

L'Chaim

The Yeshiva Centre - Chabad NSW Headquarters
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Living with the Rebbe



This week's Torah portion, Beshalach, speaks about the perpetual battle the Jewish people were commanded to wage against Amalek. "For G-d has sworn by His throne, that the L-rd will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

The Targum of Yonatan ben Uziel (a translation of the Bible into Aramaic, the Jewish vernacular of ancient times) explains that the war against Amalek will end only when Moshiach comes and ushers in the Messianic age.

Nowadays we do not know the physical identity of Amalek; only Moshiach will be able to correctly distinguish between who is, and who is not, one of his descendants. Thus, at present, we are unable to fulfill the mitzva (commandment) in the literal sense.

Nonetheless, the commandment to "blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven" is still incumbent upon us today, albeit in the spiritual sense.

"Amalek," in terms of our spiritual service of G-d, is symbolic of coldness and apathy for all that is holy. Of Amalek it is said, "He cooled you off" - i.e., the physical Amalek dampened Israel's eagerness and enthusiasm for the Torah they were about to receive at Sinai following the exodus from Egypt; the spiritual Amalek lurks in the recesses of our hearts.

G-dliness and holiness are warm and filled with life and vitality; apathy and indifference are cool and unresponsive.

"All right," the spiritual Amalek whispers in our ears, "you want to observe the Torah's commandments? Fine! Every Jew should do so. But why be all excited about it? It's not as if you're doing something new, something you've never done before. Every day you learn Torah, every day you recite your prayers. What's the big deal?" In this way (as well as in many other subtle ones) Amalek attempts to cool off the Jew's innate ardor and natural affinity for holiness. His aim is to blind him to the true reality: that a Jew's performance of a mitzva is the single most significant act that can ever be accomplished in this world, one which affects his entire being forever and ever.

The crafty Amalek is ever vigilant and resourceful when it comes to tricking a Jew into adopting a ho-hum attitude towards sanctity and G-dliness.

How are we to fight this incursion of coldness? By responding with warmth and emotion, consciously resisting Amalek's attempt to cloud our eyes to the truth.

Furthermore, waging war against Amalek in the spiritual sense serves to prepare us for the era in which we will be able to do so in the physical sense - the age of our Righteous Moshiach, may it commence immediately.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. 2)

THE SONGS WE SING

It's part of our nature: we love songs. Songs reflect our moods, they create our moods. Songs express our thoughts, our feelings, our dreams and our ideals. Song brings us together in a way no other media can. Whether it's the combination of voice and instrument, or whether the multi-form interplay - words and music - have you ever heard the music of a favorite song, without the words? If you don't start adding, the words, immediately, it sounds off. And even if it's in a different tempo or style, we fill in the blanks. And very often the lyrics of a sensational, powerful song are just banal without the melody.

And of course songs come in many different styles and genres: folk, jazz, pop, rock and roll, classic - you need a musicologist to list them all. There are protest songs, folk songs, ballads, love songs, patriotic songs, nonsense songs, and - again, you'd need an expert in music history, or theory, to tell you all the types. And even they'd probably leave some out.

You can tell a lot about a person by looking at his or her iTunes library. Even more by checking out the playlists - how they organize the songs in their lives, what type of music or singer they favor, etc. In fact, you could probably draw a pretty good picture of their personality simply by surveying their music.

The same can be said of a people, or a nation. So let's take a look at what Jews listen to - as Jews. We're not talking about Jewish versions of a Broadway play or whatever. What we're talking about are songs that, no matter the genre or style, when people hear them they say, "Oh, that's a Jewish song."

We can leave out cantorial music, because of course synagogue music is Jewish. No, we want to look at the "popular" stuff. They all have one thing in common: The content - verses from Torah, or Psalms, or some other Biblical (or even Rabbinic) text. Even the English songs, when not translations, are reworking of Biblical motifs.

So even when the melody, or tune, is contemporary, fits a "modern beat," the message is timeless. Jewish songs express the essential nature of the Jewish soul - a longing for G-d's Presence, a celebration of tradition (Shabbat, a wedding), expressions of Jewish identity (Am Yisrael Chai), a recasting of prayer as song, an informal approach to verses from Psalms and the Torah so that they become familiar, echo in the mind and flow from the tongue - even if we don't know Hebrew, these words become who we are, how we express ourselves. And of course, the yearning for Moshiach.

