

LAMPLIGHTER

24 Shevat
Parshas Mishpatim
Shabbos Shekalim

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion this week is Mishpatim - statutes. Included amongst the many mitzvot (commandments) found in the portion is one which discusses how to behave toward an enemy in distress. "When you see the donkey of your enemy lying under its burden, you might want to refrain from helping it, but you must make every effort to help him [unload it]." (23:5)

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chasidic movement, translated and explained this commandment in a unique way which makes it relevant to each one of us. It is important to note that the Hebrew word for donkey - chamor is similar to the word for materiality - chomer.

When you see a donkey - when you carefully examine your materiality, your body, you will see...

...your enemy - for your materiality hates your Divine soul since it is the Divine soul which longs for G-dliness and spirituality. Furthermore, you will see that it is...

...lying under its burden - it is overwhelmed and overloaded with the command placed upon it by G-d, namely, that it should become refined through the study of Torah and performance of mitzvot. But, the body, like a donkey, is lazy and stubborn to fulfil these commands. It may then occur to you that...

...you might want to refrain from helping it - to enable it to fulfil its mission. And instead, you might follow the path of mortification of the flesh to break down the body's crass materiality.

Hundreds of years ago, it was indeed considered proper to subordinate the body through afflicting it with ascetic practices, but the Baal Shem Tov rejected this path. He saw the body not as an obstacle to the spirit, something intrinsically evil and ungodly, but as a potential vehicle for the spiritual, a means for the soul to attain heights otherwise inaccessible.

The light of Torah will not reside fully in this method. Rather...

You must make every effort to help it - purify the body, refine it, but not to break it.

Thus the "enemy" is transformed into an ally, an instrument through which to perform mitzvot. In great measure the mitzvot employ gross physical matter to fulfil G-d's will, e.g. leather for Tefillin thongs, wool for Tzitzis, etc. We must care for our physical selves in order to fulfil G-d's commandments. Indeed, it is a commandment to watch over the health of one's body.

Adapted from Hayom Yom, compiled by the Rebbe from teachings of the previous Rebbes.

The Divine Loan

By Tali Loewenthal

The intimate Jewish relationship with G-d is expressed in the idea that G-d Himself keeps the laws of the Torah. The Sages tell us they are called "G-d's laws" because not only do they come from G-d, but they are also kept by G-d. This teaching helps a person understand more clearly how closely we are connected with the Divine at every step of our lives. The Zohar states: "G-d, the Jewish people and the Torah are one." This applies in many ways. The teaching that, so to speak, both we and G-d keep the laws of the Torah helps us understand that we are truly bonded together.

The Sedra presents us with many laws, most of them concerning relationships with other people. One of them tells us about lending money to the poor. "If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you..." (22:24). The Sages of the Talmud comment that the word 'if' is not to be taken literally. There is a duty and a requirement to lend money to the needy person.

This is a central concept in traditional Jewish society. In many communities today, there are interest-free loan funds. A loan helps an individual or a family deal with the constant pressures of life.

How does G-d Himself keep this law? He 'lends' each of us everything we have. Our physical bodies, our skills and talents, our minds and intelligence, our homes, our possessions. This is a Divine loan which we are able to enjoy - yet we also have to repay it.

And how do we pay back the loan? By using all that G-d has given us in order to fulfil His objective: to make this world into a dwelling for the Divine, through keeping the laws of the Torah.

There are two types of loan. If you borrow someone's watch, you have to give the same watch back to its owner. The borrower never truly possesses the watch. However, if you borrow money, you do not have to give back the same banknotes, just the equivalent. The original banknotes become fully the property of the borrower.

G-d's loan to us is of the second type. Everything that G-d gives becomes ours: our physical selves, our skills, our minds and our possessions. Yet - ideally - we deliberately use all of this in every aspect of our lives for a sacred purpose, guided by the teachings of the Torah. In this way we repay the Divine loan, or at least we try to. Someone might ask: "How much do you owe?"

Answer: "Everything!"

