

# LAMPLIGHTER

20 Tammuz  
Parshas Matot

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Matot, focuses on the mitzvah (commandment) of making vows, whereby a person forbids him- or herself from partaking of certain foods or becoming involved in certain activities. Why would a person make a vow? Because he sees that he is becoming too involved in worldly entities; that his life is becoming too materially oriented. Therefore he seeks a safeguard. The intention of this path of conduct is certainly positive, but it has drawbacks. Our Sages teach: "Why add more prohibitions? Is not what the Torah has forbidden enough?" For G-d did not create material existence to be ignored, but instead to be used for a G-dly purpose and intent.

At the heart of this issue is an inner conflict most of us face. Generally, we conceive of a person devoted to spiritual pursuits as otherworldly, somewhat acetic, not the kind of person with whom we'd like to relax and spend a Saturday night. And for that matter, not really the kind of person we'd like to be.

Where did this concept come from? There are some spiritual approaches that consider all material involvement as "a necessary evil." Some get very graphic about how bad material indulgence is and what difficulties it can lead to.

Since people at large aren't willing to accept such an approach, they go to the other end of the spectrum, seeking out sensual gratification and making that the object of their endeavours. They aren't necessarily protesting against asceticism. They're concerned simply with what makes them feel good.

And there are some who vacillate between the two extremes, at times indulging and at times feeling remorse over their deeds and inability to hold themselves back.

Why these two extremes? Because material satisfaction in and of itself is not very uplifting or fulfilling. It does not expand your horizons or enable you to grow. On the contrary, we all know how we can sometimes get caught up in seeking such satisfaction to the exclusion of all else. Then we become coarse and downward oriented. But this is not what we want to do with our lives. We want our lives to have meaning and depth.

On the other hand, we know that we are not angels and we don't want to pretend that we are.

Judaism offers a resolution to this quandary that satisfies both perspectives: Live in the world, but know that it is G-d's world. Be happy. Know how to appreciate the good things in life and do so in a manner that others enjoy your company. However, don't indulge in material things out of selfish desire. Instead, partake of material things as an act of appreciation to G-d for creating a world that contains a great variety of good.

In this vein, our Sages taught that the verse "Know Him in all your ways" is "a small passage on which the entire Torah depends." For the Torah is intended to teach man to relate to G-d in all forms of experience.

*From Keeping in Touch, adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe by Rabbi E. Touger, published by Sichos in English.*

## First Things First

By Shlomo Yaffe

In this week's Torah portion we read that the tribes of Reuben and Gad (later joined by half of the tribe of Manasseh) ask for the lands east of the Jordan River, these being prime pastureland for their cattle. Moses is initially angered by the request, concerned that they are not willing to help their brethren in the battle to conquer the Land of Israel. In response, Reuben and Gad propose that they first join, and be the advance troops in, Israel's conquest of the lands west of the Jordan.

*We will build sheepfolds for our livestock here, and cities for our children. We will then arm ourselves quickly [and go] before the children of Israel . . . We shall not return to our homes until each of the children of Israel has taken possession of his inheritance.* (Numbers 32:16-18)

Moses then responds in agreement, but changes the order of their projected construction project:

*Build yourselves cities for your children and enclosures for your sheep, and what has proceeded from your mouth you shall do.* (Ibid. 32:24)

*They were more concerned about their possessions than about their sons and daughters, since they mentioned their livestock before their children. Moses said to them, "Not so! Treat the fundamental as a fundamental, and the secondary as secondary. First build cities for your children, and afterwards enclosures for your sheep."* (Rashi's commentary on this verse)

The tribes had put sheep first, then children. But can it then be that that they actually loved their sheep more than their children?

Rather, it seems to me that they made the assumption that their ability to care for their children was predicated on how many sheep they owned—their financial situation. Hence they were always putting their economic involvement first. To this Moses responded: "Worry about your children first; the 'sheep' come last." Ultimately it is G-d who provides sustenance. We have to work, and work hard, but we are only creating a vessel, and then G-d fills the vessel we create with our toil.

The implication is obvious. Very often, there are so many things we do not do with our children because of the scheduling demands of our professions and businesses. To this Moses responds: "First things first! Devote yourself to the needs of your children - in particular, their spiritual needs - and the 'sheep' will happen. To bring children into the world and care for them—that is *your* mission. For your work to bear fruit, that's *G-d's* job." (This is only when we actually toil and make the "vessel"; no "thumb-twiddling" is being advocated here.)

# Slice of LIFE

## THE 20,000 % PRICE INCREASE

Rabbi Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik [1886-1959; son of Reb Chaim of Brisk], was often asked why he permitted the *Beis Yaakov* girls' school to be located in a non-religious neighbourhood. Although many girls from the nearby villages and towns as well as from Brisk itself attended it, a number of families were nevertheless discouraged from sending their daughters there because of the environment they would have to face daily.

