

# LampLighter

17 Adar  
Ki Tisa  
**869**  
13 March  
5769/2009

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's portion, Ki Tisa, G-d commands Moses to make a washing basin and place it in front of the Tent of Meeting. This basin held the water for the priests to wash with before they performed their service, as it states, "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet from it when they go into the Tent of Meeting."

The act of washing had two objectives. The first was for cleanliness and purity, as the kohen (priest) was required to maintain a higher standard than others. The second was for the purpose of holiness: by washing himself the priest received an extra measure of sanctity. In fact, the very act of washing is called the "sanctification of the hands and feet."

Although the Temple in Jerusalem is no longer standing, the lessons we derive from the services that were performed there are eternal, and apply always. Every Jew is considered a "priest" (the entire Jewish people is called "a nation of priests and a holy people"), and the concept of washing before serving the Creator exists on many different levels.

In his Laws of Prayer, Maimonides writes that one must "wash his face, hands and feet before praying the morning service." Nowadays, when we cannot bring actual sacrifices, our prayers are offered in their stead. Washing before we pray follows the example of the priests, who washed before performing their Temple duties. But why does Maimonides stipulate that the face must be washed - something the priests were not obligated to do? The answer is that the concept of "face" has a special significance during the period of exile, after the destruction of the Holy Temple.

Hands and feet are symbolic of man's physical ability and prowess; the face is symbolic of his higher powers (intellect, sight, hearing, speech, etc.) The more mundane aspects of life are to be carried out by the hands and feet alone, whereas the higher powers are to be reserved for man's higher calling - the service of G-d.

Back when the Holy Temple stood, the overall spiritual level of the Jewish people was higher. It would never have occurred to the "face" to involve itself in lower matters; thus, it didn't need an added measure of protection and holiness. During the exile, however, the Jew is sometimes so demoralized that he forgets himself and invests his higher powers in affairs that are truly unworthy of their attention. His "face," as it were, must therefore be safeguarded.

In practice, many authorities have ruled that the "Modeh Ani" declaration made upon arising, thanking G-d for restoring the soul, is sufficient preparation for prayer, and washing one's face is not strictly necessary. For the Jew's innermost essence is always pure and connected to G-d, and thus always ready to worship the Creator.

## True Mercy

By Shlomo Yaffe

After the Golden Calf debacle, Moses sought to open a path for the Jewish people to attain G-d's forgiveness. So, G-d revealed to Moses the "Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy", opening a path for the Jews - of then as well as of all future generations - to achieve atonement and healing:

*And the L-rd passed before him and proclaimed: "L-rd, L-rd, benevolent G-d, Who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, forgiving of iniquity, rebellion and sin, and cleanses..."*

This raises an interesting question: why is "an abundance of truth" considered one of the attributes of *mercy*? Compassion, graciousness and kindness seem "par for the course", but how does truth? After all, truth connotes severe and honest judgement, and unwillingness to overlook misdeeds and transgressions!?

At this juncture, it is necessary to understand that our shortcomings and failures are only superficial. They only exist for a moment in time and only affect an outer layer of self.

The Hebrew word for sin, "*chet*," actually means to "miss the mark" or to be deficient. Essentially, we are not wrongdoers; at times we simply fall short of our potential. Intertwining the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy with the concept of "*teshuvah*" (which accurately translates as "a return [to one's real self,]") creates the road that reconnects us to our potential, our truest self. This potential remains whole and unaffected by whatever temporary detour we may have taken.

When we invoke these attributes, we consolidate our relationship with the Source of all being, which is rooted deeper within us than any failure can reach. To use a metaphor, the greatest typhoon only disturbs the waters of the sea which are close to the surface, but the oceanic depths remain calm and untroubled. We have a place within our soul that is deeply connected to the Infinite, a place that cannot be reached by the effects of our negative choices. When we arouse this level of being, we find new reservoirs of strength to transform our lives.

We are fundamentally, essentially and truly G-dly and positive. We can access that reality at any time we choose. And G-d's attribute of truth cuts away all the external layers and sees us for who we truly are.



