

# LAMPLIGHTER

24 Elul  
Parshas Netzavim-  
Vayeilech  
Shabbat Selichot

1157

19 September  
5774/2014

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week we read two Torah portions, Nitzavim and Vayeilech. The portion of Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana.

It begins: "You are standing this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d, your heads, your tribes, your elders... all the men of Israel, your children and your wives ... that you should enter into the covenant of the L-rd your G-d."

With these words, Moses brought the Jewish people into a state of collective and mutual surety. Indeed, our Sages declared, "All Jews are guarantors for one another."

Let us examine the concept of surety more closely.

What exactly is a guarantor, and who is eligible to act as one? According to logic, only a person who is superior to another in a certain respect can provide a guarantee. Consider the example of the poor man who has requested a loan. The lender cannot rely on the poor man's ability to pay him back, so he asks for a wealthy guarantor as collateral. This way, the lender is assured that he will be repaid.

Conversely, it would be illogical to expect a poor man to act as guarantor for a rich man's loan. This would not make sense, as the poor man has less money to begin with.

What, then, are we to make of the fact that "All Jews are guarantors for one another"? How is it possible that even the lowliest individual can act as guarantor for the greatest?

Commenting on the verse "You are standing this day, all of you," Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidut, explained that Jews comprise a single entity. Metaphorically speaking, the Jewish people form one body, with each individual Jew being an integral part of the whole.

A physical body is composed of many organs and limbs, each one of which serves its own unique function. That the head is superior to the foot is obvious, but without the foot, the body is incomplete. A defect in the foot affects the entire person; the head suffers if any of the body's limbs are flawed. In order to exist as a healthy entity, the body requires all of its organs to be in prime condition and to work in consonance.

So too is it in regard to the Jewish people. There are many different types of Jews. Some are like the "head," while others may be said to be the "feet." Nonetheless, each and every Jew is of inestimable value, an essential part of the Jewish people without whom the "body" of Jews would be incomplete. For this reason, all Jews are "guarantors for one another," as each individual possesses unique qualities which are necessary for the health and integrity of the whole.

True unity is only possible when all Jews stand together as one. Not only does this require the participation of our "heads," "tribes" and "elders," but the "hewers of our wood" and "drawers of our water" are no less important.

*Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 4*

## The Second Level of Choice

By Tali Loewenthal

The title of this week's Torah reading is *Nitzavim*, which means "standing," is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah. In this reading, Moses addresses the entire people standing together, whether leaders, elderly sages, or water-carriers. All were gathered to listen to what Moses had to say.

Towards the end of his talk Moses says: "Look, I am putting before you today life and goodness, and death and evil... You should choose life, so that you and your children should live." Moses was saying that the path of Torah brings life and wellbeing.

There are two levels to this idea. One is that a person can see a variety of ways to live. Thinking through the possibilities and probabilities, it seems to him or her that a life guided by Torah teaching is likely to bring a more profound level of happiness, a greater degree of personal fulfilment. So he or she chooses the path of Torah, the path of life. This is one level of choice. It is guided by one's understanding, and by the feeling that Judaism brings harmony and other positive values to one's life.

The second level is when the harmony is not apparent. When there is crisis, opposition and struggle, and one's observance of authentic Jewish teaching - or simply the fact that one is a Jew - seems to lead to extra problems.

In this challenging situation, every Jew still has the power to choose the path of "life" and "goodness." However, it might well seem a choice which is higher than conventional reason and understanding. The person is choosing what they can see as true life and goodness. Other people may not understand this. Apparently well-meaning and reasonable people might advise their Jewish friend: "Why bother? Take the easy way out."

Nonetheless, Moses tells us to choose life, authentic Judaism. His instruction is based on a wider perspective of who we are and where we are going.

Chassidic teachings explain that this choice is the expression of the essence of the soul, which is inseparably united with G-d. It must choose the life of Torah, despite the adverse conditions of the moment. Because from the point of view of one's inner essence, no other road is possible. Why not? Because one's essence is concerned about reality. Not just what seems good at the moment, but what really is good.