Rabbi Soloveitchik sometimes responded with the following story.

A family that lived near the *Beis Yaakov* building, although far removed from Jewish religious practices, decided to send their daughter to *Beis Yaakov* anyway because of the convenience, rather than a school which suited their beliefs but was located much farther away.

The girl liked the school and was deeply affected by what she learned there. Although her parents openly transgressed *Shabbos*; including conducting business in their store the whole day, she herself had become well aware of the holiness of *Shabbos* and the importance of not violating its sanctity.

One Friday her parents told her they had to leave town for the

weekend, so would she please open the store on Saturday and take care of the business that day. The young girl didn't know what to do. As a *Beis Yaakov* student she knew how serious it was to publicly break *Shabbos*, so how could she? But to rebel against her parents' instructions, she didn't feel she could do that either. After much inner anguish, she decided she would go to open the store, but try her mightiest not to sell anything.

The first customer came in. He wanted to buy a small but handsome item he had noticed in the window whose price was a half *zloti*. Exerting control to keep her face expressionless, she told him, "Oh no sir, I can't sell it to you for that. Today the price went up to 100."

"Are you crazy! From one half to one hundred?" he said to her unbelievably. But she insisted that it was so.

"Okay, okay," said the man, "I'll pay you 10." She promptly refused, saying that she would not take even the slightest bit less than the full price. At this display of stubbornness he threw up his hands and left, while she rejoiced inwardly that she had succeeded in not selling anything on *Shabbos*.

An hour later he was back. "Here," he answered, and slapped 20 *zlotis* on the counter. She couldn't believe he was back again, and still interested! Outwardly calm, she said to him, "I told you; the price is 100. That's final."

And so it went on hour by hour. The customer repeatedly came back, offering a bit more money

each time, and the little sales-girl continued to refuse without hesitation.

At last it was night-time. *Shabbos* was over. "I wonder if that man will come back again," she murmured to herself.

He did. Almost embarrassed, he said, "You win," and thrust toward her the full 100. This time she took it with alacrity, and with a big smile, wrapped the purchase and handed it to her determined customer.

He took it and hesitatingly turned to leave. Then, changing his mind, he turned back to her. He said he wished to explain why he paid 100 for something worth only a half. He and his wife had just refurbished their house. When he passed the store, this particular piece had caught his eye. It was exactly what they needed to complete their new arrangement. It was so perfect a complement that he couldn't get it out of his mind, despite the outrageous price, until finally he decided to buy it no matter what.

After he left, the girl sat still for a few minutes, stunned at how G-d had rewarded her efforts to observe *Shabbos*. When her parents returned, they could barely believe the story she excitedly told them. They had to admit that it was only in the merit of *Shabbos* that they had profited 100 *zlotis* on a half-zloti price. This in turn inspired them to study Torah and *mitzvos* and eventually they both became *mitzvah* observant.

"So," Rabbi Y.Z. Soloveitchik would conclude, "*Beis Yaakov* is not only to educate our own girls, but also to be a beacon to Jewish souls gone astray."

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## MOSHIACH MATTERS

In our times the Final Redemption is eagerly anticipated. Every miracle that occurs during this period of anticipation is experienced as only a foreshadowing of what the future holds in store for us. The full measure of song and praise is therefore also held in abeyance, awaiting the full Redemption.... Soon our song shall burst forth in its full might. Soon we shall be able to tell the whole story of Redemption down to the last detail alluded to by the Prophets. Very soon, in our days. Amen!



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Miss [...]

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased to receive your letter, in which you write that you have noticed that in the Torah, and in *Yiddishkeit* [Judaism] in general, the number 7 occupies a special place, and you ask why.

You surely know that there are other numbers which are similarly significant and prominent, such as 10, 3 and others.

As a matter of fact, there is hardly any justification in questioning G-d's ways, as to why He has chosen certain numbers for special significance. For, as you will readily understand, G-d's wisdom is beyond human understanding.

The question may be asked, however, after G-d has chosen a certain number of days in which to create the world, namely the number 7, what can we learn from this?

Approaching the question from this point of view, it is possible to say that inasmuch as certain categories of things and creatures were created on separate days, instead of every living being created in one day, each category stands out separately in importance and in the scale of Creation, as also explained in the various commentaries on the *Chumash* [Pentateuch]. Man, who was created last, on the 6th day of Creation, is the most important creature. But the whole of Creation was crowned with the 7th day, the holy day of *Shabbat*, which is a source of life and blessing for all the creatures, inasmuch as the *Shabbat* is the "soul," so to speak, of the whole world.

And, because G-d, in His infinite wisdom, chose to create the world on the basis of this figure of 7 days, there are many matters of Torah and *mitzvot* which reflect this number 7, such as the 7 weeks of the Counting of the *Omer*, the 7 years of *shemittah* [sabbatical year], the 7 *shemiotot* of *Yovel* [jubilee], etc.

