

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas Shekalim
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Mishpatim, begins with the verse, "And these are the judgments which you shall set before them (lifneihem)." Our Sages learn a number of lessons from the word lifneihem:

"Before them" - before Jews. If ever there is a disagreement among Jews they must go to a Jewish court to resolve it, rather than bring their case before a gentile judge. A Jewish judge will render judgment according to the laws of the Torah.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Chabad Rebbe, explains the word "lifneihem" as "lifnimitam - before their inner essence - penimiyut." G-d's wisdom must penetrate even the most hidden levels of the soul.

The mitzvot (commandments) are divided into three categories: statutes, testimonies, and judgments (mishpatim).

Statutes are commandments that are beyond our comprehension. We obey them simply because G-d has commanded us to do so, with acceptance of the yoke of heaven.

Testimonies are mitzvot which, although we would not have discerned them on our own, have a rationale we can nonetheless comprehend.

Judgments are commandments which all people can readily understand. These mitzvot are laws which are compelled by human logic, and which all mankind deems necessary for the good of society.

A question is asked: Why is it precisely the rational commandments we would have observed anyway, about which the Torah states "you shall set before them"?

A person would never consider bringing "statutes" and "testimonies" before a non-Jewish court. Statutes and testimonies are particular and unique to Torah, commandments that are derived from G-d's will rather than human understanding; thus it is obvious that they pertain solely to Jews. However, a person might think that because non-Jews understand and obey rational laws it is permissible to be judged by them in certain instances. For this reason our Sages insisted: "Before them - and not before idolaters."

All of the Torah's commandments were given by G-d. We observe them solely because He wants us to, not because they make sense to us. Just as statutes and testimonies are performed with faith in G-d, so too must our observance of judgments have the same motivation.

Furthermore, it is precisely concerning judgments that the word "penimiyut" most relates, for the Jew must awaken the innermost recesses of his soul to obey them properly. Merely understanding the Torah's rational laws is not sufficient.

In this way we will come to obey all of the Torah's commandments with all of our individual strengths.

Adapted for Maayan Chai from Likutei Sichot vol. 3

Not My Job

By Yanki Tauber

I heard of an incident that occurred once in Moscow. A car parked in the yard of the Chabad shul was broken into, and valuable equipment was stolen. When the caretaker/watchman was confronted with this blatant failure to do his job, he shrugged, "My job is to make sure that everything's okay. When something's not okay - that's not my job!"

That incident reminded me of a story which the Lubavitcher Rebbe would often tell about his predecessor, The Tzemach Tzedek (1789-1866). The wife of The Tzemach Tzedek's youngest son had fallen ill, and the doctors were unanimous in their opinion that there was no hope of recovery. When The Tzemach Tzedek was informed of the doctors' verdict, he noted that the Talmud raises the question, "From where do we know that a physician is allowed to heal?" and answers that this is derived from the verse, "And heal shall he heal." "But nowhere," concluded The Tzemach Tzedek, "has a physician been given the right or the ability to determine that a human being is incurable."

The Talmud's query is a very real question for the believer. If a person is stricken with illness only because G-d has determined that he should be ill, what use is there in summoning the doctor? It's not only a question of "how do you dare to interfere with G-d's will?" - it's also a matter of "how can you think that anything you do will make a difference?" The answer given by the Talmud is that, indeed, the physician is permitted to "interfere" only because G-d allows and commands the physician to interfere, and therefore the physician's efforts make a difference.

This led The Tzemach Tzedek to conclude that the physician's authority and influence are strictly limited to the function that the Torah has given him - to heal. Anything beyond that is not his job.

While illness and healing provide a dramatic illustration of this principle, Chassidic teaching applies it to all areas of life. We have the ability, the right and the duty to make a difference because G-d has empowered us to make a difference. But this authority has its limits. When we have truly done everything that is within our knowledge and capacity to do - what happens beyond that is beyond our domain.

