

LAMPLIGHTER

27 Tammuz
Matos-Massei
Shabbos Chazak

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In the Torah, two different names are used to refer to the tribes of Israel - "shevatim" and "matos" (as in the name of the first of the two Torah portions read this week, "Matos"). "Shevet," literally a staff and "mateh," literally a rod or stem, both denote the branches of a tree. The difference between them is that a shevet is a supple branch, attached to a living tree, whereas a mateh is a hardened stick already cut from the trunk.

The two names used to denote the Jewish tribes have spiritual significance, and refer to the type of connection every Jew has with G-d. When the connection between the Jewish soul and its G-dly source is open and revealed, the word shevet is used. When, however, the bond between the Jew and G-d is hidden and obscured, the word matos is used to describe the Jewish people.

In general, the first description refers to the Jewish soul as it exists before coming down into the physical world. The soul, united with G-d, is directly connected to its source, just as the branch is still connected to its source of life, the tree.

After the soul makes its descent into a physical body, however, it more closely resembles the mateh which has been severed from the trunk. The vital connection to its source, to G-d, is no longer easily perceived and apparent, so much so that the soul may feel as if it has been totally cut off, G-d forbid. The afflictions of the physical body and the demands of the material world harden the tender soul, making it tough and less sensitive to spirituality.

Yet despite the fact that the shevet is still connected to its source, it is not as strong and rigid as the superior mateh, which has been tempered by its experience. The branch, while attached to the tree, is green and flexible. Only after it is cut off does it become a sturdy and dependable rod.

This, in essence, is the purpose for which the soul is sent down into this world and distanced from its G-dly source - to uncover the soul's hidden strengths and enable it to reach an even higher level of spiritual closeness to G-d than before. When the soul overcomes the challenges of the Evil Inclination and the hardships of a physical existence, its bond with G-d becomes infinitely stronger and deeper.

The distinction between shevet and mateh exists on another level, as well. When the Holy Temple existed and G-dliness openly illuminated the world, the Jewish people were on the level of shevet. After the destruction, however, and the advent of the dark and bitter exile, we find ourselves on the level of mateh. For almost 2,000 years the Jewish people have had to develop its hidden resources and stand strong in the face of suffering. When Moshiach comes and the G-dliness which is concealed within all of creation is revealed, the Jewish people, through having uncovered the "mateh" within their souls, will enjoy an even closer relationship with G-d, the true purpose of the entire exile.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Power of Prayer

By Yossy Goldman

A fellow was boasting about what a good citizen he was and what a refined, disciplined lifestyle he led. "I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't gamble, I don't cheat on my wife, I am early to bed and early to rise, and I work hard all day and attend religious services faithfully." Very impressive, right? Then he added, "I've been like this for the last five years, but just you wait until they let me out of this place!"

Although prisons were not really part of the Jewish judicial system, there were occasions when individuals would have their freedom of movement curtailed. One such example was the City of Refuge. If a person was guilty of manslaughter (i.e., unintentional murder) the perpetrator would flee to one of the specially designated Cities of Refuge throughout Biblical Israel where he was given safe haven from the wrath of a would-be avenging relative of the victim.

The Torah tells us that his term of exile would end with the death of the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest. The Talmud tells of an interesting practice that developed. The mother of the Kohen Gadol at the time would make a point of bringing gifts of food to those exiled so that they should not pray for the early demise of her son, to which their own freedom was linked.

Now this is very strange. Here is a man who, though not a murderer, is not entirely innocent of any negligence either. The rabbis teach that G-d does not allow misfortune to befall the righteous. If this person caused a loss of life, we can safely assume that he is less than righteous. Opposite him stands the High Priest of Israel, noble, aristocratic and, arguably, the holiest Jew alive. Of the entire nation, he alone had the awesome responsibility and privilege of entering the inner sanctum of the Holy Temple, the "Holy of Holies," on the holy day of Yom Kippur. Do we really have reason to fear that the prayers of this morally tainted prisoner will have such a negative effect on the revered and exalted High Priest, to the extent that the Kohen Gadol may die? And his poor mother has to go and *shlep* food parcels to distant cities to soften up the prisoner so he should go easy in his prayers so that her holy son may live? Does this make sense?