In a similar manner we must approach your question of why a girl becomes *Bat Mitzvah* at 12 while a boy becomes *Bar Mitzvah* at 13, and why not sooner or later? As you can well understand, duties and obligations must come together with sufficient maturity and understanding of their importance, and why they should be cherished and observed with love and devotion. According to G-d's scheme of Creation, such maturity is attained by a Jewish girl at the age of 12, and by Jewish boys at the age of 13.

Of course, you might ask, G-d surely could have speeded up or slowed down the age of maturity, so that the obligation to fulfil the *mitzvot* would come sooner or later than the said 12 and 13 years. But in that case, the same question could still be asked whatever the *Bar Mitzvah* and *Bat Mitzvah* age would have been. Clearly G-d, Who is the Creator, created the best possible order in nature and in human development.

Judging by your thoughtfulness and interest in Jewish matters, I am confident that you are learning with proper devotion and dedication to the Torah, *Torat Chaim* [Torah of Life]. And the study of the Torah with the proper devotion and dedication means the kind of study that leads to the fulfilment of the *mitzvot* in everyday life. I hope that you are a good influence on your friends in this direction.

With blessing,

## CUSTOMS CORNER

### Shabbat candles

Light is a blessing as it says in the Midrash, "...and G-d blessed the seventh day. With what did he bless it? With the Shabbat Candles."

Our sages tell us that diligent observance of this Mitzvah is a *Segulah* (spiritually propitious) for having children who will be Torah scholars. (Mothers, don't fret! This doesn't mean that they have to be rabbis, they can have an ordinary job and still be Torah scholars.)

Shabbat candle-lighting is not mandated by Biblical law, but the Rabbis instituted this Mitzvah for several reasons, here are two:

- 1) Light up the Shabbat: We are commanded to honour (*kavod*) the Shabbat, and to have pleasure (*oneg*) on this day of rest. Candles create an ambience. Lighting Shabbat candles is a symbol of the respect we have for the Shabbat and it also contributes to the special aura of the Shabbat meals.
- 2) Light up your Soul: On Shabbat, a special extra soul - the *Neshamah Yesairah* - is conferred upon every Jew. A soul is compared to a candle - "The candle of G-d is the soul of Man" - and in honour of this soul we kindle a special Shabbat candle.

## A WORD

*from the Director*

*We are now in the midst of the "Three Weeks" of mourning for the destruction of the first and second Holy Temples. In these next few weeks, as we commemorate the destruction of the Holy Temples and the beginning of our long and bitter exile, it is appropriate and commendable to strengthen and increase our study of Torah and observance of mitzvot.*

*In the Musaf prayer recited on Shabbat, we say, "and because of our sins we were exiled from our land." Therefore it follows that through rectifying and removing the cause, the effect will also be removed.*

*The Lubavitcher Rebbe stated: the Jewish people as a whole has already rectified the reason for the exile. The Rebbe was referring specifically to the "unwarranted hatred" that caused the destruction of the Second Holy Temple.*

*The Rebbe explained that by enhancing our ahavat Yisrael - the love of a fellow Jew - we will experience a foretaste of the unity and ahavat Yisrael that will be prevalent in the Messianic Era.*

*For, when Moshiach is revealed, the G-dly essence of everything will also be revealed. Thus, we will experience the true appreciation of our fellow Jew, and this will lead to true "love of a fellow Jew."*

*At that time, according to our Sages, our days will be occupied with performing mitzvot and the pursuit of knowledge of the Divine through studying Torah, and especially the new insights into Torah that will be revealed by Moshiach.*

*J. I. Guterlich*

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

## Real Generosity

Once, in a small village there lived a wealthy man who was an extremely generous host. Every guest who had the good fortune of staying in his home received not only the finest food to eat, the fluffiest, most comfortable bed in which to sleep, but the poorer guests also were sent away with a handsome donation to smooth their difficult lot. He was entirely praiseworthy in his devotion to the mitzvah of receiving guests, except for only one thing: he continuously congratulated himself and sought praise for his deeds.

When the Baal Shem Tov became apprised of this man's good deeds, and their unfortunate accompanying pride, he saw that all of these mitzvot were rendered useless by his boastfulness. The Besht dispatched his disciple, Reb Zev Kitizes to bring about a change in the man's behaviour.

One day Reb Zev turned up at the door of the wealthy man and sought lodging. Of course, he was greeted with the greatest of generosity, but at every turn the wealthy benefactor asked, "Aren't I the best host you have ever encountered?" or "Have you ever been treated to anything like this?" To each inquiry Rev Zev replied: "We'll see."