## Dachau's Purim Shpiel

By Solly Ganor

Arriving from Auschwitz in groups of 20, they looked like walking skeletons; triangular faces with pointed chins and sunken cheeks, lips shrunken to thin blue lines, large eyes with a strange luminous sheen. They were known in concentration camp slang as "Musselman," usually the last stage before death.

Their Yiddish accent sounded strange to us Lithuanian Jews. They came from the ghetto of Lodz, and then through Auschwitz, before they were sent to our camp. Our camp was known as the "Outer camp of Dachau, #10," situated near the picturesque town of Utting by Lake Amersee, in a small forest surrounded by green meadows and beautiful landscapes.

I remember the day we were brought there, I thought to myself, "Can anything bad happen amid all this beauty?" But the beauty was in the landscape only; the Germans were sadistic murderers.

The Lodz people fell into the same deceptive trap. After Auschwitz, our camp looked like paradise. Most of them died soon after arriving, from hard labour, beatings and starvation, but they preferred to die here than in Auschwitz's gas chambers.

It was from them that we heard the horrors of gas chambers and crematoriums, where thousands of our people were killed every day. Some told us that they were standing naked before the gas chambers when they were suddenly ordered to dress and were sent to our camp. The Germans must've been desperate for workers to send these walking skeletons all the way from Poland.

Around March 1945, only a few remained alive. One of them was known

as "Chaim the Rabbi." We never found out whether he was actually a rabbi, but he always washed his hands and made a blessing before eating. He knew the Jewish calendar dates, and also knew the prayers by heart. At times when the Germans weren't looking, he would invite us to participate in the evening prayers.

Our Jewish camp commander, Burgin, tried to get him easier jobs. Most people died when they had to carry 100 pound cement sacks on their backs, or other chores of heavy labour. He wouldn't have lasted a day on a job like this. He once told me that if he survived, he would get married and have at least a dozen children.

Around the middle of March, we were given a day off. It was a Sunday. The camp was covered with snow, but spring was in the air. We heard rumours of the American breakthrough into Germany and a glimmer of hope was kindled in our hearts.

After breakfast of a slice of mouldy bread, a tiny piece of margarine and brown water known as "Ersatz Coffee," we returned to our barrack to get some sleep.

Suddenly we saw "Chaim the Rabbi" standing in the snow and shouting, "Haman to the gallows! Haman to the gallows!"

He had on his head a paper crown made out of a cement sack, and he was draped in a blanket that had cut out stars from the same paper attached to it.

Petrified, we watched this strange apparition, barely able to trust our eyes, as he danced in the snow, singing, "I am Achashverosh, Achashverosh, the king of Persia!"

Then he stood still, straightened himself up, chin pointed to the sky, his right arm extended in an imperial gesture and shouted, "Haman to the gallows! Haman to the gallows! And we all know which Haman we are talking about!"

We were sure that he had lost his wits, like others in those times. About 50 of us were gaping at the "rabbi," when he said: "Yidden vos iz mit ajch! Fellow Jews,

what's the matter with you?! Today is Purim! Let's make a Purim Shpiel!"

Back home, a million years ago, this was the time of the year when children dressed up for Purim, playing and eating Hamantashen. The "rabbi" remembered the exact date on the Jewish calendar. We hardly knew what day it was.

Chaim then divided the roles of Queen Esther, Mordechai, Vashti and Haman among the onlookers. I received the role of Mordechai, and we all danced in the snow in our Purim Shpiel in Dachau.

But that was not the end of the story. The "rabbi" said that we will get "Mishloach Manot," our Purim food gifts. That was hardly likely to happen.

But, miracle of miracles, that afternoon, an International Red Cross delegation came to our camp. It was the first time that they had bothered about us. Still, we welcomed them, because they brought us the "Mishloach Manot" the "rabbi" had promised.

Each of us received a parcel containing a tin of condensed milk, a bar of chocolate, a box of sugar cubes, and a pack of cigarettes. It is impossible to describe our joy! Here we were starving to death, and suddenly on Purim, we received these heavenly gifts. Since then, we never doubted the "rabbi."

