

WHAT'S

HAPPENING

Parshat

— @ Chabad of Coral Springs —

Shoftim



Thank you to the following people
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this week's Kiddush in honor of the
birth of Sara Malka:
Sigal Rowell, Brian & Robin Kettler,
Paula & Joel Levy.

Mazal Tov on this wonderful simcha!

Davening Times & Information

Friday Candle Lighting: 7:40 p.m.

Shabbat Ends: 8:33 p.m.

Tzeit Hakochavim (Friday): 8:23 p.m.

Shabbat: 8:15 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m. & 11 a.m.

Shabbat Mincha: 7:40 p.m.

Sunday: 8:00a.m., 9:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m.

Weekdays: 6:45 a.m., 7:45 a.m. & 8:45 a.m.

Mincha & Ma'ariv: 7:50 p.m.

Ma'ariv, 2nd Minyan: 9:30 p.m.

08/16 Earliest Tallis & Tefillin: 6:10 a.m.

Latest time for Shma: 10:07 a.m.

08/21 Earliest Tallis & Tefillin: 6:13 a.m.

Latest time for Shma: 10:08 a.m.

TIMELESS TORAH

By: Rabbi Yossie Denburg

REBBE vs. REVOLUTIONARY

214 years ago (in this very week, 29th of Av), the Alter Rebbe (founder of Chabad Lubavitch) took to the war-torn, danger-filled roads. Twenty days earlier, on Tisha B'Av (1812) Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Russia. Anticipating the French advance, the Rebbe emphatically declared his intention to flee as, "*I prefer death than to live under his rule.*"

Though Napoleon's Declaration of Rights guaranteed religious tolerance which excited many Jews, nonetheless, the Rebbe adamantly opposed him. True, the Jews' financial and political situation might improve; yet he foresaw that their spiritual level would plummet. Thus, he prayed for Napoleon's total collapse including, "*Napoleon's own countrymen [should] rise up against him.*" Indeed, the invader would soon be banished from his own France.

In the Rebbe's eyes, Napoleon was "*the Enlightenment on horseback,*" who refused to accept any authority, including G-d's, making him "*a powerful evil force (klipa).*" For this reason, the Rebbe refused to live under Napoleon's rule even for a moment.

So, with the assistance of the Czar's army, the Rebbe emptied his house and fled. Two miles out, he asked for a fast carriage to return and search for anything possibly left behind. They retrieved two worn-out slippers, sieve, and rolling pin. Chassidim insist that the Rebbe thought that Napoleon would use sorcery on something belonging to the Rebbe. So the house was set on fire.

This was not a second too early. Just then, Napoleon's vanguard entered the city from the opposite direction. He promised to richly reward anyone who would deliver anything that had belonged to the Rebbe. When no one stepped forward, Napoleon angrily burned down the adjacent *shul*.

Bonaparte's rapid advance made it impossible for the Rebbe to rest. In one instance, they even travelled on Shabbos just to stay alive. The Rebbe himself said as much: "*I fear I will have to sacrifice my life to humble him.*" Indeed, so it came to be. Only at the exact time of the Rebbe's passing did Napoleon's beaten army retreat out of Russia.

The Rebbe's stark rejection of Napoleon was not an easy or obvious position to take. It placed him in direct opposition to other Chassidic masters. True, millions would be emancipated, but at what price? Napoleon's very legitimacy was rooted in denying the Divine and declaring himself the world's *secular* Messiah. Such a man the Rebbe could not support.

The Rebbe's mystical writings offer us a window into his anti-Napoleon stance: Other idolatrous kings, even the Russian Czar, recognized the need for a G-d; while Napoleon like Sancheriv (the king of ancient Assyria) who exiled

10 of Israel's tribes, rejected the very existence of a Creator. And so the battle lines between Rebbe and revolutionary were drawn.

Many tribulations beset him on the road. But the Rebbe transformed trials into triumph. He even 'borrowed' Napoleon's 'Victory March' to be used in service to Hashem. [At Yom Kippur's end, just before the *shofar* is blown, Lubavitchers still sing Napoleon's March.] Ironical that the Rebbe took Napoleon's song, while the revolutionary obtained nothing of the Rebbe's. Eventually, on Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe, "*saw in prayer that...our side will [ultimately] be victorious.*"

But months of arduous wandering in the bitter winter took a physical toll. His circuitous route of more than 1,500 kilometers ended in the tiny non-Jewish village of Piena (Kursk province). At first, the Rebbe was despondent when it became clear Napoleon would capture Moscow. But when as predicted, Napoleon's army was crushed, the Rebbe immediately organized a relief campaign raising funds and establishing living places for all who had been displaced.

But his time on this world was about to end, and in a peasant's hut he returned his soul to his Maker. Piena had no Jewish cemetery, so the Rebbe took to the road one last time. A snow-sled transported his body to Haditch (Ukraine) 300 kilometers away. Tradition has it that midway, the Rebbe's body raised itself and was suspended in the air. The escorts were alarmed until they noticed an unclean animal under the sled. After removing it, the journey continued.

Eventually, an *ohel* (an enclosure customarily built over the graves of great Sages) was constructed. His son requested that Chassidim purchase olive oil to keep a lamp always burning. And it did. Even at the height of the bloody Russian Civil War, Nazi onslaught and the malicious 70 years of Soviet rule, its flame was kept alive.

Contrast these two warriors. One mighty on the battlefield, one in Heaven. Napoleon invaded Russia with 615,000 soldiers. He lost 524,000 of them. Conversely, the Alter Rebbe first arrived in Lidai (1800) with 5000 adherents. Today, Pew data indicates that 38% of adult Jews in the U.S. alone (2.2 million) interact with Chabad. Add to that the thousands of Chabad institutions in more than 100 other countries and the Alter Rebbe's enduring legacy is truly global.

Ultimately, Napoleon was exiled to a dank, desolate rock in the South Atlantic, where, stripped of power and hope, he swiftly disintegrated. There he died (1821). True, he is remembered, but primarily for his military prowess. Otherwise, he is reviled as a ruthless dictator. Meanwhile, thousands still trek the war-torn roads of Ukraine to pray at the Rebbe's gravesite. There, a lamp still burns, illuminating our darkened world and inspiring spiritual seekers everywhere.

This week's Torah reading contrasts, those who claim divine powers vs. authentic prophets, while this week's history distinguishes between revolutionary and Rebbe: One builds empires that crumble. The other still satisfies our souls.



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