

# LAMPLIGHTER

6 Elul  
Shoftim  
**1049**  
24 August  
5772/2012

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah reading, *Shoftim*, contains the commandment: "By the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses shall he who deserves death be put to death." Our Sages learned from this that a minimum of two witnesses is required to impose capital punishment or flogging. Even if a person admits his crime, it is considered insufficient evidence for these forms of punishment.

Maimonides explains: "It is a textual decree that the Jewish court cannot put a person to death or flog him as a result of his confession. Two witnesses are necessary to do so." This law applies only to capital punishment and flogging; when it comes to financial matters, a person's word is decisive, and "admission is worth a hundred witnesses."

Maimonides characterized this law as "a textual decree," but other commentators have added a possible explanation: A human being, they maintain, may be master over his wealth and property, but he can never be the ultimate master over his body. Because money is subject to his control, his word carries weight; because the body does not really belong to him, he does not have the right to inflict harm.

A person's body and soul are not really his; they are only lent to him by G-d as collateral. In fact, we are obligated to take care of our bodies throughout our entire lives. Jewish law states that "An individual is not permitted to hurt his body." For the body he inhabits isn't really his; it belongs to G-d. And what right does one have to damage something that doesn't belong to him?

Of course, it is also true that everything in the whole world belongs to G-d, as it states in the Torah, "The earth and everything within it is the L-rd's." Even a person's money isn't ultimately his, as it states elsewhere, "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine."

But if everything is really G-d's, what is the difference between a person's money and his body?

The answer lies in the degree of control G-d allows us. Yes, everything belongs to Him, but He permits us to decide what to do with our money. By contrast, the body is purely collateral, and we cannot do whatever we want with it. It is simply not in our power to self-impose capital punishment.

While G-d allows us a certain autonomy over money, we must also recognize that He alone controls reality. The story is told about a chasid who wrote at the end of his balance book: "There is nothing but Him."

In fact, "there is nothing but Him" expresses the true reality, which everyone will come to perceive in the Messianic era, may it commence at once.

*(Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Vol. 34)*

## An Impartial Judge

*By Naftali Silberberg*

This week's Torah Portion, *Shoftim*, is always read on the first Shabbat of the month of Elul. As nothing is accidental, this Parshah must contain important lessons for us to implement during this auspicious month.

"*Shoftim*" means judges. The Torah commands us to appoint a hierarchy of righteous judges in every city and province. On a literal level, this commandment refers to judges who adjudicate civil, criminal and religious issues. On a deeper level, however, this commandment, as well as its details, has great meaning for every one of us in our personal lives. Let us examine one of this law's details:

*"You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show favouritism, and you shall not take a bribe."*

Once the Torah prohibits the perversion of justice, is it necessary to ban bribery? Can there be a greater miscarriage of justice than bribery? Rashi, the preeminent Bible commentator, explains that Torah forbids bribery even in an instance where the giver stipulates that the money is being given on condition that the judge issues a fair verdict! For as soon as the judge is thus "bribed," he will be biased in favour of that particular party, and will be unable to issue an objective ruling. As the verse continues: "for bribery blinds the eyes of the wise." As soon as a kinship exists between a judge and one of the litigants, that judge is unfit to preside over that case.

During the month of Elul, every person is expected to judge his or her actions and accomplishments of the previous year. However, every person is "bribed" by a sense of self-love and is incapable of rendering a completely fair evaluation. Therefore, every person must appoint a "judge," an impartial spiritual mentor who can issue an objective opinion.

Furthermore, the very knowledge that at the end of every week or month one will have to discuss their spiritual accomplishments with another is oftentimes enough to impel an individual onto the path of improvement. As Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai said to his disciples, "If only you would fear G-d as much as you fear your fellow man."

# Slice of LIFE

Sam (fictitious name) was a young upcoming businessman who, in his travels through Europe, met an attractive young woman who found favour in his eyes.

At first the only connection they had was business, but eventually he invited her out for dinner and discovered they had a lot in common.... except religion.

Her parents and she were devout, church-going Catholics. It was simply unthinkable that she would marry out of her religion. Her parents would never agree. Not only that but such a sin meant eternal damnation! The only possibility, she told him, is if he would (G-d forbid) leave Judaism.

