



Rabbi Yehuda ben Moshe Hakohen was the personal physician of King Alfonso X of Castile, one of the first provinces which the Spaniards had recaptured from the North African Arabs in the 13th century.

A great friend of the Jews, the king invited them to settle in Toledo, Cordova, Seville and other cities in Spain, and had many prominent Jewish advisors.

Because King Alfonso appreciated the services the Jews performed for his kingdom, he protected them and allowed them to worship and live as they pleased.

However, like kings of other lands, Alfonso was strongly influenced by the clergy, who were fanatically hostile to the Jews. Rabbi Yehuda was ever on guard lest the king fall under the influence of the clergy.

One day Rabbi Yehuda came to the palace to visit the king, as he often did, only to be informed that the king couldn't see him. The change in the king's attitude towards Rabbi Yehuda was evident, and he was filled with anxiety and foreboding. Heavy-hearted, he left the palace, but instead of returning home, he went to consult with his close friend Don Yitzchak de la Maleha.

Don Yitzchak was not surprised, for he knew that the king had important visitors, two ambassadors of the king of Portugal, Alfonso the Third.

He didn't know what sort of business was being conducted, but he had friends in the Portuguese court from whom he could inquire. The two friends agreed to meet again in three days' time, to exchange information and decide on a course of action.

But before the three days passed, Yitzchak de la Maleha sent urgent word to his friend: "I have learned that the Crown Prince of Portugal, Diniz, is suffering from some mysterious illness which the Portuguese doctors were unable to cure.

In the meantime, the king's priest used the opportunity to turn the king against his loyal Jewish officials.

"As you know, our Crown Prince, Sancho, is always scheming and lusting for more power. He wants to form a political alliance with Portugal by making a match between his sister, Princess Maria, and Diniz."

"What's so bad about that?" asked Yehuda.

"What are you saying? One of the conditions of the alliance is that the two Christian kingdoms join in expelling the Jews who will not convert to the Christian faith!"

Yehuda paled and tears appeared in his eyes. "The Guardian of Israel save us," he uttered in a heartfelt prayer. The purpose of the Portuguese ambassadors was clear, as was the cold and unfriendly attitude of the King.

Yehuda thought for a minute. "Royal matchmaking takes time. In the meantime we may be able to avert the danger. Perhaps if the king finds out that Diniz is ill, he will call off the match."

"In matters of political convenience, illness isn't an impediment," replied Don Yitzchak. "But I have a better idea, if G-d only grants us success, and you will be the one to intercede."

"I will do whatever I can. But what is it?" asked Rabbi Yehuda. "You will travel to Lisbon and cure the Crown Prince." The two friends discussed the plan at great length.

Rabbi Yehuda packed his medical kit and secretly departed for Portugal. Word was to be spread in the royal court in Lisbon about the arrival of a great physician from Spain.

As soon as the king heard the news he sent for the new doctor to examine his beloved son. He promised any reward, if only this doctor would succeed where all the royal physicians of Portugal had failed.

Rabbi Yehuda examined the ill man and informed the king that he had a blood clot on the brain. It would require delicate surgery, but he would undertake it. Until that time, the prince would be under his care. The king agreed. All went as planned, but then, on the scheduled day of the operation, Rabbi Yehuda received the unexpected

order to leave the country without delay. It was incomprehensible, but Rabbi Yehuda packed and left at once.

He had been on the road only a few hours when a carriage drew up to him and the king, himself alighted. "The priest has cooked up a nasty dish this time, but he will pay for it! What do I care if you are a Jew, if you can cure my son!" He then related what had transpired.

The priest, being sure that this new doctor was a Jew, and probably the doctor of the King of Castile, was eager to discredit him. So, he went to the king with the lie that the Jews had decided to kill the Crown Prince with the help of this Jewish doctor, in order to stop the proposed marriage.

"I admit I was swayed by the priest, but when I told my son, he just scoffed at the accusation. He cried that if you were not permitted to treat him, he would commit suicide. You are his last hope, and he has complete confidence in your skill. I have come in person to beg your forgiveness and ask you to treat my son."

Yehuda Hakohen performed the operation, and the Almighty gave him success. The Crown Prince recovered his health, and Rabbi Yehuda was sent home laden with gifts. Of course, his greatest reward was having averted the threatened deportation of the Jews, who continued to live in Spain and Portugal for the next two hundred years in relative peace and prosperity.

Adapted from Talks and Tales.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

And he called out to Moses; and G-d spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying (Leviticus. 1:1)
 As explained by Rashi, G-d prefaced each exchange with Moses by calling out to him, indicative of His great love. This love between G-d and Moses is symbolic of the open and loving relationship enjoyed by the Jewish people when the Holy Temple still stood and the Divine Presence rested in the Holy of Holies. This love has not diminished any during the exile; it has only become less open and revealed. The way to restore the relationship with G-d to its former glory is by expressing unconditional love for our fellow Jew. If the Jewish people will be united in brotherhood and unity, G-d's love for Moses will once again be fully expressed when the dead are resurrected and the Third Holy Temple is rebuilt. *(Likutei Sichot, Volume 27)*

If any one of you bring an offering (Leviticus 1:2)
 The elevated spiritual standing of holy and righteous tzadikim is ensured by the actions of the entire Jewish people. It is in their merit that the leader of the generation draws closer and closer to G-d. *(The Holy Alshich)*