His prediction also came true. Two months later Haman/Hitler went to the gallows and shot himself in Berlin, while those of us still alive were rescued by the American army on May 2, 1945.

I lost track of "Chaim the Rabbi" on our Death March from Dachau to Tyrol, but I hope he survived and had many children as he always wanted. I recall his Shpiel whenever Purim comes around.

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*Solly Ganor went to fight in Israel's War for Independence, was honorably discharged in 1949, joined the Merchant Marine, and fulfilled his desire to see the world. After twelve years at sea, he married his wife, Pola. They now divide their time between La Jolla, California and Herzlia, Israel.*

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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



Year 5769 or 2009?

5733 [1973]

... Perhaps this is an opportunity to re-emphasize several basic points:

1. Those well-meaning persons, who felt impelled to interpret certain passages in the Torah differently from the time-honoured traditional interpretation, did so only in the mistaken belief that the Torah view (on the age of the world, etc.) was at variance with science; otherwise they would not have sought new interpretations in the Torah.
2. The apologetic literature - at least a substantial part of it - that was created as a result of this misconception, relied on the principle that, as in the case of "mutar leshanot mipnei darchei shalom" [it is permissible to make a change for the sake of peace], there was no harm in making an "innocent" verbal concession to science, if it would be helpful in strengthening commitment to Torah and mitzvot [commandments] of many.
3. At the bottom of this attitude was the mistaken belief that scientific "conclusions" were categorical and absolute.
4. Parenthetically, some explanation for this attitude to science may be found in the fact (pointed out in my previous letter), that the Torah accords to science a higher status of credibility than contemporary science lays claim to, as is evidenced from the rule in halacha that the prohibition of chilul [desecrating] Shabbos may be waived on the opinion of a physician in the area of pikuach nefesh [saving a life] and many similar rulings.
5. The crucial point, however, is that the latest conclusions of science introduced a radical change in science's own evaluation of itself, clearly defining its own limitations. Accordingly, there is nothing categorical in science; the principle of cause and effect is substituted by "probable sequence of events" etc.
6. Furthermore, contemporary science holds that scientific judgments and descriptions do not necessarily "present" things as they really are.
7. Science demands empirical verification: "conclusions" are considered "scientific" if they have been investigated experimentally - but certainly not in relation to conditions which have never been known to mankind and can never be duplicated.
8. In view of all that has been said above, there is no reason whatever to believe that science (as different from scientists) can state anything definitive on something which occurred in the remote past, in the pre-dawn of history. Consequently, there is no need to seek new reinterpretations in the Torah to "reconcile" them with science, as stated in the beginning of the letter.
9. Apropos of your special reference to Shabbos Bereishis, it is astonishing that those who attempted to reinterpret the Six Day Creation account in terms of eons etc. failed to even mention the contradiction of such a view with the text of a get [writ of divorce]. It is well known how punctilious the halacha [Jewish law] is in regard to a get. The text of the get begins with the unequivocal dating of it "according to the creation of the world" (e.g. in the current year it would read: "Shnas Chameshes Alafim Sheva Meios Ushloshim V'Shalosh Libriyas HaOlam" (the year five thousand, seven hundred and thirty-three since the creation of the world).

In the words of the Megillah [Scroll of Esther] which we read this week, "There is one people... and their laws differ from those of any other people".

May G-d grant that just as in those days our people felt justly proud of their uniqueness and difference and made no attempt to reconcile their laws and customs and views with those of the people among whom they were "dispersed and scattered," so may every Jew now also display the same courageous spirit, based on the one and the same Torah, since "this Torah shall not be changed or substituted" - one of the basic Thirteen Principles of our faith, as formulated by our Sages.

With esteem and blessing,

## A MITZVA A DAY

**Positive Commandment 245: Conducting Business**

The Torah deals with every aspect of our lives; not only with the way we pray and study, but also the manner in which we carry out our business. This Positive Mitzvah establishes guidelines for our business dealings and governs the way we buy, sell, and transfer ownership of property. These guidelines include writing business contracts, paying for goods with money, or exchanging one item for another. This is derived from the passage, "And if you sell something to your neighbour, or buy something from your neighbour" (Leviticus 25:14).