But Sam wouldn't hear of it. True he was fond of her and also true that he wasn't a particularly observant Jew. But he was a proud Jew and he knew that marrying a gentile meant trouble; the children wouldn't be Jewish, the house wouldn't be Jewish, his parents would be heartbroken and, most important of all ... Judaism was too important to him.

So they separated and Sam threw himself into his work and his other interests and forgot all about what had happened. Almost.

As 'fate' would have it, because they were in the same general line of work, a year later they again met. But this time things were different. First of all it was in New York and second, Sam was much more to the point.

He told her firmly and finally that, despite his feelings for her, if she would not be willing to convert this would be their last conversation.

The poor girl was beside herself, conversion was out of the question... but she liked him. She explained her dilemma; they exchanged phone numbers and again parted.

A few weeks later her phone rang. It was Sam. He had decided that it was unfair of him to expect her to convert when she knew nothing about Judaism. He told her that in another few days it would be a festive Jewish holiday called Simchat Torah. If she wanted, he had spoken to a family in an area of Brooklyn called Crown Heights who agreed to take her as a guest. Then she could ask questions, learn and see what real Judaism was.

She agreed. She spent two days of the Holiday there and it was wonderful. The family, the Chassidim, the joy, but most of all, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. As soon as she saw him she felt that if anyone could help her solve her problem it was him.

The family she stayed with made a few phone calls and, got her an appointment (called 'Yechidut') and a few days later she entered the Rebbe's office and poured out her heart.

She explained how she was a Catholic, Sam was Jewish. He wanted her to convert. But her parents would never agree to her converting. But she didn't want to lose him. She was torn. Should she leave him? Should she convert?

The Rebbe was silent for a few seconds and said, matter-of-factly, "You don't need to convert."

She looked at the Rebbe bewilderedly and the Rebbe continued. "You can get married. You are not a gentile. You are a Jew."

She couldn't believe her ears, this was crazy. She? A Jew? "But you don't know me." She blurted out. "I've been in this room only two minutes. I'm Catholic! I was raised a Catholic. I go to church with my parents every Sunday. What do you mean I'm Jewish?!"

The Rebbe just looked at her, smiled and said. "Go to your mother and ask her if you're Jewish or not."

That evening she returned to the house where she was a guest and asked if she could use the phone to call her mother long distance. They agreed. When she heard her mother lift the receiver she asked. "Mother, am I Jewish?"

She figured that her mother would simply answer 'no' and that would be the end of it... but to her surprise her mother slammed the phone down.

'Strange' she thought to herself. Two days later she flew home and as soon as she entered the door she took her mother aside and asked the same question. "Shhhhh" Her mother whispered. "Don't talk about this when your father is at home. Tomorrow we will take a walk in the park and I'll explain."

The next day after her father left for work they went to the park and, when her mother was sure they were far from any human ear, she turned to her and said. "My dear daughter, it's true. You are Jewish. And so is your father, and so were our parents and their parents before them. But after the war things changed; your father and I went through the camps and when the war was over we met and got married. We suffered a lot because we were Jews and, well, your father said he didn't want his children to suffer like we suffered. So we changed our religion and never told you."

Several days later the girl returned to the Rebbe to give him the good news and the Rebbe replied. "Because you entered a Church you must immerse yourself in a Mikvah... not for conversion but to remove the defilement of idolatry. Then you must learn the laws of Judaism."

Today she and Sam are married, live in Haifa and have a Chassidic family with

children and grandchildren making the world a better place.

Rebbi Shalom Ber Gansberg worked as the Rebbe's personal helper and was always on call if the Rebbe was in need of assistance.

On the Holiday of 'Succot', the Rebbe and his wife Rebbitzin Chaya Mushka ate in a Succa that was near the Rebbe's headquarters, and every time they would enter Rabbi Gansberg would first make sure everything was ready and then tend to their needs during the meal.

One year on the first day of the holiday, the Rebbitzin took Rabbi Gansberg aside before the Rebbe came home and told him that because it was cloudy outside and looked like it would rain, he should make sure the Succa was covered when they weren't using it. (it is forbidden to have a cover on the Succa while eating in it).

Rebbi Gansberg replied that he purposely did not cover it because he was afraid he would forget to remove it before the Rebbe entered which would disqualify the Succa. But the Rebbitzin assured him that he had nothing to worry about; first of all he had an excellent memory and had never let the Rebbe down and second, she promised she would remind him.

