

# Lamplighter

19 Adar  
Ki Tisa  
**920**  
5 March  
5770/2010

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Ki Tissa, contains one of the most misunderstood occurrences recorded in the Torah — the sin of the Golden Calf.

This sin was so great that its consequences are still being felt today, thirty-three hundred years later. For, as a result of the sin, G-d promised that every punishment that would ever befall the Jewish people would contain an element of chastisement for this grievous transgression.

And yet, as it appears in the Written Torah (without the accompanying commentary), the entire account is illogical and difficult to understand. How could the same Jewish people who had just left Egypt under miraculous circumstances, received the Torah at Mount Sinai amidst open miracles and actually heard the voice of G-d utter the first two of the Ten Commandments, stoop so low as to worship a molten image?

Closer study reveals, however, that the Jewish people were not seeking a substitute for G-d in the Golden Calf; what they desired was a substitute for Moses, as expressed in the verse, "And the people saw that Moses was delayed in coming down ...and they said [to Aaron]: Get up, make us a god...for this man, Moses, who has taken us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Without Moses, the Jewish people were in a quandary. Moses was the intermediary that connected them to G-d above, as it states, "I stand between G-d and you." Moses was the medium through which the Children of Israel were freed from Egypt and through whom they received the Torah, to the point where "the Divine Presence spoke from his throat."

Moses is referred to as "a man of G-d," for despite the fact that he was mortal, Moses existed on a spiritual plane on which he was totally united with the Divine. His function as intermediary between man and G-d served to strengthen the Jews' belief in the Creator, for it is difficult to believe in a G-d one cannot see. When the Jews beheld a human being on such a G-dly level, it strengthened their faith in G-d and connected them to Him in a tangible manner.

In this light, the mistake they made is far easier to comprehend. When Moses did not reappear when they expected him, the Jewish people feared they had lost the means by which they bound themselves with the Infinite. They rightly understood that such an intermediary needs to be completely united with G-d. Having just witnessed the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, at which G-d descended in a "supernal chariot" bearing the face of an ox, they decided to forge a calf of gold that would closely resemble it.

The Jewish people were correct in their recognition of the need for an intermediary between man and G-d in the form of a G-dly human being; there was also nothing wrong with their choice of an inanimate object to draw holiness down into this world (G-d's voice would later issue forth from between the cherubim — fashioned in the form of two angels — above the holy ark in the Sanctuary).

Rather, their error was in taking into their own hands a matter which can only be determined by G-d. Only G-d has the authority to decide how His holiness will be transmitted; only He may choose the correct medium.

*(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

## Use Your Brain!

By Mordechai Wollenberg

"Dad", the young boy asked his father.

"Yes, son?"

"Why is the sky blue?"

"I don't know, son."

"Why is the grass green?"

"I don't know, son."

"How do birds fly?"

"I don't know, son."

So it went on, the son asking questions and the father's responding, "I don't know, son." One day, the son said to his father, "Dad, I hope you don't mind my asking you all these questions all the time?" "Not at all, son" replied the father. "How else are you supposed to learn anything?"

This week's special Torah reading, *Parshat Parah* contains a lesson about intelligence. Intelligence has its limits. Sometimes we have to take things on faith.

A *chok* means a law with no apparent logical meaning, yet one which we are commanded to carry out nonetheless. There are three types of commandment in Judaism, called *Eidot*, *Chukim* and *Mishpatim*. *Mishpatim* are laws which we could figure out anyway by ourselves - not to murder, not to steal, etc. *Eidot* are laws which might not be immediately obvious but which have a particular rationale - Shabbat, or the concept of tithes, and so forth. *Chukim* are laws which have no apparent rhyme or reason, yet we fulfill them anyway.

Sometimes we need a reminder that it is all well and good to be rational and logical, but from time to time, Judaism requires of us that we place all these calculations on one side. Sometimes we just have to enjoy the moment, without all the whys and wherefores. We don't have to understand absolutely EVERYTHING.

I was once at a friend's house. I was about to drink a glass of fine whiskey, when one of the other guests piped up: "Wait a minute. I went to whiskey appreciation classes. You can't just drink it like that; you have to do this, that, the other before you drink it, so you can really appreciate it properly." He then proceeded to list all the pre-requisites and their rational reasons, not letting me enjoy my *l'chaim* until he had finished! By the time he had indeed finished, the moment was lost and I no longer felt any pleasure or excitement from this fine whiskey! So much for "appreciation"!