When evening came and everyone went to sleep, the host bedded down together with his guests, as was his custom. When he was fast asleep, Rev Zev touched his finger and the man had a strange dream. In his dream, the king arrived at his house to visit him. He served the king a glass of tea, and suddenly the king passed out and died. The host was arrested and imprisoned, but then a fire broke out in the jail and he managed to escape.

He ran and ran until he arrived in a far-away village where he worked as a water carrier. The work was hard and he could eke out the barest survival, since there was an abundance of water in the area and no one required his services. One day, as he was carrying the heavy pails of water, he stumbled and fell, breaking both of his legs. As he lay on the ground weeping, he recalled that once he had been a wealthy man.

Reb Zev released his finger and the man woke in his own bed, weeping, but now from the realization that it had been only a dream. Reb Zev told him that the Baal Shem Tov had allowed him to experience this dream in order that he repent from his pride. The man asked if he could return with Reb Zev to the Besht to learn how to truly extinguish his pride. The two travelled together to the Besht and when the wealthy man returned to his home he was a changed man, as generous as ever, but humble and modest.

## A Simple "Foundation"

There lived a man named Shopvol in the city of Anipoli. This man was a simple craftsman, but he prayed in the shul every day, rain or shine, and never missed a day. If there was a minyan, he joined it, but if not, he still came to shul and prayed in his accustomed place.

Once the Baal Shem Tov was traveling through the area and spent a night in Anipoli. As he was sitting by the window smoking his pipe in the early morning, he spied a man rushing through the street, although it was bitterly cold. The Besht called his host and asked who the man was and where he was

going, to which the host replied that the man was named Shopvol and he was hurrying off to pray in the shul as usual.

The Besht was curious about Shopvol and asked that he be brought to meet him. The host replied, "He probably will refuse to come. He's a simple craftsman with little understanding." That answer notwithstanding, the Besht sent one of his disciples to go to the man and ask that he bring him four pairs of socks.

When the man arrived, the Besht asked, "How much are these socks?"

"They are a gulden and a half each pair," was the reply.

"Perhaps you would sell them for a gulden?" the Besht asked.

"If I would, I would have said it up front," the man replied.

The Besht paid the full amount and continued speaking to the man, inquiring about his life and his work. "How do you go about making the socks?" he asked.

"When I finish making fifty pairs," said the man, "I soak them in warm water and then wring them out and lay them flat to dry. Then I wait for the merchants to come and buy them. They always come to me, and I hardly ever go out, except to go to shul to pray. It was only out of my respect for you that I agreed to bring these socks to you."

The Baal Shem Tov enjoyed the man's simplicity and honesty and he wanted to investigate more deeply into his soul. He asked, "What do you do when your children are ready for marriage and you have to make a wedding?"

"I have never had a problem, for G-d always provides. A bit from here and a bit from there also comes in, and I have always, thank G-d, managed."

Then the Besht asked, "Do you ever say Psalms?"

"The ones I know by heart, I say while I work," the man answered.

After the man left, the Besht turned to his host and said, "A man like this is the very foundation of the synagogue. He will remain so until the coming of Moshiach."

# Thoughts THAT COUNT

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

"To take G-d's vengeance on Midian" -- for whoever stands against Israel, stands against G-d. (*Rashi*)

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 honor of G-d. (*The Chassidic Masters*)

And Moses sent... Pinchas the son of Elazar the priest (31:6)

Why did he send Pinchas? He said: "The one who began the mitzvah shall finish it." It was Pinchas who turned away G-d's wrath from Israel and smote the Midianite woman; let him finish the sacred task. (*Midrash Rabbah; Rashi*)

And half the tribe of Menasseh (32:33)

Because Menasseh caused the sons of Jacob to rend their clothes by hiding Joseph's goblet in Benjamin's sack (cf. Genesis 44:13), his tribe was rent in two, half receiving its portion in the lands east of the Jordan, and half on the west. (*Midrash Rabbah*)

## CANDLE LIGHTING: 18 JULY 2014

BEGINS	ENDS
5:03 .....MELBOURNE .....	6:04
5:06 .....ADELAIDE .....	6:05
4:54 .....BRISBANE .....	5:49
6:19 .....DARWIN .....	7:11
4:51 .....GOLD COAST .....	5:47
5:13 .....PERTH .....	6:11
4:47 .....SYDNEY .....	5:46
4:53 .....CANBERRA .....	5:52
4:45 .....LAUNCESTON .....	5:48
5:06 .....AUCKLAND .....	6:07
4:54 .....WELLINGTON .....	5:58
4:40 .....HOBART .....	5:45
4:49 .....BYRON BAY .....	5:45
6:58 .....SINGAPORE .....	7:49



## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS MATOT

20 TAMMUZ • 18 JULY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:03 PM
	MINCHA:	5:10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:45 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:58 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:04 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
	MON-FRI:	8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:10 PM
	MAARIV:	6:00 PM