But he wasn't convinced. So she again told him not to worry, it looked like it was about to rain, the Succa would be all wet etc. etc. he had never forgotten before and she again promised to remind him. So, against his better judgment, after the Rebbe and his wife left the Succa he covered it with the plastic covering.

But his worst nightmare came true. The next day when the Rebbe entered the Succa and sat down to make 'Kiddush' before the Holiday meal Rabbi Gansberg realized he had been so busy with other duties that he had forgotten to remove the covering!!

Immediately he slapped his forehead in dismay and yelled "OY! Rebbe, wait!!" ran outside, rolled the plastic covering back, re-entered and announced that the Rebbe could begin the meal.

But the damage had been done. Poor Rabbi Gansberg was heartbroken. He had let himself and the Rebbe down; even though it was a small thing and nothing really bad came as a result, he felt terrible.

Two days later the Rebbe whispered in his ear. "Gansberg, you can't fix one sin with another sin".

He stepped back, saw the Rebbe was half smiling and understood. The fact that he forgot to open the covering was a 'sin' but being depressed about it was another 'sin'.

The Rebbe was telling him that the only way to really fix mistakes is through joy.

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*The Lamplighter contains words from sacred writings. Please do not deface or discard.*

ISSUE 1049

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Talmud lists a number of signs for the approaching redemption and concludes that the most manifest sign is when "You, mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit..." (Ezekiel 36:8) To be like the trees of the field, that "the shoots taken from you will be like unto you," to blossom and cause a chain-reaction of self-perpetuating fruits of Torah and mitzvot (commandments) in oneself and others, is an assured way to bring about the speedy coming of Moshiach. (From *Living with Moshiach*, by J.I. Schochet)



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

4 Elul, 5734 (1974)

I am in receipt of your letter of 14 August. Needless to say, I am very sorry that my previous letter caused you some anguish, which, of course, was neither intended nor anticipated. I therefore hasten to reply to your letter in order to clarify my intent and, hopefully, to dispel your anxiety.

By way of preface, you must not think that I take personal offense if the suggestions which I convey in writing or orally are not followed. Certainly, in your case, there was no thought in my mind that if my suggestions were not accepted there would be cause for apprehension. It is only that when I am asked for advice and the like, I offer it as I see it, to the best of my knowledge, in the best interest of the inquirer, and in the case of your husband and yourself - in the best interests also of those in your environment.

Now to your letter and my previous one, to which it refers: I am certain that your husband can accomplish a great deal in his field, and that he can accomplish it in a way that will also be beneficial to the cause of Yiddishkeit [Judaism], which will be a source of blessing to yourselves and many others, as indicated above. The more the activities are in harmony with G-d's directives and Shabbos observance is one of the most important ones, not only as a basic mitzvah [commandment] of the Torah, but also of the Ten Commandments - the wider are opened the channels to receive G-d's blessings.

In the present instance there is a further benefit, in that generally when there is a proposition to appear in a show or entertainment, and, in the nature of things, such an offer may have both positive and negative aspects - the question of Shabbos and Yom Tov [holiday] observance can serve as a test of its desirability. For if it has to be declined on this ground, it is an indication that it is not desirable also on other grounds, including the material aspect.

The above may seem like a mystical approach to material things. But on deeper reflection it can be seen that the mystical approach is also a practical one. Moreover, in recent years we have seen that where certain celebrities insisted on Shabbos observance, their religious convictions were respected. To cite some instances: The American Grand Master of Chess, Samuel Reshevsky, while participating in a tournament in Moscow, refused to play on Shabbos, and the game was postponed until after Shabbos. And although religion is not at a "premium" in that country, it only raised his prestige. It was also beneficial to him from a practical viewpoint, for it gave him an opportunity to rest an extra day in between games, which, needless to say, are rather strenuous.

The world chess champion, B. Fischer, who is a Jew, though he professes to be a follower of the Seventh Day Adventists, also refused to play on Shabbos, even though he forfeited the game, but it did not hurt his chances to win the crown.

A further example from the world of business: A person who is a friend of mine participated in an International Fair in Moscow some 4 or 5 years ago. He notified the authorities that he could not do business on Shabbos, and a special session was arranged for him on Sunday. It turned out highly satisfactory for him, even business-wise, quite unintentionally and unexpectedly.

