

# LAMPLIGHTER

3 Elul  
Parshas Shoftim

1154

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

"At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he who is worthy of death be put to death, but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death," we read in this week's Torah portion, Shoftim.

But what happens if someone confesses to a capital crime? Is the Jewish court allowed to carry out a death sentence, according to the rule that "the admission of the plaintiff is worth 100 witnesses"?

Maimonides explains that this legal ruling applies only in monetary cases; when it comes to capital crimes, two witnesses are necessary to determine guilt.

Our Sages explain the difference thus:

A person's soul is not his property; it does not belong to him at all, but is only entrusted to him by G-d for safekeeping. For this reason it is not only forbidden to kill (oneself or others) but it is forbidden to cause harm or injury to the body, as well. An admission of guilt is therefore meaningless because it involves something which is not subject to ownership.

Wealth, on the other hand, is actually "owned" by the individual (as much as anything created by G-d, the Master of the world, can said to be "owned" by a human being). The testimony of the person involved may therefore be accepted as the determining factor.

This distinction is also reflected in the various blessings established by our Sages, appropriately called "benedictions of enjoyment."

We recite a blessing before eating or drinking, but not before enjoying our money. That is because the soul, which derives its pleasure and sustenance from the divine sparks in the food or drink we ingest, is not our own; we must therefore recite a blessing before we partake of G-d's goodness. However, we do not need to obtain G-d's permission before we spend our money. (Of course, G-d wants us to utilize our wealth for doing mitzvot (commandments), giving charity, etc.)

In truth, every single Jew is a "witness," for his observance of Torah and mitzvot attests to the existence of the Creator. The function of a witness, in both the limited and broader sense, is to uncover something which is hidden. G-d has placed the Jewish people in a physical world ("olam," from the word meaning hidden or concealed) to testify to His absolute sovereignty, and show through their actions how "everything came into being with His word."

When this will take place, the above type of testimony will not be necessary, for we will have entered the Messianic era and G-dliness will be self-evident: "The glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh will see that the mouth of G-d has spoken." May it happen immediately.

*Adapted from talks of the Rebbe*

## The Final Frontier of Security

By Ari Shishler

Security is a global hot topic.

Here in Johannesburg, where security is a very local concern, many have surrounded their homes with high walls, electric fences, security gates and burglar bars. Since 9/11, airports around the globe have introduced security screenings that unnerve even the most ironclad heart. Our home PCs and office networks are protected with firewalls.

It's now not only acceptable, but fashionable to limit access on just about every level of our lives. We know how to keep the burglars, terrorists and spammers out.

Ironically, however, we still remain vulnerable to trespass of a different kind.

A wise man commented: "Jews have always considered it taboo to enter a church, yet nowadays they bring the church into their own homes."

"Church" is more than a place of worship; in a broader sense it symbolizes any idea antithetical to Jewish values.

You could sit in the comfort of your Jewish home, flanked by a silver *mezuzah*, Shabbat candlesticks and a portrait of your grandfather sporting a flowing white bearded. Press a button on your remote control and you invite people, images, sounds and themes that are contrary to every Jewish value.

"Judges and policeman you shall place at all your gates," the Torah tells us (Deuteronomy 16:18). You could read that at face value—a Jewish town needs to have a judicial system. Or you could approach this line as a Jew should: as a personal lesson. As with every verse in the Torah, if you cannot find the relevant personal lesson, you have missed the larger point.

Let's read that sentence again, with different emphasis this time: "Judges and policemen *you* shall place on *all* your gates." Your gates are the access points to your soul: your eyes, ears and mouth.

It's important to keep unwanted visitors out of your house; it's just as important to keep them out of your head (and your kids' heads).

We've invested a fortune in physical security; we should at least equal the effort for our spiritual security.

# Slice of LIFE

## Miracles Come In All Sizes

By Yossi Overlander

People around the world speak of miracles. While some are small occurrences that one might pass off as "luck," here is my story that I believe was truly a miracle.

In the winter of 2011 I was a student in a yeshiva in a little village just outside Paris, France. The yeshiva has about 300 students attending. There is a dormitory and all the students board.

My story begins on a Friday afternoon, when your typical Chabad-Lubavitch yeshiva student is out and about. He is finding Jewish people with the intent of encouraging them do a mitzva (commandment), such as putting on Tefilin.

As it was still many hours until Shabbat and I had already visited the people I regularly meet in their offices, my friend and I decided that we would try something new. We would combine site-seeing with helping our fellow Jews do mitzvot.

We rented bikes and off we went around Paris asking Jewish people we met if they would like to do a mitzva to help change the world for good.

We rented different bikes at various locations throughout the city. We exchanged bikes about a dozen times.

