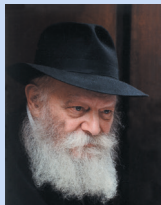


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

The book of Vaikra -- Leviticus, which we begin reading this week, details the laws pertaining to the offerings that were brought in the Sanctuary and Holy Temples.

It begins with the words, "And He called to Moses."

Rashi, the great Torah commentator, explains that G-d called out to Moses with a special and unique love.

Chasidic philosophy further elaborates on the significance of the fact that G-d's name is not directly mentioned. This great love, it explains, emanates from an attribute of G-d so lofty and elevated that it exists beyond the limitations imposed by a name. G-d's very essence, as it were, was calling out to Moses.

Chasidut also teaches that every Jew has a spark of the soul of Moses within his own.

G-d's calling out to Moses with special love is therefore a call to every Jew, no matter who he/she is. The directives that followed, the details of the korbanot (from the Hebrew meaning "to draw near"), are the instructions by which man may draw closer to G-d, and apply to every Jew, in every time and in every place.

This concept is also reflected in the haftara (from the Book of Isaiah) which is usually read in conjunction with the Torah portion. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall tell My praise."

The first part of the verse seems to indicate G-d's great love of the Jewish people; the second half seems to refer to their prayers, good deeds and Torah study, through which G-d's name is made great.

Yet, studying the verse in depth, we find that the type of praise G-d refers to here is of an entirely different sort, one which is totally independent of a Jew's actions.

"This people have I formed for Myself," G-d states. The Jewish people belong to G-d; it is only through them that His sovereignty over the world is established, for a king cannot rule without subjects. A Jew, by his very nature and not by virtue of his actions, is created special.

"They shall tell My praise," G-d continues. The continued existence of the Jewish people in itself reveals the glory of G-d.

The fact that the Jewish nation, "one sheep among seventy wolves," is still flourishing after thousands of years testifies to the greatness of G-d. Every Jew bears witness to the existence of G-d and causes His name to be praised.

This is especially relevant for our generation, following, as it does, the terrible decimation of our brethren during the Holocaust.

The fact that Jews exist today, proudly continuing our holy tradition and raising a new generation of Jews to further imbue the world with holiness is in itself miraculous, bearing witness to G-d's greatness.

This tremendous love which G-d feels for every Jew, regardless of his deeds, indicates just how important it is for us to love our fellow Jew and to always judge others favorably, for each of us is G-d's special treasure.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The First Commandment: Find the Courage to Heal

By Rabbi Yosef Y. Jacobson

The Biblical account of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt has been one of the most inspiring stories for the oppressed and enslaved throughout history. From the American Revolution to the slaves of the American South, to Martin Luther King's Let Freedom Ring, the narrative of the Exodus provided countless people with the courage to hope for a better future.

Moses' first visit to Pharaoh demanding liberty for his people only brought more misery to the Hebrew slaves; the Egyptian monarch increased their torture. The Hebrews now would not listen any longer to the promise of redemption. Now let us pay heed to this seemingly strange biblical verse.

So G-d spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and He commanded them to the children of Israel, and to Pharaoh the king of Egypt, to let the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 6:13)

G-d is charging Moses with two directives: command the people of Israel and then command Pharaoh the king. However, the verse is ambiguous: What did G-d command Moses to instruct the people? The message for Pharaoh is clear: Let the children of Israel out of Egypt. But what is it that Moses is supposed to command the people themselves?

The Jerusalem Talmud says something profoundly enigmatic:

G-d instructed Moses to command to the Jewish people the laws of freeing slaves.

The Talmud is referring to a law recorded in Exodus, If a Jew sells himself as a slave, the owner must let him go after six years. This was the law Moses was to share with the Israelites.

But what does the commandment to the Jewish people that they free their slaves one day in the future have to do with the mission to Pharaoh to set the Hebrews free?

Who Is Free?

The answer to this question is vital to the understanding of liberty in Judaism.

Before Pharaoh can liberate the Jewish slaves, they must be ready to become free. You can take a man out of slavery, but it may prove more challenging to take slavery out of a man.

What is the first and foremost symptom of being free? That you learn to confer freedom on others.

The control freak, or the abusive spouse or parent does not know how to give others freedom. Outwardly he attempts to appear powerful, but inwardly his power is a symptom of inner misery and insecurity.