You write that you hesitated to show my letter to your husband, not knowing if he would follow my suggestion, etc. But I do not see why you should be apprehensive, since, as I explained, above, it is not connected with any stricture on my part. It is only free advice which, I believe, is for his benefit also materially, in addition to the spiritual aspects. But if he is not ready yet to accept it, I am certain we will remain good friends...

May I add that apparently I give your husband more credit than you do, for I firmly believe that he is capable of forgoing the material gain and personal satisfaction of appearing in a show if he is convinced that there is a worthwhile cause to warrant it. At any rate, my suggestion was based on the assumption that it would come - as you express it in regard to yourself, and also your husband, "from within, on a voluntary basis," being certain that your husband already has it "within" him, and only needs to bring it out to the surface in actual deed.

## CUSTOMS CORNER

The reason we lift the Torah up in the air in the synagogue after each reading.

The one who is called up reads from the text in a whisper together with the designated reader, because actually reading the text is considered to be a great deed. For this reason, the famed codifier of the Code of Jewish Law, Rabbi Joseph Caro, writes, "It is incumbent on men and women to look at the Torah Scroll's text," when it is being lifted in the air for all to see.

Rabbi Abraham Abele Gombiner (1635-1683), writes in a gloss on the Code, "When one sees the letters, the holiness of the words radiates and imparts holiness to the individual."

Given this, it has become a beloved synagogue tradition that everyone should rise and try to get a glimpse of the words.

The crowd bows slightly and says the verse (Deuteronomy 4:44):

And this is the "Torah" [teaching] which Moses set before the children of Israel. What happened to the rest is "al pi Hashem beyad Moshe"

## A WORD

*from the Director*

*What is the core of teshuvah (repentance) and how does it work? How can a single turn in the right direction "erase the slate" and eradicate years of ingrained behaviour?*

*Chasidic philosophy explains this by comparing the Jew's relationship with G-d to a fire, based on the verse "For the L-rd your G-d is a consuming fire." Just as a physical fire requires certain conditions in order to burn, so too does the Jew's connection to G-d depend on several conditions in order to thrive.*

*A physical flame must meet two requirements in order to be sustained: it must be given a sufficient amount of material to burn, and avoid any substances that can extinguish it. A fire that isn't fed or is doused with water will eventually sputter and go out.*

*Likewise, there are two requirements for nurturing the spiritual "flame" that symbolizes the Jew's relationship with G-d: It must have sufficient "food" to sustain it (Torah study and the performance of positive mitzvot), and avoid any substances that can extinguish it (those things that the Torah has forbidden).*

*When a Jew observes positive mitzvot and is careful not to transgress the Torah's prohibitions, his "flame" flourishes and burns brightly. If he is lax about meeting the flame's requirements, the fire will sputter and grow dim.*

*When a person does teshuvah he is merely "re-igniting" a flame that wasn't properly tended. To do so, he must bring a fire from another source, one that has never been allowed to go out. This fire, which is completely impervious to being extinguished, exists in the innermost recesses of every Jew's heart. Like the flint rock that can always give off a spark after years of being submerged in water, the potential for a "fiery" and all-consuming relationship with G-d always exists.*

*When a Jew sincerely regrets his distance from G-d and contemplates his innate love for Him, he accesses this inner and eternal "fire." teshuvah then, is the "match" that can rekindle even the tiniest flame, and cause it to burst into a giant conflagration.*

*J. I. Guterlich*

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

SAVED BY A MATCH

In 1935, in the tiny village of Kreszowice, near Cracow, there lived a Jew by the name of Israel Weiner. It happened that he fell behind with his tax payments, and his home was visited by the tax collector, accompanied by a policeman, both of whom were big anti-Semites. They had come to requisition his belongings in lieu of the unpaid taxes.

Among Israel Weiner's possessions was his greatly valued sewing machine. When not in use, it was draped with a linen cover adorned by an embroidered white eagle, the Polish national emblem. The tax collector ordered Weiner to lift this cover so that he and his companion could inspect what was beneath it. When they were through, Weiner lowered the cover back onto the smooth surface but, in his nervousness, did not take care to centre it properly and one side hung down lower than the other. Within a few moments the cover began to slip and soon, unnoticed by Weiner, it was on the floor.