Finally, after many hours, it was time to go home, a.k.a. back to our yeshiva dormitory to start preparing for Shabbat.

I parked the last bike I had used. When I reached into the basket on the front to get my belongings, I saw that my jacket was there, but under my jacket there was NOTHING! No Tefilin, no bag and no Shabbat candles.

For those who do not know, Tefilin cost about \$1000 U.S. You can imagine why I started to panic. Could they have been

stolen? Did I misplace them? Did I leave them on a table after helping someone put on Tefilin? I had no idea.

The only thing to do was go to the French police and report my loss. They did not seem very interested in helping me and were annoyed that I spoke only English and was not responding to any of their questions asked in French.

After filling out a report and hoping for the best, I headed back to yeshiva for Shabbat. On Shabbat, one is supposed to remove all stressful thoughts from his mind and focus on enjoying the holiest day of the week. Relieving my mind of thinking about the Tefilin would be a real challenge!

A week went by with no word from the police. I called the lost and found bureau but they also did not come up with anything. I decided to try a different approach. I printed 100 signs requesting that if anyone found the Tefilin they should return them. My fellow yeshiva students posted them around Paris.

Throughout this time, I borrowed someone else's Tefilin for prayers. Eventually, I came to the realization that my Tefilin were gone forever. I called a Parisian scribe and asked him to please get me a new pair.

Feeling a little depressed I resigned myself to the situation and prepared for the ordeal of revealing the awful news to the person who had so graciously and generously sponsored my original pair - my father.

Another week passed. The administrator of our yeshiva, a rather serious and strict man, personally requested that I visit him in his office. I was understandably a little nervous. As I walked in, he said three words: "We found them!" I had not told him that I had lost them, but I knew exactly what the "them" were. My Tefilin!

In the retelling, this seems like a simple story of lost and found. However, when considering the details one comes to realize that it was truly a miracle that I got my Tefilin back safe and sound. I had

mistakenly left my Tefillin in the basket of a bike. The next person who rented the bike must have removed them from the basket and placed them on the ground near the docking station. They lay there unnoticed - by street-cleaners and passers-by who should have been concerned about an unattended, nondescript bag - for two whole weeks.

(The area they were left in was comparatively Paris' version of Times Square. Rue Rivoli is well known for its Museum le Louvre and has thousands of people travelling on it daily.)

During those two weeks it had rained a number of times, but the scribe to whom I took them when they were found assured me that there was no water damage.

The docking (parking) station was directly outside a Jewish store. When the owner (finally) noticed the bag, he looked inside, saw the Tefilin and thought, "Tefilin? Oh, for sure they belong to someone in Chabad." He then called my yeshiva to notify them that he had found Tefilin.

As I headed back to Paris to get my almost-forgotten Tefilin, I wondered to myself, "Why did this happen? G-d directs the steps of man. Where were my steps being directed?"

I found the answer to the question - including why it had taken the Jewish store owner two weeks to notice them - as soon as I had retrieved my precious Tefilin. Moments after I took possession of them again, I bumped into an Australian man who asked me where the Jewish quarter was located. After answering his question, I asked him if he had put on Tefilin that day. A few minutes later, this Aussie Jew, who had not put on Tefillin since his Bar Mitzva, was winding the straps and reciting the Shema in the middle of this bay metropolis of Paris.

Now it all fit. I happily headed back to Yeshiva with the knowledge that it was all for the good.

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ISSUE 1154

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Moshiach signifies the separation of the good from the evil. This is why he will come "only in a generation which is altogether meritorious or altogether sinful," i.e., at a time in which there will be no mixture of good and evil. So as long as Moshiach has not come, there is a mixture of good and evil in all the worlds: there is no good without evil and no evil without good. (Rabbi Shneur Zalman)



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d  
10th of Iyar 5725  
[May 12, 1965]  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to receive your respective letters written towards the end of the month of Nissan. Needless to say, every additional effort in matters of Torah and Mitzvos and in the dissemination of Yiddishkeit in general, will bring additional Divine blessings.

With regard to the question of Davenning, you surely know that there are various customs insofar as women are concerned. However, this is only as far as the women themselves are concerned. But if, as you write, this also has a bearing on the Chinuch of the children, this gives added reason to adopt the custom which would be most valuable for the children, even though the religious community where you lived previously did not demand it.

Besides, there is nothing more conducive to attune the mind and heart towards the consciousness of G-d's Presence than regular prayer, where the first condition is "Know before Whom thou are standing." Fostering this consciousness is very helpful for the attainment of peace of mind and general contentment. For through prayer and direct personal contact with the Al mighty, one is reminded every day that G-d is not far away, in the Seventh Heaven, but is present and here, and His benevolent Providence extends to each and every one individually. This point has also been greatly emphasized by the Alter Rebbe in his book of Tanya, where he urges everyone to remember that "Behold, G-d is standing near him." With this in mind, there is no room left for any anxiety or worry, as King David, the Sweet Singer of Israel, said, "G-d is my shepherd, I shall not want," "G-d is with me, I shall not fear," etc. Thus, this is no longer a theoretical idea, but becomes a personal experience in the everyday life.