Moses' words, telling us to "choose life," include both these levels. And this is a suitable introduction to Rosh Hashanah. For on this festival we express our dedication to G-d as King, and He in turn "chooses" us anew, as His people.

G-d's choice of the Jewish people is not based on our good deeds, the first level of choice. Rather it is a choice of the essence of the Jew within us, the point at which we are united with G-d, independent of our actions at the time: the second level.

Given this deep inner bond with G-d, it is up to us to try to bring consistency to our lives, to make our outward behaviour a reflection of the love hidden in the essence of our heart. Then the inner and outer realities merge, both for the individual person and, ultimately, also for the world, and the two levels of choice become one. To choose the path of Jewish teaching means to choose life and goodness and joy.

# Slice of LIFE

## A Life's Mission

By Nosson Avrohom

Avraham Kraft was born in Manhattan in 1945. "I was primarily raised by my grandparents. They believed in G-d and were proud of being Jewish, but were not observant.

"I remember when I was five; we went to upstate New York. The majestic mountains, the forests and birds, the glistening rivers all led me to conclude that Someone must be responsible for all this, Someone greater than us.

"When I was a teenager, I met a friend from elementary school whom I hadn't seen in years. He was wearing a yarmulke. I asked him why he was wearing it. He explained that he had become a baal t'shuva (returnee to Torah observance). He invited me to his rabbi's house in Williamsburg.

"I spoke with the rabbi and he invited me for Shabbat. Every moment of that Shabbat was enjoyable and uplifting. Seeking life's meaning had led me to read literature from many eastern religions. But no exercise or mantra gave me the wonderful feeling that I felt during the Shabbat prayers or at the meals."

Avraham spent several months in the company of the yeshiva students in Williamsburg and broadened his knowledge of Torah. "As the summer approached, I was offered a job in a Jewish camp. It was my first time involved with children and I was very successful. But working with kids wasn't where I was heading. I wanted to be a successful businessman and make money.

"After that summer, I experienced a crisis. If Torah was true and it refined a person's character, why did I encounter behavior that wasn't honest? Also, I met some religious people who said they didn't understand why I needed to become a baal t'shuva. I spoke to a good friend, a Satmar Chasid, who advised me to go to Lubavitch.

"I arrived in Crown Heights. Within a few hours, I understood that the atmosphere was very different. I met

Lubavitchers with whom I am still in touch. They advised me to consult the Rebbe.

"I sat in '770' and wrote to the Rebbe about everything I had experienced until then. I told the Rebbe that I was feeling down and didn't know what the future would bring. The Rebbe responded, saying I should work with children. I was stunned because I hadn't written to the Rebbe about my success in camp."

Although the Chasidim said the Rebbe was telling him his life's mission, Avraham didn't agree. "The Rebbe hadn't specifically told me to be a teacher. I could work with children in my free time, or maybe the Rebbe meant working with my own children when the time came. A few days later, I had the opportunity to pass by the Rebbe together with hundreds of others. Without saying my name, I asked the Rebbe what I should do in life. The Rebbe said, 'I already told you to work with children.' I was amazed that the Rebbe knew who I was. But I did not submit to his suggestion."

Over the next few months, whatever job Avraham took did not work out. "I wrote to the Rebbe again: I was not an educational expert, I didn't have a degree, and all of my experience involved a few weeks in camp. Who would hire me?" The Rebbe responded to teach, noting that if he made the effort he would easily find work.

"Two weeks later, I met the Satmar chasid who had directed me to Lubavitch. When he heard what the Rebbe had instructed me to do, he suggested a morning job in a Belzer elementary school in Williamsburg, teaching English. 'They are looking for an English teacher,' he said. The next day, I went for an interview and was hired.