This is why the concept of "despair" is given no credence in Chassidism. It is generally assumed that there exist two types of people: fatalists and activists. The fatalist maintains that things are the way they are, and that nothing that anyone does really makes a difference. There is no reason neither for exultation nor for despair (though some would say that the fatalist's state is one of perpetual despair). The activist believes himself to be the master of his fate, so he exults over his achievements and despairs when things do not go the way he's planned, believing the latter to be the result of his failure to make happen what he wanted to have happened.

The Jew is neither, and both. He's a fatalist, in the sense that he believes that whatever transpires is the direct result of G-d's will that it should transpire. But he's also an activist: he believes that there is much he can and must do, and that what he does makes a difference.

So that Russian watchman did have a valid point. To make things right - that's our job. But when we reach our limits, that's not failure, it simply means that we have done our job, and now it's up to G-d to do His.

Slice of LIFE

Something for G-d

By Alan Magill

He sat in his prison cell sulking. I'll call him Steven. Time was playing tricks on him. It seemed like only yesterday and at the same time a lifetime ago that he had everything—a loving wife, beautiful children, a high-powered job on Wall Street and luxuries that the average person couldn't imagine.

But now he was sitting on a hard chair in a dank cell in Upstate New York and he knew all too well how he had fallen. Being rich hadn't been enough. He had needed to be richer and he was doing a fine job of that until he was caught doing illegal insider trading. He was convicted and sent to jail for a number of years. His wife and children still showed their love for him, but there was only so often they could visit and he missed them terribly. Soon after his internment, he heard stories of how too many of the other imprisoned men had gotten "Dear John" letters from their wives and girlfriends, ending loving contact just when they needed it most. Steve feared he would also be left alone, and he was like a man falling into an abyss with nothing to hold on to, nothing to anchor him.

One day, which seemed like every other day of listlessness and sadness, Steven was told he had a visitor. He was soon introduced to Rabbi Richard Bieler, the prison chaplain who had moved up from New York City to take the position. Steven, who was far removed from his Jewish roots, nevertheless was not averse to Rabbi Bieler's visit. When you hit rock bottom, any friendly face is like somebody throwing you a lifeline.

On his first visit, Rabbi Bieler chatted with Steven. Nothing about Judaism, a lot about what Steven needed to talk about. On the next few visits, the rabbi interjected some words of hope, drawing on Jewish sources. Steven took some solace in this and, in subsequent visits, they continued to shared basic human interaction with more and more of Judaism being thrown into the mix.

They got to know each other as people, and Steven looked forward to every one of this rabbi-in-training's visits. They even learned a little Torah, which was probably the first activity of this kind for Steven in years.

Then came the day when Rabbi Bieler would have to tell Steven he was leaving, moving back to New York City. Steven took the news relatively well and thanked the rabbi for all he had done on his behalf. They wished each other all the best and then went on with their lives.

For Rabbi Bieler's part, he walked out of that prison and went on to his next job. For Steven's part, he was not finished intersecting with this rabbi's life.

A number of years later, Rabbi Bieler was walking down a Manhattan street when he came upon a man who looked very familiar in one sense and not familiar in another sense. Then he realized it was Steven, who was far removed from his prison garb. He had on an expensive suit, was immaculately groomed and was carrying a briefcase.

They shook hands warmly, each one happy to be in the other's presence. The rabbi asked Steven what had happened since they had last seen each other. Steven replied that he had so enjoyed the time they had shared so long ago. He added that the Torah sessions -- though relatively few -- had given him a thirst for more

Torah knowledge. When the next prison chaplain came in, they learned on a regular basis and his connection to Judaism became the anchor that had been so missing in his life. When he got out of a jail a few years later, rather than being diminished by his prison experience as many are, he had a new, positive direction in his life.

He told Rabbi Bieler how his relationship with his family had strengthened. He told him about getting a new job. And he told him how Judaism mattered to him.

