

INSPIRE

VYAKHEL PEKUDEI- CHAZAK - HACHODESH

25TH ADAR - 21ST MARCH 2020

The Cloud

This week we finish the reading of the book of Exodus, also known in the commentaries as the Book of Redemption because of its description of the people of Israel leaving Egypt. This second book of the Torah concludes by describing the establishment and dedication of the Tabernacle and, most importantly, the revelation of G-d's Divine Presence within it. The Torah tells us: "When the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the Israelites would set out, on their various journeys." This seemingly simple verse raises two very significant questions. First of all, what is the connection between the Jews travelling forward and the establishment of the Tabernacle in the desert? This information would seem to be more appropriate later in the book of Numbers, when it describes in great detail the various travels of the people of Israel during their 40 years in the desert. Secondly, the verse implies that the Jews' march toward the Land of Israel is specifically connected to the Divine Presence leaving their camp in the desert. Only when "the cloud lifted" do "the Israelites set out." Why is this so? Chasidic thought answers both of these questions by dealing with the ultimate existential nature of Creation. It understands the Tabernacle to be a paradigm for all of the world. What dynamic is at play behind the timing of the Jewish people's journeys? One answer is that there is no great spiritual accomplishment in fulfilling the Divine Will at a time when G-d's Presence is revealed and manifest. The ultimate goal of existence is to rise up and connect to holiness even when it is hidden and concealed from us.

The Midrash tells us that G-d desired a "dwelling place for Himself in the lower worlds." But relative to G-d, is there truly an upper or lower world? His realm is infinite. We can now understand that when G-d's cloud was found among the Jewish people and His Presence was revealed, then the material world ceased to be "lowly." It is only when the cloud of G-d raises itself higher and higher, and His Divine Light is no longer revealed, can we begin the spiritual fulfilling of G-d's design. And the Tabernacle bestows upon the Jewish people the strength and faculties to bring holiness into the world, the ultimate purpose of Creation. This is an extremely relevant message for us all at this time in Jewish history. We are in a spiritual state of exile. There is a darkness that rests on the world necessitating our best efforts, even more than before, to engage in the study of Torah and the fulfilment of mitzvot. We must understand that our ultimate goal and purpose is to illuminate that darkness with the light of Torah. Just as the disappearance of the Divine cloud from the Tabernacle became the sign to proceed forward, so, too, should today's conflicts encourage and arouse us to dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of G-d's mission, which is to journey past this era and into the Messianic era of the complete and full redemption.



LOUGHTONSHUL
MORE THAN A SHUL

Shabbos Times

CANDLE LIGHTING 6:00PM
SHABBAT ENDS 7:03PM

FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICE
&
SHABBOS DAY

PRAY AT HOME WITH SONG
AND JOY

ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT
EVEN THOUGH ONE CANNOT GET
A ALIYAH, THEY CAN LEARN THE
TORAH PORTION IN THE MERIT
OF THE LOVED ONE

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What could be the meaning of a virus forcing millions into a "timeout" of quarantine and seclusion?

Coronavirus is now officially a global pandemic. Suddenly we find ourselves smitten by a plague of biblical severity. Passover asks us to remember the 10 plagues which God sent against the Egyptians. With the help of the Bible we know the purpose behind these afflictions of a people. God had a plan. Egyptian suffering had meaning. What makes our contemporary anguish so particularly unbearable is its seeming incomprehensibility.

In the age of the prophets there would've been an effort to discern some divine message in this global tragedy. But today we somehow assume that scientific knowledge precludes the possibility for including God as part of the management of the universe. After all who can argue with Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch who, in the latter half of the 19th century, proved the germ theory of disease – that pathogens too small to see without magnification are the true cause of illness. Germs are the villains and viruses are the sole reasons for the presence of diseases which determine whether we live or die.

And I dare to ask: Doesn't belief in God demand that we merge the germ theory of disease with the conviction of faith in a supreme being who actually decides where, when and how far viruses spread?

Please understand exactly what I'm saying. Maimonides long ago made clear that it is our obligation to ensure our good health. We can't simply rely on God; God has made us his partners in our quest for longevity. Hygiene is a mitzvah; it's an obligation. Taking care of our bodies is a spiritual requirement akin to protecting our souls. When we are directed by doctors to wash our hands we are required to do so by Torah law. But the ultimate decision of life or death remains, as we make clear every year on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when our fate is sealed, with the Almighty. That is why I'm amazed that of the countless suggestions for how to counter and to cope with the coronavirus we hear so little of the word God and the possibility that this global pandemic brings with it a profound divine message. I am obviously no prophet, but here is a thought that I think is worth considering and taking to heart. Every parent knows that one of the most obvious responses to a child's misbehaviour is what is commonly known as a "timeout." The child is restricted from enjoying pleasurable activities. The child has his normal life disrupted. The child is encouraged to reflect upon his disobedience. Is it too much to consider that as our world continues to sink ever lower in our commitment to virtue that God responded with a virus that has forced millions into a "timeout" of quarantine and seclusion?