But such is the power of prayer--the prayer of any individual, noble or ordinary, righteous or even sinful.

Of course, there are no guarantees. Otherwise, I suppose, Shuls around the world would be overflowing daily. But we do believe fervently in the power of prayer. And though, ideally, we pray in Hebrew and with a congregation, the most important ingredient for our prayers to be successful is sincerity. "G-d wants the heart," we are taught. The language and the setting are secondary to the genuineness of our prayers. Nothing can be more genuine than a tear shed in prayer.

By all means, learn the language of our Siddur, the prayer book. Improve your Hebrew reading so you can follow the services and *daven* with fluency. But remember, most important of all is our sincerity. May all our prayers be answered.

Slice of LIFE

CHURCH VS. STATE

Story told by Rabbi Shmuel Gurevitz

Around 1990 there was a young man that began coming to the Chabad House here in Leon and became interested in getting back to his Jewish roots. He began putting on Tefillin and coming to classes until it seemed that he was just about to become completely observant.

But he surprised us one day by announcing that he was in love with and engaged to be married to a beautiful girl from a very influential family in Leon. We all congratulated him but I suspected that maybe it wasn't so simple. Sure enough, when I asked him if the girl was Jewish he replied in the negative.

I tried to explain to him that the Torah forbids such a thing, his children wouldn't be Jewish, and he would be breaking the chain of Judaism etc. but to no avail.

Then suddenly I had an idea. I told him 'How can you get married without the blessing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe?' And it worked! He actually agreed to travel to the Rebbe and ask his permission and even insisted that I come along.

The next day he already had the tickets and that night we flew to New York carrying all sorts of letters and notes that other people gave him to take to the Rebbe as well.

When we arrived at the Rebbe's headquarters he deposited the other letters in the office of the Rebbe's secretaries. But his letter he personally handed to the Rebbe when he came out of his room for one of the prayers (despite the gestures and protests of the Rebbe's staff).

He wrote two things. First, He does not understand how the Torah has the right to enter his personal life; the Torah is there to benefit him, not the other way around, and therefore he wants the Rebbe's blessing to marry the girl he loves even though she is a gentile!

Second, he wrote that if the Rebbe does not want to bless him at least it shouldn't affect the other people that he brought letters for.

About an hour later one of the Rebbe's secretaries came running out of the Rebbe's

office looking for us. The Rebbe has already replied.

We sat down and read the Rebbe's words:

"Regarding what you wrote in the end of your letter that 'perhaps I will not bless you or the other people', you need have no worry for this because there is no such thing as a Jew that does not deserve a blessing; Every Jew deserves to be blessed. Regarding what you wrote first, that you love a non-Jewish girl and want to get married, this is also not correct: if you loved her then you would NOT marry her! This is contrary to her purpose in life and would be a great injustice to her as well as yourself."

The young man appreciated the Rebbe's unique and positive approach. Nevertheless, it did not affect his decision. He was resolved to marry no matter what.

They returned to France. A few months later the invitations had been sent out and the day of the wedding arrived. It was to be in one of the biggest halls in Leon with the finest food, a live orchestra and thousands of guests. Money was not an issue.

In France, because there is separation of church and state, two ceremonies are necessary for each marriage: a colourful and ornate Catholic ritual in a large cathedral complete with organ music, priests and choirboys, and a short formality in the city hall where each party mechanically declares three times 'I do' before a government official.

The Church ceremony went smoothly. Our hero had no problem kneeling, bowing, saying and doing everything the priest asked him to.

Then they all proceeded joyously to the City hall. On the way several toasts were made and by the time they got there everyone, especially the groom, was in very good spirits. They stood before the official, beaming and smiling, impatient to get the thing over and begin the festivities.

"Do you, Madam, agree to marry this man?" he asked the blushing bride for the first of three times. "Oui oui!" she answered.

"Do you Madam agree to marry this man?" he asked again and then a third time. And after each time she answered yes.

"And you, Sir" he turned to the proud groom, "Do you agree to marry this woman?"

