

L'Chaim

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Weekly Publication
for every Jewish Person

March 11, 2011 – 5 Adar II, 5771

0914: VAYIKRA

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Living with the REBBE



This week's Torah portion is the first portion in the Book of Leviticus-Vayikra. The Book of Leviticus, which deals primarily with the laws of sacrifices, opens with the words "And He [G-d] called (Vayikra) to Moses." According to Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator, this expression "is language indicating affection." G-d called out to Moses as a manifestation of His love.

Chasidut explains that the fact that the Torah does not specify by name who is calling is significant. G-d's call to Moses is derived from His Essence, which transcends all Names or descriptions. Similarly, G-d's affection for Moses also stems from His very Essence.

Every Jew possesses a "spark" of the soul of Moses; G-d's "call of affection" is thus directed to every individual Jew. In Leviticus, G-d teaches us how to offer the korbanot (sacrifices), from the root word meaning closeness. By means of the korbanot, one is able to draw closer to G-d.

This same idea is also expressed in the haftorah that is usually read after the portion of Vayikra, which begins with the words "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall proclaim My praise." Like the opening verse of Leviticus, these words describe G-d's tremendous love for His people.

The simple explanation of the verse is that the Jews proclaim G-d's praise through their actions, i.e., by observing G-d's commandments, studying His Torah and praying to Him. But on a deeper level, G-d is "praised" independent of the Jewish people's conduct and even their will. This is the natural consequence of the Jews' very existence, and nothing else.

The 1st half of the verse describes the Jews' essential nature: "This people have I formed for Myself." By mere virtue of his existence a Jew belongs to G-d, having been created specifically for that purpose.

However, the Jewish people "proclaim G-d's praise" in the collective sense as well. The simple fact that the Jews - "a sheep among 70 wolves" - have survived while other, mightier nations have disappeared off the face of the earth, is a tribute to the Alm-ghty. A Jew proclaims G-d's greatness just by being alive.

This is especially true in our generation, the one after the Holocaust. Whenever one sees a Jew continuing the tradition and passing Judaism along to the next generation, it is a living miracle of the Holy One, blessed be He.

G-d loves every Jew with an essential love regardless of his actions. From this we learn how important it is to love our fellow Jews unconditionally, judge them favorably, and always treat others with respect. For "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall proclaim My praise!" ■

Adapted from Volume 1 of Sefer HaSichot 5750

How Big is Your House?

There's an old story about a couple who grumbled that their house was too small. They were too poor to buy another house or build an addition. Day after day, the family suffered from lack of space and overcrowded quarters. Finally the husband went to the rabbi of the town to ask for advice.

The rabbi advised, "Go home and bring the roosters into the house."

What?" the man said. "I say the house is too crowded and you say I should bring more into the house?"

But the rabbi was, after all, the rabbi. And so the man went home, and they did as the rabbi advised.

Sure enough, it was even more crowded. The wife insisted that her husband return to the rabbi for a better solution.

"You're right," the rabbi said, after listening to the man. "Now, bring the goats into the house."

The man protested, but the rabbi was adamant. If he wanted to solve his problem, he must bring the goats into the house.

And so it went. Each time another animal came into the house, causing more of a ruckus, taking up more room, the wife would send her husband to the rabbi and the rabbi would send him back and another animal would come into the house.

Until finally, the entire family was reduced to tears. "Take all the animals out!" the rabbi ordered. "Immediately!"

Suddenly they had plenty of room in their house.

Which leads to a question: How much room do we need in our house? In answer, let's ask another question:

Have you ever been alone in your house? Not by yourself.

No, we can be alone in our own house even when other family members are there. When mother's away, say at a convention, the house doesn't just seem empty. You're alone. And sometimes, if you're at one end and father's at the other, even if one end is the kitchen and the other's the living room and it's ten steps from one to the other, you can still be alone.

The room in our homes isn't just the rooms in our houses. It's not the physical space. Oh, yes, we need a certain amount of physical space to call our own. But the space we really need is emotional space. Those animals didn't just make it difficult to move around; they crowded out the people, with their braying and mooing and instinct-first behavior.

The irony is that when our homes are emotionally crowded they're physically expansive. There just always seems to be enough room - the house is always big enough - when the family groups together emotionally.

And spiritually, for that's the source of the emotional roominess.

You see, it's not the physical dimensions that determine how big your house is. It's the G-dliness inside, a G-dliness that crowds out everything else and so paradoxically creates more room.

