

Lamplighter

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Yitro, we read: "And Yitro heard...everything that G-d had done for Moses and His people Israel...and Yitro came...to Moses into the wilderness."

What did Yitro hear that caused him to leave his land and join the Jewish people? As Rashi explains, he heard about the splitting of the Sea and the war against Amalek.

At first glance, this is surprising. The exodus from Egypt, with all its miracles, took place before the splitting of the Sea of Reeds; surely Yitro was aware of what happened. Why then was it not until the Sea was split and the battle fought against Amalek that he decided to go to Moses?

There is another difficulty as well. According to the principle that "one must always ascend in matters of holiness," one would expect the Jewish people to have reached a more elevated spiritual state by the time the Torah was given. The war against Amalek seems to represent a spiritual decline. However, as will be explained, the battle against Amalek was actually a significant ascent in the Jews' progression toward Mount Sinai.

When the Sea split, G-d's Divine light illuminated all planes of existence, effecting a bond between the higher spheres and the mundane physical world. All the nations heard of the great miracle; the revelation of G-dliness at the Sea struck fear in their hearts. Nevertheless, even after the splitting of the Sea, Amalek was not afraid to confront the Jews. Why? Because the revelation of holiness that occurred had still not purified the very lowest levels of the physical. These lowest levels became purified only after the battle with Amalek, when the Jews were victorious.

Thus the war against Amalek was the final step in the Jewish people's preparation for receiving the Torah. For it was by means of this war that the entire world was transformed into an appropriate vessel to contain the Torah.

This also explains why these two events convinced Yitro to join the Jewish people: it was only after both had occurred that the world was completely ready to accept the Torah.

Each day we say: "Blessed are You... Who gives the Torah" - in the present tense. Every day we receive the Torah anew. Just as our ancestors prepared themselves to accept the Torah at Sinai, so too must we prepare ourselves.

We do this by living with the adage "Know Him in all your ways." A Jew's connection to G-d must be constant, not just during prayer or Torah study. First comes the "splitting of the Sea" - our involvement in spiritual matters, only after which can we wage "war against Amalek" and see to mundane affairs.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Have Something Important to Say?

Conversation Tips from Sinai

By Naftali Silberberg

What's the difference between speaking and nagging? Speech involves one individual speaking words and ideas, another individual hearing words and ideas. Nagging is defined as one person articulating words and thoughts, another person hearing — at best — grating static.

We usually have only one chance to communicate an important message. If we botch that opportunity, the odds of the recipient "getting" the message in a second go-round are greatly minimized. As such, substantial thought and planning should precede any conversation of significance.

Undoubtedly, the Creator assured that the words would enter one ear—and then stay put. In our nation's 3,300 year history, G-d has directly addressed us exactly once, when G-d descended upon Mount Sinai and gave ten commandments to an assembled nation. One communiqué that was intended to last more than three millennia. Without a doubt, the Creator of speech utilized this opportunity to its maximum, and assured that the words He uttered would enter one ear — and then stay put.

The Midrash says that the mighty voice that spoke the Ten Commandments had no echo. An echo occurs when sound waves encounter resistance, striking an impenetrable obstruction. G-d's voice had no echo because it penetrated. It pierced desert mountains and human minds and hearts — nothing and no one blocked the voice out.

In doing so, G-d also left us a perfect prototype to follow on those occasions when we really want our words to be taken seriously.

Here are some conversation lessons I gleaned from the Great Communication:

Don't "btw" It

It wasn't sudden or unexpected. It wasn't "Oh, good that you're here. There's something I wanted to discuss..." or "What did you just do? We've got to have a talk right now!"

Three days in advance G-d relayed to the Israelites that He had an important message. When the time arrived, the nation was prepared, curious, and eager. The momentousness of the occasion had sunk in — and they were receptive.

Choose Your Timing

"On the third day when it was becoming morning..." Considering that the Sinai event featured a spectacular "light and sound" show ("And all the people could see the sound and the flames"), would it not have been that more impressive and awe-inspiring had the event been scheduled for after dark?

Apparently G-d did not want to address a weary nation. He chose a moment when the mind is clear and most alert — and receptive.