To those blessed with the gift of intelligence, it is important to remember to use it wisely, that it is just that—a gift—and not to become smug or arrogant because of it. Also, there are limitations to intelligence. Sometimes we have to just take action and not let that analytical, logical human mind hold us back.



## Don't Let The Light Go Out Recovering From a Tragic Car Crash

by Yafa Plaut-Cappon

It seems like I have been trying forever to write my story. I wanted to share what happened to me in a way that reflects the positive and powerful effects that a faith-filled life has had on me since the accident. I also wanted to give you, the reader, a message of hope, of the power of forgiveness, and the absolute miracle of my survival, so that you can take what has happened and personalize it with your own life's challenges.

We go about as we do, living out our individual dreams and not aware that we can be taken from our lives in the blink of an eye. That is what happened to me on April 2, 2007. We had just parked our car, and were getting ready to join dear friends for a joyous Passover celebration when a drunken stranger forever altered our lives, and the lives of every Jew in our small community.

I do not remember being hit; only waking up in pain. He hit me, and Annette Brodovsky- at nearly seventy miles an hour. She died almost instantly, in a gutter, after being thrown nearly fifty feet. She had been waiting for me a few feet away as I was taking my baby out of his car seat. I was filled with joy because I had seen the swell of her belly- babies are a source of great joy to us, and this was especially good news. I wanted to hug her and let her know how excited I was because I had not seen her for a long time. The last picture I have in my mind of Annette was of her smiling at me, waving, and then waiting by a tree. It is a happy picture, thank G-d.

After that, my memory is a blur. I do not remember being hit; only waking up knowing something awful had happened to me. I felt like I was floating, I was on the ground, looking up at the car, and wondering how I had gotten there. And then the pain, and the choice I had to

make; to live or die. I knew I had that choice when I saw my husband's face above me, and I suddenly decided that he needed me, that our baby, Yossi, needed me. I feared the worst- had my baby died? I didn't remember if I had gotten him out of his seat. The pain was unbelievable. I was going into shock, but I had to know if Yossi was alive, and he was, because I could hear him crying. A woman came to hold my hand and reassure me; she took the baby out of his car seat and gave him to an EMT to be checked. He was unhurt, miraculously. He had been in his car seat, missed by inches when the drunk driver tore the doors off the car and smashed its back end. We had survived, Yossi and me: two Passover miracles.

The days and months to follow were filled with pain and with physical challenges that were unending. Excruciatingly painful scans, tests and procedures, to assess the damage and its aftermath, filled my days. I often cried for hours, my only relief coming in the form of very potent narcotics that only temporarily relieved my suffering. Throughout these times I prayed constantly, and felt G-d's presence giving me the strength not to give in, especially when I found out that I was not paralyzed or head injured. I had made the determination that I was going to walk again, no matter what it took me to get there.

On a tear-filled night, after an especially painful surgery, I made Annette a promise: to live my life to the fullest, and never forget her; to take her memory, to take *her* with me as I dove back into my life. I have not forgotten that promise. It has been nearly two years since that fateful night. My family is still suffering the aftermath. I have not been able to work because of the pain and my physical weakness. Every day has moments of deep sorrow, but there is also tremendous joy- especially because of my baby, who is two now. He is a happy, healthy little boy.

I know that this accident was a terrible blow to everyone who was involved, but I also believe that it was part of G-d's plan for me. I had two choices to make once I faced my future. I could choose to be bitter and resigned to living a life scarred by hatred of the man who had torn our lives to pieces, a life contracted and full of darkness. Or I could make the choice to

live abundantly from where I was: to be co-creator with my Creator in a life that embraced the experience with its days of sorrow, and days full of joy and possibility.

My body bears the marks of my injuries, and I have pain that never goes away. It is what I do with that pain and those scars that make me stronger. They are a reminder to me that I cannot draw a single breath without the grace of G-d- that it is He who is in control, it is He who created me and animates my being- and being broken and rebuilt is only part of the picture. He has given me the chance to experience what it is to be radically and totally alive, to feel it to the point of exquisite pain and blinding joy all at the same time. I have gone on with my life as I promised Annette: I am attending night school to become a medical administrator, and I relish the chance I have to be a useful member of society again, to use my brain and my intelligence, and my humanity, to make my corner of the world a better place.

