

LampLighter

3 Av
Devarim
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The first translation of the Torah into a language other than Hebrew was rendered by Moses, shortly before the Jews entered the Land of Israel.

On the words in this week's Torah portion, Devarim, "Moses began to explain this law," our Sages commented: "In seventy languages he explained it to them." Moses also instructed that the Torah be written down in all seventy languages after the Jews crossed the Jordan.

Another translation is discussed in the Talmud (Tractate Sofrim): "Five elders translated the Torah into Greek [the Septuagint] for King Ptolemy; that day was as painful for Israel as when the Golden Calf was made." Why was this day so painful? The answer given in the Talmud is: "Because the Torah could not be translated adequately." But if Moses had already translated the Torah into Greek, why did our Rabbis take such a dim view of this later translation?

In order to understand, let us examine our Sages' statement more closely. Our Sages did not liken the Septuagint to the sin of the Golden Calf, but rather, compared it to the day on which it was made. Both acts were motivated by positive intentions, yet contained the potential for dire consequences.

When the Jews made the Golden Calf, they were trying to make a substitution for Moses. For, they reasoned, if G-d had appointed Moses - a physical man - as an intermediary between themselves and G-d, the concept of intermediary was Divinely sanctioned. When the Jews became worried that Moses wasn't returning, they sought to replace him.

In fact, this intention was laudable, as we see from the phenomenon of the Sanctuary. The purpose of the Sanctuary (and Holy Temple) was to enable holiness to dwell in the physical world. In making the Golden Calf, the Jews sought a physical representation of the Divine Chariot, and indeed imitated the "face of the ox."

Unfortunately, their logic was flawed. When G-d chooses an intermediary, the intermediary is "invisible," without independent existence. The intermediary's only function is to transmit G-d's word. By contrast, when people choose intermediaries for themselves, it can lead to a situation of "two authorities" (ascribing authority to anything other than G-d) and even actual idol worship. When Moses translated the Torah at G-d's command, holiness illuminated each of the translations and precluded the possibility of misunderstanding or incorrect interpretation. But when Ptolemy demanded a translation, there was great potential for error, and the Rabbis made certain changes, as is known.

As it turned out, the Septuagint was a positive development, as it transmitted the concept of G-d's unity to the gentiles. Indeed, according to Jewish law, Greek is the only "foreign" language in which it is permissible to write a Torah scroll - the ultimate perfection of the Greek language.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Know Where You Are Coming From

By Mordechai Wollenberg

In the beginning of our Parshah, Moses recalls how G-d had said to the Children of Israel, "You have surrounded this mountain long enough. Turn away and ... journey..." (Deuteronomy 1:6). The mountain is Sinai, scene of the revelation of G-d's wisdom and will to man; yet G-d tells us, "You've been here long enough. Move on!"

We must always be prepared to move forward; to take what we have and propel it forward. How are we to navigate a clear path through the confusion that is everyday life? How do we reconcile this with our past? How do we utilize our life experience, both individual and collective?

A young boy was travelling from Jerusalem to the Galilee.

He arrived at a four-way crossroads and discovered, to his horror that the crossroads sign, with its arrows pointing the way to the cities lying in the four directions had fallen down.

Now he had no way of knowing which road to take to reach his destination.

What was he to do?

But he knew where he was coming from — Jerusalem. By arranging the sign so that Jerusalem pointed to the path he had just come from, he was able to figure out which way to go.

This is the key. Moving forward is essential, but in order to do so we must understand where we are coming from. The Torah is our collective life experience; our heritage and our history are our signposts. Using these as our starting point - knowing where we are coming from - we are able to get to where we need to go, on the correct path, without straying or getting lost.

Progress is both inevitable and even good. Nonetheless, it must be tempered with a clear understanding and appreciation of where we started out from and what our framework of reference is. In this way, we will be able to deal with the challenges of the modern world, using progress in the most positive manner, to reach our final destination.