"I told the kids stories in English, played educational games, and we got along well. I really enjoyed my job. The principal told me that other teachers had not been able to get the children to appreciate the language; I was the first one to do so and in a Jewish way. A few months later I also started an afternoon job in a different yeshiva.

Avraham decided to pursue music, as well. "I thought that through music I would be better able to impart important Jewish messages to the children."

Avraham got a guitar as a gift and bought a music book. "I studied with a good friend. I began composing my own songs.

"I played at children's assemblies and combined songs with stories. I got invitations to events in summer camps. One of my well-known songs is 'Jewish Child,' which begins, 'I am a Jewish child, Hashem loves me.'

The song was a result of a very disturbing incident at one of the first Jewish camps Avraham performed at: Children were singing Christian missionary songs. "When I got home I begged Hashem to give me something to counteract the missionaries' message, a song that would talk about Hashem and His love for Jewish children, and the words popped into my head. I had barely written them down when a tune came to mind. I quickly grabbed my guitar. I was thrilled when the words fit the tune and a great song emerged."

With the Rebbe's blessing, Avraham became involved in counter-missionary work with Jewish children. "I started with Brighton Beach where there was a big centre with a smooth-talking missionary who ensnared many people.

"I often disguised myself in order to be able to enter these places. At one Christian orphanage I went to there was a Jewish boy. I said I was homeless and asked to stay on the premises. I spent the night in the boy's room. Throughout the night I talked to him. I arranged for the boy's transfer to a Jewish institution. Today, he is the father of a beautiful Jewish family.

"Another time, I was on the subway and I heard a woman tell her son, 'Moshe, hurry. We must get to church.' I was shocked and asked her why she sent her son to church. She said, 'To learn about Judaism.' I offered to visit her at home to explain what authentic Judaism is. She eventually removed her son from the church.

Five years ago, Avraham moved to Israel, where he continues his life's mission that the Rebbe gave him. Avraham is presently writing songs for a new CD in the Zaidy Avi series. He is also finishing a book refuting Christian missionary claims.

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Editor: Yosef Y. Kasle  
P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

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ISSUE 1157

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Indeed, the Redemption is very close, for the exile is over, and now we are in the throes of labour. This process is identical to the conclusion of the exile in Egypt, for even after the Jews' slavery had almost ended and their redemption had been announced, their bondage intensified even more -- but not for long, for immediately afterwards they were redeemed. (From *The Chofetz Chaim on Awaiting Moshiaich*)



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d  
16 Tammuz, 5726 [1966]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] From the above [exposition of the Baal Shem Tov's teaching concerning the Divine Providence that relates even to a mere leaf], we can appreciate the extent to which Divine Providence relates to the innermost concerns of the sons and daughters of Israel, "the people who are close to Him."

[Allow me to offer my] blessings for good news concerning the content of your letter. It goes without saying that my earlier comments are addressed to each of you, including in particular the reference in your letter to the state of your health, and so on.

My intent [in writing of Divine Providence] is not to act as defence counsel (G-d forbid) for the above-mentioned situation. On the contrary: My intent is to suggest that perhaps the meaning of this situation is that it is a test (and this is applicable only to something that is incomprehensible). In that case, as is common with tests, when a person recognizes that this is only an instance in which "the Lrd your G-d is putting you to the test in order to know whether you love the Lrd your G-d with all [your heart and all your soul]," and when he withstands that trial, the situation ceases (because it has already served its "function"), and that individual regains his health.

With blessings for a full and speedy recovery, for a more ample livelihood, and for good tidings,

[...]

P.S. The proposal of a match for your daughter with [...] is, all in all, sound. However, since you mention that at first your daughter had some reservations, and so on, it would not be advisable for you to involve yourselves any more in this matter. Let your daughter proceed according to how she sees fit, according to the direction in which her heart is drawn and so on. After all, as written above, G-d's Providence supervises every particular.