The first way to expand your house, then, to make it larger in the only way that really counts, is to make sure you have a kosher mezuzah on every door post - not just the outside, but all the ones inside as well. That way the spiritual dimension enters into the emotional, expanding both. ■

**MEZUZAH
DID YOU
KNOW???**



The Art of Mezuzah – The Ink

The main ingredients of the special ink used by the scribe are gall nuts, or the gallic acid derived from these nuts; gum arabic, a resin substance; and copper vitriol, a bluish stone which gives the ink the blackness required. The gall nuts and the resin are cooked in water for about an hour. Then the vitriol is added and the mixture is boiled until half remains.

Further details of this process are, however, a closely guarded secret. Through tradition passed to him by his teachers, and through knowledge gained over years of experience, each scribe has his own formula for making an ink with the desired qualities of clarity, easy flow, intense color and tackless film on drying. ■

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

On Thursday, a certain Jew suddenly desired a new suit for Shabbat. He went out, purchased the suit, and proudly brought it home. He showed the suit to his wife and asked her if she would hem the pants so he could wear it for Shabbat.

"It's Thursday night and I still have to make the challahs, the kugel, the cholent, the soup. There is no way I can hem your pants," she said firmly.

So, the man went to his daughter with the same request. "Dad, I have tons of homework, I have to bathe the kids and clean my room. Sorry, but I just can't do it."

The man resigned himself to not wearing his suit on Shabbat. At about two in the morning, though, he woke up. He decided to take matters into his own hands, laid out the pants and proceeded to cut off a few inches.

At three o'clock, his wife woke up. Feeling quite bad, she found the pants, cut off a few inches, and assured herself she would hem them in the morning.

The daughter woke up a little while later, feeling very guilty. She found her father's pants, cut off a few inches, and mentally scheduled the hemming into her day.

Friday morning arrived, and the man eagerly tried on his pants only to find that he now had - shorts!

The point of this story? Sometimes, in our attempt to "tailor" Judaism to fit our lifestyle, we snip a little here and a little there. But when we really take a good look at what we have after all the tailoring, we see that it hardly resembles the original product.

You can do mitzvot without tailoring them by taking your time, one mitzva at a time, one day at a time. If you don't take short-cuts, you won't wind up with shorts. ■

The Rebbe Writes

16 Sivan, 5719 [1959]

Blessings and Greetings!

You write of your state of mind, in which you find it difficult to make decisions on any matter and remain in doubt as to whether you are doing as you ought, and so on.

In view of your upbringing, of which you write, there is certainly no need for me to emphasize the subject of Divine Providence, a fundamental principle in our faith and in our Torah, the Torah of Life. The meaning of this concept, hashgachah peratis, is straightforward - that G-d, Who created and directs the world, watches over every man and woman, not only in public matters, but also in his private affairs. This concept enables us to understand the principle of trusting in the One Who conducts the world and Who is the essence of good, for accordingly, everything is also for the good, plainly and simply.

Every believer's mind, too, understands that the first direct result of this trust is that there is no worry and no confusion. For when a person is weighing in his mind what he should decide and how he should act, at that time, too, G-d is watching over him and helping him, helping all those who desire what is good and upright. And when one conducts himself according to the directives of the Torah, this is the good path, and such conduct in itself helps a person to go ahead with all his affairs in a way that is good for him.

As in all matters of faith, the above-mentioned principle likewise requires neither intellectual argumentation nor profound and complex philosophical proofs. For every individual of the Children of Israel, man or woman, senses in his soul that he truly has faith - even when he is not thinking about whether this principle is correct or whether it is a rational imperative. As the Sages affirm, all Jews are "believers, the descendants of believers." This means that the faith that is within them, both in their own right and as a heritage from their forebears who were believers, and all the spiritual properties that became theirs in their own right and also as a heritage - this faith and these spiritual properties are utterly strong within them all. This is self-explanatory.

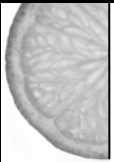
I hope that these lines of mine, limited as they are in quantity, will suffice to rouse your thoughts and to guide you toward the truest and innermost point within your own self - that in your innermost soul you most definitely trust that G-d watches over you. All you need to do is to bring forth this thought from within your soul to your day-to-day life. After all, "there is nothing that stands in the way of the will."

As was said above, the way to accomplish this is not by profound intellectual debate, but by relying on your inner feeling that you place your trust in G-d - not by seeking out doubts, nor by creating problematic queries that are not at all problematic and in fact do not trouble you. Averting your attention from all of this will no doubt help you to rid yourself easily of all the confusing factors that have been spoken of.