What Jews Do

By Hanna B. Geshelin

The route of every Jew who becomes observant is unique. One of the turning points on my journey occurred at a large Iowa university with a minuscule Jewish population, where during my freshman year of 1963-64, I was the only undergraduate female who identified herself as Jewish.

Among my roommates during my first term was a junior taking a child development class on cultures. She decided to join the committee researching the Jewish culture because she had a ready-made resource to interview - me. As a fourth-generation American descendent of Reform Jews who emigrated from Germany before the U.S. Civil War, I didn't know much about Judaism, but I did my best to answer her questions. The relief that I felt when she finished questioning me was short-lived, however. Every term after that, the child development professor gave my name to the committee studying Judaism. To meet this challenge, I would have to learn something about my heritage.

The college library had two shelves of books on Judaism. I started at one end of the upper shelf and began reading. They gave me basic information about Jewish history, tradition and beliefs. With the help of the books I managed to get through the questions during the winter term. Then, in the spring of my freshman year, I met Janet.

Janet was a Southern Baptist from a small town in Iowa. Like many students at college, she came from a family for whom church was a major focus. Her beliefs guided her behaviour in all aspects of her life.

I was the first Jewish person she'd ever met. She told me that she had chosen to write about the Jewish culture because she wanted to learn about the origins of her faith. Could she come with me to synagogue?

The town had a small Reform congregation that met Friday evenings in the parlour of one of the churches. I agreed to take her, and as we strolled through the quiet streets she asked me about my religious life. "Where do you eat?" she asked suddenly.

Mystified, I gave the name of the dorm dining hall.

"How do you manage?" she asked.

"What do you mean? I just eat."

With an edge to her voice she said, "How can you 'just eat?' We get ham, pork or shellfish three or four nights a week, and most of the rest of the time there's meat and milk at the same meal."

"Oh," I said confidently, "You mean kosher. I'm Reform, and we don't keep kosher."

"You don't keep kosher? But from everything I've read, kosher is one of the cornerstones of Judaism. Why don't you keep it?"

I shrugged. "I don't know, we just don't."

Janet stopped and turned to face me, hands on her hips. I can still picture her standing there in the light of a street lamp, dressed the way she would for church in a navy suit, a small white hat and white gloves. She looked me up and down as though I were a bug on a pin. Then she said words that still reverberate through my mind, "If my church told me to do something, I'd do it."

In the long silence that followed, I rolled the words over and over through my mind. And I wondered, why did the Reform movement say keeping kosher wasn't important? I decided to find out.

The next day I found, on one of those shelves of Jewish books, a history of the

Reform movement. Breaking bread with others, said the book, is a universal gesture of friendship and goodwill. Keeping kosher prevents Jews and non-Jews from breaking bread together; thus it prevents casual communion between "us" and "them." When Jews stop keeping kosher and eat non-kosher with their neighbours, anti-Semitism will end and Jews will be fully accepted into mainstream society.

I thought of the Jewish history I'd been reading, of Moses Mendelsohn and the Emancipation; of my mother's family, which hadn't kept kosher in at least four generations; and I thought of the Holocaust, which began in Mendelsohn's and my great-great-grandparent's homeland, Germany. I turned to the title page of the book and saw that originally the book had been published in German in Berlin in 1928.

Maybe in 1928 German Jews could say that eating with non-Jews would end anti-Semitism. But they were about to be proved disastrously wrong. Could I continue to eat in a non-Jewish fashion, when the reasoning for permitting Jews to eat non-kosher was based on a complete fallacy?

"If my church told me to do something, I'd do it." Janet's words took one end of my Yiddishe neshama (Jewish soul) and the book's glaring fallacy took the other end, and they shook me until I had to sit down, right there on the floor beside the library stacks. When I stopped shaking, I knew that until I could find a good reason, a true reason, to not keep kosher, I had no choice. I was a Jew, and the Jews kept kosher. It was that simple.