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By the Grace of G-d  
15 Iyar, 5718 [1958]  
Brooklyn  
To the [esteemed] chassid,  
R. Menachem [Feldman],  
[Atlanta]

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] You write about your health and about having been unwell in the past, and of your doctor's directive that you must keep yourself under control and free yourself of worries and stress and the like.

As is well known, the classic counsel for being free of worries is to [cultivate] the attribute of bitachon. The way in which you can explain this subject to yourself is explained at length in many works, including Chovos HaLevavos, Shaar HaBitachon. In fact, trust is a direct corollary of the fundamentals of the faith of the Jewish people, all of whom are "believers, the descendants of believers." And this belief is that G-d supervises every single person with individual Divine Providence, and that He is the essence of good - in the words of the Sages, "All that the Merciful One does is for the good." 287

If so, what room is left for worry? Worry can arise only if one forgets the fundamentals of the faith.

In light of this, the above applies to matters that are in the hands of Heaven. As the Sages teach, "Everything is in the hands of Heaven apart from the fear of Heaven." Berachos 33b. In matters of Torah and mitzvos, therefore, a person should worry - about how to improve his ways so that they will accord with the purpose for which he was created. In the words of the Mishnah, "I was created to serve my Maker."

Though you do not mention this, I hope that you have fixed study sessions in the revealed plane of the Torah and also in the teachings of Chassidus, 34 and that from time to time you add to these sessions - for in matters of holiness we are commanded to increase.

With blessings for good news in all the above matters,

[...]

P.S. My English secretary is not in town at the moment, hence the reply in the Holy Tongue, but you can continue to write in English.

## CUSTOMS CORNER

### Writing a Personal Torah Scroll

The 613th mitzvah of the Torah is the obligation for every Jew to write a Torah scroll.

#### The Details of Writing a Torah Scroll

1. In order to fulfil this obligation, one does not need to write the Torah oneself; one may commission a scribe to write it.
2. However, if one does write a Torah scroll himself, it is as if he has received it from Mt. Sinai.
3. If one simply buys a ready-written Torah scroll, he has not fulfilled his obligation, unless he then fixes at least one letter that was previously invalid.

#### The Details of Owning Holy Books

1. Nowadays one fulfils the mitzvah of writing a Torah scroll via owning holy books even if one doesn't own all of the holy books that can be purchased.
2. Nevertheless, it is important to try to purchase the basic holy books necessary for Jewish life and learning, for example: prayer books, Chumash, Tanach, Mishnah, books on Jewish Law, etc.
3. One can fulfil this mitzvah with books in the language that one understands. The books do not have to be in Hebrew.

One should at least make sure that he buys a letter in a Sefer Torah. One can buy a letter online at [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org).

## A WORD

from the Director

*Since the beginning of the month of Elul we've been doing teshuva, getting rid of negative baggage and "cleaning up our act" before Rosh Hashana. But this Saturday night we're going to really get down to business, as Jews around the world go to the synagogue to recite Selichot. These special penitential prayers are the next stage of our preparation for the High Holidays.*

*Chasidic philosophy makes the following distinction: During the month of Elul, we concentrate on improving our thought, speech and deed. But when we say Selichot, we focus on an even deeper level of the soul and correct the emotive powers themselves.*

*Though it sounds serious, Chasidim have always approached Selichot (like everything else!) with a sense of joy, rather than sadness and gloom. We look forward to the opportunity to reach even higher levels of holiness and sanctity.*

*The Rebbe Rashab, quoting Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidut, gave the following explanation on one of the lines in the Selichot: "The needs of Your people are great, and their knowledge is narrow and limited." Our needs are many precisely because our knowledge is limited. If our knowledge were "wider," our needs would be fewer.*

*The pursuit of luxuries, adds the Rebbe, can even diminish the "regular" measure of blessing a person would otherwise receive. Because our "knowledge is limited" we demand too much, over-inflating our importance and assuming that G-d "owes" us. Our "needs" tend to multiply when we put too much emphasis on material rather than spiritual concerns.*

*Nonetheless, the Rebbe concludes, "Our request from G-d is that He fulfils all the needs of His people, even though what we ask for stems from a deficiency in knowledge. And may every single Jew lack for nothing." Amen.*

J. I. Guttentag

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

The month of Elul was drawing to a close. Everyone was getting ready for Yom Tov, and the "scent" of the High Holidays was already in the air. The marketplace was overflowing with all kinds of merchandise and produce, including the special fruits that are traditionally eaten on Rosh Hashana like pomegranates.

