authority, the authority of the One and Only G-d.

If in a previous generation there were people who doubted the need of Divine authority for common morality and ethics, in the belief that human reason is sufficient authority for morality and ethics, our present generation has, unfortunately, in a most devastating and tragic way refuted this mistaken notion. For, it is precisely the nation which has excelled itself in the exact sciences, the humanities and even in philosophy and ethics that turned out to be the most depraved nation of the world, making an ideal of murder and robbery, etc. Anyone who knows how insignificant was the minority of Germans who opposed the Hitler regime, realizes that the [unclear in original] cult was not something which was practiced by a few individuals, but had embraced the vast majority of that nation, who considered itself the super race, etc. Surely it is unnecessary to elaborate on this at greater length.

With all good wishes, and with blessing.

A WORD from the Director

This coming week the Jewish people will be observing the Holiday of Shavuot, the anniversary of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. It was not just a major historical event. It is Judaism's defining moment when G-d gave us the "Master Plan" for the entire world. The Torah is not just a collection of laws. It is what makes every aspect of our lives filled with meaning and depth. The Torah, moreover, is what will make G-d's plan for the world come to fruition.

When G-d created the world He stipulated that its continued existence depended on the ultimate acceptance of the Torah by the Jewish people. When we responded to G-d's offer to give us the Torah with the immortal words "na'aseh v'nishma—we will do and we will hear," and G-d declared the ten Commandments and all that followed that validated the existence of the universe.

Every Shavuot we do much more than simply commemorate the world's most important event. Every Shavuot, the Divine energy that was introduced into the world at the revelation at Mount Sinai recurs. When we read the Ten Commandments in our synagogues—with all the men, women and children of our communities in attendance—we re-enact the Sinai experience. G-d gives us the Torah anew.

Shavuot is also a taste of the future. The Torah, as the world's Master Plan, set into motion a process that will ultimately transform the world into a world the way G-d desired it—a world of peace, harmony and unmitigated goodness. What happened at Sinai—and what happens every Shavuot as we re-enact the events of the past—prepared and continues to prepare the world for the time when G-d's plan will finally be realized.

The greeting/blessing the Rebbe would give for the festival of Shavuot traditionally was: Kabbalat Hatorah b'simcha u'bipnimiyut." Translated roughly it means: "May you receive the Torah with joy and inner depth." When we realize the power of the Torah to transform our lives and the entire cosmos by paving the way for Moshiach and the final Redemption it is not difficult to internalize its power and experience incredible joy.

J.I. Gutnick

Yizkor is recited on the 2nd day of Shavuot (Thursday the 9th)

Dairy foods on Shavuot

On Shavuot we celebrate the giving of the Torah. This gift was one of complete compassion and loving-kindness, for with the Torah we were given the tools (i.e. knowledge, commandments) to connect with the infinite and otherwise unknowable Creator.

Dairy foods are associated with the loving, nurturing generosity exemplified by a mother nursing her baby. It is this supreme love that we connect to on the anniversary of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. New beginnings and connecting to the Source is what Shavuot is all about.

Here are a few of the other reasons for the custom to eat dairy on the first day of Shavuot:

1. Chalav—the Hebrew word for milk—has the numerical value (Gematriah) of 40 reminding us the number of days and nights that Moses remained on Mt. Sinai.
2. When the Jews received the Torah on Shavuot they were commanded only to eat meat which was ritually slaughtered. Since none of their meat was previously slaughtered and the Torah was given on Shabbat — when it is forbidden to slaughter animals — they were forced to eat dairy for the rest of the day.
3. Two loaves of bread were offered in the Holy Temple on the holiday of Shavuot. To commemorate this offering we eat two meals on Shavuot; one dairy and one meat (eating meat is mandatory on every festival).

CUSTOMS CORNER

It Happened Once...



Rabbi Chaim Zanvil Abramowitz, the Ribnitzer Rebbe, was born in the mid 1890s in the town of Barashan, Romania. After leaving Russia in 1973 he settled in Israel, where he lived in the Sanhedria section of Jerusalem. A number of years later he moved to the USA, where he lived in Miami, Los Angeles, and Brooklyn before eventually settling in Spring Valley, NY.

While in the USSR, the Ribnitzer Rebbe served G-d and lived as a pious Jew and inspirational leader as if the communists and Stalin did not exist. He did not forgo anything — not even immersing daily in the waters of the *mikva* - which often involved chopping ice on a frozen river — or praying with a *minyan*. He continued to spread Torah, to perform circumcisions and kosher slaughtering, and to encourage Jews to send their children to underground Torah schools. He was interrogated, jailed and even placed in front of a firing squad, but he always seemed to miraculously escape and return to his “counterrevolutionary” activities.

From the 1930s until the end of his life, the Ribnitzer Rebbe fasted on all days when it is permitted to do so under Jewish law.