As a small child, I was given the gift of a deep belief in G-d. I always believed that there was a Creator who loved me and looked out for me, and shed a brilliant light all around me, a light only I could see. I know now that this is the light that all Jews possess, the light of our neshama, our soul. This light has tremendous power. The importance of kindling the Shabbat lights gained even more importance to me once I was able to do so again after the accident.

We must never let the light go out. Each one of us is responsible for each other; it is not just one doing for the whole. It will take all of us to bring Moshiach- each little candle uniting into a blaze of fire that circles and engulfs the whole universe, until finally the darkness is banished forever.

As we are now in the month of Adar, the month of increased joy, may our lives be filled with that joy, and may we remember those whose lives were taken, with love and blessings to their families who remain to carry on their memories.

It is my hope that people will be inspired by my survival to illuminate the darkness in their own lives- to look beyond the darkness into the deep and abiding light that is G-d, and gain inspiration to reach beyond any obstacles that are placed in their paths.

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ISSUE 9/20

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Talmud states, "In the future time, G-d will make a banquet for the righteous from the flesh of the Leviathan." This banquet is replete with spiritual allusions: the Leviathan, the Wild Ox, the "preserved wine" - each has its profound mystical significance. At the same time, however, this will also be a physical banquet. For, the ultimate reward in the days of Moshiach will not be granted in the Garden of Eden, "where there is neither eating nor drinking," but in the World of Resurrection, to souls garbed in bodies.  
(From a talk of the Rebbe, Parshat Balak, 5751/1991)

# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



*Freely adapted and translated*

12 Menachem Av, 5712 (1952)

It pained me to learn that you are still in a downhearted mood, and according to my understanding this is the mood in your household as well.

I don't want to go on at length and enter into a debate as to whether your attitude is correct or not. Understandably, it does not take much contemplation to appreciate why you are all in such a frame of mind after the tragedy that occurred - may we all never know of such events again.

The above notwithstanding, Jews in general and chassidim in particular as "believers" are expected to unequivocally cleave to G-d, keeping their relationship with Him open, as the verse states, "And you who cleave to the L-rd your G-d are all alive today."

Life, true life, does not mean simply marking time; it means that one's life lacks for nothing, with both the person and his family possessing their entire spiritual and material needs.

Since the possibility exists that - G-d forbid - they have not earned this generous bounty from G-d, therefore the holy Zohar (II, p. 184b) tenders the advice: "They - this physical world and man in general - exist by the 'radiant countenance' [i.e., the joy and positivity,] that is emitted from below. In like manner they then draw down upon themselves the same qualities from Above. Man's joy draws down a corresponding measure of joy from Above."

Concisely stated: when one strengthens himself in his bitachon [trust] in G-d that He will surely provide those matters with which a person can be in good spirits, happy and joyous, doing so in such a powerful manner that his bitachon affects his daily life, then one draws down this Divine beneficence from Above. One then verily sees that his bitachon was justified.

May G-d help that you, your wife, and your entire family experience this as quickly as possible and in as discernible a manner as possible.

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11 Nissan, 5701 (1951)

... Surely you are correct in writing that you have already suffered enough; it is high time for everyone to be helped in all that they require, particularly with regard to good health, and I hope you will be able to convey to me glad tidings regarding your improved health.

I wish to note the following, although I am not entirely sure whether this is wholly germane to your situation:

Quite often, a person's feelings of self-assurance and security are dependent on something outside of and higher than himself - in simpler terms, [they are dependent] on his feelings of faith and bitachon in the Creator of the world as a whole and man's personal world in particular.

After the earthshaking events of our generation, which have shaken various spiritual foundations and torn away many individuals from deeply rooted family and national traditions, it affected many people and caused them to think that they were left hanging in the wind; [i.e., without something to which they could anchor their lives].

I am referring here even to those of them who are believers; their faith became something that was disconnected from their practical everyday life. They would think about their faith, recite Shema Yisrael or Modeh Ani, often thinking about the meaning of the words, and yet they would go around the entire day with the thought that they were entirely alone, each of them drawing conclusions from these thoughts according to their nature and personality.

The most realistic manner of helping such individuals regain their equilibrium is by revealing within them their familial and ancestral traditions that even now remain concealed within their souls.