My complete transformation from a secular to a Torah observant Jew took many years and many more lessons in faith. But my first big step began that Shabbat night, when a Christian girl challenged me to stand up and act like a Jew.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



Comforting Mourners

13 Tishrei, 5728 [1968]

Translation of a letter from the Rebbe to Gen. Ariel Sharon

I was deeply distressed to hear of your great loss - the tragic death of your young son, may he rest in peace.

It is not given to us to know the ways of the Creator. During the war, during the time of danger, it was His will that all be saved. Indeed you, sir, were one of those who achieved victory for our people of Israel against our enemies, when the many were delivered into the hands of the few. Yet, at home, and during a time of peace, this terrible tragedy happened. But how can a mortal understand the ways of the Creator? There is no comparing our minds and His. We do not wonder that a small child does not understand the ways and conduct of an old and wise man, though the difference between them is only relative. This is no attempt to minimize the extent of your pain and grief, and I, too, share in your sorrow, though I am so far from you.

Even in such a great tragedy as this, solace can be found in the words of our traditional expression of consolation to mourners - an expression which has become hallowed by the law and tradition of many generations of our people. "May the Almighty comfort you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."

We may ask, why mention those who mourn for "Zion and Jerusalem" when comforting an individual on his personal loss? A deeper analysis will, however, reveal that the mourner will find comfort precisely in this comparison of his loss with the Destruction and exile of Zion, for several reasons.

First, the mourning over the Destruction of Zion and Jerusalem is shared by Jews the world over. It is true that those who live in Jerusalem and actually see the Western Wall and our Beis Hamikdosh [Holy Temple] in ruins feel the anguish more deeply, but even those who live far away feel sorrow.

Similarly, the grief-stricken individual or family will find solace in the thought that "all the children of Israel are as one complete whole," that their sorrow is shared by all our people.

Second, we have perfect confidence that G-d will rebuild the ruins of Zion and Jerusalem; He will gather the dispersed remnants of Israel from the ends of the earth through our righteous Moshiach, and bring them in gladness to witness the joy of Zion and Jerusalem. We are equally confident that G-d will fulfill His promise that "... the dwellers of dust (the dead) shall awake and give praise." Great indeed will be the happiness and rejoicing then, when all will meet together after the Revival of the Dead.

Third, the Babylonians and the Romans were able to destroy only the Beis Hamikdosh of wood and stone, of gold and silver, but they could not harm the inner "Beis Hamikdosh" in the heart of every Jew, for it is eternal. In the very same way, the hand of death can touch only the body, but the soul is eternal; it has simply ascended to the World of Truth. Every good deed we do in accordance with the will of G-d, the Giver of life, adds to the merit of the departed soul, as well as to its spiritual welfare.

May it be G-d's Will that you and your family know no more pain and distress. May you find true comfort and solace in your communal endeavors, defending the Holy Land, the land "... over which G-d your L-rd watches from the beginning of the year until the end of the year," as well as in those endeavors of your private life-observing the Mitzvah of Tefillin, one Mitzvah bringing another, and yet another, in its train.

A MITZVA A DAY

Positive Commandment 213: Marriage

The groom is commanded to marry and live with his wife according to the law of the Torah. This is learned out from the words (in the Torah): "When a man takes a wife and marries her" (Deuteronomy 24:1).

A WORD from the Director

This coming Thursday (July. 30) is Tisha B'Av, the day on which the Holy Temple was destroyed nearly 2,000 years ago.

Chasidic teachings offer a metaphor for the paradox of exile: A teacher is in the midst of sharing an idea with his favourite student. Suddenly, he has a flash of inspiration: an infinitely deeper idea has flashed in his mind - a concept which he feels will be of great value to his disciple. He stops talking. He closes his eyes. The student is confused and begins to speak but his queries are brusquely rebuffed.

