

## Bringing the Farbrengens Home

### THE LATE MINYAN

by Tzipah Wertheimer

He was the chossid (older than the Rebbe) who jumped on the table in 1951, and yelled "Chassidim! We have a Rebbe," as the Rebbe took on the mantle of leadership. Having survived conscription in the Russian army with his faith intact, Rabbi Avraham Sender Nemtzov eventually immigrated to Manchester and then Long Beach, NY, in his later years.

One day the Lubavitcher Rebbe asked Reb Sender if there were any Friday night minyanim in Long Beach that davened at sundown during the summer months (i.e., did not take Shabbos in early). Reb Sender told the Rebbe that indeed there were no such minyanim. The Rebbe requested that he arrange such a "late" minyan.

Reb Sender followed orders, however, gathering 10 men at the late hour, throughout the summer months proved very challenging. When the next summer approached he asked the Rebbe if there was any need to continue. The minyan was unpopular and seemed unnecessary.

That's when the Rebbe explained the true purpose of the minyan....

It's debatable that this week's parsha contains the first mitzvah in the Torah – namely the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh – calculating and establishing when a new month begins. Essentially the entire Jewish calendar is based on human calculations taking both lunar and solar cycles into account.



Man-made decisions have G-dly ramifications! For example: is a girl three-years-old, or is she three and a day? Well, it depends if Cheshvan had 29 days or 30 days. A girl's status changes based on her age – and her age is determined by the calendar and the calendar is determined by people (Jewish court).

Apparently, humans have a partnership with G-d, so to speak. Our courts determine when holidays begin, and anything else related to the Jewish calendar. This dynamic is so relevant and so important that it's actually tied into the first mitzvah in the Torah.

...So the Rebbe explained the Reb Sender why his late minyan was needed in Long Beach. According to Halacha if all the shuls in a given area accept Shabbos early – Shabbos automatically begins for the entire town.

Long Beach was full of Jews who were not yet observant of Torah and Mitzvos. If Shabbos were to begin early in Long Beach, a lot of people would be desecrating the Shabbos for longer. "Why should they be mechalel Shabbos for 27 hours, when it could be 26?" the Rebbe explained.

The people's pedestrian choices were impacting the spiritual start of the Shabbos... The late minyan was never for the shul-goers in the first place. ☺

### A Nation Is Born

by Tzipah Wertheimer

In the hours before their liberation, the Israelites were commanded to bring the Pascal sacrifice, each family in their individual homes. As is well known, they were asked to smear blood on their doorposts so that the Angel of Death would recognize a Jewish home and Passover it during the plague of the first born. This is why we put Mezuzahs on our doors today and celebrate the holiday of Passover.

That initial Passover, in the hours before the triumphant Exodus, there were many individual sacrifices in separate homes. Families were instructed not to leave their homes throughout that night. On the surface it seems that the scattered sacrifices and the instructions to stay indoors were for their own safety; however a deeper understanding of the essence of the Jewish nation and the meaning of our peoplehood paints an entirely different picture.

The task at hand was to bring holiness into the moment, to be totally and completely present.

By bringing the sacrifice in their own homes, they transformed their immediate surroundings into a sanctuary. And this is how we became a nation.

We were commanded to bring G-d into our daily lives, the real everyday moments. ☺

### Hayom Yom

5 Shevat

One must recite words of Torah copiously, saying Tehillim or verbally reviewing Mishna whenever and wherever possible, in order to bolster the existence of Creation, to be saved from *chibut hakever* and *kaf hakela*, and to merit all the highest revelations.

# A Shliach to the Netherlands

## Did Moshe Lie?

by Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer

What was a greater miracle: The exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, or for a Jew to escape the Nazi inferno?

Here is the incredible story of Rabbi Yitzchak Vorst, who survived Bergen-Belsen, went to yeshiva in Israel, ultimately returning to Holland, his place of birth, at the request of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

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Rabbi Vorst was born in Rotterdam, Holland, on January 3rd, 1938, a 7th generation Dutch Jew. When he was five years old, he and his family were forced into the Westerbork transit camp, and deported to Bergen-Belsen. His infant brother passed away and his mother died of starvation. May the name and memory of the Nazis be wiped out.