Slice of LIFE

Rabbi Nachum Katsenelenbogen always knew his father was a hero. Arrested by the NKVD, predecessor to the KGB, in 1950, Moshe Katsenelenbogen spent seven-and-a-half years in a Soviet prison simply for being Jewish. Once he was free, he poured his heart into instilling a strong love of Judaism in his children.

As a Chabad-Lubavitch emissary in Owings Mills, Katsenelenbogen aims to bring his father's teachings to his Baltimore-area friends, students and congregants. When his father passed away on Sept. 3 at the age of 83, the rabbi began to reflect on his father's sacrifices. By keeping his faith under harsh circumstances, Katsenelenbogen believes his father helped ensure the spread of Judaism for future generations.

"My whole life, I dreamed about being a Chabad rabbi because of my father's unwavering commitment to Judaism," Katsenelenbogen, who directs Chabad of Owings Mills, said last week. "I try to pass on the lessons he taught me to the Baltimore Jewish community. He might be physically gone, but his story lives on."

Later this year, the Chabad centre will be dedicating a new Torah scroll in honor of the late Katsenelenbogen, ensuring that his memory lives on as inspiration for Jewish learning.

"My father did not die for Judaism," said his son. "He lived for Judaism."

"My father was a walking, living Torah scroll," he continued. "When I thought about how to commemorate his life, the Torah just seemed like the most natural fit."

Katsenelenbogen's father devoted his life to defending his religion. Born

in the Former Soviet Union, Moshe was part of an underground network of Jewish educators and activists coordinated by Chabad leaders. Coming from a Lubavitch family, his own father, Rabbi Michoel Katsenelenbogen, was one of the original students at Yeshivat Tomchei Temimim, the movement's flagship educational institution.

When Moshe was just 6, his father was arrested by the secret police and murdered shortly after. Despite his father's death, Moshe continued to learn in the underground system.

"The Chabad movement taught my father the entire Jewish calendar by heart," said Katsenelenbogen. "Many boys his age would learn arithmetic by going to baseball games. My father studied Jewish law in secret. He knew exactly [when Yom Kippur] fell, so he knew when to fast. He was fluent in the Jewish code of law."

Moshe's mother helped forge passports and Polish documents to help Jewish families escape from Russia. But his Jewish background and beliefs would lead him to jail.

After his arrest for refusing to attend a Soviet school and not testifying against his mother, he faced torture, physical abuse and starvation in prison. His only crime was that he was a practicing Jew.

"They told my father he had 90 months, and my grandmother was sentenced to death. They say 90 months rather than seven and a half years because psychologically, it sounds longer," said Katsenelenbogen. "In jail, they whipped him in front of his mother and gave him minimal food. They wanted to break his spirit. Instead, they made him stronger."

After he was released from jail, Moshe left the Soviet Union in 1971. Immigrating to London, he focused on igniting a passion for Judaism in his five children.

"My father's stories about jail truly inspired me to pursue a career in Jewish education," said Katsenelenbogen. "He used to share prison stories with me all the time. One of my favourite tales is his Passover story. In jail, they only feed you bread, sugar and water. Therefore, on Passover, he did not eat for eight days. He simply said eating was not an option. He was arrested for practicing Judaism, and there he is, in a Soviet jail cell, observing Jewish holidays."

From donning Tefillin under the blankets to creating his own candles on Chanukah, Moshe created a portable Judaism. This Yom Kippur, Katsenelenbogen plans to use his father's life lessons as the inspiration for his High Holiday sermon.

"People do not want to hear a preacher, they want to hear a story," said Katsenelenbogen. "My father's story is real, and I think the Baltimore community can benefit from hearing about it. My father visited Owings Mills many times in his life and loved the community. When he died, thousands of Baltimoreans reached out to me. He might be one person, but his courage has inspired thousands from Eastern Europe to London to Baltimore."

With the pressures and distractions of today's society, Katsenelenbogen fears his father's generation may be forgotten.

"My father had such a strong perseverance," said Katsenelenbogen. "Even though we are not being killed by Stalin, we still face peer pressure every day. I take my [bar and bat mitzvah] students to meet Holocaust survivors and physically see their numbers. The previous generation fought so that we can celebrate Judaism freely. My father taught me well, and I want to teach my students well."