Choose Your Setting

Contrary to popular conception, G-d is not in the habit of performing miracles simply to impress. When G-d gave the Torah, a bird did not chirp or take wing, an ox didn't low, angels didn't fly or sing G-d's praise, the sea didn't move..." (Midrash). Contrary to popular conception, the Talmud tells us that G-d is not in the habit of performing miracles simply to impress. Every miracle has a purpose. So why did G-d hush all other voices aside for His own? Would His voice have been drowned out by all this common background noise? Or is the elimination of even minor distractions vital to creating an atmosphere wherein the listener is completely tuned in and receptive?

Use Both Sides of Your Mouth

The Midrash also tells us that G-d's voice serenaded the Israelites from all four directions, as well as from above and below. Before delivering your message, ask yourself: "Am I broadcasting this message from all directions? Or is there some part of me that is signaling a different message altogether? If that is the case, have a conversation with yourself before attempting to convince another. If you have not internalized the message, there's little chance that you will find the other person receptive.

Mince Words

The whole grandiose event centered around ten commandments, expressed in exactly 620 letters. It left room for the addressees to ponder the words and consider its multiple meanings and lessons. It gave room for thought instead of stifling it. Got the other person to think? He's already receptive!



This Shabbat, February 6th is the 22nd passing anniversary of the great wife of our dear Rebbe, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Here is a little something to let you know who she is.

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka led a life which was remarkable in many ways, not the least in its utter selflessness and extreme privacy.

She was born in 1901, the daughter of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak. Her remarkable abilities and keen intellect brought her father to entrust her with great responsibilities. In fact, she was actively involved in many of his activities to keep Judaism alive during the explosive years following the Russian Revolution and establishment of the Soviet state.

In 1927, when her father, the Previous Rebbe was arrested, it was Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka who made sure that all possibly incriminating documents were destroyed. Indeed, during his imprisonment, she was in the forefront of those seeking to commute the death sentence to one of exile, and then, finally to release.

A unique relationship existed between Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka and her father, and he wrote many deep, philosophical letters to her, in which he expounded his concepts of Chassidic thought and Divine service. Those who were privileged to know the Rebbetzin described her as a refined, erudite woman of very extensive knowledge and great intelligence and wit.

On the 14th of Kislev, 1929, Warsaw was at the peak of its glory, the "Jerusalem of Poland." On that day, Rebbe's numerous Chassidic dynasties, world-renowned rabbis and heads of yeshivas, illustrious Jews of many walks of life gathered to celebrate the wedding of the daughter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and the son of the brilliant scholar and kabbalist, Harav Levi Yitzchak Schneerson. The marriage of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka to Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson opened a new chapter in her life. Twenty-five years later, the Rebbe described the union as a marriage which bound him to the Chasidim.

The early days of their marriage were ones of onerous hardship and great personal danger. First settling in Berlin, they were forced to flee to Paris after the Nazis came to power. They fled Paris in 1940 and through the strenuous efforts of the Previous Rebbe they succeeded in boarding the last ship to leave Europe. From the day they arrived in the United States, for the next 47 years, the Rebbetzin's life was dedicated to only one thing - the wellbeing of her husband and the success of his mission in life.

It was Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka who urged her husband to assume the leadership of Chabad after the passing of her illustrious father in 1950. From that moment on, the Rebbetzin

embarked on perhaps the most difficult mission of her life, for she spent the next four decades supporting every action and move the Rebbe took on behalf of the Jewish people.

Although she was entirely absent from the public eye, she took an avid interest in the work of the many thousands of emissaries, keeping abreast of their activities. The Rebbetzin took deep personal satisfaction in their accomplishments, and commiserated in their hardships.

For the Rebbetzin, her husband's will became her own. She was his greatest Chasid. And yet, she had the wifely wisdom to look out for his health. Knowing that the Rebbe usually refused to see a doctor, she would make her own medical treatment contingent on his agreeing to a check-up. In order to assure her well-being, he would, of course, comply.