When I do not confront the parts in me that are wounded, my animal-soul consciousness which has developed coping mechanisms, and belief systems to keep it in control, it will be running my inner operating system.

Pharaoh may set you free physically. People who were abused sometimes become abusers themselves.

The first Mitzvah the Jews had to hear from Moses even before he could go to Pharaoh to let them go free was: One day you will be free. Remember that freedom is a gift; use it to free others.

As it turns out, this is a remarkable Talmudic insight. Don't internalize what the Egyptians have done to you. Find the spark of freedom, the inner Divine core, that no trauma can tarnish or paralyze; that part which has remained free all along, celebrate it and cherish conferring it upon others.

SLICE OF LIFE

Historic Jewish Landmarks Are Being Returned and Reestablished



Siberian Government to Renovate Wooden 'Cantonists Shul'

The historic wooden shul that was built by the Jewish Cantonists, who were taken at a young age by the Russian government to be brainwashed and trained in the army, will be undergoing an extensive renovation that will be funded by the Siberian government.

On the eve of Purim, joyful news arrived regarding an extensive renovation that the Siberian government has decided to undertake for the historic synagogue in Tomsk, Siberia.

This renovation is part of the restoration of the entire building, which is recognized as a national heritage site. The synagogue was built by Jewish Cantonist soldiers with their own hands and features special wooden carvings.

The historic synagogue was returned to the Jewish community, led by the city's rabbi and Shliach, Rabbi Levi Kaminetzky, during a special ceremony about seven years ago, with the participation of Russia's Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar.

After many years of negotiations, the authorities in Tomsk, central Siberia, returned the historic synagogue built by Jewish Cantonists who were exiled to distant Siberia by the Russian government.

The structure, made entirely of wood, was built by Jewish Cantonists approximately two hundred

years ago. For many years, they prayed there with great devotion until it was nationalized by the Communists and converted into a residential building occupied by local families.

In recent years, numerous efforts were made to return the building to the Jewish community of Tomsk, led by Rabbi Kaminetzky. To expedite the process, the governor arranged alternative housing for the 17 families who had settled in the historic and sacred building over the years.

As mentioned, seven years ago, the community received ownership of the building in an emotional ceremony held at the entrance, where the keys to the building were presented to Rabbi Lazar. However, a lengthy bureaucratic process followed, which concluded this week with the great news that the renovation of the site would be carried out and funded by the government itself.

Great excitement gripped all members of the Tomsk community upon hearing the joyful news, which, by divine providence, arrived on the eve of Purim, when many are expected to participate in events organized by the large community, which includes educational and charitable institutions.



New Mikvah to be Built in Debrecen 80 Years After Holocaust

In what many are calling a historic moment for Jewish life in eastern Hungary, the city of Debrecen will soon be home to a new mikveh (ritual bath) after Mayor László Papp transferred a substantial property in the heart of the city's Jewish quarter to the local community.

The announcement comes as Hungarian Jews mark 80 years since the Holocaust devastated what was once a vibrant community in Hungary's second-largest city.

"This represents more than just a building project," Rabbi Shmuel Faigen told reporters

after receiving the keys to the property this week. "For our community, it's a symbol of renewal."

The 1,000-square-meter property on Bajcsy-Zsilinszki Street, adjacent to Debrecen's main Orthodox synagogue, previously housed a school before falling into disuse. According to local sources, several commercial developers had expressed interest in the prime real estate.

"Many businesses wanted this location," Rabbi Faigen explained, "but the mayor understood its significance for our community. He saw it as closing a historical circle."

Debrecen's pre-war Jewish population was largely destroyed during the Holocaust when most residents were deported to Nazi death camps. Those who returned after the war maintained a much smaller community under communist rule, using an aging mikveh that dated back to before World War II. In recent years, that facility had deteriorated beyond repair.

Since becoming Debrecen's rabbi five years ago, Faigen, a Chabad emissary, has prioritized finding a suitable location for a new mikveh. The search was complicated by limited available space in the city center's historical Jewish quarter.

Hungary's Chief Rabbi Shlomo Köves noted that the facility will serve not only local Jews but also thousands of Jewish visitors who come to the region each year. Many make pilgrimages to the nearby grave of Rabbi Shayale of Keresztes, located about an hour's drive from Debrecen.