"I'm very happy for you," said the rabbi.

"What's new with you?" asked Steven.

The rabbi said he was leaving the next morning on a trip to Israel with his family.

"Enjoy," said Steven.

The rabbi added that there was a custom of putting notes into the Kotel (Western Wall), a form of communication with G-d. "You can make requests for things you need," said the rabbi. "Would you like me to put in a note for you?"

"Most definitely," said Steven.

The rabbi took out paper and pen, handed it to Steven and said, "Write what you want to say."

Steven took no more than two seconds to write and handed the note back to the rabbi.

Surprised by how quick he was, the rabbi asked, "What did you write?"

Steven responded, "I wrote something that G-d doesn't hear often enough. You could look at it."

Rabbi Bieler opened up the piece of paper and it read, "Thank you."

Postscript: To this day, notes Rabbi Bieler, "Steven thanks G-d for the fact that he had a second chance." A second chance that includes Rabbi Bieler officiating at the wedding of one of Steven's sons.

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ISSUE 1073

MOSHIACH MATTERS

On the verse, "Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it," commentaries write: "Take heed to remember the Shabbos day constantly, so that if you encounter something special [such as a delicacy, in the course of the week], set it aside for Shabbos." The same applies to the future Redemption. Even when we are still in the "weekdays" of the exile, we should constantly keep in mind and prepare for the Redemption, for "the Day which is entirely Shabbos and repose for life everlasting."



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

B"H 7 Tevet, 5717 (1957)

Recalling the well-known dictum of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch and the founder of Chabad Chasidism, to the effect that "a Jew should live with the times," i.e., according to the time and spirit of the weekly Torah portion, I wish to dwell briefly on the first section of the Torah portion of Shemot (Exodus), which is the "Torah-time" when your celebration is taking place.

We are told in this first portion of the book of Exodus how a handful of Jews – seventy souls – managed to survive on the foreign soil of Egypt, in the midst of an overwhelmingly powerful and hostile people. They survived not by imitating their non-Jewish neighbours and trying to hide their identity, but, on the contrary, by realizing that they were different and by guarding, most zealously and uncompromisingly, their identity and spiritual independence. Our Sages pointed out this secret of survival in their commentary on the first verse of the Torah portion, "And these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt." The Sages write, "Because they did not change their names and their customs, they were redeemed from Egypt." Moreover, not only did they manage to survive in such adverse circumstances, but they also multiplied in number and grew strong in spirit, until they received the Torah at Sinai, bringing light to the entire world and accomplishing the purpose of Creation.

This portion of the Torah, which gives us the story of the first Jews in the first exile, contains the secret of Jewish survival in all dispersions and in all generations. This lesson should be remembered, particularly in our own day, when the exile, has become so tragically devastating both physically and spiritually. Jews dispersed throughout the world are everywhere surrounded by a demoralized and hostile world, a world in which basic principles of humanity and justice are trampled upon, a world so confused that darkness is mistaken for light, and light for darkness, a world living in fear of atomic self-destruction, G-d forbid.

In this dark exile, we Jews must realize, more than ever before, the teaching of our Torah – the Torah of Life – that only through the preservation of our identity and spiritual independence, based on the solid foundation of our Torah and mitzvot and nurtured through an uncompromising Torah-true education of our children, can we ensure the survival of our people, spiritually and physically, and, moreover, grow and prosper.

CUSTOMS CORNER

Meat & Milk

One of the important aspects of observing kosher is keeping milk and meat properly separated. This prohibition is derived from the verse, "Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk." This verse appears in the Torah three times, twice in Exodus and once in Deuteronomy. The Sages explain that the repetition of the verse teaches us that it is not only forbidden to cook meat and milk together, but it's also forbidden to then eat or derive benefit from the mixture.