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ISSUE 1178

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Prior to the Redemption, when the quality of self-sacrifice for a higher goal is less understood, men dominate. Women, however, who represent a state of utter nullification to G-d will be truly appreciated in the Era of Moshiach. When G-dliness finally pervades the world openly, the uniqueness of her Divine essence will shine with remarkable radiance.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

In commemoration of the Yahrzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka (on the 22nd of Shevat -this past Wednesday, February 11) the Lubavitcher Rebbe's wife, we present excerpts of two letters the Rebbe wrote regarding Jewish women.

In the days of Sefira, 5728 [1968]

...The Torah tells us that when the Jewish people finally reached Mount Sinai, they attained a state of complete unity, as indicated in the words, "and Israel encamped there" (in the singular person), all of them as one, united and unified by the singular thought of receiving the Torah and mitzvot.

The significance of that moment is pointed out by our Sages of blessed memory, declaring that the unification of the Jewish people was the condition for receiving the Torah.

It has often been emphasized that there are crucial moments in the life of our people, especially in the area of Torah and Judaism, where the Jewish woman plays a most important role. One of these areas is the unity of the family. Here the woman holds the main keys of harmony between the parents and the children, the parents vis-a-vis each other, and the children in relation to one another. In this area the wife and mother clearly has a decisive role, and in most cases, even a more decisive role than the husband and father. This is one of the reasons why the Jewish woman bears the title of *akeret habayit* (foundation of the home).

It is likewise clear that Jewish unity in a broader sense - unity between one family and another, and unity on a national level - is dependent upon harmony within the family unit. Where harmony is lacking within the family, G-d forbid, surely no harmony can prevail between such a family and another.

However, even where there is complete harmony within family groups, there still remains the problem of achieving unity on the national level. Let us therefore remember that the basis for true Jewish unity is the Torah and mitzvot.

If throughout the ages it has been no easy task to achieve unity, the problem has become much more complicated in this age of "freedom" in the "free" countries of the world, where people are no longer restricted in their choice of domicile, occupation, educational facilities, free expression of opinions, ideas, etc.

All these diversities and dispersions - geographic, social, cultural, etc. - are "by-products" of the contemporary "free" society in which we live. The newly-created conditions have created new problems and difficulties, which, however, must be viewed as challenges. With the proper approach and a determined will, they can be resolved...

[Letter written for "The annual Lubavitch Women's Convention"]

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Adar I, 5730
[February 7, 1970]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and blessing!

... In addition to the above, the Jewish Leap Year has a special relevance to Jewish women, mothers and daughters. The sun and the moon were created as "the two great luminaries," but each has been given its own place and function. The moon acts as a reflector and transmitter of the sun's light. In this way it has a special quality in that it transmits the solar light and energy to those areas in nature where direct sunlight would be too intense to be of benefit.

Similarly the worthy Jewish wife, in many respects, must reflect and transmit the Torah way of life of her husband to the entire household, and it is in this way that she fulfills her great responsibility and privilege of being the *Akeres Habayis*. At the same time there are areas in Jewish life where the Jewish woman, rather than the man, can make the greatest contribution, using her special qualities to best and fullest advantage.

(Excerpt from a letter)

CUSTOMS CORNER

Shabbos Shekalim

Shabbos Shekalim is named for the additional Torah portion read on this Shabbos regarding the Mitzva to contribute a half-shekel yearly for the purchase of the communal offerings. When the Mishkan, and later the Beis Hamikdash stood, the shekalim were due by the first day of Nissan. One month earlier, on the first of Adar, announcements were made so that everyone would give the half-shekel in the proper time. Thus, our Sages enacted that on the Shabbos immediately preceding Adar or on the Shabbos on which the first day of Adar fell, the passage about the shekalim call was to be read from the Torah. In our times, it is customary to give a half coin (for instance, in the Australia a half-dollar) to charity on the eve of Purim as a remembrance of this special mitzva.

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbos, the last before the month of Adar, is called Shabbos Parshas Shekalim, or simply Shabbos Shekalim. On this Shabbos we read about the mitzva of the half-shekel, which G-d commanded every Jew to give as atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf.