"The timing couldn't be better," Rabbi Köves said. "A new direct flight route from Israel to Debrecen is scheduled to begin operations in May, which will significantly increase Jewish tourism to the area."

Construction is set to begin before Passover next month, with completion expected within two years at an estimated cost of 2 million euros.

The project has gained attention as part of a broader revival of Jewish life in Hungary, which has seen growing interest in Jewish heritage sites despite concerns about antisemitism elsewhere in Europe.

"We're working to complete this as quickly as possible," Rabbi Faigen said. "Not just for Debrecen's Jews, but for all visitors who come to connect with the rich Jewish history of this region."

Purim in Kharkov: A Celebration of Hope and Joy



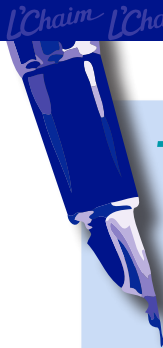
Despite it being the fourth Purim amidst the war, the Jews of Kharkov, Ukraine, celebrated Purim in style, with hundreds of people of all ages joining in the festivities. From the Mishloach Manot at the entrance to the Megillah reading, it was clear that this Purim would be one to remember.

With a fun cowboy theme, the beautiful Kharkov synagogue was transformed into a desert ranch, complete with games and activities for everyone. Men and boys put on their Tefillin, and everyone lined up to take a picture at the "Shalom Saloon."

Rabbi Moishe Moskovitz shared an inspiring message, saying that the fact we could celebrate Purim despite the war shows that the Jewish community, and the entire Jewish nation, is unbreakable. Just like in the days of Shushan, when darkness suddenly turned to light, we believe that this difficult time will end soon, and we will experience the Geulah.

PASSOVER PLANS

In the over 3500 Chabad-Lubavitch centers around the world, plans are under way for communal Passover seders, hand-baked matza distribution, and other holiday programs. Countless people around the world are expected to be touched by one or more of Chabad's Passover outreach efforts this year. Call your local Center for information about attending a Passover Seder or purchasing handbaked matza.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

From a letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Passover is the first day of Jewish independence, and the first festival in the history of our Jewish people. It is first in rank and significance, for it brought the liberation of our people from enslavement and made it possible for them to live a free and independent life as a nation, governed only by the Torah and its commandments dictated by G-d alone.

As such, Passover is especially meaningful for our Jewish people, and for every Jew individually, at all times and in all places. For this reason, also, every aspect of the festival, and every detail attending the historical exodus from Egypt, has a special significance in the way of a timeless message and practical instruction for the individual, the community and our people as a whole.

One of the important details of the exodus from Egypt is the haste with which the exodus took place. When the hour of liberation struck, the Jewish people left Egypt at once, losing not a moment, or, as our Sages express it--not even a wink of an eye. They add, moreover, that if the Jewish people had tarried and missed that auspicious moment, the opportunity for liberation would have been lost forever.

This seems incomprehensible, for it was already after the ten plagues, which had prompted the Egyptians to virtually expel the Jews from their land. The situation was thus "well in hand." Why, then, was the haste of the moment so important? And how is one to understand the statement of our Sages that if that moment had been missed, the whole liberation would have been in jeopardy?

Above all, what practical lesson is contained in this detail, so that the Torah (Torah meaning "instruction"), makes a point of revealing it to us with particular emphasis?

The explanation is as follows: When the end of the road of exile is reached, and the moment of liberation from the "abomination of the Egypt" arises, the opportunity must be seized at once. There must be no tarrying, even for an instant--not even for "the wink of an eye."

The danger of forfeiting the opportunity lay not in the possibility of the Egyptians changing their minds, but in the possibility that some Jews might change their minds, being loath to leave their accustomed way of life in Egypt, to go out into the desert to receive the Torah.

The practical lesson for every Jew, man or woman, young or old, is that the exodus from Egypt, as it is to be experienced in day-to-day life, is the personal release from subservience to the dictates of the body and the animal in man. It is the release from the passions and habits within, as well as from the materialistic environment without. This release can be achieved only by responding to the continual Divine call, the call of the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, seeking out the "oppressed and enslaved," and promising: "I shall redeem you from bondage... that I may be G-d unto you." As at the time of the first liberation, true freedom is conditioned upon the acceptance of the Torah and mitzvot.

This call for freedom never ceases. The exodus from Egypt must be achieved every day; each day the opportunity beckons anew.