The following prohibitions were added by the rabbis:

Torah law only prohibits the cooking (and eating) of the meat of a domesticated animal in milk. The rabbis added that one may also not cook (or eat) the meat of a kosher wild animal or bird with milk.

Torah Law only prohibits the consumption of meat that was cooked with milk. The rabbis added that one may not eat meat and milk together even if they were not cooked together.

In addition, the rabbis instituted that one must wait a certain amount of time between eating meat and milk. There are minority opinions that hold that it's sufficient to wait one hour or three hours. If one belongs to a community that follows those opinions, he may rely on those leniencies. Otherwise, one should wait a full six hours. In any case, one may not eat milk after meat in the same meal, even many hours later.

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbos is significant for a number of reasons. Besides it being Shabbos Parshas Mishpotim it is also Shabbos Mevarchim Chodesh Adar (the Shabbos on which we bless the month of Adar). It is also Machor Chodesh (the day before Rosh Chodesh), which serves to further accentuate the connection this Shabbos has with the coming month. This Shabbos also bears a unique phenomenon - it is Shabbos Parshas Shekalim (the Shabbos during which there is a special Torah reading describing the annual donation of a half-shekel which every Jew gave toward the communal offerings in the Temple).

The connection between Parshas Shekalim and the month of Adar is as follows. The essence of Adar is the festival of Purim, as explained in Talmud Yerushalmi, that the whole of the month of Adar is fit for the reading of the Megillah. In the Megillah it states: "the month which was converted for them (Jews) from sorrow to joy and from mourning to holiday." In other words, the entire month of Adar (not just the days of Purim) have an association with the joy and concept of Purim.

The reason why Haman's evil decree was annulled and the festival of Purim occurred was because of the giving of the half-shekel - which is the concept of Parshas Shekalim. Our Sages state (Megillah 13b) "It was revealed and known before Him, at Whose word the world came into being, that Haman would one day pay shekels for the destruction of Israel. Therefore He [G-d] anticipated his shekels with those of Israel." That is, the half-shekel which every Jew paid as his contribution to the congregational sacrifices was the counterbalance to the shekels Haman paid to destroy the Jews. This then is the connection between the month of Adar and Parshas Shekalim: The miracle of Purim (which is the content of Adar) was caused through the Mitzvah of the half-shekel (about which we read on Parshas Shekalim).

Just as years ago the Jews were redeemed in the merit of this Mitzvah, now too we should merit the ultimate redemption through our acts of goodness and kindness.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED

Once...

THE BELATED DINNER

Rabbi Yisrael Friedman of Ruzhin once told the following parable:

"A man comes home from work at the end of the day, famished. He sits down at the table, expecting his dinner. His wife appears and tells him that he should be patient because dinner is delayed. So he waits.

"After waiting for what seems like an eternity, she places a plate before him, and there is only a hard-boiled egg and a potato. Needless to say, he is quite perturbed. He is hungry, and yet he waited patiently, and this is all he gets! Had he gotten something special, then he would have understood the delay. He leaves the table disappointed.

"So ends the parable," said Rabbi Yisrael, "Now the lesson . . .

"Every morning, G-d waits for His people to say their prayers. The assiduous hasten to pray, aware of the immense privilege it is to be able to address the King of kings.

"If one prays on time, then even if the prayers are not recited with the greatest concentration, the fact that they are recited on time makes them desirable to G-d. When the prayers are said a bit late, but with great concentration, G-d desires them as well, the extra devotion making it 'worth the wait.' However, if the prayers are late and without proper concentration, they are like the simple meal that the husband in the parable received. G-d can be expected to look askance at such an offering!"

Present was an elderly Jew who listened very carefully to the words of Rabbi Yisrael. "With all due respect, dear Rebbe," he countered, "the husband's reaction would be a harsh one if there wasn't true harmony in the home. However, when a husband and wife really love each other, they understand when the other has a hard day. Perhaps the end of the parable should be that the husband graciously thanks his wife for the simple meal, and asks her to tell him about her day. Similarly, G-d is always ready to hear our prayers . . ."