Suddenly the groom's face changed strangely, his eyes opened wide as though he saw something frightening and he said, as though talking to someone else,

"No."

Those standing there were shocked speechless! They could not believe their ears. Did he really say no?

Again the Judge asked, "Do you want to marry this woman?" This time he yelled, "NO! NO!"

The family of the bride began shouting and threatening, and tried to grab him, they wanted to tear him apart. The guards in the city hall heard the noise and rushed in and tried to make some sense out of the ruckus. In the midst of all the confusion our hero snuck out of the building, took a cab home to get his passport, sped to the airport and left France! He stayed away for several years.

He paid the damages he had incurred and, years later when he heard that the girl was happily married to someone else and the furore had died down, he returned quietly to Leon.

After a while, at what seemed an appropriate opportunity, I asked him to explain what happened. After all, the whole wedding had been prepared, hundreds of people were waiting, and he had no problem with bowing down in the church. What made him change his mind in the municipal office at the last minute?

His response astonished me.

He said that actually he wanted to say yes. But as soon as the judge asked him if he wanted to marry, a vision of the Lubavitcher Rebbe suddenly appeared before him! It was so frightening that he just couldn't bring himself to say anything but "NO!"

"Well," concluded Rabbi Gurevitz to the crowd. "That young man shortly thereafter married a Jewish woman and now has a kosher home. His children even learn in our institutions. In fact, he is sitting here tonight right here in this room! If he wants to, he can stand up".

Everyone began looking around. Who could it be?

But no one stood. The Rabbi waited a few more seconds shrugged his shoulders and changed the subject.

The next day he called the hero of the story on the phone and apologized for putting him on the spot. "Sorry if I embarrassed you," Rabbi Gurevitz said.

"No Rabbi, you didn't embarrass me at all. It's just that the experience I had ten years ago when the Rebbe appeared to me was so frightening, I could not bring myself to stand up. I simply do not want to ever re-live it again."

MOSHIACH MATTERS

True belief in the Messianic redemption is reflected and verified in sincere anticipation, in eagerly looking forward to the coming of Moshiach. In turn, the sincerity of this hope and waiting is tested by what is done to achieve it. For something truly desired one will ask and beg, demand, and do everything possible to attain it. The same applies to the obligatory awaiting and anticipation of Moshiach. G-d insists that we prove the sincerity of our claim to want Moshiach by doing everything in our power to bring it about, including storming the Gates of Heaven with demands for the redemption.

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ISSUE 1094



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
25 Sivan, 5712 [1952]
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

I received your letter dated Wednesday, the 34th day of the Omer, in which you describe the state of your business affairs, your considerable debts, etc. etc. You write further that you have a possibility of selling some of your properties, but that you find yourself unable to decide alone what you should do. Above all, it appears from your letter that you are dispirited, so that as a matter of course your trust in G-d has weakened.

The phrase I just used was "above all." As is stated in our holy sources in general and in the literature of Chassidus in particular, everything depends on bitachon, the attribute of trust. A man's trust is the measuring stick of the extent to which his material affairs are bound and fused with the Creator. If this fusion is complete, it is certainly impossible for anything to be lacking, because in the worlds above, the concept of lacking is utterly non-existent.

In accordance with your request, I mentioned your name in connection with the fulfillment of your needs when I visited the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz]. That said, since you asked for my advice, I hold that you should focus on toiling on yourself - to fortify your trust in G-d to the greatest extent possible.

In truth, having the attribute of trust means that even if according to the laws of nature one sees no way out, in one's mind it is beyond all doubt that everything will be good, in a way that is actually visible and manifest to fleshly eyes, with regard to having an ample livelihood, sound health, and so on. From the perspective of the world above, considerations of nature are quite immaterial. Accordingly, once a person raises himself up and adopts a stance that is even slightly above the ground - that is, he brings himself to the realization that since he is a believing Jew, [he is] utterly certain that there is no master over him but G-d alone - he can draw down [and actualize this certainty] here, too, so that in this physical world, too, considerations of nature will not affect him adversely (G-d forbid).

I firmly hope to G-d that if you will only fortify your trust to the utmost, you will immediately see a change in the Providence which governs your material business affairs and that your situation will begin to improve, and to proceed from good to even better.