As requested, I will remember in prayer those mentioned in your letter."

By the Grace of G-d  
25 Menachem Av, 5738 [August 28, 1978]  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your letter of Av 5th, in which you ask about the apparent contradiction in regard to the matter of "alien thoughts" between Tanya Ch. 28, where it is stated, "...This refutes the error commonly held by people, who mistakenly deduce from the occurrence of the foreign thought that this proves their prayer to be worthless...." and the source in the Testament of the Ribash, to the effect that "the man who is praying... if he is unworthy, he is driven forth: an alien thought is thrown him, whereupon he leaves of his own accord."

The explanation of this apparent contradiction is two-fold:

Sometimes a "foreign thought" may be provoked by the individual himself, who, while praying, diverts his attention to it. This is the kind of alien thought to which the second of the above sources refers. On the other hand, the foreign thought that occurs to a person during prayer may be the work of the Nefesh Habahamis [evil inclination] to distract and disturb his concentration on the prayer, and this is the kind of foreign thought that the Tanya speaks of, and counsels to ignore it, as if a Goy [gentile] was standing there to distract him.

There may also be a sort of an "intermediary" situation, where the individual has not yet mastered complete control of his thoughts. In such a case, when an alien thought occurs to him, he lacks the strength to dismiss it immediately. Thus, while the alien thought was planted in his mind by the Nefesh Habahamis, he becomes an accessory and is at least partly to be blamed if he allows the alien thought to linger in his mind.

Seeing that you take such an interest in your studies, with attention to detail, etc., I trust that this is expressed also in the practical aspects of the learning, in both quantity and quality, namely, the kind of learning that leads to action, the fulfillment of the Mitzvos with Hiddur [beauty], and the general conduct in actual practice. May G-d grant that you should go from strength to strength in all of this.

With blessing,  
M. Schneerson

## CUSTOMS CORNER

### Cutting Down a Fruit Tree

One may not cut down a fruit tree...

- Even if it is young and not yet bearing fruit, or if its fruits are worm infested.
- Even if its fruits are not edible on their own, but are instead used to produce a drink.

One may cut down a fruit tree...

- If it has definitely aged to the extent that it is no longer yielding the amount of fruit that makes the labour for its maintenance worthwhile.
- If its wood is more valuable than the fruit that it produces.
- If it is damaging to surrounding trees.

### Circumventing the Prohibition

- In cases when it is forbidden to cut down a tree, one may not hire a non-Jew to do so.
- One may not sell a tree (or land) to a non-Jew, arrange for the non-Jew to cut the tree down, and then buy it back.

In conclusion, it should be noted that there are many differing opinions regarding these complex laws. It is therefore advisable to consult with a competent rabbi before cutting down any fruit tree.

# A WORD

*from the Director*

*We have recently entered the month of Elul, a time to prepare for Rosh Hashono primarily through doing teshuva.*

*The question is: what is teshuva, 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." In the same way 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 teshuva, 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." Teshuva, then, is the "match" that can rekindle even the tiniest flame, and cause it to burst into a giant conflagration.*

*J. I. Gutnick*

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Reb Zusha had gone to visit his teacher and Rebbe, the holy tzadik Reb Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch. After a fulfilling stay, drinking in his teacher's wisdom, Reb Zusha prepared to take his leave. When he went into his Rebbe's study for a parting word, he mentioned to Reb Dov Ber that he needed to marry off his daughter. Now, Reb Zusha was as poor as could be, and to marry off a child required a considerable sum. Reb Dov Ber immediately took a sum of three hundred rubles and pressed it into his disciple's hand, wishing him mazal tov, and sending him happily on his way.

Reb Zusha was greatly relieved. Now, his wife and daughter would be at ease. Although he had taken money, which was not his habit or desire, it was a necessary thing, he thought to himself.

The trip home took Reb Zusha through many towns and villages, and as he passed through one tiny Jewish village he was startled by the sound of bitter weeping coming from a small hut. The other villagers were going about their business, and he stopped one and asked, "Who is that crying?"

"That is a poor widow who was about to marry off her daughter. But on the way to the chupa she lost the entire dowry. Now, the wedding is off because the groom and his family refuse to go on with it without the dowry. And how will she ever amass three hundred rubles again?"