The Jewish section of town was bustling with activity as homes were swept from top to bottom and new clothes were fitted and sewn. At the same time it was serious business, as residents prepared themselves spiritually for the coming year. More attention was paid to praying with a minyan, refraining from gossip and in general, improving behaviour.

Inside the Baal Shem Tov's study hall the final preparations before Rosh Hashana were also underway. Prayers were recited with increased devotion, and all thoughts were focused on returning to G-d in repentance.

One evening, a few days before Rosh Hashana, the Baal Shem Tov's disciples were getting ready to pray the evening service. All that was missing was the Baal Shem Tov himself, who had yet to arrive. At precisely the appointed hour the Baal Shem Tov entered the study hall, but instead of opening his prayer book he remained standing, lost in thought.

Of course, no one dared mention that it was time to pray. The minutes ticked by and still the Baal Shem Tov seemed distracted, as if he were in another world. His holy face was suffused with intense emotion. However, the Baal Shem Tov's students were already used to such things.

When the Baal Shem Tov suddenly roused himself almost an hour later and opened his prayer book, his countenance was virtually shining with joy. That evening, the Baal Shem Tov prayed with unusual intensity and longing. It was obvious that something of very great magnitude had occurred.

After the service the Baal Shem Tov explained: "Not very far from here," he began, "lives a Jew who grew up in a traditional Jewish home. But as he grew older, he began to associate with the local peasants. Slowly he abandoned the Jewish path till he was virtually indistinguishable from the gentiles and completely estranged from his roots.

"Many years passed. The man left the province where he was born and went to live in a totally non-Jewish environment. As time passed, he forgot everything about the Jewish way of life, its prayers and its customs. Before he knew it 30 years had elapsed.

"Tonight," the Baal Shem Tov revealed, "this Jew happened to be visiting a Jewish town on business. As soon as he entered the village he could sense the commotion, and this aroused his curiosity. When he asked a passer-by what was going on the man answered, 'Everyone is getting ready for a holiday we call Rosh Hashana. According to Jewish tradition, it is the day on which man was created and the whole world is judged.'

"For some reason this explanation struck a chord in the heart of the assimilated Jew. Maybe it was the exclusionary 'we' that emphasized the huge chasm that separated him from his brethren, or perhaps the mere mention of the Day of Judgment. In any event, the man's soul was inexplicably awakened, and he was flooded with memories of his childhood.

"As he wandered through the marketplace he was suddenly stricken by the horrifying realization that he had exchanged a life rich in meaning for an empty existence. At that moment he looked up, and was surprised to find himself standing outside the main synagogue. By then it was almost dark, and people were arriving to pray the evening service.

"The man was seized by an overwhelming desire to join them, but he was also embarrassed by his non-Jewish appearance. In the end the urge to pray won out, and he went into the women's section and hid behind the curtain.

"As the cantor chanted the words 'And He atones for sin...' a shudder passed through the man's body. How he wished to pray, but the words were long forgotten. Tears streamed down his cheeks. When the last congregant had gone home he couldn't bear it any longer and burst out crying. 'Master of the universe!' he wept. 'I know there is no greater sinner than I, but I also know that You are merciful and full of loving-kindness. Heavenly Father, forgive me my transgressions and I will sin no more. I wish to return to You and live as a Jew. Please accept my prayer and do not turn me away!'

