

LAMPLIGHTER

24 Shvat
Mishpatim
1022
17 February
5772/2012

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

Last week we read about the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. This week, in the portion of Mishpatim, we begin learning the specific commandments the Torah contains.

There are three categories of mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah: Chukim (statutes) are commandments that are above our understanding. Eidot (testimonies) are mitzvot that we would not have arrived at without the Torah. However, once G-d commanded us to obey them, we are able to understand their rationale. Mishpatim (judgments) are simple commandments that are compelled by human logic, laws that society would keep even if the Torah had not commanded their observance.

Most of the Torah portion of Mishpatim deals with these seemingly self-evident laws. Which leads to the following question:

After the extraordinary spectacle at Mount Sinai, why does the Torah stress the rational category of mitzvot, as opposed to the others? Furthermore, why was a supernatural revelation necessary for rules and regulations we would have figured out on our own?

The answer is that the Torah is teaching us how to relate to the whole concept of rational mitzvot. The natural inclination is to base these mitzvot on our intellectual understanding. It hardly seems even necessary to believe in G-d to arrive at the conclusion that it is wrong to harm others, or that we must compensate someone we have injured. These principles are patently obvious.

However, by enumerating the "logical" judgments first, the Torah emphasizes that even these mitzvot must be observed out of faith in G-d. We obey the Torah's rational laws not because they are logical, but because G-d has commanded us to obey them. Indeed, the only basis and source of all mitzvot, regardless of whether or not we understand them, is our Divinely-given Torah.

This is important for several reasons:

A truly ethical life cannot be based on the human intellect, as it is simply too flexible and open to manipulation by the will. If a person really wants to do something, not only will he develop a philosophy by which such action is justified, but he will even turn it into a "mitzva"! The human mind can also devise logical "proofs" for contradictory theorems. It is thus too unreliable a foundation for a moral existence.

Moreover, just as G-d is Infinite and without end, so too is His holy Torah. Even the simplest and most logical mitzvot are endlessly deep. If a Jew observes a mitzva only because he understands it, he misses out on all its inner significance.

By basing our observance on faith, we ensure that our moral system will be stable and unwavering. We also connect ourselves to G-d through even the most "logical" of mitzvot.

(Adapted from Volumes 16 and 3 of *Likutei Sichot*)

Under New Management The Muad in Our Service of G-d

By Betzalel Bassman

A close friend of mine is an addict. He had tried medication, therapy and much more. Nothing worked. He lost his family and his health. He almost lost his life-a number of times. He finally found recovery through a 12-step program. In his words, "I found G d. Since then my life has never been better."

In this week's Torah portion we discuss the laws of a *muad*, an animal with an established track record of violence. This distinction is earned by having perpetrated a destructive act three consecutive times, for instance if the animal gored another animal 3 times he then attains the status of a *muad*.

(Once an animal is an established *muad*, the owner has to pay the full price of the damage caused-as opposed to a *tam*, an ordinary animal, for which he must cover half of the loss.)

Once established as a *muad*, can an animal become tamed, or does it keep its *muad* status forever?

The answer is that even animals can "repent" and revert to *tam* status. The sages of the Talmud offer a number of methods through which the animal's slate can be wiped clean. One way is for it to be purchased by a new owner. When "under new management" we once again assume that it is tame and is no longer viewed as a menace.

The Rebbe explains how this can be interpreted in to our practical day to day life; we each have an inner animal, known in chassidic parlance as the *nefesh habehamit*, the animal soul. Left untended, it can become "wild." How can we bring it under control? There are a number of steps that a person must take to subdue his baser side. And like the case of the unruly and destructive animal, chief among them is that he must transfer ownership. In this case, by bringing it under G-d's control and submitting himself to His will.

How does that work?

My friend the addict explained that the key to recovery was realizing he was powerless - G d is in control. Once he had relinquished control to a higher power, he was able to begin recovery.

Slice of LIFE

TRANSLATING THE TRANSLATOR

"Yes," insisted Robin Dixon of the Los Angeles Times, "I want to go to the town of Lubavitch. And no, the seven-hour drive from Moscow is not a deterrent."

Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz was impressed by Mrs. Dixon's determination. As executive director of the local Federation of Jewish Communities, and shaliach (emissary) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Moscow, with his wife Leah, he was the right person for this journalist to have contacted. She had called saying that her paper, whose stories are often syndicated, was interested in doing a feature piece on the revival of Jewish life in Russia.

"My preliminary research led me to Chabad," she had said. "It seems that yours is the most dominant group in Jewish life in Russia today. Its dedication and success intrigued me, and after I discovered that all of it began in the small town of Lubavitch, on the border of Belarus, hundreds of years ago, I decided that a visit to the town could provide the backdrop for my story."

Rabbi Berkowitz didn't want to dampen her interest, but he had his doubts. What was there to see in that tiny, backward village, whose roads aren't even paved? The only Jewish presence in the town these days are people who come to pray at the gravesites of the Lubavitch Rebbes buried there. What could he show this journalist, other than the small museum adjacent to the graves?

As he pondered the matter, Rabbi Berkowitz had an idea. It was the summer of 2001. In the spring of that year, some of the hundreds of Lubavitch yeshiva students who come to Russia to arrange Pesach Seders had made contact with Jewish children in the area. The students were stationed in Smolensk, close to Lubavitch, and in the summer they set up camp in a Lubavitch public school. That camp would be an ideal place for Mrs. Dixon to witness the rejuvenation of

Jewish life.

The trip was planned. When the car came to pick up Rabbi Berkowitz, he joined the photographer and a local Russian who worked for the Los Angeles Times as a translator and researcher. Rabbi Berkowitz inquired, in the course of the conversation, about their religious ties; both said they were gentile. The translator introduced himself as Yasha Ryzhak, a member of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Aware of the story's potentially wide audience and of the long drive ahead, Rabbi Berkowitz began explaining the history, philosophy and activity of Chabad. He expounded on the origin of the movement in the town of Lubavitch, whose very name means "the city of brotherly love." As he spoke, Mrs. Dixon took notes and Yasha asked many questions. Something about his inquiries seemed to be beyond normal curiosity.

At one point, Yasha suddenly declared, "I really should call my grandmother. We'll soon be approaching Smolensk; my family originates there. I've never travelled to this region before, and I'd like to see the place."

After spending fifteen minutes on the phone with his grandmother, he turned to Rabbi Berkowitz with an expression of wonder mixed with confusion.

"Rabbi," he said slowly, "my grandmother just told me something I had never known. When she heard I was traveling to Lubavitch, she became very excited and told me that, during the war, her family members had forged their identity papers and changed their names. They were of Chassidic origin; the men had studied at the yeshiva in Lubavitch. Her great-grandfather's name was Zalman, after the rabbi who founded the movement, and his family name was Rivkin."

Rabbi Berkowitz was amazed.

"Is this your maternal or paternal grandmother?" he asked deliberately.

"She's my mother's mother."

"Then, Yasha, according to Jewish law, you are a Jew." Rabbi Berkowitz declared. This information caught Yasha totally unprepared. An extended

conversation ensued over the remainder of the drive. Yasha listened intently but found it difficult to relate to his newly found identity.

Later, the visitors encountered the camp children and were moved by the ease with which these youngsters, who had no previous Jewish education, absorbed the concepts they were learning, and by the pride they took in their religion.

In the small museum, Rabbi Berkowitz pointed to a striking wall hanging depicting the chassidim who had studied in the town, one of whom was wearing tefilin.

"This is probably what your grandfather looked like, Yasha. Every day, he put on his own pair of tefilin, just as you see portrayed here."

"I hear what you are saying," Yasha responded, "but I am not Jewish."

"According to Jewish law, you are," Rabbi Berkowitz reminded him. "Would you like to put on tefilin, if only to honour the memory of your grandfather?"

Yasha became thoughtful for a moment and then he agreed.

"How strange," he murmured as he unwound the straps, "Suddenly, I feel I am a Jew!"