Jews sing songs that no other nation sings, in a way no other nation sings.

Jewish songs - really Jewish songs - express not only the unquenchable desire for an encounter with G-d, they evoke, illustrate, and yes, anticipate how we will feel when the "whole world will be filled with knowledge of G-dliness."

So, sing! Sing a song to the King. Sing a new song. Sing a song of ascents!

And, to paraphrase, Sing Jewish.

Aliyot Summery

General Overview: In this week's reading, Beshalach, Pharaoh pursues the Israelites into the desert. The Red Sea splits, the Israelites cross the sea while the Egyptian army is drowned. Moses and the Israelites sing a special song thanking G-d for this miracle. The Israelites complain about a lack of food and drink. G-d sends Manna and quail for them to eat, and miraculously produces water from a rock. Amalek attacks the Israelites and is soundly defeated.

First Aliyah: After Pharaoh sent the Israelites from his land, G-d did not allow them to take the most direct route to the Promised Land, fearing that any confrontation would then frighten the Israelites, causing them to return to Egypt via this short route. Instead G-d had them take the circuitous desert route, leading them with a pillar of cloud during daytime and a pillar of fire after dark. G-d then commanded the Israelites to backtrack and encamp along the Red Sea. They would thus appear to be hopelessly lost, which would prompt the Egyptians to pursue them. The Israelites followed this instruction, and, indeed, the Egyptians armies set out after the "lost" and cornered Israelites.

Second Aliyah: The Israelites noticed the approaching Egyptian armies, and they panicked. "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the desert?" they screamed at Moses. "Don't be afraid," Moses reassured. "Stand firm and see G-d's salvation that He will wreak for you today . . . G-d will fight for you, and you shall remain silent."

Third Aliyah: G-d instructed Moses, "Speak to the children of Israel and let them travel!" G-d told Moses to stretch out his staff over the sea and divide it, and the Israelites should then proceed through the split sea. "And the Egyptians shall know that I am G-d, when I will be glorified through Pharaoh, through his chariots, and through his horsemen." Meanwhile, the pillar of cloud that normally led the Israelites moved to their rear, insulating the Israelites and plunging the Egyptian camp into darkness. Moses stretched out his staff and the sea divided, and the Israelites walked on the seabed, on dry land. The Egyptians quickly pursued them into the sea.

Fourth Aliyah: Moses stretched his hand over the sea and the waters that had been standing like walls now fell upon the Egyptians, drowning them all. Moses then led the Israelites in

song, praising G-d for the wondrous miracle that had transpired. Miriam, Moses' sister, then led the women in song and dance, with musical accompaniment. The Israelites traveled on in the desert, journeying three days without encountering water. They then arrived in Marah, where there was water—but bitter water. Moses miraculously sweetened the water.

Fifth Aliyah: One month after the Exodus, the Israelites' provisions ran dry. They complained to Moses, mentioning nostalgically "the fleshpots of Egypt," that they left behind. G-d responded that He will rain down bread from heaven in the mornings, and meat will be provided every night.

Sixth Aliyah: The meat, in the form of quails, appeared in the evening and covered the Israelite camp. In the morning, bread – called manna – fell from heaven, encased between layers of morning dew. Moses told the Israelites to gather one omer (a biblical measure) of manna per household member every day. Miraculously, no matter how much manna one picked, he arrived home with precisely one omer per head. Furthermore, Moses commanded the Israelites not to leave any manna over from one day to the next. Some disregarded this instruction, and next morning found their manna worm-infested. On Friday everyone picked two omers. Moses explained that the second portion was to be prepared and set aside for Shabbat—when no manna would fall. Again some disregarded Moses' directive, and went out pick manna on Shabbat. G-d was angered by this disobedience. G-d instructed Moses to take a jar of manna and place it in the (yet to be constructed) Tabernacle, as a testament for all future generations.

Seventh Aliyah: The Israelites journeyed further and as they arrived in Rephidim their drinking water ran out again. The Israelites complained, and G-d instructed Moses to smite a certain rock with his staff. Water came pouring out of the rock and the people drank. The Amalekites then came and attacked the Israelites. Moses directed his student Joshua to assemble an army and battle Amalek. Joshua did so, and the Israelites were victorious—aided by Moses' prayer atop a mountain. G-d told Moses to record in the Book that He will "surely erase the memory of Amalek from under the heavens."