In her last years, when the Rebbetzin was ill, she suffered in silence, and to her last day, no complaint escaped her lips. Even to her husband she did not reveal all her suffering, in order to spare him distress. On the unanimous advice of several doctors the Rebbetzin was hospitalized. Soon after she arrived at the hospital she suddenly requested a glass of water. Shortly after midnight of Wednesday, the 22nd day of Shevat, the pure neshama of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka left this world. The Rebbetzin's forebearers, Rebbetzin Rivka and Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah, her great-grandmother and grandmother, had asked for a glass of water minutes before their passing. It is recorded in many holy books that tzadikim often ask for water before their passing. One explanation that is given is that their souls thereby leave this world after reciting the proper blessing before drinking water, "...and everything is created through His word" and the blessing afterward "...He who creates many souls." This same blessing will be said at the time of the resurrection of the dead in the Messianic Era.

In the merit of the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, may we follow the Rebbe's injunction to take her life's accomplishments to heart, and with our many deeds of goodness and kindness, may we see the coming of Moshiach now.

Road Work Told by Chessed Halberstam

Note: Chessed Halberstam worked in the employ of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneersohn, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, for eighteen years — from 1970 until the Rebbetzin's passing in 1988 — performing household chores and serving as the Rebbetzin's driver.

The Rebbe requested that I try to see to it that the Rebbetzin gets out of the house every day for fresh air. Usually we would drive out to a park in Long Island. In the years that my son, Ari (may G-d avenge his blood), was a young child, we would often drive by his school on Ocean Parkway to take him along; the Rebbetzin enjoyed playing with him, pushing him on the swings in the park playground, etc.

One day, as we neared the park, we found our regular route closed off due to road work, and were forced to proceed instead on a parallel street. As we drove along that street, we heard

the sound of a woman screaming in Russian. When I stopped at the next traffic light, the Rebbetzin turned to me and said: "I heard a woman screaming; can you go back and see what that was about?"

We drove back to the beginning of the street. There we saw a woman standing on the curb and weeping, while near her workers were carrying furniture and household items from a house and loading them on to a truck belonging to the county marshal. "I heard a woman screaming; can you go back and see what that was about?" At the Rebbetzin's request, I parked behind the marshal's truck and went to learn the details of what was going on. The marshal explained that the woman had not paid her rent for many months and was now being evicted from her home.

When I reported back to the Rebbetzin, she asked me to go back and inquire from the marshal how much the woman owed, and if he would accept a personal check; she also asked that I should not say anything to the family being evicted. At this point, I still did not realize where all this was leading, but I fulfilled the Rebbetzin's request. The sum that the family owed was approximately \$6,700. The marshal said that he had no problem accepting a personal check, as long as he confirms with the bank that the check is covered; he also said that if he received the payment, his men would carry everything back into the house. When I informed the Rebbetzin of the details, she took out her checkbook and, to my amazement, wrote out a check for the full amount, and asked me to give it to the marshal.

The marshal made a phone call to the bank, and then instructed his workers to take everything back into the house. The Rebbetzin immediately urged me to quickly drive away, before the woman realized what had transpired.

I was completely amazed at what I had seen and later, when we were in the park, I could not contain myself and asked the Rebbetzin what had prompted her to give such a large sum to a total stranger?

"Do you really want to know?" asked the Rebbetzin.

"Yes, I do," I replied.

"Then I'll tell you," she said. "Once, when I was a young girl, my father took me for a walk in the park. He sat me down on a bench and started to tell me about the idea of *hashgachah peratit* ('specific divine providence'). Every time — said father — when something causes us to deviate from our normal routine, there is a divinely ordained reason for this; every time we see something unusual, there is a purpose in why we've been shown this sight.

"Today," continued the Rebbetzin, "when I saw the 'Detour' sign instructing us to deviate from our regular route, I remembered my father's words and immediately thought to myself: Every day we drive by this street; suddenly, the street's closed off and we're sent to a different street. What is the purpose of this? How is this connected to me? Then I heard the sound of a woman crying and screaming. I realized that we have been sent along this route for a purpose."

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ISSUE 916

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The efforts of Jewish women to serve as catalysts for the Redemption have historical precedents. In the Egyptian exile, it was Miriam who communicated the prophecy that a redeemer would emerge. Moreover, this took place while she was still a child, implying that similar activities can be undertaken by Jewish girls even before they reach full maturity. Even when the leaders of the generation could not foresee an end to servitude and oppression, she spread hope and trust among her people.
(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 11 Shevat, 5752 - 1992)

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



The following letter was written by the Rebbe to one of the renowned generals of the Six Day War:

I was deeply distressed to hear of your great loss—the tragic death of your 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 Alm-ghty 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 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,” and 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 the 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 Holy Temple of wood and stone, of gold and silver, but they could not harm the inner “Holy Temple” in the heart of every Jew, for it is eternal. In the same way, 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 or 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 mitzva of tefilin, one mitzva bringing another, and another, in its train.