## A WORD from the Director

*This Shabbat is known as "Parshat Parah" (the "red heifer") because of the additional Torah portion which is read in the synagogue. In the days of the Holy Temple, if a person became spiritually unclean through contact with a dead body, the ashes of the red heifer rendered him clean. As a person had to be in a state of ritual cleanliness in order to bring the Passover offering, these laws were read publicly in the weeks leading up to the holiday.*

*Although we cannot bring offerings in the literal sense at present, the spiritual lessons they contain are timeless.*

*Our Sages likened Torah to the body, and its mitzvot to its parts. Just as the body is composed of 248 limbs and 365 sinews, so too, the Torah is composed of 248 positive and 365 negative commandments.*

*In addition, the Torah is likened to the soul. Just as the soul animates the physical body and transforms it into a living being, so too does the Torah enliven the practical mitzvot and illuminate them with its light. When a Jew studies Torah and understands the deeper significance of the commandments, his mitzvot are performed with joy and with a heartfelt enthusiasm.*

*This principle sheds light on the Talmudic statement, "He who studies the laws of the burnt-offering is considered as if he has brought one." During the exile, when we cannot bring sacrifices in the literal sense, our study of the law stands in its stead. The mitzva of bringing the sacrifice, however, just like the human body, is limited by the boundaries of time and space; the actual mitzva can only be fulfilled in the proper time and at the proper location (indeed, it is forbidden to offer sacrifices outside the Temple).*

*But our holy Torah, just like the soul, is spiritual; it is not limited by the restraints of time and place. Our study of the Torah's laws of offerings is therefore relevant and appropriate in any age and in any location.*

*As we gradually "rev up" for the Passover season, let us remember that every positive action we do draws nearer the day when, "The spirit of uncleanness I will remove from the earth," with the coming of Moshiach.*

J.I. Gutnick

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Midrash explains that the Red Heifer (Para Aduma) offered by Moses in the desert is a constantly present entity. All the ensuing Red Heifers were sanctified from the ashes of that original sacrifice. Likewise, the tenth and final Red Heifer (to be offered by Moshiach) will also be sanctified with the ashes taken from the first Red Heifer brought by Moses in the desert. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 10 Tammuz, 1978)

# It Happened Once...



The charges against Mendel arrived in an official-looking envelope from the Rumanian government. A former friend who had a grudge against him had falsely accused him of absconding from Rumania with government funds, and although he now lived in Russia, they were pursuing their claim against him in a local court. Mendel was in serious trouble and not at all sure of how to exonerate himself.

He decided to present his whole story to the famous tzadik (righteous person), Aryeh Leib, the Shpoler Zeide, and see what advice the Rebbe could give him. After having listened to Mendel describe the problem at length, the tzadik said, "Don't worry about the trial. Just be sure to have the proceedings postponed until the day of Purim. And as for a lawyer, don't worry about that either, because I'll send a very good one to plead your defence."

Mendel felt the burden being lifted from his shoulders. "Rebbe, how much will I have to pay for this lawyer," he asked with some trepidation. "And, how will I recognize him?"

"There is an orphaned girl whom I'm trying to marry off, and I need three hundred roubles for the dowry. If you give me money for this great mitzva (commandment), I'll send the lawyer at my own expense. You will recognize him because he will be wearing a white hat and red gloves."

Of course, Mendel was more than happy to comply; he handed the money to the tzadik and returned home. He was successful in having Purim set as the date for his case.

As for his part, the Shpoler Zeide had a very unique method of influencing the official government sphere. On Purim, he had been known to gather a group of his intimates for a special kind of Purim-spiel or play. This "jest," however, was not meant in humour, but was a serious cabalistic means of affecting the outcome of dangerous legal dilemmas. In the course of the Purim-spiel the case at hand would be enacted by the tzadik and his company, and a positive verdict would be handed down.