Inspired by the visit and by the extensive interviews she had conducted, Mrs. Dixon wrote an impressive feature story, which was set to run on September 12, 2001. The terrible events of Tuesday, September 11, however, pushed aside all other news for weeks thereafter. Mrs. Dixon regretfully informed Rabbi Berkowitz that, since it was a time-sensitive story, with the summer camp as one of its highlights, the paper had filed it for a later appropriate date. She apologized for having taken so much of his time for an article that would remain temporarily unpublished.

But Rabbi Berkowitz wasn't disappointed. As far as he was concerned, it was a higher authority that had ordained the long trip to Lubavitch, and its effects were becoming clear even without the publicity of the influential newspaper. Yasha (now Yaakov) Ryzhak delved into his newly-discovered Judaism with zeal and today is a proud member of the Chabad community of Moscow.

Published by **The Chabad House of Caulfield** in conjunction with the **Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.**

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ISSUE 1022

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In this week's Torah portion we read: "For six years he shall serve and in the seventh year he shall be set free" (Exodus 21:2). The six years hint to the six kingdoms where the Jews will be in exile: Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Media/Persia, Greece and Rome - our current exile. At the end of the exile of Rome we will be set free by Moshiach who will redeem us from this exile. (Iturei Torah)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

This letter was sent to R. Michael Lipsker, a member of the chassidic community in Paris, instructing him to depart for shlichus in Morocco.

B"H, 20 Shvat, 5710

Greetings and blessings,

We are still baffled and shocked over the passing [of the Rebbe Rayatz] and it is still difficult to write letters. This however, is clear: it was the holy desire of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, hk"m - and it is his will at present as well - that none of the efforts that were conducted under his leadership be weakened in any way, and that all those who are bound to him should strengthen and reinforce themselves in the fulfilment of their tasks with which he charged them, with greater strength and greater power. Undoubtedly, in the future, my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, hk"m, will also [continue to] convey influence to them from his spirit so that they succeed in their work [on behalf of the Jewish people] as a whole and in their personal lives.

One of the matters about which my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, hk"m, spoke to me in the days before his passing was the education of Jewish children in [North] Africa. With G-d's help, [he desired] to establish a branch of his educational endeavours there whose purpose would be to help our Jewish brethren living in [North] Africa establish and organize kosher educational institutions. For this purpose, they would also train a group of teachers from that place. Also, they would make sure that injustice not be perpetrated against the [North African] youth who make aliyah to the Holy Land, to protect them so that they will not be snared in the net of heresy, Heaven forbid.

He told me that he would write to you with regard to the above, [asking you] to travel there - to [North] Africa - to investigate the situation on site and organize the activities and direct them. Among your responsibilities would also be to establish and maintain an ongoing relationship with the local office of the Joint [Distribution Committee so that] over the course of time, they would take over the financial responsibilities. (The ordinary pattern concerning such matters is that the Joint in [North] Africa will turn to the central office of the Joint in France. Through the efforts of R. Benyamin Gorodetzky, everything will certainly be arranged in a desirable fashion. These were the master's words. In the interim, "the angels were victorious," and the matter was never written down.

Since it has been decided to continue, with G-d's help, all the work that was conducted under the leadership of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, hk"m, and to reinforce it with greater strength and greater power, for that is certainly his desire, I am notifying you about the above and asking you if you agree to accept this position. There is no doubt in my [mind] that you will accept it with great happiness. Inform me about the above and I will write to the office in Paris to arrange all the details involved.

Until the Joint accepts financial responsibility [for the project] - for they are accustomed to wait a while until they see actual work - we will send the necessary [funds for the] budget from here. May "your beginning be modest" and then - as my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, hk"m, once said in one of his talks, I think in the name of the Baal Shem Tov - "your end will thrive exceedingly."

The conception of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, hk"m, was that at first, you should travel to [North] Africa alone. Only afterwards should your family go there.

I heard all of this after it became known that the business proposition made to you was withdrawn and that you returned to your previous job.

I am awaiting your immediate reply.