In addition, it would be appropriate to immediately begin giving tzedakah as you used to do, and to increase your accustomed donations at least slightly. I look forward to hearing good news from you on all the above.

With blessings for material success, and may the teaching of the Alter Rebbe be fulfilled in your life - that the Holy One, blessed be He, grants Jews materiality, and they transform materiality into spirituality.

CUSTOMS CORNER

Ma'akeh

A person is responsible for deaths caused by his negligence - is expressed in Deuteronomy: "When you build a new house, you shall make a guardrail for your roof, so that you shall not cause blood [to be spilled] in your house, lest someone fall from there."

It is a Torah obligation to build a guardrail around one's roof lest someone fall off the roof and get hurt or die. This guardrail is called a *ma'akeh*.

There is no requirement to build a guardrail on a roof that is not used by people.

The guardrail must be sturdy and at least ten handbreadths, or approximately three feet, high.

When erecting a *ma'akeh*, one should recite the following blessing: *Ba-ruch a-tah ado-nai e-lo-hei-nu melech ha-olam, a-sher kid-e-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-tav vetzi-va-nu la-asot ma-akeh.* ("Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to construct a parapet.") One who is erecting the *ma'akeh* for someone else should conclude the blessing: *al asiyat ma-akeh* ("...commanded us concerning the construction of a parapet").

A WORD

from the Director

This week we read two Parshas which have names with very distinct and seemingly opposite connotations; Matos and Maasei.

The first parsha we read, Matos (literally "rod" or "staff") denotes strength and stability. A synonym, shevet (branch), refers to the staff while it still supple and connected to the tree. It is then subject to influences of the wind, swaying to and fro, while a mateh is firm and cannot be bent. In short, a mateh denotes invulnerable, unchanging stability.

Massai ("journeys") denotes quite the opposite - constant change from one place to the other, devoid of any stability. If the branch sways with the wind, at least it remains united at all times with its source. Massai, diametrically opposed to Matos indicates constant, total flux.

With such conflicting implications it seems preposterous to combine the two. Nevertheless, as everything in Torah, there are no mistakes. Every detail is precise, in order that we can make a practical application to our lives.

The joining of these two parshas together in particular is to introduce to our personal service of G-d the following:

Massai refers to the journey of man through life, constantly striving to reach new levels, until the ultimate goal - Yardein Yereicho - the peak of stability (Matos).

But he must always remember that the power that he has to undertake such an arduous journey comes from his readiness to be firm in his convictions. In the words of our Sages: "Be bold as a leopard - do not be affected by the scoffers."

This is why Matos is before Massai. Only with the fortitude of Matos (as a leopard) can one hope to ever reach one's final destination on the journey to Yardein Yereicho.

J. I. Guttentag

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

IN DEFENSE OF ELIJAH

Rabbi Moshe Alsheich was the head of a large yeshiva in 16th century Tsfat (Safed). He had received rabbinical ordination from Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of *Shulchan Aruch* [Code of Jewish Law]. He was a wealthy and extremely charitable man, in addition to being a great Torah scholar.

One Saturday night after Shabbat departed, as he was passing by the home of a certain poor man, he heard the man joyfully wish his wife "A good week," and begin to sing the hymn "*Eliyahu HaNavi*" ["Elijah the Prophet"]. His wife, however, interrupted bitterly: "What are you so happy about? You know that the children have been hungry for many days and there is still no food in the house, no firewood either; so where is *Eliyahu HaNavi* in whose honour you sing?"

Upon his return home, R. Alsheich filled a sack with gold coins. He then covered his face and quietly retraced his steps, opened the door of the couple's house, and threw in the sack of money and ran off.

This anonymous generosity raised a great stir in heaven. The Heavenly Prosecuting Angel, however, said that it was nothing extraordinary, and that R. Alsheich should not be specially rewarded until he himself went down to test him.