Thoughts that Count

And Israel saw the great power which the L-rd had shown on the Egyptians...and they believed in G-d (Ex. 14:31)

Even though the Jewish people had witnessed many wonders and miracles firsthand they still needed to have faith in G-d. For faith is on a higher level than sight; indeed, it enables a person to see more than the physical eye can ever observe. *(Chidushei HaRim)*

And they believed in G-d (Ex. 14:31) The Hebrew word for faith, emuna, has a dual meaning. Etymologically, it is related to the word meaning to train or accustom oneself, and also to the word for power and strength. However, these two meanings are interrelated. In the merit of emuna, i.e., by virtue of the strength and certitude of the G-dly soul, a Jew is able to overcome the downward pull of the animal soul and ascend from one spiritual level to the next, till he merits the very highest revelations of G-dliness. Indeed, the Jewish people merited to sing the "Song of the Sea" solely because of their emuna.

(Sefer HaMaamarim 5680)

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



This coming Shabbat is called Shabbat Shira, "the Sabbath of Song."

It is the Shabbat on which we read the Torah portion of Beshalach, which describes the splitting of the Red Sea and the song of praise to G-d sung by the men (led by Moshe), and the song of praise sung by the women (led by Miriam).

Our Sages explain that the Jewish people are destined to sing ten songs. Nine songs have already been sung by the Jewish people as a whole; in the Era of the Redemption, we will sing the tenth song, "a new song."

The first nine songs are referred to as "shira," the feminine form of the word "song," while the "new song" of the Era of the Redemption is referred to as "shir," the masculine form of the word.

All the previous songs refer to the efforts of the Jewish people (the feminine dimension) to ascend to a higher spiritual level and to elevate their environment. In contrast, the song of the Era of the Redemption will be a song of revelation from Above (the masculine dimension).

According to the commentary Me'am Lo'ez, there is another difference between the nine songs sung in exile and the tenth song of the Redemption.

In the past, no one sang a song until after the miracle had occurred. The song was never sung in advance, even when a miracle was anticipated.

In the Messianic Era, however, people will sing because of a future miracle; it is therefore called a "new song" - an entirely new concept. Our faith will be so strong that we will sing even before the miracle occurs.

As the Rebbe said in a talk one year on Shabbat Shira, "Soon we will merit the singing of the 'new song,' the song of Redemption, a song of unity and oneness.

Indeed, a foretaste of the happiness and joy which will accompany that song can be experienced at present. The confidence that the Redemption is an immediate reality should produce joy and happiness."

Pinchus Feldman

Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

Smile its Friday! A Jewish young man was seeing a psychiatrist for an eating and sleeping disorder. "I am so obsessed with my mother... As soon as I go to sleep, I start dreaming, and everyone in my dream turns into my mother. I wake up in such a state, all I can do is go downstairs and eat a piece of toast." The psychiatrist replies: "What, just one piece of toast, for a big boy like you?"

A Blessing From The Rebbe

by Dr. David Lazerson

I run an experiential, hands-on music program at the Quest Center in Hollywood, Florida for students with profound special needs, including autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, medically fragile conditions, and other challenges. The Quest Center is part of the Broward County public schools.

And unbeknownst to me, my district superintendent, principal and fellow teachers had nominated me to be inducted in the National Teachers Hall of Fame (NTHF). When I was informed that I had been selected, I had to confess that, up to that point, I had never even heard of a Teachers Hall of Fame before.

A few days after I was notified, I received an email from the NTHF, located in Emporia, Kansas. The jam-packed schedule of events would include media sessions and interviews, roundtable discussion groups, meetings with various educational leaders and dignitaries, local tours, dinner receptions, which would then culminate with the Friday evening, official induction ceremony. They stated that if there were any issues at all, I shouldn't hesitate to contact them. I emailed them back with my two issues: Shabbat and kosher food. This was followed by a quick, one word response: "Huh?"

The induction ceremony was scheduled to end around 9:00 p.m.; it would already be Shabbat. So my wife Gittel and I searched online, and we finally found a cute Bed & Breakfast that was only a mere half mile away from Emporia State College, which was the venue for the event. Since this place was considerably more expensive than the hotel, we offered to pay the difference. The NTHF would hear nothing of the sort. "We'll put you up at the Bed & Breakfast. It's our pleasure!"