It would be advisable that before the morning prayers on weekdays, a few times a week, you set aside a few cents to be donated for tzedaka - preferably on Mondays and Thursdays and on the eve of Shabbos. And it goes without saying that such an undertaking should be made without a formal vow.

With blessings for a strengthening of your bitachon and for good news regarding all the above, ■

From In Good Hands, translated by Rabbi Uri Kaploun, published by Sichos In English



SLICE OF

LIFE

Tattoos

by Rabbi Simon Jacobson

Around 15 years ago I was invited to serve as the guest speaker at a weekend Shabbaton in a small city in the United States (names and details have been omitted to "protect the innocent").

During the meals various volunteers helped set up and serve. Among them I noticed one man who was being particularly helpful. With a congenial smile and no airs about him he was doing everything possible to make all the guests comfortable.

During my talks I observed that this gentleman (we'll call him David) was extremely attentive, absorbing every word. And when discussions ensued after the talks his engaged curiosity was extraordinary. At every possible opportunity David would approach me with more inquisitive questions. His insatiable thirst for knowledge, his sincerity and innocence of heart touched me deeply. I quietly asked the host Rabbi about David.

His story goes like this. David was a Viet Nam veteran. After being discharged from the US Navy, where he served several years, he began a search for his Jewish roots. He visited different synagogues, attended various classes, and finally ended up in this particular synagogue. David grew up in a completely secular home, with absolutely no Jewish education. Now he embraced his heritage and began observing Torah and mitzvot. The Rabbi tells me that David has unquenchable thirst for study, doing everything possible to compensate for his years of no Jewish education.

Then came the punch line. Nonchalantly the rabbi whispers to me, "You should know that David is a tzaddik nistar," a hidden righteous person (tzaddik nistar is an expression used to describe hidden tzaddikim that exist in the world. The concept originates from the thirty-six hidden tzaddikim). "You see," the Rabbi continues, "when David was in the navy he had his body tattooed, as many sailors and marines

do in the navy. From head to toe, his body was covered with tattoos. When David began becoming observant he had some procedures done to remove his many tattoos. Besides for the fact that David now learned about the Torah's prohibition of mutilating or scarring the body, including the etching of tattoos, he also felt that his tattoos were not in the spirit of where he wanted to be.

"But some tattoos were simply impossible to get rid of. One tattoo in particular irked David. It was a tattoo that was etched on his left bicep, where a right handed individual places his Tefillin on the arm. This particular tattoo was - how shall we say it? - not exactly the Star of David. It therefore deeply disturbed David that this tattoo stared him in the face every morning as he donned his Tefillin.

"He presented the question to a rabbi. Besides the problem of 'chatziza,' an obstruction between the Tefillin and the arm, the tattoo was also a distraction and contrary to the entire spirit and intention of Tefillin, which is about binding your heart and mind in service the Divine. An authoritative rabbi told David that since he did not know better when he had himself tattooed and being that the tattoo was irreversible, he shouldn't worry about it and just put on Tefillin and ignore the tattoo."

The rabbi then added: "After becoming observant five years ago, David immerses himself in a mikva (a ritual bath) every morning [a custom embraced by many males]. Because he doesn't want anyone to see his remaining tattoos, David wakes up each morning at 5a.m. and goes to the mikva before anyone else arrives..."

"What do you think G-d is feeling," the rabbi innocently asks me, "when He sees the holy mikva waters spilling over and covering the tattooed body of this Viet Nam veteran each morning?"

I sat stunned. In awe. I looked at David pleasantly going about his way helping everyone in sight, considering himself a simple person, asking questions as though he was inadequate due to his lack of Torah education - with no clue of the sheer power and beauty of his deep connection to G-d, a connection that transcended his tattoos.

I was deeply moved. There is nothing as powerful as witnessing the human triumph over a handicap. And I said to myself, "This is the power of Judaism, which celebrates the ultimate majesty of life: We don't escape our scars and tattoos; but we can immerse them in deeper experiences, and thus transcend them."

The Torah teaches and trains us all to look at the inner core of human beings. Never to be distracted by the outer tattoos, scars and other superimposed states. No matter how deeply etched they are, no matter if they may even be naturally irreversible, the fact remains that the inner essence of a person is beautiful and can prevail over any difficulty.