Reb Zusha's tender soul was pained for the poor woman. Then he suddenly realized that three hundred rubles was exactly what he had with him. He walked up to the door of the hut and knocked. "My good woman, I think I may have found your money!" Her eyes widened in disbelief. "Can you tell me if this money had any distinguishing marks?" asked Reb Zusha.

"Why yes," she replied. "The money was in a packet of two fifties, and ten twenties, and it was tied with a red string."

"Yes, that's exactly what I found!" replied Reb Zusha. "I will go to the inn and get the money and bring it right back."

Reb Zusha ran to the inn and changed his money for the denominations the widow had described. Then he tied the bills together with a red string and ran back to the widow's hut. By the time he returned the little village was buzzing with the good news. The girl had changed into her bridal dress, and the neighbours were bustling about preparing the wedding feast. As Reb Zusha presented the widow with the money, he said, "I am keeping one 20 ruble note for my trouble."

She looked at him as if he was speaking a foreign language. The others who had overheard the remark stood with their mouths open. "What!" screamed the widow. "How can you rob a poor widow of 20 rubles! And after you have just performed a most wonderful and holy mitzva (commandment)!" The others converged around Reb Zusha screaming and yelling, "Thief! Stealing a widow's money! For shame!"

Reb Zusha, however, refused to budge. He clung to the 20 rubles as if to dear life. "This money is mine as a reward, and for my troubles!"

Relatives, friends and other townspeople berated Reb Zusha, and soon it seemed that they would tear him limb from limb to retrieve the money. Finally someone piped up: "Let's go to the rabbi. He will be able to settle this once and for all!"

Everyone agreed to follow the rabbi's ruling and they all trailed along to the rabbi's house. The rabbi listened to each side and then ruled: "Reb Zusha must give the widow the 20 rubles."

Still, Reb Zusha refused to give up the money. One young man put his hand into Zusha pocket and extracted the bill. Then Zusha was escorted to the edge of the village and unceremoniously kicked out.

Many months later the village rabbi happened to encounter Rabbi Dov Ber and related to him the incident with his disciple, Reb Zusha.

The Maggid turned to the rabbi, "You must go to Reb Zusha and beg forgiveness. That money didn't belong to the widow. I myself gave it to Reb Zusha to marry off his own child! He demanded twenty rubles because he wanted to avoid honour at any cost. He wanted this great mitzva to be completely pure."

The rabbi was shocked and ashamed when he heard this. He went to Anipoli to beg Reb Zusha's forgiveness. But Reb Zusha replied to him, "You don't need my forgiveness because I never was angry. I do not hold my honour high, but I will forget about the incident completely if you promise never to reveal the truth to the widow. I never want her to suspect that the money wasn't hers by right." The rabbi, of course, agreed and the incident was never mentioned again.

[Adapted from [lchaimweekly.org](http://lchaimweekly.org) #1282]

## Thoughts THAT COUNT

Justice, justice shall you pursue (16:20)

Why does the verse repeat itself? Is there a just justice and an unjust justice? Indeed there is. The Torah is telling us to be just also in pursuit of justice -- both the end and the means by which it is obtained must be just. (Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa)

And it will be, when he sits upon his royal throne, that he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah on a scroll... (17:18)

The king has two Torah scrolls: one that is placed in his treasury, and the other that comes and goes with him. (Talmud; Rashi)

If the ordinary person needs one Torah scroll, a king needs two: because of his greatness, he has greater need to be reminded of the higher authority to which he must submit. (Yalkut David)

Be wholehearted with G-d (18:13)

Conduct yourself with Him with simplicity and depend on Him, and do not seek to manipulate the future; rather, accept whatever happens to you with simplicity and then, you will be with Him and to His portion. (Sifri; Rashi)

### CANDLE LIGHTING: 29 AUGUST 2014

BEGINS	ENDS
5:37 .....MELBOURNE .....	6:36
5:36 .....ADELAIDE .....	6:32
5:15 .....BRISBANE .....	6:08
6:25 .....DARWIN .....	7:15
5:13 .....GOLD COAST .....	6:06
5:40 .....PERTH .....	6:35
5:16 .....SYDNEY .....	6:12
5:23 .....CANBERRA .....	6:20
5:25 .....LAUNCESTON .....	6:25
5:39 .....AUCKLAND .....	6:37
5:34 .....WELLINGTON .....	6:35
5:22 .....HOBART .....	6:24
5:11 .....BYRON BAY .....	6:05
6:52 .....SINGAPORE .....	7:41



### CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS SHOFTIM

3 ELUL • 29 AUGUST

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:37 PM
	MINCHA:	5:45 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:15 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:32 AM
	MINCHA:	5:35 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:36 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
		MON-FRI: 8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:45 PM
	MAARIV:	6:35 PM