But they were just getting warmed up. Within days, the kosher food issue was settled as well. The NTHF would bring in all the goodies, including all the special foods for Shabbat, from Kansas City. How could we refuse?

With these details taken care of, I could now focus on the real tasks at hand and prepare for this major event. Being elected to the NTHF automatically puts one in a position of being a spokesperson for education. I would also be going as a national

representative for special education. I needed to be clear headed about where I stood on the important issues facing The world today. I would be asked, on national radio and TV, my opinions on all sorts of education-related issues, everything from No Child Left Behind, to why so many new teachers simply pack up and leave the field. Plus, and here was a critical factor, I would be wearing a kippa on my head. Thus, I would be representing not only my field of special education but also the Jewish people. It was a unique opportunity to make a real Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of G-d's name) - if all went well, of course.

To keep things flowing smoothly, whenever the inductees spoke for the media, we spoke in alphabetical order. My last name, Lazerson, put me fourth out of the five inductees. So I was surprised when at our ceremony rehearsal (rehearsing for the Friday evening event which would end at 9 p.m.), they had me speak first. "I don't want to rock the boat here," I protested. "No," they insisted. "We don't want you to have any problems with the Sabbath and using a microphone!"

Thursday morning, in our first responsibility as a group, the NTHF had us meet with over 150 high school students from across the state of Kansas. They were all thinking of becoming teachers and wanted to interview us. Several of the students wanted to know what my kippa symbolized and many, to my surprise, asked for my autograph. I couldn't help but feel pride for my profession. Here were high school teens asking for an autograph - not from a professional football or baseball player, not from a rock 'n roll star, not from a handsome face from the TV screen... but from a teacher. Suddenly I felt a feeling inside, yes, there is hope for us.

The events of the next two days were intense, busy, and lots of fun for us. At the actual induction ceremony, I spoke long before Shabbat began.

I ended my talk with that famous line from the Talmud: I learned a lot from my teacher. More from my colleagues.

But most from my students. Despite facing incredible difficulties and challenges day-in and day-out, they almost always have a smile on their faces. They teach us to love and to give and to appreciate the "small" things in life - the stuff we so often take for granted, which, of course, are really the big things.

The real surprise came later that Friday evening. My wife Gittel went back to our B&B to light the candles, then walked back to meet me at the ceremony. As Shabbat came in with the setting sun, the induction ceremony came to a close. Now it was party time! The reception would be held over at the hotel. The other inductees did their best to convince us to go.

"You sure we can't kidnap you? You know, just push you two into the open back seat of the car? Please!" They motioned to a waiting car with the back door open.

We had to graciously decline as we started to walk to our nearby lodging. My parents had come, as well as some friends from Miami, and our host family as well, so we had a good group for Shabbat dinner. About 40 minutes later, five or six carloads of people pulled up in front of the B&B. It was a loud, rowdy group and at first I thought it was some sort of college frat group.

Then they came under the porch lights. It was the entire reception group! All the inductees and their families. The university and school dignitaries. The media people. The NTHF people.

"We all decided," someone yelled, "if Laz can't come to the party, the party comes to Laz!"

We had tears in our eyes and simply couldn't believe it.

That night, we sat and answered questions... about kosher, Judaism, Shabbat. We told our guests about the seven laws of Noah for non-Jews. It was a magical Shabbat in Emporia. One that taught me the lessons of reaching out, of teaching and of helping others. And that the really important things in life are not measured or counted in dollars, but in matters of the human soul.

Excerpted from an article that appeared in the N'Shei Newsletter. To read the entire article or more about Dr. Laz, visit drlaz.com

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Moshiaach

ma t t e r s

And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for food, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail; it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for healing.

It Happened Once

Tu B'Shevat, (the fifteenth of the month of shvat) the Rosh Hashana for Trees, is a holiday replete with praises - praise of the Land of Israel and her celebrated fruits, and praise of G-d, Who gave His chosen land- from which his eyes never turn,- to His children for an eternal inheritance. Israel, the focus of the Jewish people's longing and desire, is "a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, and a land of olive trees and [date] honey."