We all have our tattoos - physical or metaphorical - the scars, wounds and bruises we carry, some from the abuse of a dysfunctional childhood, others from errors of judgment, ignorance or inexperience. Some of these tattoos may be irreversible. Once we have lost our innocence, by imposition or by choice, and tasted from the "forbidden fruit," we can't always turn the clock back.

But that doesn't mean that things are lost. It means that we have to dig deeper. Even if our tattoos are etched into our skins and beings, even when our wells get clogged, we have the power to burrow beneath them and discover deeper reserves.

The Viet Nam veteran's story is the story of a walking example of possibility - how each of us can access places that are beyond even the deepest scars.

Possibility - that is the ultimate message of empowerment that Torah offers the human race. ■

*Rabbi Simon Jacobson is the author of the best-selling **Toward a Meaningful Life** which has been translated into Hebrew, French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Russian and Japanese. He is the director of the **Meaningful Life Center**. Reprinted with permission from www.MeaningfulLife.com. All rights reserved.*

Moshiach Matters

The prophet Isaiah states: "For the earth shall be as full of the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed." Of the future time it is likewise written, "For they will all know Me." (Jeremiah) Nevertheless, not all will be equal: the man with the deeper and broader mind will understand more than another. Hence the simile, "as the waters cover the ocean bed": though on the surface the water is even, the chasms in the ocean bed hold more water than elsewhere. ■ *(The Short Maamarim of the Alter Rebbe, p. 141)*


Customs

Why do we light 2 Shabbat candles?

The two candles symbolize the two verses: "Remember the Sabbath day" (Ex. 20:8), and "Observe the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5:12). Many women add another candle upon the birth of each additional child. This custom is rooted in the verse, "The candle of G-d is man's soul."

News

Jewish Learning Network The Jewish Learning Network is an innovative way to study Torah. Initiated 5 years ago, JNet fills the need for a more personal and convenient way for Jews to connect to their heritage. Whatever the topic, studying on the phone one-on-one with a Jnet volunteer is bound to bring some Jewish spirit into your life. After applying on-line (www.jnet.org) the applicant is contacted for a brief phone interview to ascertain the specifics of background, times and study topics. Within one to two weeks, a study partner is assigned. Once the connection is made, a JNet staff member will call periodically to see how things are going. Jnet is a division of Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch. ■

Important Times – Scottsdale, AZ March 11 – 18 <i>Shacharis</i> 7:00am Sunday 8:00am Monday/Thursday 6:45am <i>Minchah/Maariv</i> 6:15pm Shabbos 6:05pm <i>Shabbat</i> <u>Chassidus Club 8:15am</u> <u>Kabbalah of Cholent 9:05am</u> <u>Shacharis 9:30am</u> Light Candles 6:14pm Shabbat Ends 7:10pm	Brought to you by: Chabad-Lubavitch in Cyberspace www.chabad.org Copyright © 2010 Lubavitch Youth Organization www.lchaimweekly.org	Re-printed by: Chabad of Scottsdale (480) 998-1410 chabadofscottsdale.org  The Jewish Learning Center of Scottsdale 480.443.5362
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Fast of Ester: Thurs. Mar. 17 **Fast Begins** 5:21am **Fast Ends** 7:01pm **It Once Happened** Despite his vast wealth

and riches, Reb Shlomo, one of the Baal Shem Tov's chasidim, was burdened with the deep sorrow of childlessness. Often he sought his Rebbe's blessing for children, but to no avail.

Reb Shlomo, however, persisted. On one of his visits to Mezibush, he implored the Rebbe to bless him with children. This time, the Besht agreed to grant the blessing, but attached a condition. "If you agree to forego your wealth, you will be blessed with a child," promised the Besht.

Reb Shlomo was overjoyed at the thought of his wish being granted. "Go home and discuss it with your wife," the Besht said.

Reb Shlomo rushed home to consult his wife. "Hurry back to the Besht and tell him I agree wholeheartedly," said his wife. Reb Shlomo immediately set out to Mezibush and finally received the long-awaited blessing.

On his journey home, he stopped at an inn to rest. He conversed with some fellow travelers who had passed through his city and without introducing himself, asked about the latest news.

"Haven't you heard about the misfortune of Reb Shlomo? His entire fleet of ships, loaded with tons of wood was lost in the stormy seas!"

"So, it's actually happening," thought Reb Shlomo with delight. As he neared his hometown, he was greeted with stories of fires that had consumed all his possessions. Reb Shlomo, however, was anything but sad. "The blessing will come sooner than I imagined," he thought.

Neither Reb Shlomo nor his wife complained about their misfortune. On the contrary, their thoughts were filled with eager anticipation and within a year, Reb Shlomo's wife gave birth to a baby boy.