Unfortunately, there are individuals who tarry and consign the opportunity to the "three solemn days" of the year, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur; others, at best, postpone it for Shabbat and Yom Tov; still others, who recall and experience the exodus in their daily prayer, fail to extend it to every aspect of the daily life.

What is true of the individual is also true on the community and national levels, except that on these levels the missed opportunities are, of course, even more far-reaching and catastrophic.

As in the days of our ancestors in Egypt whose exodus was not delayed even for a moment, whereby they attained full liberation of the body and full liberation of the spirit (with the acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, which was the purpose and goal of the exodus): May G-d grant that every Jew and Jewess seize the extraordinary opportunity of the present moment, to achieve self-liberation and to help others in the same direction. And may they be liberated from all manner of bondage, internal and external, and above all, liberation from the most dismal bondage of all--the idea of "Let's be like the rest."

May they return to the way of the Torah and mitzvot in the fullest measure, and thus merit the fulfillment of the promise: When the Jewish people return, they are redeemed at once, with the true and complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

It will be as if the doer of evil were totally annihilated.

And as man approaches this lofty level, he will also become worthy of a divine providence not limited by the laws of nature.

What is now manifestly miraculous will ultimately become part of the nature of things.

(Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *The Real Messiah*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'Chaim Publication.

From the Archives

In a special letter that the Rebbe wrote addressed to all Jews everywhere, the Rebbe discussed the impact of our present month, Nissan, on the daily life of a Jew throughout the entire year.

Nissan is referred to as the month of geula -- Redemption: There are two dimensions of Divine intervention -- G-d's governing of the world within the "natural" order and that of a supra-natural miraculous order which breaks through all natural barriers of the physical world. The latter form of Divine intervention is associated with the month of Nissan.

For, it was in Nissan that we witnessed the miraculous deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The exodus from Egypt came about because of the revealed miracles that G-d wrought "for our ancestors and for us; He took us out from slavery to freedom."

But these revealed miracles brought about not only the exodus from the physical Egypt, but also the exodus from non-physical restraints and limitations ("Egypt" in Hebrew is "mitzraim," which is similar to "metzarim" -- restraints and limitations).

What is true of the Jewish people as a whole is true of every individual in particular. G-d performed these physical and non-physical miracles "for our ancestors and for us." Thus the exodus from Egypt -- and the month of Nissan in which it took place -- effects in each of us a personal redemption from our own natural limitations. The Rebbe concluded the letter, "And we should all merit to see the most important miracle -- the miracle of the true and complete Redemption through our Righteous Moshiach."

In Nissan came the first redemption, and in Nissan will come the final Redemption, at which time we will see miracles that will surpass the miracles that were wrought at the Exodus from Egypt, as our Sages interpret the prophecy, "As in the days of your coming out of Egypt, I will show you wonders," namely, miracles that compared even with the miracles of the Exodus will be outstanding wonders. May it come about very soon, indeed."

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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MOSHIACH MATTERS

Although man will still have free will in the Messianic Age, he will have every inducement to do good and follow G-d's teachings.



IT HAPPENED ONCE

Rabbi Yehuda ben Moshe Hakohen was the personal physician of King Alfonso X of Castile, one of the first provinces which the Spaniards had recaptured from the North African Arabs in the 13th century.

A great friend of the Jews, the king invited them to settle in Toledo, Cordova, Seville and other cities in Spain, and had many prominent Jewish advisors.

Because King Alfonso appreciated the services the Jews performed for his kingdom, he protected them and allowed them to worship and live as they pleased.

However, like kings of other lands, Alfonso was strongly influenced by the clergy, who were fanatically hostile to the Jews. Rabbi Yehuda was ever on guard lest the king fall under the influence of the clergy.

One day Rabbi Yehuda came to the palace to visit the king, as he often did, only to be informed that the king couldn't see him. The change in the king's attitude towards Rabbi Yehuda was evident, and he was filled with anxiety and foreboding. Heavy-hearted, he left the palace, but instead of returning home, he went to consult with his close friend Don Yitzchak de la Maleha.

Don Yitzchak was not surprised, for he knew that the king had important visitors, two ambassadors of the king of Portugal, Alfonso the Third.

He didn't know what sort of business was being conducted, but he had friends in the Portuguese court from whom he could inquire. The two friends agreed to meet again in three days' time, to exchange information and decide on a course of action.