They will then perceive that man is not alone. Moreover, they will realize that man is the master of his lot only to a certain extent; for the most part it depends on G-d.

Consequently, the person need not place all the burdens of his life on his own shoulders, feeling a tremendously weighty responsibility for everything that happens to him. Surely he need not be filled with despair regarding specific matters or specific situations.

When such individuals are connected with their fount of faith and bitachon, which without the slightest doubt remains deeply rooted in them, this will lead to their peace of mind and will enable them to live their lives in a healthier manner and better be able to fulfil the unique tasks that each and every individual has in life. ...

## A WORD from the Director

*In this week's Haftorah, we read about Elijah the Prophet and his famous confrontation with the prophets of Baal. Elijah addressed the Jewish nation and said, "How long will you waver between the two? If G-d is truly G-d, then follow Him, and if it is Baal, then go after him."*

*Elijah told the Jewish People: your inability to choose between the two alternatives is the worst possible spiritual path, even worse than choosing outright idolatry.*

*How can anything be worse than idolatry - ascribing G-dly powers to an object? Is it not better to reach some sort of compromise, to maintain a belief in G-d, but to nevertheless incorporate some elements of paganism? Why did Elijah say that it is preferable, G-d forbid, to actually worship idols?*

*When a person worships an idol, be it one made of stone, or the planets and stars in the sky, he thinks that by placating these objects he will receive more blessings in his life. This, then, is the difference between a true idolator and a Jew who straddles the fence, never making a clear choice between idolatry and worship of the One, true G-d.*

*An idol worshipper may one day arrive at the conclusion that idolatry is wrong and return wholeheartedly to G-d, after having admitted his error. But it is far more difficult for a person who is "straddling the fence" to realize the error of his ways and see that he is committing a sin.*

*A person who vacillates is also more detrimental to those around him. An idol worshipper is more easily avoided, and not likely to lead others astray, who could be deceived by outward appearances.*

*Elijah's message holds true for us today. It is far easier to avoid obvious pitfalls in spiritual matters than to stand on guard against finer, less conspicuous compromises. But it is these finer points which ultimately define our intellectual honesty and our faith.*

J. I. Gutnick

### Parshat Parah

There are two special Shabbats before Rosh Chodesh Nissan: Parshat Parah and Parshat Hachodesh. Parshat Parah comes first and then Parshat Hachodesh. Parshat Parah may fall out on the Shabbat following Purim, but sometimes it can be on the second weekend after Purim. Some Halachic authorities maintain that there is a Biblical requirement for everyone to hear the Torah reading on the Shabbat of Parshat Parah.

On Pesach all the Jews participated in a pilgrimage to the Holy Temple where the Paschal lambs were sacrificed and eaten by the Seder. Since many of the pilgrims were spiritually impure because they had come into contact with a corpse, they had to be sprinkled and purified by the ashes of the Red Heifer before entering the Holy Temple and/or partaking of the Paschal lamb. Therefore,

on this Shabbat we take out a second Torah from the Ark and read from it the rules pertaining to the purification process of the Red Heifer (Numbers, chapter 19).

[The purification power of the Red Heifer ashes is the ultimate "chok" (supra-rational divine command); it seems to make no sense whatsoever. In fact, when King Solomon, the wisest of all men, reflected on this Mitzvah he exclaimed, "I said, 'I will become wise,' but it is far from me" (Ecclesiastes 7:23). Many Mitzvahs are difficult to comprehend, but this one really takes the cake...

## CUSTOMS CORNER

# It Happened Once...



One day, a visitor arrived at the home of Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezeritch. The visitor was an old friend of the Magid's, who had studied with him in their youth. With great interest he observed the behaviour of his former study-partner, who had since become a follower of the founder of Chassidism, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, and had assumed the leadership of the Chassidic community upon the latter's passing.

The visitor was particularly struck by the amount of time that the Chassidic master devoted to his prayers. He himself was no stranger to reflective prayer: when he and Rabbi DovBer had studied together, they had pored over the mystical teachings of the Kabbalists and would pray with the prescribed meditations, or *kavanot*, outlined in the writings of Kabbalah. But never in his experience had prayer warranted such long hours.