With wishes for all forms of everlasting good,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Adar

Our sages instituted to read 4 portions in the Torah during the duration of time between rosh chodesh (the head of the month) Adar and Rosh chodesh Nisan to remember 4 things:

Parshat Shkolim, to commemorate the Shkalim (the currency in the days of the temple) that each Jew had to donate to pay the costs for the tamid offering of each year.

Parshat Zachor, to remember the bad actions of Amalek, we read that always on the Shabbos before Purim in order to compare the eradication of Amalek to that of Haman.

Parshat Parah, to commemorate the blood which was thrown on our fathers to purify them so that they should be able to sacrifice the Pesach offering.

Parshat hachodesh, we read this on the Shabbos before the month of Nisan in order to "sanctify" the month of Nisan.

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbat we bless the new month. Adar is associated with an increase in joy. The Talmud explains that during the month of Adar, Jewish "mazel" (colloquially translated as fortune) is very potent. The mazal (or source of influence) of a Jew refers to the higher levels of his soul, which are connected to the essence of G-d at all times. In Adar, we have the opportunity to draw down an abundance of holy energy through good deeds that are imbued with joy.

Interestingly, our Sages taught that "Israel has no mazal" ("ein mazal l'Yisrael"), meaning that Jews are above being influenced by the stars and planets, which are known as "mazelot."

By changing the vowels under the Hebrew letters slightly, "ein mazal l'Yisrael" can be read "Ayin - the Infinite - is the mazal of Israel." The Jewish people receive their influence from G-d from a transcendent level, the transmission of which is particularly powerful in the month of Adar.

The name Adar has several meanings, one of which is cloak or mantel. This is a reference to G-d's compassion for His people, the Jews. The purpose of a garment is to provide us with warmth. In Adar, when the holiday of Purim occurs, we experience the warmth and comfort of G-d. A garment also conceals the body of the person who wears it. Similarly, the miracle of Purim was "dressed" in a series of natural events.

The word Adar is a combination of the Hebrew letter "alef" and the word "dar," meaning "G-d dwells." (Just as alef is the initial letter in the alphabet, so too is G-d the "first.") G-d created the earth in order to have a dwelling place in the physical world. Through the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvot, we create an abode for Almighty G-d.

May the positive influence of Adar be expressed in the advent of the true and complete Redemption with Moshiach in the immediate future.

J. I. Guttentag

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

THE TENTH MAN

Rabbi Levi-Yitzchak Schneerson, the chief rabbi of Yekaterinoslav, is awake, deep in his studies, after a day taken up with underground activities to continue the fire of Judaism in the darkness of communist Russia. Stealthy messengers come and go with coded notes. Bribe money changes hands. Earlier, when dusk descends, he thanks G-d for whatever successes there were. His eyes find comfort in the lines of the sfarim (holly books); a smile flickers, and his strength returns. These are the times he loves the best.

His hours of study soar and then a soft knock on the door. Your heart stops then. It's never good news.

He sits, tense - and ready. Another knock: weak, vacillating. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak exhales. No, it's not the secret police. The NKVD's style is: kick, and break through. He gets up and opens the door.

A woman stands there, completely bundled up and very frightened. She enters quickly. Once inside she begins to speak. "Rabbi, I'm very thankful to have reached here without being caught. I'm from a distant city, and now you must do a great favour for me..."

"My daughter and her fiancée wanted to get married in the government offices. But my heart wouldn't let me agree to a marriage without a chuppah and kiddushin, the Jewish way.

"I begged and begged them - and they finally consented to come to you for a true Jewish wedding. They're frightened out of their wits: both are high-level Communist Party officials. If they're exposed, they'll lose their jobs - if not their lives. They're coming here exactly at midnight to get married. Please, Rabbi, do this great kindness; marry them off. Put three souls at ease."

Minutes pass. More quiet taps on the door, and a young fearful couple come inside. The rebbitzin takes them quickly into an inner room; the rabbi sets out to find a minyan.