The next Shabbat, a poor man suddenly appeared in the synagogue and announced: "I am hungry; who will feed me?" R. Alsheich immediately invited him for the Shabbat meal. The man devoured all the food that was set in front of him and then cried out that he was still hungry. Further helpings also failed to satisfy him. R. Alsheich was so concerned that he served the man all the food that had been prepared for himself and his family for the entire Shabbat. The guest ate everything up at once and again cried out that he was still hungry. R. Alsheich then ran over to some neighbours and took whatever food they could give him, but it was not enough to satisfy his ravenous guest.

So it continued all through the Shabbat: the poor man gluttonously consumed whatever he was given and then cried out that he was still hungry. In the end R. Alsheich said to him: "Today is Shabbat and there is nothing more I can do, but with G-d's help, after Shabbat I shall try to feed you until you are satisfied."

After Shabbat, he sent an ox to be slaughtered, but afterwards it was found to be *treif* ["ritually unfit"] and another ox had to be dispatched. This one also turned out to be unfit.

All told, thirty-nine oxen were slaughtered and all were found to be *treif*! This caused R. Alsheich great financial loss, but he kept insisting that he had to satisfy the hungry man. Finally, the fortieth ox was declared to be kosher, but before they could prepare it, the poor man disappeared.

This extraordinary demonstration of kindness caused another great

commotion in the heavenly court. A decree was issued that one of the seventy faces of the Torah should be revealed to R. Alsheich and an angel was immediately dispatched to impart the knowledge to him.

At this time, Rabbi Yosef Caro was the chief rabbi of Tsfat. He arrived at the synagogue the following Shabbat as the service was about to begin, but when he looked up at R. Alsheich's seat and saw that it was empty he ordered the congregation to wait, for it had been revealed to him that Rabbi Alsheich had become very great in Torah. When it was time for the weekly discourse about the Reading of the Law which R. Yosef Caro always gave, he asked R. Alsheich to ascend to the pulpit and speak in his place. R. Alsheich refused at first, insisting he wasn't capable. Only when R. Yosef Caro finally ordered him to speak did he agree. R. Alsheich ascended the platform and delivered a discourse. Everyone was amazed by his profundity.

From that day on, the Alsheich *HaKodesh* (the "holy Alsheich," as he came to be called) was the one who delivered the weekly address each Shabbat, which became the basis for his famous "*Toras Moshe*" commentary on the Torah,

Biographical note:

Rabbi Moshe Al-Sheich (1522-1570) was the author of many works, including important analytical explanations of Scriptures, which are highly regarded even today (and in recent years have become available in English). He was a student of R. Yosef Caro and member of his *Beit Din*.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And Moses spoke to the people: "Arm yourselves . . . to take G-d's vengeance on Midian" (31:3)

G-d had said to Moses, "Avenge the vengeance of the children of Israel upon the Midianites"; yet Moses said: "To take G-d's vengeance on Midian!"

G-d said to Israel: It is you who have an account to settle with them, for they caused me to harm you. But Moses said: Master of the worlds! If we had been uncircumcised, or idol worshippers, or had denied the mitzvot, the Midianites would not have hated us. They persecute us only on account of the Torah and the precepts which you have given us! Consequently the vengeance is yours; and so I say: "To take G-d's vengeance on Midian." (*Midrash Tanchuma*)

G-d sees the war on Midian as avenging Israel, for G-d's foremost concern is for His people; the people of Israel see the war as avenging G-d, for they are concerned only with the honour of G-d. (*The Chassidic Masters*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 5 JULY 2013

BEGINS	ENDS
4:54MELBOURNE	5:57
4:58ADELAIDE	5:58
4:48BRISBANE	5:44
6:15DARWIN	7:08
4:45GOLD COAST	5:41
5:07PERTH	6:05
4:40SYDNEY	5:39
4:45CANBERRA	5:45
4:36LAUNCESTON	5:40
4:58AUCKLAND	5:59
4:45WELLINGTON	5:50
4:30HOBART	5:36
4:43BYRON BAY	5:39
6:57SINGAPORE	7:48



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAR STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS MATOS-MASSEI
27 TAMMUZ • 5 JULY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:55 PM
	MINCHA:	5:05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:40 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10:00 AM
	Molad for the month of Av will be Monday, July 8:	9:18 PM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5:56 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:05 PM
	MAARIV:	5:50 PM