"I don't understand," he said to Rabbi DovBer, "I, too, pray with all the *kavanot* of the mystics. But still, my prayers do not take nearly as much time as yours do."

Rabbi DovBer's visitor was a dedicated scholar. His wife ran the family business so that he could devote all his time to Torah study. Only once a year was he forced to break from his studies for a few weeks: his wife would give him a list of the merchandise she needed and he would travel to the fair in Leipzig to wheel and deal.

"Listen," said Rabbi DovBer to his visitor, "I have an idea for you. Why must you waste precious weeks of study every year? This year, sit at home. Envision the journey to Leipzig in your mind's eye: picture every station along the way, every crossroads, and every wayside inn. Then, imagine that you are at the fair, making your rounds at the booths. Call to mind the merchants that you deal with, reinvent the usual haggling and bargaining that follows. Now, load your imaginary purchases upon your imaginary cart and make the return journey. The entire operation should not take more than a couple of hours and then you can return to your beloved books!"

"That is all fine and well," replied Rabbi DovBer's friend, "but there remains one slight problem: I need the merchandise."

"The same is true with prayer and its *kavanot*," said Rabbi DovBer. "To envision a particular attribute of G-d in its prescribed section of the prayers, or to refer to a certain nuance of emotion in your heart at a particular passage, is all fine and well. But you see, I need the merchandise...."

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

### See, I have called by name Betzalel the son of Uri (Ex. 31:2)

When Moses ascended on high to receive the Torah, G-d showed him all the Sanctuary's vessels and explained how to make them. Moses thus assumed that he would be the one to make them, until G-d took out the Book of Adam and showed him the names of all the people who would live from Creation until the Resurrection of the Dead, "each generation and its kings, its generation and its leaders and prophets." Pointing to Betzalel's name He declared, "See, I have called by name Betzalel," i.e., ever since the creation of the world, Betzalel was intended to be the Sanctuary's artisan. (*Midrash Rabba*)

### You shall make it incense (Ex. 30:23)

Atonement before the Alm-ghty is similar to appeasement among people. Although one may have completely forgiven another for a wrong, it is still remembered. The next time the same transgression occurs, it is not forgotten so easily. The same is true of our sins, which are atoned for by means of the sacrifices. Some "unpleasant odour" may still remain even after atonement. The incense offering "wipes away" even that small reminder. (*The Tzemach Tzedek*)

### And the Tablets were the work of G-d, and the writing was the writing of G-d (Ex. 32:16)

What was so remarkable about the Tablets, considering that the Jewish people had already heard the Ten Commandments? Rather, when the Ten Commandments were inscribed in stone, they were simultaneously engraved upon the heart of every Jew forever and ever, as it states, "Write them on the tablet of your heart." This, indeed, was truly "a work of G-d." (*Sefat Emet*)

### And you shall see My back (literally "end"); but My face shall not be seen (Ex. 33:23)

The significance of most events is not readily apparent when they first occur; it is only with the passage of time that we are able to discern the guiding hand of Divine Providence throughout history. That is what is meant by "And you shall see My end" - only in the end will you understand; "but My face shall not be seen" - whereas in the beginning, a true understanding of the overall picture is impossible. (*Torat Moshe*)

### The rich shall not increase and the poor shall not decrease from the half shekel (Ex. 30:15)

A rich person's wealth will not be increased by not giving; neither will a poor person become poorer by giving. If this is true with the donation of the half-shekel, certainly it is true of charity. (*Imri Shefer*)

#### CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

#### PARSHAS KI TISA 20 ADAR • 6 MARCH

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:38 PM
	MINCHA:	7:40 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS :	8:15 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LAST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10:20 AM
	MINCHA:	7:30 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8:34 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS: SUN- FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	7:35 PM
	MAARIV:	8:25 PM

#### CANDLE LIGHTING: 5 MARCH 2010

Begins		Ends
7:38	MELBOURNE	8:34
7:31	ADELAIDE	8:26
5:59	BRISBANE	6:51
6:50	DARWIN	7:39
5:56	GOLD COAST	6:48
6:30	PERTH	7:24
7:10	SYDNEY	8:04
7:19	CANBERRA	8:14
7:32	LAUNCESTON	8:31
7:38	AUCKLAND	8:34
7:42	WELLINGTON	8:40



Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

### The Lubavitcher Rebbe

צוקללה"ה נב"מ ז"ע

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