"The man's heartfelt repentance caused a great commotion in the celestial realms," the Baal Shem Tov explained, "and his prayer ascended to the very Throne of Glory. In fact, it was so powerful that it brought along with it many other prayers that had been waiting hundreds of years to ascend.

"When I sensed what was going on in the man's heart," the Baal Shem Tov concluded, "I decided to wait for him to pray so I could join him. Tonight's service was delayed so we could merit praying with a true penitent..."

[adapted from *lchaimweekly.org* #1286]

## Thoughts THAT COUNT

You stand upright this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d (29:9)

"This day" is a reference to Rosh Hashanah, the day on which we all stand in judgment before G-d (the Torah reading of Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah). (*Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov*)

This mitzvah which I command you today... It is not in heaven... (30:11-12)

If it were in heaven, you would be required to climb up there and learn it. (*Talmud, Eruvin 55a*)

And Moses went... to all of Israel (31:1)

But the Torah doesn't tell us where Moses went on this last day of his earthly life. The Chassidic masters say: Moses entered into the core of every Jew of every generation, so that every Jewish soul possesses a spark of the soul of Moses. (*Maayanah Shel Torah*)

And I, hide shall I hide my face from them (31:18)

There are times when G-d hides His face. But then there are times when G-d hides His face and we don't even realize that His face is hidden; we dwell in darkness, and think it is light. This is a doublegalut, a concealment within a concealment. (*The Chassidic Masters*)

**CANDLE LIGHTING: SEPTEMBER 18, 24, 25, 2014**

BEGINS	ENDS
19th.....24th.....25th.....20th	
5:55.....5:59.....6:58.....MELBOURNE.....6:53	
5:51.....5:55.....6:51.....ADELAIDE.....6:47	
6:17.....5:26.....6:19.....BRISBANE.....6:17	
6:25.....6:25.....7:14.....DARWIN.....7:14	
5:22.....5:25.....6:18.....GOLD COAST.....6:16	
5:52.....5:55.....6:50.....PERTH.....6:47	
5:31.....5:34.....6:30.....SYDNEY.....6:26	
5:39.....5:42.....6:39.....CANNBERRA.....6:35	
5:16.....5:51.....6:51.....LAUNCESTON.....6:46	
5:56.....6:00.....6:57.....AUCKLAND.....6:53	
5:55.....6:00.....7:00.....WELLINGTON.....6:55	
5:45.....5:50.....6:51.....HOBART.....6:46	
5:22.....5:24.....6:18.....BYRON BAY.....6:15	
6:44.....6:42.....7:31.....SINGAPORE.....7:32	



**CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH**

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD  
 PARSHAS NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH  
 24 ELUL - 19 SEPTEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:55 PM
	MINCHA:	6:00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:30 PM
SHABBOS:	TEHILLIM:	8:00 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	11:00 AM
	FARBRENGEN FOLLOWING DAVENING	
	MINCHA:	5:55 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:53 PM
	SELICHOS:	12:20 AM
WEEKDAYS:	SELICHOS: MON-TUE:	7:30 AM, 8:45 AM
	WED:	7:10 AM, 8:20 AM
	SHACHARIS: SUN-WED:	9:15 AM
	MON-WED:	8:00 AM
	MINCHA: SUN-WED:	6:05 PM
	MAARIV: SUN-TUE:	6:50 PM
ROSH HASHONO:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:59 PM
	WED: MAARIV:	6:50 PM
	THU: SHACHARIS:	9:00 AM
	SHOFAR:	11:00 AM (APPROX)
	MINCHA:	5:50 PM FOLLOWED BY TASHLICH
	MAARIV:	6:50 PM
	CANDLE LIGHTING:	NOT BEFORE 6:58 PM
	FRIDAY: SHACHARIS:	9:00 AM
	SHOFAR:	11:00 AM (APPROX)
	MINCHA:	5:50 PM
	CANDLE LIGHTING:	6:01 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:40 PM