

עטרת השבוע



ATERES HASHAVUA

THE WEEKLY TORAH PUBLICATION FROM THE STUDENTS OF
MESIVTA ATERES YAAKOV
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לז"נ
 שרה שיינדל
 בת אריה משה

פרשת בא
 ג' שבט תשע"ד
 January 4, 2014

Candle Lighting:	4:22
First זמן קריאת שמע:	9:03
Second זמן ק"ש:	9:39
Sunrise:	7:18
Latest זמן תפלה:	10:26
שקיעה:	4:41
Earliest Havdalah:	5:31

(50 minutes)
 All times are for Lawrence, NY only

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Mysterious Months	Page 1
Not so Simple	Page 1
Stories of Tzaddikim	Page 3
B'dchilu U'rchimu	Page 3
Greatness Remembered	Page 4

MYSTERIOUS MONTHS

By Rabbi Shlomo Drebin, MAY Faculty

”החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים...” (שמות י"ב א')

“This month should be for you the beginning of the months...” (Shemos, 12:1)

“But *Rebbe*, how could *Nissan* be the first month? We learned that *Tishrei* is the first month of the year?!” This is a question guaranteed to be asked by children in every classroom where *Parshas Bo* is learned. Of course, we all understand that whereas *Tishrei* is the first month in regards to the creation of the universe, *Nissan* is to be counted as the first month of our calendar year. As *Rashi* states, “This month (*Nissan*) will be the “ראש לסדר מנין החדשים”. By numbering the months from *Nissan* we are in essence recalling the month of *Yetziyas Mitzrayim*.

Is there a deeper level on which we can understand this *mitzvah* of לכם הזה החדש? And incidentally what is the significance of the word “לכם”-“to you”? In fact it is repeated a couple of words later, “ראשון הוא לכם”?

Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* comments on this topic that these two months, *Nissan* and *Tishrei* are lessons in our awareness of Hashem’s power. This first lesson (the month of *Tishrei*) is that Hashem is the Creator of the world. The second lesson (the month of *Nissan*) is that of *hashgacha pratit*, a belief that it is Hashem who runs world events and so it was he who enslaved *Bnei Yisrael* and He who freed them. The Torah is teaching us in this *pasuk* that the lesson of *emunah* in Hashem’s *hashgacha pratit* is more important than the lesson of the universe’s creation! Why? Because day to day awareness that Hashem created the world may not make a

(continued on page 2)

NOT SO SIMPLE

By David Lesser, 11th Grade

”והיה כי ישאלך בנך מחר מה זאת...” (שמות י"ג י"ד)

"And it shall be when your son shall ask you at some future time, 'what is this?'" (Shemos 13:14)

In the *Haggadah*, this question is attributed to the *ben tam*, the simple son. There are many questions one may ask on this. For instance, how did the author of the *Haggadah* know that this was referring to the simple son? Perhaps this question wasn't asked in a curious tone, by the *tam*, maybe it was asked by the *rasha*, the wicked son, to mock the *mitzvos*. When the Torah refers to the simple son, it says "And it shall be when your son shall ask you at some future time," while when the Torah refers to the wicked son, it says "And it shall be when your children say to you, What is this service to you?" (*Shemos* 12:26). Strangely, it seems that both the two sons are asking the same question, just at different time periods. What might the reason for this be?

In responding to these questions, the *Kli Yakar* first focuses on the simple son's question of "what is this." Since this *perek* doesn't have anything to do with *matzoh* or *marror*, the *Kli Yakar* says that his question is going on *Pidyon Haben*, the redeeming of the son. Evidently, the *tam* isn't questioning the

(continued on page 2)

Rabbi Drebin (continued from page 1)

difference in a person's attitudes or how he acts. But once a person is aware of the supervision of *HaKodosh Baruch Hu* in daily events, he will be careful with and improve his behavior. Hashem is not only the Creator of all but He conducts all world events, great and small, and a person's acceptance or rejection of this belief can have a profound influence on his actions and view of life. If one believes in Hashem's *hashgacha pratis*, the world makes sense and his life will have meaning and purpose. If *chas v'shalom* a person chooses to blind himself to this truth, he invites the conclusion that life is purposeless and absurd. It is then that a person will act in any manner he sees fit, having no qualms about his actions.