By now, Reb Shlomo was reduced to begging for alms. He joined a group of beggars that made their rounds in other towns. During their wanderings, they passed through Mezibush. "Let's go to the Besht's house of study," one beggar suggested. "He always gives generously."

The group joined the line in the courtyard and passed by the Besht who handed out charity personally. "Come to my study, later," the Besht instructed Reb Shlomo when he recognized him.

Later the Besht addressed Reb Shlomo. "Though it was decreed that you be a poor man, you are entitled to a dignified level of poverty. Travel to Krim and there your fortunes will change. May you be successful."

Obediently and with great anticipation, Reb Shlomo set out on the road. Upon arrival, he sought out the local shul, where he was greeted very warmly by the attendant and introduced to a wealthy man who would host him for Shabbat. It was a splendid Shabbat spent in joy and abundance; his host spared no effort to make Reb Shlomo comfortable.

However, after Shabbat ended, Reb Shlomo noticed a clear change in his host's demeanor from that of joy to deep concern and sorrow.

"You've been wonderful to me," Reb Shlomo said to his host gently. "I'm sorry to see you so troubled. Please share your problem with me, it may lighten your burden."

The wealthy man explained that his daughter had a terrible health problem. "I know of someone who can help you," Reb Shlomo exclaimed. "In the town of Mezibush, there is a very great tzadik, the Baal Shem Tov, who has assisted many people. We will seek the holy rabbi's advice."

With a hopeful heart, the rich man accompanied Reb Shlomo to Mezibush, and presented his problem to the Besht. The Besht instructed Rabbi Tzvi Sofer, his attendant, to accompany him, and the four set out for the rich man's town.

Upon arrival, the Besht told his attendant to go to the mikva and declare: "The Besht has demanded that you leave this place." As soon as he uttered those words, a voice was heard from the mikva: "The Besht has power only over Poland! I will not obey him here!" When Rabbi Tzvi related what the voice had said, the Besht handed Rabbi Tzvi his walking stick, "Should the spirit refuse again," he told him, "strike the water with my stick."

Rabbi Tzvi did as he was told. When he struck the water, it turned crimson. The Besht then instructed that the mikva be cleaned. The health problems that the rich man's daughter had experience utterly disappeared.

"How can I repay you for what you have done?" cried the rich man. "I need nothing," replied the Besht. "However, please tell me how is it that you have amassed such wealth?" "I owned a small dock at the harbor. One day, gusty winds blew a fleet of boats and logs into my dock. I sold the boats and the merchandise and netted a large profit. The Besht nodded and pointed to Reb Shlomo. "Those boats and logs belonged to this man," he said. "Though you were free to profit from the luck the sea brought you, he, nevertheless, is entitled to a share." The rich man generously paid Reb Shlomo, who now lived peacefully, sharing with his wife the pleasure of children and grandchildren. ■

Reprinted from From My Father's Shabbos Table by Rabbi Yehuda Chitrick.

Of his own voluntary will (Lev. 1:3) The commentator Rashi explains that although the verse **Thoughts that Count** says "of his own voluntary will," if one does not want to bring a sacrifice, we compel him to do so. How, then, can we say that the sacrifice is brought willingly? We compel him until he wants to do it. When the Torah tells a person to do something and a person is against doing it, his negative reaction is not reality. In the innermost depths of his heart, a Jew wants to carry out the Will of G-d. By forcing him to do what is correct, his negative inclination is nullified and the willingness to carry out G-d's Will is genuine. (Rambam on the laws of divorce, ch. 2)

With all your sacrifices you shall offer salt (Lev. 2:13) Sacrifices symbolize the revealed part of the Torah, which is likened to meat. Salt symbolizes the hidden aspects of Torah which are more abstract. This is why each sacrifice had to be brought with salt. In the same way that salt preserves meat from spoiling, so do the inner, esoteric explanations of Torah preserve the revealed part of Torah. (Likutei Torah)

If a person sins...and is not sure, he shall bear guilt (Lev. 5:17) The Torah is even stricter, in terms of bringing sacrifices, with one who is not sure if he has sinned. The sacrifice when one is uncertain if he sinned cost more than those brought as atonement for a known sin. If a person knows clearly that he has done something wrong, he will regret it. However, if he is not sure, he may convince himself that he really did not sin. Then, he will not repent. Thus, he has to bring a costlier sacrifice that will cause him to be more introspective. (Rabbeinu Yona)