It's approaching 1am. Even the NKVD have disappeared. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak moves swiftly and deliberately through the lonely streets, asking the Master of the Universe not to encounter a late-night police squad. Now he knocks on another door, leading the faithful from their beds to the wedding. He prays in his heart not to err regarding the minyan's discretion - there's no room for a tragic slip.

Nine faithful Jews are in the room. But, who will be the tenth? Who can he trust?

"Wait," he tells them as he leaves the apartment and goes downstairs. Grisha, "Chairman of the Residents' Committee," lives on the ground floor by the entrance. For many years he belonged to the large Yekaterinoslav shul, until the communist madness swept him away and he became a Party member. Now he worked hand-in-hand with the NKVD - keeping an eye on Jews suspected of underground Jewish activities. His current

assignment: Rabbi Levi Yitzchak - his rabbinical activities, and everyone coming to and leaving his home.

He dozes now in his observation post, his alertness dulled after a long day of spying. A sudden knocking at the door, and he rises with difficulty to open it. Reb Levi Yitzchak himself is standing there, smiling. Grisha feels confused; he invites the Rabbi inside.

"Come, Grisha," the rav is holding Grisha's hands warmly, "come complete a minyan for a young Jewish couple. They're getting married; building a family - an eternal house in the path of our fathers..."

Reb Levi Yitzchak's presence overwhelms Grisha. The elegant beard and noble countenance, and - more than anything else - his eyes: piercing eyes whose direct gaze looked into a man's soul.

A flood of emotions sweeps through Grisha's heart. The Rabbi's request is staggering: Grisha's standing responsibility is to report misdeeds - not promote them! The Rabbi's willing self-sacrifice for Judaism's continuation penetrates Grisha's heart to the core. Yet, far beyond any of this, it's the Rabbi's trust in him; that look on his holy face that shows the total confidence he places in him. Grisha is overcome at once with pain - as well as the greatest wealth he's ever experienced. The Rabbi himself is counting on me, he thinks, tears filling his eyes...the Rabbi is placing his trust in me.

"Me?" whispers Grisha, choking. "But the Rabbi knows that I... I..." He can't finish the sentence.

Reb Levi Yitzchak hugs Grisha's shoulders; a flash of awareness passes between them. Grisha locks his door and, as in a dream, follows Reb Levi Yitzchak up the stairs.

"There are ten kosher Jews here," says the rav in a voice radiating trust and pleasure. He sits down to write the ketubah, the wedding contract. The rebbitzin produces a tallit, four men take hold of its corners; the wedding canopy is spread above the young couple.

A new eternal house rises in Israel - a house built upon genuine self-sacrifice.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And you shall serve the L-rd your G-d, and He will bless your bread and your water. (Ex. 23:25)

Serving G-d refers to prayer and reciting the Shema; the blessing of "your bread and your water" refers to breakfast, which, according to the Talmud, is the most beneficial meal to the body. The same is true in our spiritual lives. The Torah we learn in the morning, immediately after our prayers, affords us the best spiritual sustenance of the day, even better than the Torah we may learn later. For at that time, the spiritual awakening experienced during prayer is carried over into the learning itself. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 17 FEBRUARY 2012

BEGINS	ENDS
7:59MELBOURNE	8:57
7:51ADELAIDE	8:47
6:14BRISBANE	7:07
6:57DARWIN	7:47
6:13GOLD COAST	7:06
6:48PERTH	7:43
7:29SYDNEY	8:25
7:39CANBERRA	8:36
7:56LAUNCESTON	8:57
7:59AUCKLAND	8:56
8:06WELLINGTON	9:06
7:58HOBART	9:00
7:13BYRON BAY	8:06



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS MISHPATIM
25 SHVAT • 18 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING: MINCHA: KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	7:59 PM 8:10 PM 8:40 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS: LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: THE MOLAD OF THE MONTH OF ADAR IS WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 22 MINCHA: SHABBOS ENDS:	10:00 AM 10:13 AM 8:49 AND 1 CHELEK AM 8:00 PM 8:57 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI: MINCHA: MAARIV:	9:15 AM 8:00 PM 8:50 PM