But before the three days passed, Yitzchak de la Maleha sent urgent word to his friend: "I have learned that the Crown Prince of Portugal, Diniz, is suffering from some mysterious illness which the Portuguese doctors were unable to cure.

In the meantime, the king's priest used the opportunity to turn the king against his loyal Jewish officials.

"As you know, our Crown Prince, Sancho, is always scheming and lusting for more power. He wants to form a political alliance with Portugal by making a match between his sister, Princess Maria, and Diniz."

"What's so bad about that?" asked Yehuda.

"What are you saying? One of the conditions of the alliance is that the two Christian kingdoms join in expelling the Jews who will not convert to the Christian faith!"

Yehuda paled and tears appeared in his eyes. "The Guardian of Israel save us," he uttered in a heartfelt prayer. The purpose of the Portuguese ambassadors was clear, as was the cold and unfriendly attitude of the King.

Yehuda thought for a minute. "Royal matchmaking takes time. In the meantime we may be able to avert the danger. Perhaps if the king finds out that Diniz is ill, he will call off the match."

"In matters of political convenience, illness isn't an impediment," replied Don Yitzchak. "But I have a better idea, if G-d only grants us success, and you will be the one to intercede."

"I will do whatever I can. But what is it?" asked Rabbi Yehuda. "You will travel to Lisbon and cure the Crown Prince." The two friends discussed the plan at great length.

Rabbi Yehuda packed his medical kit and secretly departed for Portugal. Word was to be spread in the royal court in Lisbon about the arrival of a great physician from Spain.

As soon as the king heard the news he sent for the new doctor to examine his beloved son. He promised any reward, if only this doctor would succeed where all the royal physicians of Portugal had failed.

Rabbi Yehuda examined the ill man and informed the king that he had a blood clot on the brain. It would require delicate surgery, but he would undertake it. Until that time, the prince would be under his care. The king agreed. All went as planned, but then, on the scheduled day of the operation, Rabbi Yehuda received the unexpected

order to leave the country without delay. It was incomprehensible, but Rabbi Yehuda packed and left at once.

He had been on the road only a few hours when a carriage drew up to him and the king, himself alighted. "The priest has cooked up a nasty dish this time, but he will pay for it! What do I care if you are a Jew, if you can cure my son!" He then related what had transpired.

The priest, being sure that this new doctor was a Jew, and probably the doctor of the King of Castile, was eager to discredit him. So, he went to the king with the lie that the Jews had decided to kill the Crown Prince with the help of this Jewish doctor, in order to stop the proposed marriage.

"I admit I was swayed by the priest, but when I told my son, he just scoffed at the accusation. He cried that if you were not permitted to treat him, he would commit suicide. You are his last hope, and he has complete confidence in your skill. I have come in person to beg your forgiveness and ask you to treat my son."

Yehuda Hakohen performed the operation, and the Almighty gave him success. The Crown Prince recovered his health, and Rabbi Yehuda was sent home laden with gifts. Of course, his greatest reward was having averted the threatened deportation of the Jews, who continued to live in Spain and Portugal for the next two hundred years in relative peace and prosperity.

Adapted from Talks and Tales.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

And he called out to Moses; and G-d spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying (Leviticus. 1:1)

As explained by Rashi, G-d prefaced each exchange with Moses by calling out to him, indicative of His great love. This love between G-d and Moses is symbolic of the open and loving relationship enjoyed by the Jewish people when the Holy Temple still stood and the Divine Presence rested in the Holy of Holies. This love has not diminished any during the exile; it has only become less open and revealed. The way to restore the relationship with G-d to its former glory is by expressing unconditional love for our fellow Jew. If the Jewish people will be united in brotherhood and unity, G-d's love for Moses will once again be fully expressed when the dead are resurrected and the Third Holy Temple is rebuilt. (*Likutei Sichot, Volume 27*)

If any one of you bring an offering (Leviticus 1:2)

The elevated spiritual standing of holy and righteous tzadikim is ensured by the actions of the entire Jewish people. It is in their merit that the leader of the generation draws closer and closer to G-d. (*The Holy Alshich*)

If his offering be a burnt-sacrifice (Leviticus 1:3)

Because thought always precedes deed, the burnt-sacrifice, brought to atone for evil intentions, is listed first in the order of offerings. "That which was created last arose in the mind first." (*Rabbenu Bechaye*)



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