After they were liberated, his father returned to Rotterdam to begin the process of rebuilding the Jewish community as the chief rabbi of the city.

As a teenager, Rabbi Vorst was a madrich (counselor) with the Zionist youth group Bnei Akiva, and it became clear to him that his future was in Israel.

After graduating from university with a degree in engineering, he decided to make aliyah. Concerned that the mandatory military service would negatively impact his religiosity, he decided that it was important to dedicate some time to learning Torah before joining the army.

His sister Shifra's husband, Reb Dovid Morozov of Kfar Chabad, arranged for him to attend Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Lod. Although there was not yet an official Chabad presence in Holland, and in fact, Rabbi Vorst knew nothing about Chabad at the time, he had listened to recordings of some Chabad niggunim (melodies) which left their mark on him.



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He arrived at the yeshiva in Lod on the 28th of Teives 5721, Monday, January 16, 1961 (62 years ago to the day, this Shabbat). The Torah portion that week was Bo.

That Thursday, three of the yeshiva students returned from a trip to New York, and they spent the entire night farbrenging about their experiences in 770, the court of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Rabbi Vorst didn't understand Yiddish at the time, but the niggunim they sang made a strong impression, and he decided to stay in yeshiva.

A few months later, he wrote a letter to the Rebbe, in which he asked why Moshe asked Pharaoh to let the Jews leave Egypt for three days, even though he fully intended never to return? Did Moshe lie?

In the Rebbe's response, dated 24 Sivan 5721 (June 8, 1961), the Rebbe notes that this question is addressed by various commentaries, and there are many valid ways to understand it.

One approach, the Rebbe suggests, is that Moshe's request highlights the cruelty of the Egyptians, and that they were thus deserving of the harsh punishments of the Ten Plagues. That is, even though all Moshe asked for was three days – after 210 years of slavery! – even such a small request was refused. Even when Pharaoh finally acquiesced to this request, he changed his mind afterwards.

This also explains why Moshe asked for three days, fully intending never to return to Egypt. Noting the writings of Rabbi Yehuda ben Eliezer (one of the Baalei HaTosefos), the Rebbe suggests that it was not a lie, for it was true that indeed he wanted to leave for three days – he just didn't give any indication of what would happen after that.

Moreover, the Egyptians themselves knew that the Jews did not plan to return, which is why when the Jews took all their property with them, the Egyptians did not ask what they needed all their possessions for.

This concept lends itself to a more general point, namely, that even when a person has good, logical questions about something that appears to be unjust, we should know that G-d directs everything with justice.

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The following year, Rabbi Vorst traveled to the Rebbe for the first time. He stayed for the High Holidays, and had a personal audience with the Rebbe right after Tishrei. Amongst other things, he requested on his father's behalf that the Rebbe send a Shliach to the Netherlands.

The Rebbe said: "I have not yet found the appropriate person who both desires and is capable of fulfilling the position." The Rebbe gave a broad smile, their eyes meeting, perhaps alluding to what the future had in store for him.

He continued his studies in yeshiva, and got engaged two years later. Before his marriage to Doba Robinson of France, they met with the Rebbe. In addition to blessings for their upcoming marriage, the Rebbe spoke about sending them to Holland. He told Rabbi Vorst that there were plenty of engineers in the world, and he and his wife were needed to share the teachings and life of Torah with others.

A few weeks after their marriage, they moved to Holland. Rabbi Vorst passed away on the 28th of Elul in 2023, at the age of 85. There are now 18 Shluchim families in the Netherlands.

From Rotterdam to Bergen-Belsen and back to Rotterdam; to Israel and the Rebbe in New York and back to the Netherlands. Each of us has our place in the world, and we are given strengths and talents to uplift and transform our surroundings. May we merit the ultimate transformation, with the coming of Moshiach, may it be speedily.

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