It is noteworthy that in the *Rambam's* list of the thirteen principles of faith, he lists as the first, "אני מאמין...שהוא" "אני מאמין...שהוא" that a *yid* must believe that Hashem is the active Conductor, the One who did, does and will do all things, everything, big and small, good and "bad" -it's all from Hashem.

A person was visiting the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Yehuda Zev Segal *zt'l*. Rav Segal, knowing that his visitor's father was ill, inquired about his welfare. The man responded that although his father's condition was very serious and the prognosis was precarious, he has *bitachon* that his father would have a *refuah shleima*. Rav Segal corrected him quoting the words of the *Chazon Ish* that the correct meaning of *bitachon* is an understanding that nothing (good or "bad") happens by chance.

This is the deeper meaning of "החדש הזה לכם" according to Rav Moshe. The imperative to believe that Hashem controls our world, day to day, minute to minute, slavery to freedom, good to bad. We must act in an elevated manner because Hashem isn't only the creator of all that is, was and will be, as seen in *Chodesh Tishrei*, but also the *manhig*, conductor, or *mashigach*, the watcher, of the world as seen in *Chodesh Nissan*.

Now that we understand the directive of "החדש הזה לכם" on a deeper level, what can we learn from the world "לכם" "to you"? Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch *zt'l* in his *פירוש תרומת צבי* explains that the *mitzvah* is not simply to establish an astronomical cycle of the months, but rather to make monthly renewals in *ourselves*. We must renew *ourselves* each month as understood from the word "לכם" "to you". Let us constantly strive to renew our *emunah* and *bitachon* by seeing the hand of Hashem in every moment of our life.

David Lesser (continued from page 1)

mitzvos of Pesach, rather the *mitzvah* of redeeming the son. The *Kli Yakar* then asks, what is there about this *mitzvah* that provokes the simple son's curiosity?

The *Kli Yakar* says that this is the general nature of the *tam*. When he's told to eat *matzah* or *marror*, he doesn't question it, rather acts right away. Similarly, when he's told to perform a *mitzvah*, he listens and acts upon the request. After all, why wouldn't he? It doesn't cause him any pain in any way to fulfill these requests that he's been asked to do. If he may come across a question about his act, he disregards it, and asks it later. The *rasha* on the other hand, can't even tolerate to do a "convenient" *mitzvah*. On any act he's asked to perform regarding the Torah, he must fight against it. The *rasha* just gets so angry and rowdy inside, that he must immediately question the purpose and reason for the *mitzvah* asked to be completed.

When the *tam* is asked to reach into his wallet to redeem the first born, then he asks his question. One may wrongfully compare the *tam* to the *rasha*, in that they both question the *mitzvos* prior to their acceptance. The Torah explains the difference between the two of them. The *rasha* immediately asks, he will do nothing if his task has anything alluding to the Torah. In contrast, the *tam* will accept the *mitzvah* right away, when it doesn't result in a heavy loss of time or money. We now have a clear difference between the *tam* and the *rasha*. The *tam* generally acts, and then he questions. The *rasha* on the other hand, seeks every reason not to act. The *rasha's* questions are just his ways of justifying his arrogance and inaction.