If his offering be a burnt-sacrifice (Leviticus 1:3)
 Because thought always precedes deed, the burnt-sacrifice, brought to atone for evil intentions, is listed first in the order of offerings. "That which was created last arose in the mind first." *(Rabbenu Bechaye)*



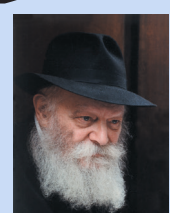
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6 Nissan, 5785
April 4, 2025
 Torah Portion Vayikra
 Shabbat ends 8:06 PM

L'Chaim

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The Weekly Publication
 for Every Jewish Person
 נוסד תור ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
 "To You I lifted up my eyes, You Who dwell in heaven" (Psalm 123:1)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

The book of Vaikra -- Leviticus, which we begin reading this week, details the laws pertaining to the offerings that were brought in the Sanctuary and Holy Temples. It begins with the words, "And He called to Moses." Rashi, the great Torah commentator, explains that G-d called out to Moses with a special and unique love. Chasidic philosophy further elaborates on the significance of the fact that G-d's name is not directly mentioned. This great love, it explains, emanates from an attribute of G-d so lofty and elevated that it exists beyond the limitations imposed by a name. G-d's very essence, as it were, was calling out to Moses. Chasidut also teaches that every Jew has a spark of the soul of Moses within his own. G-d's calling out to Moses with special love is therefore a call to every Jew, no matter who he/she is. The directives that followed, the details of the korbanot (from the Hebrew meaning "to draw near"), are the instructions by which man may draw closer to G-d, and apply to every Jew, in every time and in every place. This concept is also reflected in the haftara (from the Book of Isaiah) which is usually read in conjunction with the Torah portion. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall tell My praise." The first part of the verse seems to indicate G-d's great love of the Jewish people; the second half seems to refer to their prayers, good deeds and Torah study, through which G-d's name is made great. Yet, studying the verse in depth, we find that the type of praise G-d refers to here is of an entirely different sort, one which is totally independent of a Jew's actions. "This people have I formed for Myself," G-d states. The Jewish people belong to G-d; it is only through them that His sovereignty over the world is established, for a king cannot rule without subjects. A Jew, by his very nature and not by virtue of his actions, is created special. "They shall tell My praise," G-d continues. The continued existence of the Jewish people in itself reveals the glory of G-d. The fact that the Jewish nation, "one sheep among seventy wolves," is still flourishing after thousands of years testifies to the greatness of G-d. Every Jew bears witness to the existence of G-d and causes His name to be praised. This is especially relevant for our generation, following, as it does, the terrible decimation of our brethren during the Holocaust. The fact that Jews exist today, proudly continuing our holy tradition and raising a new generation of Jews to further imbue the world with holiness is in itself miraculous, bearing witness to G-d's greatness. This tremendous love which G-d feels for every Jew, regardless of his deeds, indicates just how important it is for us to love our fellow Jew and to always judge others favorably, for each of us is G-d's special treasure. *Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*

The First Commandment: Find the Courage to Heal

By Rabbi Yosef Y. Jacobson

The Biblical account of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt has been one of the most inspiring stories for the oppressed and enslaved throughout history. From the American Revolution to the slaves of the American South, to Martin Luther King's Let Freedom Ring, the narrative of the Exodus provided countless people with the courage to hope for a better future. Moses' first visit to Pharaoh demanding liberty for his people only brought more misery to the Hebrew slaves; the Egyptian monarch increased their torture. The Hebrews now would not listen any longer to the promise of redemption. Now let us pay heed to this seemingly strange biblical verse. So G-d spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and He commanded them to the children of Israel, and to Pharaoh the king of Egypt, to let the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 6:13) G-d is charging Moses with two directives: command the people of Israel and then command Pharaoh the king. However, the verse is ambiguous: What did G-d command Moses to instruct the people? The message for Pharaoh is clear: Let the children of Israel out of Egypt. But what is it that Moses is supposed to command the people themselves? The Jerusalem Talmud says something profoundly enigmatic: G-d instructed Moses to command to the Jewish people the laws of freeing slaves. The Talmud is referring to a law recorded in Exodus, If a Jew sells himself as a slave, the owner must let him go after six years. This was the law Moses was to share with the Israelites.

But what does the commandment to the Jewish people that they free their slaves one day in the future have to do with the mission to Pharaoh to set the Hebrews free? Who Is Free? The answer to this question is vital to the understanding of liberty in Judaism. Before Pharaoh can liberate the Jewish slaves, they must be ready to become free. You can take a man out of slavery, but it may prove more challenging to take slavery out of a man. What is the first and foremost symptom of being free? That you learn to confer freedom on others. The control freak, or the abusive spouse or parent does not know how to give others freedom. Outwardly he attempts to appear powerful, but inwardly his power is a symptom of inner misery and insecurity. When I do not confront the parts in me that are wounded, my animal-soul consciousness which has developed coping mechanisms, and belief systems to keep it in control, it will be running my inner operating system. Pharaoh may set you free physically. People who were abused sometimes become abusers themselves. The first Mitzvah the Jews had to hear from Moses even before he could go to Pharaoh to let them go free was: One day you will be free. Remember that freedom is a gift; use it to free others. As it turns out, this is a remarkable Talmudic insight. Don't internalize what the Egyptians have done to you. Find the spark of freedom, the inner Divine core, that no trauma can tarnish or paralyze; that part which has remained free all along, celebrate it and cherish conferring it upon others.

לעילוי נשמת
 חרש בן יוסף ע"ה
 Dedicated in memory of
Cheresh Ben Yosef, OBM