On the day of Mendel's court appearance, the Shpoler Zeide had his associates dress up as judges and various court officials. One man was instructed to blacken his face in order to act the part of the Rumanian prosecutor, two others were appointed judges, and the local rabbi was the chief justice. The Shpoler Zeide himself acted the part of the defence attorney, covering up his shtreimel with a white cloth and donning red gloves. The cast was completed with one man taking the part of the informer, and another the part of Mendel, the accused.

The Purim-trial began with the reading of the accusation by the Rumanian prosecutor, but whenever he tried to speak the other members of the court laughed at his attempts. Next, the accuser gave testimony. Finally, the Shpoler Zeide rose to deliver his case for the defendant. His case was stated in a manner which left no doubt as to the innocence of the accused. In his argument he proved that the entire charge was false, and that even if it had been valid, the Rumanian government would have had no legal claim to the money in question. When he finished speaking the judges handed down their verdict: Mendel was acquitted.

Then the Shpoler Zeide and all the other Purim-spielers adjointed to the dining room where they enjoyed the festive Purim meal. Later that night the

tzadik received a telegram from Mendel relating the good news and saying that he was on his way to Shpola.

Upon his arrival he went immediately to the Rebbe and related all the details of the trial. What a spectacular delivery the defence attorney made! What erudite arguments, why, the courtroom was spellbound! The chasidim listened with increasing wonder lighting their eyes. The details of the case were amazingly familiar to them. The events of the courtroom mirrored the "script" of the tzadik's Purim play!

"Well, Mendel," inquired the tzadik, "So you liked the lawyer I sent?"

"Rebbe, that's what I'm saying. He was wonderful, everyone agreed!"

"Know, then, that he was no human being, but an angel sent down from heaven, created as a result of the tzedaka money (charity) you gave for the poor orphan. If you have the merit, you may see him again when you are tried at the Great Tribunal on High, for he will be your attorney when you are called to give an account of your life on this earth."

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

### Half a shekel, after the shekel of the Sanctuary (Ex. 30:13)

A Jew is only "half" an entity in two senses, attaining completion and wholeness by uniting with G-d, or alternately, with another Jew. Yet these explanations are interrelated, for when a person helps his fellow Jew and unites with him, he simultaneously merits G-d's blessing and draws closer to Him at the same time. (Likutei Sichot, Vol. 3)

### The Children of Israel shall keep-veshamru-the Shabbat (Ex. 31:16)

Keeping Shabbat means much more than just refraining from certain kinds of work; the Hebrew root shin-mem-reish also implies waiting in anticipation and looking forward to something. The Torah teaches that rather than being considered a burden, Shabbat should be eagerly awaited and longed for each day of the week. (Ohr HaChaim)

### When you will take the sum (lit., the head) of the Children of Israel... then they will give every man a ransom for his soul (Ex. 30:12)

When the time will come for you to appoint a "head" - a leader of the Jewish people - make sure it is one who is willing to give up his very soul on behalf of his brethren; only one such as this is worthy. (Alshich)

### Everyone who sought G-d went out to the Tabernacle of Meeting, which was outside the camp (Ex. 30:7)

They were actually looking for Moses, yet the Torah states that they were seeking G-d. We thus learn that receiving the leader of the generation is the same as receiving G-d Himself. (Jerusalem Talmud, Eruvin)

## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

### PARSHAS KITISA 18 ADAR • 14 MARCH

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:25 PM
	MINCHA:	7:35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:00 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	7:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8:22 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN - FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	7:00 7:25 PM
	MAARIV:	8:15 PM

## CANDLE LIGHTING: 13 MARCH 2009



BEGINS		ENDS
7:25	MELBOURNE	8:22
7:20	ADELAIDE	8:15
5:50	BRISBANE	6:42
7:45	DARWIN	8:34
5:47	GOLD COAST	6:43
7:20	PERTH	8:13
7:00	SYDNEY	7:53
7:18	LAUNCESTON	8:16
7:27	AUCKLAND	8:22
7:29	WELLINGTON	8:26

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

### The Lubavitcher Rebbe

יצוקללה"ה נבג"מ ז"ע

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