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STORIES OF TZADDIKIM

Chezky Friedman, 12th Grade

There is an incredible story about the Sfas Emes of Gur. When Rav Elya Lopian lived in Kelm his wife got very ill. The Doctors had very little hope, as there was nothing they could do. She was in a particularly bad state one day, and the whole family was gathered around her bedside. Rav Elya however was in an adjacent room beside himself with worry. Suddenly there was a knock at the door, a yid walked in and seeing all the people crying asked what it was all about. Rav Elya explained that his wife was very ill, and that the doctors had no cure for her sickness. The yid asked what the illness was. When Rav Elya told him, he instructed Reb Elya to gather a certain plant that resided in a certain field, take the plant boil it, and give it to her to drink. He followed the instructions and his wife miraculously recovered. Years later Rav Elya went to visit the Sfas Emes. They discussed various *halachic* issues, but at the end of the meeting, Rav Elya asked the Sfas Emes for a *bracha*. The Sfas Emes answered, that a yid who had a visit from Eliyahu Hanavi, does not need his *bracha*. Rav Elya replied, that if the Rebbe knew that Eliyahu Hanavi had paid him a visit and he was unaware, he definitely wanted the *bracha* from the Sfas Emes.

Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov kept a keen eye out for the orphaned, widowed, and needy. He always tried to assist them in any way he could, and as discreetly as possible. Even the recipient of the kindness was unaware the identity of their benefactor. Once on an extremely cold night the Rav Moshe had heard about a family that did not have fire wood to heat their home. Rav Moshe wanted to assist, but how could he give them the fire wood without embarrassing the family. He devised a plan to dress up as a peasant, going door-to-door selling fire wood. But when he arrived at the home of the poor family and tried to sell the fire wood to them, the mother refused, saying that she had no money to pay. "Even if I would have the money to pay you, our axe is broken," she stated "so we would have no way to split the wood to heat our home." Rav Moshe, still disguised, told her not to worry. He insisted on giving them the wood on credit, reassuring them that, he would split the wood with his axe, for no extra charge.

B'DCHILU U'RGHIMU ~ WITH LOVE AND WITH AWE

Naftali Engel, 12th Grade

"ויאמר ה' אל משה נטה ידך על השמים ויהי חשך על ארץ מצרים וימש חשך"

"G-d said to Moshe 'Stretch out your hand towards the heavens and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt. The darkness will be palpable'"

The darkness became matter, it became a tangible thing. (Rashi)

Why was there a plague of darkness? There were wicked Jews who refused to leave Egypt. They died during the plague of darkness and were buried at that time, because otherwise the Egyptians will say: 'Just as it has struck over us, so has it struck over them.' Therefore He brought darkness upon the Egyptians for three days, so that the Jews could bury their dead without their enemies seeing them. (*Midrash Rabah* | Rashi 10:22)

There is a body, there is a soul. There is matter, there is form. There is darkness, there is light. There is death, there is life. The first of each pair are all one concept as the second are all one concept as well. Those who pursue body are also pursuing matter, darkness and death while those who pursue soul pursue form, light and life.

Therefore the Egyptians who were steeped in physicality literally felt the "palpable" physicality of the darkness envelop them. And the wicked Jews who did not want to leave the materialistic lifestyle of Egypt died since matter, body, darkness and death are the same. But the Jews who sought soul – the Jews who sought spirituality and anticipated the salvation had light in their homes, for soul and light are the same concept, they merited the light of the future, which is similar to the light of creation – the antithesis of the plague of darkness – a light that enveloped the entire world.

However there were still many wicked who left with us to Israel; informants and even idol worshipers joined us on the journey. Only those who were deeply rooted in the physicality of Egypt and did not want to leave deserved to die, not the other wicked people-for they were willing to leave Egypt. This phenomenon can be understood in light of the principle that Yom Kippur atones for all of our sins except for violating Yom Kippur itself (*Shavuos 13a*). This is because on Yom Kippur, a Jew's intrinsic connection with G-d is illuminated and all his sin is wiped away, consequently sinning on Yom Kippur itself blocks this revelation, preventing the awesome effects of the holy day.

Similarly those who did not want to leave Egypt forfeited the merit which was the key to their redemption – but with the true final redemption every single Jew will be redeemed. This is because at the giving of the Torah, G-d chose the Jewish people – forging the intrinsic connection which can never become totally blocked. Therefore the final redemption which occurs after the giving of the Torah will include all of the Jewish children.

May we all merit the final redemption speedily with our days!