The 10 Commandments are the biblical source of the most basic system of ethical and moral behaviour. They represent the primary justification for our continued existence on earth. And the commentators took note of a remarkable number. In the original Hebrew, the language in which the commandments were inscribed by God on the two tablets, there are exactly 620 letters. 620 would seem to be a number with no particular theological significance. It would've been perfect and readily comprehensible if there were exactly 613 letters in the 10 Commandments. Those are the numbers of mitzvot given to the Jewish people in the Torah. The 10 Commandments are the principles inherent in all of Jewish law. But what is the meaning of 620 letters? The rabbis explained. While the number of mitzvot for Jews is 613, the number seven represents universal law – what is commonly referred to as the seven laws of the descendants of Noah, required as a minimum for all of mankind. And 620 of course is the sum of 613 and seven, the totality of divine guidance for both Jews as well as the rest of the world.

The commentary does not end there. 620 is the gematria, the numerical value, of an important Hebrew word, keter, which means crown. A keter – a crown – is placed on top of every Torah scroll. The symbolism is obvious. The crown above the Torah demonstrates the relationship of the 10 Commandments to the rest of the Torah. From the 10 – in number of letters 620 – we have the principles which subsequently found expression in the entirety of the Torah.

The keter – the crown – is the most powerful symbol of our connection with God.

The word corona – as in coronavirus – comes from the Latin word for crown.

Perhaps we need to consider the world's present affliction not just in the context of a disease caused by pathogens but as a divine message reminding us that we have been given our lives to invest them with meaning and virtue as defined by God's 10 Commandments.

A LITTLE HISTORY

What Is Maror?

By definition, maror is something bitter.

But what?

The Mishnah lists five herbs that fit the bill. There is some discussion as to how to translate the Hebrew/Aramaic words of the Mishnah, but it is generally accepted that romaine lettuce, horseradish and endives (escarole) are included in the list.

The Chabad custom is to use romaine lettuce and horseradish together.

The Mishnah continues that both the stalk and the leaves (if using an herb that has leaves) may be used, and they may be fresh or dry. The Talmud, however, points out that this allowance for dry herbs is only regarding the stalk; the leaves must be fresh. The herbs may not be cooked, or even soaked for 24 hours, since that would cause them to lose their bitter taste.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

As impossible as it sounds, as absurd as it may seem: The mandate of darkness is to become light; the mandate of a busy, messy world is to find oneness. We have proof: for the greater the darkness becomes and the greater the confusion of life, the deeper our souls reach inward to discover their own essence-core. How could it be that darkness leads us to find a deeper light? That confusion leads us to find a deeper truth? Only because the very act of existence was set from its beginning to know its own Author. As it says, "In the beginning . . . G-d said, 'It shall become light!'"

Moses assembles the people of Israel and reiterates to them the commandment to observe the Shabbat. He then conveys G-d's instructions regarding the making of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The people donate the required materials in abundance, bringing gold, silver and copper; blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool; goat hair, spun linen, animal skins, wood, olive oil, herbs and precious stones. Moses has to tell them to stop giving. A team of wise-hearted artisans make the Mishkan and its furnishings (as detailed in the previous Torah readings of Terumah, Tetzaveh and Ki Tisa): three layers of roof coverings; 48 gold-plated wall panels, and 100 silver foundation sockets; the parochet (veil) that separates between the Sanctuary's two chambers, and the masach (screen) that fronts it; the Ark and its cover with the Cherubim; the table and its showbread; the seven-branched menorah with its specially prepared oil; the golden altar and the incense burned on it; the anointing oil; the outdoor altar for burnt offerings and all its implements; the hangings, posts and foundation sockets for the courtyard; and the basin and its pedestal, made out of copper mirrors. An accounting is made of the gold, silver and copper donated by the people for the making of the Mishkan. Betzalel, Aholiav and their assistants make the eight priestly garments—the ephod, breastplate, cloak, crown, turban, tunic, sash and breeches—according to the specifications communicated to Moses in the Parshah of Tetzaveh. The Mishkan is completed and all its components are brought to Moses, who erects it and anoints it with the holy anointing oil, and initiates Aaron and his four sons into the priesthood. A cloud appears over the Mishkan, signifying the divine presence that has come to dwell within it.

This week's Haftorah is from Yechezkel – Ezekiel Chapter 45 and is related to the reading of Parshas Hachodesh. The latter chapters of Yechezkel describe the future Bais Hamikdash and the service that will take place once Mashiach has come and the Jews have returned to Eretz Israel. The Haftorah describes the offering that the Prince (the King or the High Priest) will bring on Rosh Chodesh – the New Moon. This selection from Yechezkel is especially appropriate for the Shabbos that precedes or coincides with the beginning of the month of Nissan. The month of Nissan is known as the month of redemption. Our exodus from Egypt took place in the month of Nissan. The Mishkan was first assembled on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. The Mizbeach was inaugurated into service during the first 12 days of Nissan. Therefore, we hope that this year, in the month of Nissan, we will again merit to be redeemed from exile, rebuild the Bais Hamikdash, and again inaugurate the Mizbeach by bringing the Rosh Chodesh offering in the service of G-d.



WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK - CHAYIM ARUCHIM

- Winter Alan Mother Ada bas Yosef 25 Adar
- Michaels David Mother 25 Adar
- Irwin Sandra Father Yoel ben Yaakov 26 Adar
- Lorraine Jonathan Mother Sheina Rivka bas Moshe Chaim 26 Adar
- Kashket Norma Mother Miriam bas Mordechai 27 Adar
- Prever Janine Mother Seisal bas Dovid Halevi 27 Adar
- Blow Pamela Mother 27 Adar
- Gee Steven Father Dovid ben Shmuel Yitzchak HaLevi 27 Adar
- Bensusan Blanche Daughter Rachel bas Chaim 28 Adar
- Grant Suki Father Sidney ben Shaul 28 Adar
- Bermange Karen Sister Masha Bas EliMelech 29 Adar
- Roll Gary Father Pinchos Ben Eliezer 29 Adar
- Leigh Ruth Mother Chinah bas Yitzchak 2 Nissan



HUMOUR???

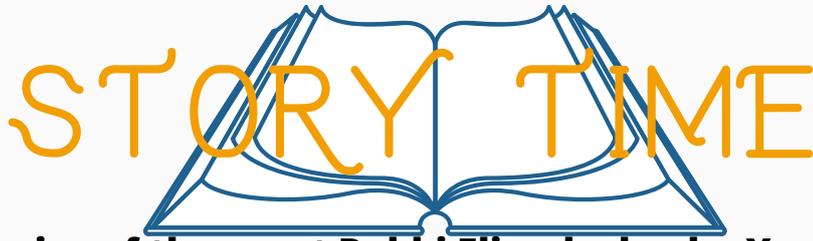
A boy breaks an old vase at a rich uncle's house. The uncle gets extremely angry and yells: "Do you even know how old the vase was? It was from the 17th century!" The boy sagged in relief: "Oh, good that it wasn't new."



Riddle of the week

Lovely and round, I shine with pale light, Grown in the darkness, a lady's delight. What am I?

Answer to last weeks Riddle
your reflection



2 stories of the great Rabbi Elimelech who Yartzeit was this past week

For many years the two saintly brothers, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk and Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli, wandered the back roads of Galicia. Disguised as simple beggars, they journeyed from town to town and from village to village, refining their souls with the travails of exile and inspiring their brethren with words of wisdom and encouragement. Late one evening, the brothers arrived in the town of Lodmir. Seeing a lighted window in a large, well-appointed home, they knocked on the door and asked for a place to stay the night. "I don't run a hotel," was the irate response of its large, well-appointed resident. "There's a poorhouse near the synagogue for wandering beggars. I'm sure you'll have no trouble finding accommodations there." The heavy door all but slammed in their faces, and Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusha walked on. Soon they came upon another lighted home, whose resident, the town scribe, welcomed them in and put his humble hut and resources at their disposal. Several years later, the two brothers again visited Lodmir. This time, they were official guests of the community, which had requested that the now-famous rabbis come for a Shabbat to grace the town with their presence and teachings. At the welcoming reception held in their honour and attended by the entire town, a wealthy gentleman approached them. "Rabbis!" he announced, "the town council has granted me the honour of hosting you during your stay. G-d has been generous to me, and you'll want for nothing in my home. I've already explained to your coachman how to find my residence, though he's sure not to miss it—everyone knows where 'Reb Feivel' lives..." The gathering dispersed, and Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusha went to pay their respects to the town rabbi and meet with the scholars in the local study hall. The rich man went home to supervise the final arrangements for the rabbis' stay. Soon the coachman arrived with the brothers' coach and luggage. The horses were placed in the stables, the luggage in the rabbis' rooms, and the coachman settled in the servants' quarters. Hours passed, but still no sign of the two visitors. Growing anxious, the host sought out their coachman. "What happened?" he asked. "When are they going to come here?" "They're not coming," said the coachman. "Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusha are staying at the scribe's home." "At the scribe's?! What are you talking about?! You're here, aren't you?" "Those were the rabbis' instructions. 'Take the horses and our luggage to Reb Feivel's,' they said to me. 'We'll be staying with the scribe.'" Reb Feivel rushed to the scribe's hut and fairly knocked down the door. "Honoured Rabbis," he cried, finding Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusha before the fire, having a cup of tea with their host. "Why have you done this to me? It was agreed that I would host you. You must tell me what I have done to deserve such humiliation!" "But you are hosting us," said Rabbi Elimelech, "at least, that part of us that you desire to host. Last time we were here, but without a coach, horses, coachman and bundles of pressed clothes, you turned us away from your door. So it is not us you want in your home, but our coachman, horses and luggage—which are currently enjoying your hospitality..."

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 travelled 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 rumours." 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 apologise. I told you the simple truth, and everything you said was also true..."