All of the teacher's mental energy is involved in fully developing this spark of an idea.

The student is devastated. He does not understand why his teacher has shut him out.

The teacher senses the student's distress. But to divert his attention and reassure his beloved student, even if with just a word or two, could cause him to lose some of the nuances or perhaps the entire, fragile idea.

It is because the teacher cares about his student that he does not interrupt his thoughts for even a moment to reassure him.

The teacher's "rejection" of his favourite student is, in fact, an act of love. Even though it is not in keeping with the ordinary nature of their relationship, this "rejection" actually serves to deepen the bond.

This metaphor also explains why the exile becomes "darker" as we move toward the light of the Redemption. For, were exile merely to be a punishment for our sins, then it should become lighter as we atone for those sins. But the opposite is true. The closer we are to the Redemption, the more concealed is our relationship with G-d. Despite the fact that we are approaching the Redemption, we see a decline in sensitivity to that which is holy.

But this pattern is like the teacher's "rejection" of his student: the more he develops the spark of the idea, the more he must pull away from his student. Yet, the withdrawal signifies a greater love for his student and a greater commitment to his role as teacher.

May we merit the "New Torah" from Moshiach that has been developing throughout this long exile, Now!

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Why is Eicha (Lamentations) - the scroll read on Tisha B'Av to commemorate the destruction of the Holy Temple - not written on parchment as is the Scroll of Esther (read on Purim)? When Moshiach comes, Tisha B'Av will be transformed from a day of sorrow into a day of rejoicing. As every day we await Moshiach's arrival, making Lamentations more "permanent" by committing it to parchment is not really necessary and would imply that we had already despaired, G-d forbid. Purim, however, will also be celebrated in the Era of Redemption, and thus the parchment scrolls will also be used then.

(The Levush)

J.I. Gutnick

It Happened Once...



The emperor Napoleon once passed by a synagogue and heard the people within weeping bitterly. Upon inquiring what the reason for this sadness was, he was told that today was Tisha B'Av and the Jews were mourning the destruction of their Holy Temple. Napoleon replied, "A people that mourn so faithfully over their loss will surely see their Temple rebuilt."

The destruction of both Temples took place on the ninth of Av. After the exiles returned from the first Babylonian exile the returnees rebuilt the Temple. When it had stood 300 years, cracks were discovered in the building and Herod undertook the mammoth task of rebuilding it.

Herod, an Edomite - a non-Jew - who had been a slave to the Hasmonian royals, was an implacable foe of the Torah Sages who opposed him. He had risen to the position of king only after having ruthlessly decimated the Hasmonian dynasty, including his own wife, Mariamne. Why did a man so steeped in evil and violence decide to rebuild and beautify the Holy Temple?

The particular target of Herod's bloody excesses was the great Torah Sages. Herod persecuted them to the point that there remained alive only one, Bava ben Buta, and he had been blinded by order of the king. One day Herod disguised himself and appeared before the great Sage. Wanting to provoke the rabbi to curse him, he began, "Herod is nothing but a wicked slave!"

Bava ben Buta only replied, "What am I to do about it?"

As the disguised stranger escalated his anti-Herod rhetoric, the Sage rejoined with many passages from the Torah which forbid slandering a king. He refused to allow himself to be drawn into the conversation against the tyrant. When he could stand it no more, Herod blurted out, "I am Herod! But had I known that the Torah Sages were so cautious in their speech and actions, I never would have killed them. What can I do to atone for my sins?"

Bava ben Buta replied, "When you killed the Torah Sages you extinguished the light of the world. Now restore the light by rebuilding the Holy Temple, for it, too, illumines the world."

Herod feared the reaction of the Roman emperor, by whose grace he reigned. Bava ben Buta suggested that a messenger be sent to Rome with a request to begin construction. By the time the messenger would return, the construction could be completed. Herod agreed and work began.