(Based on: *Likutey Moharan I, 37:2* | *Likutey Halachot V p. 149a* | *Likutei Sichos vol.11, p 2ff*)

GREATNESS REMEMBERED

By Naftali Engel, 12th Grade

Friday January 3rd

ב שבת

Reb Zusha of Annipol – רבי משולם זושה מאניפולי –

1718-1800

Reb Zusha was born in the city of Tarnow – modern day Poland – to Reb Eliezer, who was the son of Elimelech (whom Rav Elimelech of Lishensk, Reb Zusha's brother is named after). Reb Zusha was a prominent student of The Maggid of Mezerich, and was a part of the Maggid's inner circle of *talmidim* known as the "Holy Brotherhood – *The Chevraya Kadisha*". He was well known for his deep and emotional approach toward prayer and *avodah*. Rav Zusha was renowned for his piety and love of every Jew as well as the ability to find the good in any person or situation. He is buried next to his Rebbe, Rav Dov Ber – The Maggid of Mezerich – in Annipol.

"When I reach the next world I am not afraid that they will ask 'Zusha why were you not like Moshe (rabbeinu)?' I am afraid that I will be asked 'Zusha! Why were you not Zusha!'"

Sunday January 5th

ד שבת

Rav Moshe Leib of Sassov – רבי משה לייב מסאסוב –

1745-1807

Rav Moshe Leib was a *talmid* of R' Shmelke of Nikolsburg. He started the Chasidic Dynasty of Sassov and is known best for teaching the importance of *Ben Adam L'Chavero* – loving your brother as yourself. Rav Moshe would go to great lengths to free Jews from prison regardless of their religious standing or their alleged crimes. He wrote many *seforim* on the *Talmud* including; *Likutei Ramal*, *Chiddushei Ramal* and *Toras Haramal HaSholeim* – The complete teachings of Rav Moshe Leib. He was also known as "The Father to Orphans" because of his deep rooted concern for the needy. Even after passing it is said he rescued captives from *gehinom* for that is what he did on earth.

Monday January 6th

ה שבת

The Sfas Emes of Gur – "השפת אמת" מגור רב יהודה לייב –

1847-1905

Rav Yehuda Leib Alter, also known as the Sfas Emes, was born in Warsaw Poland, and was orphaned of both parents at the age of 8. He was then raised by his grandparents, the Chidushei Harim and his wife. When he was 10 his grandfather took him to the Kotzker Rebbe; this made a very large impression on Rav Yehuda Leib. Rav Yehuda Leib is most famous for his commentary on *Chumash* and *Gemara* – Sfas Emes, the language of truth.

"One of the greatest religious problems is, people fear a relationship with God and distance themselves from Him. Just as angels serve God without fear despite their lower status in comparison to God, so too human beings should take their model and walk amongst them, they should not be afraid of developing a relationship with God and serving Him. This represents a wholeness that we as human beings are capable of only if we think of ourselves as walking amongst angels."

Wednesday January 8th

ז שבת

Rav Dovid of Lelov – רבי דוד מלעלוב –

1746-1814

Rav Dovid of Lelov was born in Biala Poland and was a student of the great Chozeh M'Lublin. The Chozeh said about Rav Dovid: "He is the foundation of all the tzaddikim and all the leaders of the Chasidic movement." Rav Dovid was well versed in the mystical aspects of the Torah and maintained a strong connection with his Rebbe regardless of the distance. Rav Dovid was especially famous for his love of all Jews, even the wicked ones, always finding ways of defending them. He used to say to his followers, "How can you claim that I am righteous, when I know that I still love my children and grandchildren more than I love my other fellow Jews?" It once happened that his son fell seriously ill. Anxious for his welfare, the townsfolk assembled to pray for his recovery, and spared no expense in hiring the most expert physicians. When in due time he recovered, they expected to see their Rebbe, R' Dovid, rejoicing, yet instead they found him weeping bitterly. Rav Dovid said to them: "When my son fell ill, everyone was concerned, prayed, and did whatever was necessary until he was well. But if any other person is sick, no one makes a stir about it, and people do not pay nearly that much attention to him. Now isn't that something to weep over?"



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