On this day, when the land is renewed in its ability to produce, the Jewish people rejoice. And when the land yields its treasures to her children, they eat and praise their Father in Heaven Who bequeathed them such delicacies.

It is related by the great sage, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, that upon entering the land of israel the Twelve Tribes were allotted parcels of land according to their own distinct attributes, to the extent that the fruits of one tribe differed in flavor from those of a brother tribe.

The Midrash relates the following story illustrating that teaching: Once it happened that the people of the town of Ludkia were greatly in need of oil. They appointed one man to go and procure it for them, telling him: "Go and get for us oil in the amount of one hundred times ten thousand."

The man went on his way, inquiring of everyone he met where he could buy such a tremendous amount of oil.

His first stop was in Jerusalem, where he came into the market. Amidst the noise of merchants hawking their wares and shoppers haggling over prices he announced boldly, "I need oil in the amount of one hundred times ten thousand." He was told to go to the town of Tzor, where someone might be able to help him.

Upon hearing of this promising location, the emissary of Ludkia gathered his humble provisions and set out in the direction of Tzor.

When he arrived there, the man went to the market and once more called out: "I need to buy oil in the amount of one hundred times ten thousand." But no one in Tzor had such a large quantity of oil.

They suggested, though, that he travel yet further, to the town of Gush Chalav.

Arriving in Gush Chalav, the man once more went to the market and made his announcement. He was told to go to the home of a certain resident of that town. With praises to G-d and the hope that his mission would soon be completed, the man went to the address he had been given.

"The master of the house is not home now, he is tending to his olive trees," was the response the emissary from Ludkia received upon inquiring after the owner.

Undaunted, the emissary went out into the olive fields in search of the prospective oil merchant. Finally, he located the man and told him, "I am in need of oil in the amount of one hundred times ten thousand."

The man was not in the least bit fazed by the emissary's request for such a tremendous amount of oil. Calmly and evenly he answered the emissary, "Please wait for me until I am finished with my work in the olive groves."

When the man had finished with the olive trees, he carefully collected all of his tools and returned home together with the prospective buyer. Yet the man seemed so unassuming in appearance.

The emissary wondered, "Could it really be possible that this man with whom I am now walking, who was himself just tending the olive grove, could supply so vast an amount of oil? I fear I have made this trip for no reason, for surely I am the object of someone's joke."

The emissary's thoughts began to change, though, when the two men reached the home of the olive grove owner. For, when they entered the house, a maidservant brought pitchers of heated water for her master to wash his hands and feet. Then she brought out a solid gold container filled with oil into which he immersed his hands and feet, in keeping with the verse, "And he dips his foot in oil."

In no time, deliciously prepared food was laid on the table and they ate and drank.

"If you will come with me," said the man to the emissary, "I will gladly measure out the oil for you now." The emissary followed and watched in amazement as he measured out oil worth one hundred times ten thousand.

Turning to the buyer, the grove-owner asked, "Do you want more oil?"


The man was astounded, and replied, "I have no more money."

"No matter," he was informed. "I will be happy to measure out the oil and accompany you to your town where I can collect the extra money." And with that, the man again measured oil, this time for another eighteen times ten thousand.

It is said that the buyer used every available mule and camel to transport the fabulous volume of oil to his home town, where he received an enthusiastic welcome from his fellow townspeople. His remarks to them were the following:

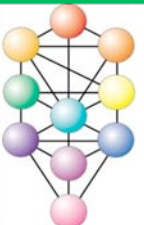
"Give your praise only to this person, for all the credit is his. Also, I am in debt to him for the sum of eighteen times ten thousand! It is said, 'Some appear to be rich and are paupers, while others appear poor, yet are exceedingly rich.'"

Volunteers are required for Shul Security at The Yeshiva Centre
CSG training session for volunteers will be held on wed 18th Feb 2009.
To participate please approach Zeev Gavson or Call 0412 1800 12


Candle Lighting Times
Friday 30th January 2009

City	In	Out
Sydney	7:39pm	8:37pm
Brisbane	6:22pm	7:16pm
Surfers Par	6:21pm	7:16pm
Melbourne	8:12pm	9:11pm

Dedicated in Loving memory of
Benny Ross
Benim ben Pesach
12 Shvat



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This event is part of worldwide Hakhel celebrations

SINGER AND
ACTOR
TROYE SIVAN