A WORD from the Director

This Shabbat is the 22nd yartzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, of blessed memory, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and daughter of the Previous Rebbe. Born in the Russian village of Babinovitch (a small shtetl near Lubavitch) in 1901, she played an integral role in both her father’s and husband’s affairs throughout her life. And yet, she deliberately chose to function out of the limelight. Extremely modest, royal in bearing and above all kindly, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka was the embodiment of Jewish womanhood and an exceptional role model for Jewish women and girls.

On the anniversary of her passing several years ago, the Rebbe spoke about the special mission all Jewish woman have been entrusted with. The function of every Jew - man, woman and child - is to “make a dwelling place for G-d” on earth. But the goal of the Jewish woman is to take this one step further, and adorn G-d’s abode on the physical plane so that it is “lovely” and appointed with “fine furnishings.”

In particular, the Jewish woman fulfills her role of “spiritual decorator” through the three special mitzvot G-d has given her to implement in her private home: maintaining the kashrut of her kitchen, keeping the laws of Family Purity, and lighting candles on Shabbat on Yom Tov, together with her daughters. (The Rebbe specified that young girls should light first, so that their mothers can assist them if necessary.)

The Rebbe also called on women to renew their commitment to the Jewish education of their children, from the earliest age on. When a Jewish mother sings a lullaby to her baby about how the Torah is “the best, the sweetest, and the most beautiful” thing in the world, it instills a deep love and appreciation for Torah that lasts a lifetime.

The main point during these last few moments of exile, the Rebbe stressed, is to recognize the great merit and power Jewish women and girls have to bring about the Final Redemption, may it happen at once.

J. I. Gutnick

More Customs of the first week of marriage

The first week of marriage is celebrated by the newlywed couple in holiday fashion. Shabbat finery is worn throughout, and neither of them goes to work. When the groom goes to the synagogue to pray, the entire congregation omits the Tachanun (Confessional sections of the prayers which are omitted on festive days of the Jewish calendar) in honour of the holiday atmosphere generated by the guest.

It is customary for the groom to be called up to the Torah for an Aliyah on the Shabbat after the wedding.

As mentioned in previous columns, the bride and groom receive royal treatment the entire first week of marriage. Accordingly, the newlywed couple, whether together or individually, don’t leave their home unaccompanied—they are accompanied by an “honour-guard” wherever they go.

Under certain circumstances the bride and groom may be exempt from fasting on certain Jewish fast days if they happen to occur during the first week of marriage. A rabbi should be consulted for an actual Halachic ruling.

CUSTOMS CORNER

It Happened Once...



Darkness enveloped the silent streets of Karlin, Russia. All the Jewish inhabitants had hurried to lock themselves inside their homes. The Russian government had decreed that no Jews may be found on the streets after nightfall.

This decree was most difficult for a fiery follower – a *chassid* – of Rabbi Aaron of Karlin to observe. On one frigid night, this man was overcome with a powerful desire to see his rebbe and to warm his soul by watching the holy man's service of G-d. Despite the danger, a magnetic longing drew him from his home...

Clutching a *Tehillim* – the Book of Psalms – in his hand, the chassid hurried through the streets of Karlin, heading to the home of his rebbe.

Suddenly, a Russian policeman stood before him, blocking his path. Immediately, the chassid's hands were bound and he was unceremoniously dumped into the town jail.

"I wasn't destined to see my rebbe tonight," thought the chassid to himself, "but my precious *Tehillim* has remained with me." And with that, he began to recite the words of *Tehillim* with warmth and enthusiasm, verse by verse, chapter by chapter.

As the outpouring of prayer ascended to its heavenly place, a pair of wild hands suddenly snatched the *Tehillim* from him...

The chassid remained unruffled. "My rebbe they wouldn't allow me to see, and my *Tehillim* they took from me," he whispered to himself. "Nevertheless, I am a Jew!" A wave of joy washed over him at the thought. He rose to his feet and began to dance.