As Weiner began to cross the room, followed by the two men, his foot caught hold of the crumpled cover on the floor, and he stepped on the cloth.

"Aha!" cried the policeman gleefully. "See how this Jew treats the symbol of his country!" Despite Israel Weiner's pleas and explanations, charges were drawn up and he was summoned to court.

A day was set for the trial, and a magistrate appointed. To Weiner's dismay, the judge was a notorious anti-Semite too, and he knew that the probability of a severe sentence was high.

On the eve of the trial, the nervous and depressed defendant went to the Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Bentzion Halberstam, for a blessing. Weeping profusely, he told the Rebbe his woeful story. The Rebbe gave his blessing, expressing his hope and belief that

G-d would help the desperate man, and then added some very strange instructions.

"Tomorrow, when you go to court," the Rebbe said, "take with you a matchbox containing only one match. Then, when you notice a member of the court taking out a cigar or a cigarette during the proceedings - as someone inevitable will - you, Israel, will step forward and offer him your matchbox."

Weiner was puzzled until the Rebbe explained the rest of the plan, and advised him to inform his lawyer about it. "You have nothing to lose, and much to gain," said the Rebbe.

The next day at court, as expected, the public prosecutor released his venom on the trembling Jew.

"For such a disrespectful act against his country, this man deserves the maximum sentence under the law!"

As the prosecutor continue to rant, the judge, becoming excited at the prospect of meting out a harsh punishment to this helpless Jew, began to fumble in his pocket for a cigarette. Israel, alert to such a move as he had been instructed, quickly stepped forward and offered his matchbox - containing only one match - to the judge. Absent-mindedly, the judge accepted the matchbox, lit his cigarette and tossed the empty matchbox into the waste basket.

In those days all matches were distributed solely by the Polish government, so every matchbox bore the emblem of the Polish national eagle. The defence lawyer, who had been waiting for this moment, jumped out of his seat. "Your honour," he cried, "I must bring a very urgent matter to your attention!"

All eyes were on him. How dare he interrupt the proceeding with such an outburst? In a ringing voice, the lawyer for the defence continued his bid for attention. "The honour of our national symbol, the Polish white eagle, has been insulted in this very room, only a moment ago!" he boomed.

As everyone stared at him in astonishment, he continued. "Look into the waste basket! You will see the image of the Polish white eagle imprinted on a matchbox, amidst the refuse. The honour of our beloved country is at stake! And it is His Honour, the magistrate himself, who is guilty of this violation!"

Stifled laughter was heard from the back of the courtroom, and then the laughter became louder and the audience began to applaud.

The defendant then sprang up, wringing his hands, and cried out, "Your Honour, I am the father of small children! Please have mercy on me! I am a devout patriot; I cover my most cherished possession with our beloved national symbol. My stepping on the white eagle emblem that was on my sewing machine cover was no more an act of disrespect than was your casting an empty matchbox into the garbage!"

The room was silent for a moment, the judge shifted in his seat. "Case dismissed!" he said.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

You shall prepare the way... that every slayer may flee there. (Deut. 19:3)

Rashi explains that at each intersection there was a sign showing the way to the cities of Refuge. These cities were established to save unintentional killers from people seeking revenge. Each of us must stand at the crossroads, wherever Jews are found, to point them towards the path of Torah. Torah is the spiritual refuge from the "blood avenger," the evil inclination, that causes us to sin and prosecutes us. (*Likutei Sichot, Vol. II*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 24 AUGUST 2012

BEGINS		ENDS
5:34	MELBOURNE	6:32
5:33	ADELAIDE	6:30
5:13	BRISBANE	6:06
6:25	DARWIN	7:15
5:11	GOLD COAST	6:04
5:37	PERTH	6:32
5:14	SYDNEY	6:10
5:20	CANBERRA	6:17
5:21	LAUNCESTON	6:21
5:36	AUCKLAND	6:34
5:30	WELLINGTON	6:31
5:18	HOBART	6:20
5:09	BYRON BAY	6:03



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS SHOFTIM  
7 ELUL • 25 AUGUST

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:34 PM
	MINCHA:	5:45 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:15 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:36 AM
	MINCHA:	5:30 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:32 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS MON-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:45 PM
	MAARIV:	6:30 PM