



# Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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## Light Insight

### *A Divine Tapestry*

*“Then Moses and the Children of Israel chose to sing this song to G-d.”  
(Exodus 15:1)*

As a young boy, I remember my mother weaving a tapestry of Gainsborough’s “The Boy In Blue.” It took her forever. One day, shortly before she finished, I remember picking it up and thinking to myself: “Mommy, forgive me — you may be the best mother in the world, but when it comes to needlework...Well, this is a mess! There’s a piece of red sticking out here. Over here, there’s a turquoise thread that seems to go nowhere.” The whole thing looked like chaos.

Suddenly, my fingertips detected smooth regular stitching on the other side of the tapestry. I turned the tapestry over and saw the most beautiful sight: An exquisite and precise copy of Gainsborough’s “Boy in Blue.” The stitches were so regular and well formed. The colors all blended so beautifully. A divine tapestry! All the disjointed threads that I saw on the other side of the tapestry harmonized into a complete and beautiful whole.

Sometimes it’s difficult to see sense in world events. You hear about suffering and evil, and you wonder how this can be the handi-

work of a Merciful G-d?

Don’t think you’re alone if you feel like that. You’re in good company. Because one of the greatest men who ever lived felt exactly like you. Moses himself, our greatest teacher, had his questions about how G-d was running the show. In Parshat Shemot, Moses went to Pharaoh to ask him to let the Jewish People go. Pharaoh, as you may remember, was not the easiest of negotiating partners. In reply to Moses’s request, Pharaoh told the taskmasters to stop giving the Jews straw. However the Jews were still required to produce the same quantity of bricks as before. Not surprisingly, the Jews complained bitterly to Moses. So Moses went back to G-d and said “Why have You done evil to this people... From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he did evil to this People, but You did not rescue Your People.”

Moses wasn’t just complaining about the problems he was having now with Pharaoh, rather he was saying that “from the time” — from its very beginning the whole plan to take the Jews out of Egypt was fatally flawed. Moses didn’t see any order in what was going on.

When you look at life’s rich tapestry from the wrong side, it looks like a complete mess. Moses

didn’t see the Divine needlework of the Creator, he was looking at events from the wrong perspective. However the same word that Moses used to complain to G-d, he later repeated in G-d’s praise when he saw the perfection of the Divine Plan. The Midrash says that just as Moses erred with the expression *mei-az* — “from the time” — so with that same word *az*, Moses rectified his mistake.

After the Jewish People emerged from the splitting of the sea, they saw the mighty Egyptian army strewn across the beach like so many broken toy soldiers. It was there that every Jew, from the greatest to the most humble, reached a level of insight into the workings of the world that has never been repeated.

This perception moved Moses and the Children of Israel to song. Song in Jewish thought represents the ability to harmonize all the disparate events in our world and plug them back into the One — that G-d is One.

“Then (*az*) Moses and the children sang a song...”

That song is part of our daily prayers. Maybe one reason we say it every day is to remind ourselves that when life seems like a bad attempt at modern art, we must know that there is an Artist weaving the tapestry. And not a single thread is without design and beauty.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving people the benefit of the doubt

About 10 years ago I was visiting the city where my brother and I used to live. I was in my brother's side of town when it was time to pray the evening service. I went into a small, well known synagogue and stood at the back. At the end of the service, the man to my left recited *kaddish*, the memorial prayer for the deceased. Right in the middle, the person next to him got a phone call on his cellular phone. Not only did he answer it, but he turned to the

man saying *kaddish* and said: "Shssh, I can't hear."

I was so riled by it, I told the story every time the subject of talking during prayer came up. I told it in order to ridicule the people of that synagogue, to illustrate their improper attitude toward prayer.

About three months ago, I told it to my brother. He said, "Oh, that must have been So-and-so. He's from *Hatzalah*, the Jewish emergency and ambulance service, and his rabbi said he's not allowed to come to services unless he brings his phone with him and answers it instantly, no matter where he is in the service."

## Response Line

### High Voltage

Jonathan Katz wrote:

*Hi! Can you settle a debate I have been having with some of my friends? Is it permissible to 'light Shabbat candles Friday night using an electric light? If so, would you be able to say the blessing? How about if one does not have any candles around?*

Dear Jonathan,

Two reasons are given for lighting Shabbat candles: *Shalom Bayit* (peace in the home) and *Oneg Shabbat* (delight of Shabbat). It's hard to experience *Shalom Bayit* while stumbling over furniture, or *Oneg Shabbat* while eating in the dark. By filling the home with light, Shabbat candles promote

harmony and peace, and they make the food enjoyable.

Most authorities of Jewish law, therefore, say that you may use electric lights and even recite the blessing over them, since they add to *Shalom Bayit* and *Oneg Shabbat* the same way as candles.

Others, however, differentiate between battery-powered lights, such as flashlights, and those that run on electricity generated from a power plant. Battery-powered lights are all right since they contain 'fuel' i.e., the battery which is right there when you light it. Regular lights, on the other hand, have no 'fuel'. Rather, the electricity is 'piped in' from the outside; and furthermore, the electricity doesn't really exist yet, rather it's being created every second at the power plant. In a sense it's like lighting a wick with no oil. It's known about Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, that once when he was in a hotel and unable to light candles, he 'lit' a flashlight and made a blessing over it.

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