The building Herod constructed was described by our Sages thus, "Whoever has not seen the building of Herod, never saw a beautiful structure in his life." The Second Temple stood for a total of 420 years before the destruction - 90 of which were after Herod's beautification and enlargement.

The Temple, after Herod's completion, was built of gigantic stones, some of which were faced with blue-green marble, which resembled the waves of the sea. Almost all of the doors were faced with gold, and inside thousands of candles flickered. Near the doorway stood a large golden grapevine, and pilgrims who wished to present a gift to the Temple could purchase a leaf, a grape or a whole bunch of golden grapes which they would hang on this lovely golden vine. These donations were used to finance the running of the Temple.

Jews, who came to Jerusalem three times each year, were treated to a spectacular scene, which they no doubt reflected upon throughout the rest of the year. The Levites stood on the fifteen steps leading from one courtyard to the next and sang King David's psalms - the fifteen "Songs of the Steps" to the haunting music of harps, violins, cymbals, flutes and other instruments with which we are unfamiliar.

The siege and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was long and bloody. Millions were slaughtered or perished from lack of food and water. The Jewish defenders of the holy city, divided in their opposition to the conquerors, displayed both great heroism and tremendous folly in their vain attempt to defeat the Roman legions and their allies. But it was G-d's decree that the Jews be exiled from the land. When the Temple stood in ruins and flames licked the walls, the "flower of the priesthood," the young kohanim threw the keys to the Temple gates towards the heavens, acknowledging, "We have not been trusty guardians of your Temple, and so we are relinquishing the keys to You." A heavenly "hand" was seen reaching out to receive the keys.

And so, the ninth of Av once again casts its shadow over our calendar. We mourn for the destruction of the Holy Temples. But while we fast and remember the destruction, we also anticipate the building of the Third Holy Temple, for our tradition teaches that our redeemer, Moshiach, is born on the very day of the destruction. So out of the very rubble and ashes of the Holy Temple we are reassured about the coming of the redemption.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

The Book of Deuteronomy

What is the difference between the Book of Deuteronomy and the other four Books of the Torah? In transmitting the first four Books, Moses acted strictly as G-d's emissary, repeating the message word for word without involving his own intellect in the process. Deuteronomy, however, was transmitted precisely through the intellect and understanding of the leader of the generation, in response to the exact needs of the people and its particular spiritual level. Accordingly, Deuteronomy - given to the Jewish people just prior to their entry into the land of Israel, and the new lifestyle it would entail - contains many explanations of concepts that were only alluded to in the first four Books. (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe*)

How can I alone bear your weight, your burden and your strife? (Deut. 1:12)

As Rashi explains, the "burden" referred to by Moses was the heretics among the Jewish people. Commented Rabbi Nachman of Breslov: "The heaviest burden a person can bear is apostasy. The heart of a Jew who believes in G-d is calm and tranquil, while the heretic must constantly contend with the weight of his doubts and troubling thoughts."

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS DEVARIM 3 AV • 24 JULY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:08 PM
	MINCHA:	5:20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:50 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:08 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN - FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:20 PM
	MAARIV:	6:15 PM
FAST OF NINTH OF AV WEDNESDAY JULY 29:	MINCHA:	4:30 PM
	FAST BEGINS:	5:30 PM
	MAARIV:	6:15 PM
THURSDAY JULY 30:	SHACHARIS:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	4:30 PM
	MAARIV:	5:58 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 24 JULY 2009



BEGINS	ENDS
5:08 MELBOURNE	6:08
5:10 ADELAIDE	6:08
4:57 BRISBANE	5:52
6:20 DARWIN	7:12
4:54 GOLD COAST	5:54
5:17 PERTH	6:14
4:51 SYDNEY	5:50
4:51 LAUNCESTON	5:55
5:10 AUCKLAND	6:10
5:00 WELLINGTON	6:03

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

יצוקללה"ה נב"מ ז"ע

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