As a *mohel* circumciser, the Ribnitzer Rebbe performed thousands of circumcisions on Jewish children under the communist regime. As one of the only *mohelim* who was not intimidated by the government, he would travel all over the country in order to bring another Jewish child into the covenant of Abraham.

Rabbi Mendel Futerfas, a distinguished Lubavitcher chasid [a survivor of 14 years of Siberian exile, a maintainer of the Chabad underground Torah school network in those days, and himself the hero of many extraordinary chasidic stories], related that the Ribnitzer was once approached by the wife of a Russian general, who wished the Rebbe to come clandestinely and circumcise her son. Her husband, a sworn communist, obstinately refused to allow the child to be circumcised, lest his career in the army be jeopardized. During World War II, when her husband was called to the front, she sent a message asking the Rebbe to come.

“I accompanied the Rebbe on the trip as *sandak* (the person who holds the baby during the circumcision),” R. Mendel related, “and when we arrived at the house we were whisked into the cellar, where the child was ready and waiting. The Rebbe performed the procedure, but the child began bleeding profusely. Neither salve nor medicine was able to stop the bleeding.

“The child began to turn yellow and shudder. Upon seeing this, the mother became hysterical and began screaming, ‘Is this the reward I get for my sacrifice bringing my son to be entered into the covenant of our patriarch Abraham?’ The baby lost consciousness, whereupon the horrified mother also lost consciousness.

“I was terrified,” Rabbi Mendel went on. “We could have been killed if something happened to this child, and even worse, imagine the *chillul Hashem*, the disgrace of G-d’s name in the world, that would have come about if the child died while undergoing a *brit milah*!”

“I looked at the Ribnitzer Rebbe’s face at that moment, and it seemed to be aflame. His head was thrown back and his hands were raised to the Heavens in intense prayer. As he said the words *bedamayich chayi*, ‘By your blood shall

you live,’ the child, who had been completely still and showed no signs of life, awoke, and his bleeding stopped!

“I could not believe my eyes and exclaimed, ‘The Rebbe is performing miracles!’ Turning to me, the Rebbe responded calmly, ‘*Eliyahu HaNavi*, Elijah the prophet, who is also the angel present at every circumcision, is here — this took place under his jurisdiction.’”

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon... their charge shall be supervised by Itamar, son of Aaron the priest. (Num. 4:28)

The name “Gershon” is derived from the word meaning “to expel,” alluding to the expulsion of evil. “Itamar” is related to the word for speech, alluding to words of Torah. The juxtaposition of the two names teaches that speaking words of Torah severs evil from good and expels it. (*Ohr HaTorah*)

Shavuot

Two Shavuot - Two Promises

The word Shavuot, along with meaning “weeks,” for it is the holiday that comes after counting the omer for seven weeks, also means oaths. On this holiday two promises were made. First, G-d promised that He would not exchange the Jewish people for any other. Second, we promised that we would not exchange G-d for another. (*Book of Our Heritage*)

A Time to Eat and Rejoice

Passover and Sukkot, which commemorate physical events, may be celebrated in a purely spiritual manner, while Shavuot, which celebrates a spiritual event, must be celebrated in both a spiritual and physical manner. This is to teach us that at the time G-d gave us the Torah, the entire physical world was affected, and holiness permeated every corner of the world. (*Likutei Sichot*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS NASO - SHEVUOT • 2, 6-7 SIVAN • 4, 8-9 JUNE

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:51 PM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:30 PM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:53 AM
	MINCHA:	4:50 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5:51 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	MAARIV:	5:45 PM
TUESDAY EVENING:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:50 PM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	MAARIV:	5:50 PM
WEDNESDAY • 8 JUNE • 1st DAY OF SHEVUOT:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	4:50 PM
	MAARIV:	5:50 PM
	LIGHT CANDLES AFTER:	5:51 PM
THURSDAY • 9 JUNE • 2nd DAY OF SHEVUOT:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	YIZKOR:	APROX 11:00 AM
	MINCHA:	4:50 PM
	YOM TOV ENDS:	5:51 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 3, 7, 8 JUNE 2011

3rd	7th	8th	4th	9th
4:51	4:50	5:51	5:51	5:51
4:54	4:53	5:52	5:53	5:52
4:43	4:42	5:38	5:38	5:38
6:10	6:10	7:02	7:02	7:02
4:40	4:40	5:36	5:36	5:36
5:02	5:01	5:59	5:59	5:59
4:36	4:35	5:34	5:34	5:34
4:41	4:40	5:39	5:40	5:39
4:32	4:31	5:34	5:35	5:34
4:54	4:53	5:53	5:54	5:53
4:42	4:41	5:44	5:45	5:44

For the 8th one should light after the given time from a pre-existing flame only.

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.