

Thoughts From The Lubavitcher Rebbe

After Passover—Preparing for the Torah

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

Beginning from the second night of Passover, Jews count the daily Omer which last 49 days. The reason for this observance is given by early Jewish scholars as follows: It took the Israelites 49 days to reach Mount Sinai from the time they left Egypt.

At Mount Sinai, the Israelites received the Torah from G-d and thus became obliged by Jewish law and a "Priestly Nation to G-d." We count the 49 days to remember the preparations our ancestors made in anticipation of this great moment in history.

The giving of the Torah has important significance in that it is regarded as a new experience every day. So it is with the preparation to the receiving of the Torah, that it is a new experience every year between the days of Passover and Shavuoth.

One of the basic messages of the Ten Commandments is contained in the fact that they begin with the "I am," etc., i.e. the profound principle of monotheism, which in itself was a tremendous revolutionary idea in those days of idolatry dominated by the polytheistic culture of Egypt.

Incidentally, the emphasis on monotheism and the denial of polytheism are to be seen not only in the fact that these ideas form the subject of the first two Commandments, but also in the quantity of words and detail which they contain. At the same time, the Ten Commandments conclude with such apparently simple and obvious injunctions as "Thou shalt not steal," etc.

The profundity of monotheism, with which the Ten Commandments begin and the simplicity of the ethical and moral laws with which the Ten Commandments conclude, points to an important lesson, namely:

(a) The true believer in G-d is not the one who holds abstract ideas but the one whose knowledge of G-d leads him to the proper daily conduct even in ordinary and commonplace matters, in his dealings with his neighbors and the respect for their property even if it be an ox or a donkey, etc.

(b) The ethical and moral laws, even those that are so obvious as "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not murder," will have actual validity and will be observed only if they are based on the first and second Commandments; that is to say, based on Divine authority, the authority, of the One and Only G-d.

If in a previous generation there were people who doubted the need of Divine authority for common morality and ethics, in the belief that human reason is sufficient authority for morality and ethics, our present generation has, unfortunately, in a most devastating and tragic way, refuted this mistaken notion.

For it is precisely the nation which had excelled itself in the exact sciences, the humanities and even in philosophy and ethics, that has turned out to be the most depraved nation of the world, making an ideal of murder and robbery. Anyone who knows how insignificant was the minority of Germans who opposed the Hitler regime, realizes that the German cult was not something which was practiced by a few individuals but had embraced the vast majority of that nation, who considered itself the "super race," etc.

It is during this auspicious time, in between the two major holidays, that we turn to counting the days and realizing the unique privilege given to us to uphold the divine law—the Torah which is the guide for each and every Jew.

Most Popular Jewish Films of 1990

Jewish Video Library, the only Jewish video store in America, has released a list of its top 30 films of 1990. The list includes the two most popular titles in fifteen film categories and is based upon rental activity at JVL during the year.

The following presents the list by film category:

ADVENTURE — *House on Garibaldi Street* (dramatization of the 1960 capture of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Argentina by Israeli agents). *Operation Thunderbolt* (story of the 1976 daring rescue by Israeli commandos of 103 hostages held by Palestinian terrorists in Entebbe, Uganda).

ANTI-SEMITISM — *The Inheritors* (shocking story of an Austrian teenage boy who joins a neo-Nazi party). *Louis Farrakhan at Madison Square Garden* (Farrakhan's 1985 speech to the "Nation of Islam," where he revealed his particular brand of anti-Semitism).

BIOGRAPHY — *Hanna's War* (true story of Hanna Senesh, the Jewish heroine who parachuted behind enemy lines during World War II to save Jewish lives in Hungary). *Chagall: Portrait of an Artist* (documentary on the life and work of the world's greatest Jewish painter).

CHILDREN'S — *Ganenu, A Child's Garden of Judaism* (songs, dances and puppets introducing Hebrew letters and Jewish tradition). *Passover at Bubbe's* (puppets visit ancient Egypt and help Bubbe prepare for a Seder with songs).

COMEDY — *Goodbye, New York* (Israeli comedy about the experiences of a young Gentile woman who mistakenly flies to Tel Aviv). *Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (bittersweet tale of a young Jewish businessman who exploits any and all to get to the top in 1940's Montreal).

COOKING — *My First Jewish Cooking Video* (teaches how to cook a sumptuous Sabbath meal). *Gefilte Fish* (three generations of Jewish women share preparation styles for a traditional dish).

DOCUMENTARY — *Rise and Fall of the Borscht Belt* (reminiscences and rare footage of the entertainers who made the

Catskills famous). *Yom Kippur War* (with rare film footage, presents the story of Israel's fight for survival in 1973).

DRAMA — *The Golem* (silent film version of the ancient Jewish legend). *The Commissar* (banned from its release in 1967 until 1989, this is a fascinating story about a Jewish family during the Russian revolution).

FINE ARTS — *Great Cantors of the Golden Age* (historic footage of the greatest cantors of the pre-war era, such as Yossele Rosenblatt). *Almonds and Raisins* (a history of Yiddish film with excerpts from nine classics).

HEBREW — *Sallah Shabati* (classic Israeli satire set in 1948 about a Sephardic immigrant to Israel who confronts and overcomes the Ashkenazi establishment). *House on Chelouche Street* (the struggles in Tel Aviv of a Jewish family of refugees from Egypt during the last days of British occupation).

HOLOCAUST — *The Eternal Jew* (Nazi Germany's most anti-Semitic film). *Image Before My Eyes* (vivid depiction of

Jewish life in Poland from the late 19th century through the 1930s).

TRAVEL — *Adventure Travel in Israel* (five uncommon excursions for the sophisticated traveler in Israel). *Argentina's Jews* (history of the largest Jewish community in Latin America).

YIDDISH — *The Dybbuk* (the 1937 Yiddish classic about love and exorcism). *Yiddle With A Fiddle* (Yiddish musical comedy filmed on location in Poland with Molly Picon disguised as a traveling boy musician).

ISRAEL — *Follow Me: Story of the Six Day War* (detailed chronicle of Israel's great victory in 1967). *Ofra Haza: From Dusk to Dawn* (today's premiere Israeli vocalist in a delightful evening of song).

JUDAISM/HOLIDAYS — *The Jewish Customs* (demonstrations of the most important customs, traditions and values of Jewish life). *I Ask for Wonder: Experiences of God* (prayer, study, ritual, tragedy and good deeds presented as pathways to God).



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