The prison guard peered at him with unbelieving eyes. But his incredulity gave way to hysterics. "Get out of here right now!" he yelled. "This small jail has no room for mentally imbalanced people!"

In happy spirits, the chassid ran at once to his rebbe. Rabbi Aaron greeted him warmly, "If one is joyous to be a Jew, a part of the Jewish nation, one can be rescued from everything!"

The visitor from Hungary stopped a passerby on a street in the town of Lisensk with the query: "Can you please direct me to the home of the great Rabbi Elimelech?"

The man raised his eyelids in astonishment: "You mean to tell me that you journeyed all the way from Hungary to see this 'Rebbe of Lisensk'?! Have the exaggerations and embellishments about this man traveled that far already? I know this Rabbi Elimelech personally, and the man is an absolute zero. I'm afraid that you've wasted your time and money on these silly rumors."

The visitor was outraged. "You lowly, despicable man!" he thundered. "What do *you* know! You obviously have no understanding of anything holy and spiritual!" Still fuming, the visitor stormed off.

Later that day, when he entered Rabbi Elimelech's study for his appointed audience, he nearly fainted in shame and remorse. The man he had derided earlier on the street was none other than Rabbi Elimelech himself! With tears in his eyes, he begged the Rebbe's forgiveness.

"Why are you so upset?" asked Rabbi Elimelech. "There's no need to apologize. I told you the simple truth, and everything you said was also true..."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

And Yitro [Jethro], the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law...and Yitro, father-in-law of Moses (Ex. 18:1, 2)

Why is "father-in-law" mentioned twice in describing Yitro? Yitro was an important man in his own right. As the "priest of Midian," he already enjoyed a high status. Yet he chose to be known as "Moses' father-in-law," for he knew this was his true claim to greatness.

(Ohr Hachayim)

You shall select out of all the people...men of truth, hating bribe (18:21)

You will have to search hard to find these people, Yitro counseled Moses, for men possessing these qualities usually run away from positions of honor and do not sit idle all day, enabling you to find them easily. *(Shaar Bat Rabim)*

And Yitro heard...and he came...to Moses (18:1-5)

What did Yitro hear to cause him to seek out Moses? He heard of the miracles of the Red Sea and the war against Amalek. These events aroused in him a strong belief in G-d, and he set off. Why did he need to see Moses personally? Yitro knew that in order to learn Torah properly, he couldn't rely on second-hand information. He had to go to the leader of the generation and learn from him directly. *(Sichot Tzadikim)*

You shall sanctify today and tomorrow, and they shall wash their clothes (19:10)

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi once said, "You shall sanctify today and tomorrow" refers to the G-dliness and holiness that is bestowed from Above; "and they shall wash their clothes" refers to the effort that each of us must make on his own behalf.

His grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek, elaborated: "The command to sanctify 'today and tomorrow' was given to Moses, and indeed, in every generation, the tzadik and leader of that generation has the power to elevate the world and imbue it with more holiness. However, this must first be preceded by the preparation of 'washing the clothes.' Each individual must first work on himself to cleanse the garments of his soul—his thoughts, deeds and actions—before asking for help from Above."

Because the L-rd descended on it in fire (Ex. 19:18)

The giving of the Torah at Sinai is closely associated with fire, to teach us that a Jew should always worship G-d with a fiery enthusiasm, eagerness and warmth - the ability for which was conferred at Mount Sinai.

(Sefer HaMaamarim 5701)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS YISRO 22 SHEVAT • 6 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:13 PM
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS :	8:55 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LAST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10:06 AM
	MINCHA:	8:10 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:12 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS: SUN- FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:15 PM
	MAARIV:	9:05 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 5 FEBRUARY 2010



Begins		Ends
8:13	MELBOURNE	9:12
8:03	ADELAIDE	9:00
6:22	BRISBANE	7:17
7:01	DARWIN	7:52
6:21	GOLD COAST	7:15
6:58	PERTH	7:55
7:40	SYDNEY	8:37
7:51	CANBERRA	8:49
8:11	LAUNCESTON	9:14
8:12	AUCKLAND	9:11
8:21	WELLINGTON	9:23

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.