"Indeed," replied Rabbi Yisrael with a smile. "That is exactly the response I was hoping to hear.

"With your wise and compassionate words, you have saved many of your brethren from harsh judgment."

FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

A certain noted scholar had discovered in an obscure tome of Kabbalah that if a suitable person were to pass forty days and forty nights without uttering a single unnecessary word, he would merit the exalted spiritual state of *ruach hakodesh* ("divine inspiration").

Excited, he decided to attempt it. He spent as much of the time as he could studying Torah, and avoided social contact as much as he was able. The required time period passed without mishap, and he exhaled deeply in relief. But then he became short of breath again, as he began to tremble in anticipation of the blessed revelation.

After the Evening Prayer, he isolated himself in his room and waited.

And waited. And waited.

He couldn't understand. What had gone wrong? He knew with certainty that he hadn't failed the requirement. Perhaps he had miscounted the days?

But another day and night went by, and another, and another, and still the blessed bestowal did not happen. How could this possibly be?

He decided to journey to consult the Chassidic Rebbe he had heard so much about, Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin. When he arrived at the Rebbe's court, he was astonished at what he saw. The Rebbe lived in extraordinary luxury! Home, furnishings, clothing and appurtenances were all made of the most expensive materials and were of a quality fit for the highest level of aristocratic decadence. Was this any way for a spiritual leader to live, a Chassidic Rebbe no less?

He wondered if he had made a mistake in coming here. How could a person who lived in such opulent style possibly have anything to tell him about divine inspiration? He decided to leave for home without even speaking to the holy master.

As he passed by the Ruzhiner's house, he saw the Rebbe emerge. Four magnificent white steeds had been harnessed to a carriage worthy of royalty. As the Rebbe was about to mount to his seat, he paused, and then patted one of the horses on the head, three times.

This was too much for the frustrated scholar to bear. He dashed over to the Rebbe and challenged, "Explain to me, please, exalted sir, what spiritual work is a Chassidic master engaged in during the time he is getting a horse?"

The Rhyzhiner gazed at him a moment before answering benignly, "Ah, but you do not understand. This special horse just completed forty days and nights without uttering an unnecessary word!"

Biographical note:

Rabbi Yisrael Friedmann of Ruzhin [1797 - 3 Cheshvan 1850] was a great-grandson of the Maggid of Mezritch, at a young age was already a charismatic leader with a large following of Chassidim. Greatly respected by the other Rebbes and Jewish leaders of his generation, he was - and still is - referred to as "The Holy Ruzhiner." Six of his sons established Chassidic dynasties, several of which - Sadigora, Chortkov, etc - are still thriving today.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Neither shall you eat any meat that is torn of beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs (22:30)

This is to teach us that G-d does not deprive any creature of its just reward. Because the dogs did not bark at the Israelites when they came out of Egypt (see Exodus 11:7), G-d said: Give them their reward. (*Mechilta*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 8 FEBRUARY 2013

BEGINS	ENDS
8:10MELBOURNE	9:09
8:00ADELAIDE	8:57
6:21BRISBANE	7:15
7:00DARWIN	7:51
6:20GOLD COAST	7:14
6:56PERTH	7:52
7:38SYDNEY	8:35
7:49CANBERRA	8:46
8:08LAUNCESTON	9:10
8:09AUCKLAND	9:07
8:17WELLINGTON	9:19
8:10HOBART	9:13
7:20BYRON BAY	8:14



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS MISHPATIM
28 SHVAT • 8 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:10 PM
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:50 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10:09 AM
	MOLED for the month of Adar:	
	Sunday	5:37 and 13 chalakim PM
	MINCHA:	8:10 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS::	9:09 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	2:03 PM
		8:10 PM
	MAARIV:	9:00 PM
		9:30 PM