The sin of the Golden Calf was idolatry, which caused the Jewish people to be distanced and alienated from each other. Accordingly, the antidote was to unite the Jewish people and G-d in true unity, which was accomplished through the mitzva of the half-shekel.

In essence, the Jewish people and G-d are one entity. Without G-d, the Jews are incomplete. They are only half of a single whole.

To demonstrate this fact, the Jewish people were commanded to give a half-shekel. The other "half" is G-d, and together they comprise a single unit.

Significantly, both rich and poor Jews were required to give the same amount. For every Jew, regardless of social standing or other factors, is only "half." Only by uniting with G-d do we become complete.

This is also the inner connection between Shabbos Shekalim and the month of Adar, in which the miracle of Purim took place. The Talmud relates that the spiritual reason for Haman's decree was the Jews having bowed down to an idol. The spiritual reason the decree was nullified was their merit of the half-shekel.

When the Jews bowed down to the idol it gave the appearance that they were disconnected from G-d. Their miraculous salvation, which came about in the merit of the half-shekel, demonstrated openly that Jews can never be separated from G-d.

The merit of the half-shekel inspired the Jews to observe Torah and mitzvot with even greater dedication and self-sacrifice, despite Haman's harsh decree. May we be similarly inspired by reading of their example, and merit the ultimate salvation of Moshiach's coming.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi once sent one of his Chassidim on a mission to raise a large sum of money for an important cause. The Rebbe blessed him with a safe trip, but mysteriously warned him not to enter any house that had its door on the east side.

The trip went well, and soon most of the money had been collected. But one day the Chassid found himself caught in a snowstorm on a lonely road winding through the forest. The wind grew steadily stronger and colder. He urged his horse on, hoping to reach some sort of an inn before he lost his way entirely in the snow; but hours passed and still nothing.

He was numb and freezing, and the snow was falling so densely that he couldn't really see where he was going. He prayed to G-d for some sort of miracle.

Suddenly, through the white sea of swirling snow, he saw what looked like the outline of a house just off the road. With his last ounce of strength he forced the horse in its direction, and sure enough, it was a house! It even had a mezuzah on the door. A Jewish house, no less! He thanked G-d for his good fortune as he jumped from his wagon onto the front porch and knocked on the door.

An elderly woman opened the door and let him in to the warm house. "Come in, you must be freezing," she said. "Come have a cup of tea; sit here by the stove. In just a minute my sons will return, and they will put your horse in the barn. Please sit down."

Just as he sat down and began thawing out, he remembered that it was almost nightfall and he hadn't yet prayed Mincha (the afternoon prayer). So he asked the woman which direction was east (to face Jerusalem, as is customary during prayer) and prayed, thanking G-d for his good fortune.

As he finished praying, he noticed that something was wrong: the eastern wall was the one with the main entrance of the house in it!

Without hesitation he put on his coat and walked to the door, saying apologetically, "I'll be right back"-but the door was locked. He went to a window, but it too was locked. "I forgot something in the wagon," he called to the old woman, who had slipped out of the room. "Could you please open the door?" Suddenly a key turned in the door from the outside, and four brawny young men entered from the storm. As soon as they saw their visitor they immediately grabbed him, emptied his pockets, tied him up, laid him on the ground in a corner, and sat down to eat while their mother examined the booty.

"Ho ho!" she exclaimed. "Look what we have here!" as she held up the pack of money she found in his wallet. "Looks like we caught a big fish this time." One of the sons examined the money, went to the cupboard, took out a large bottle of vodka and put it on the table with a bang. "Brothers, let's celebrate! G-d has been good to us! We have enough money here to be happy for a long, long time! But first, let's take care of our guest." He pulled a large knife from somewhere under his coat while one of his brothers was pouring him a drink. He took a cup of vodka in his free hand, raised it high and said, "To long life, except for you!" as he looked at the bound Chassid.

One of the brothers, surprised by the joke, laughed so hard that the vodka came spraying out of his mouth on the others, and they all began to laugh, and then someone began a song and another toast, then another. Then the door opened again, and it was their father. "Aha!" he shouted as he looked at the money on the table and the bound victim on the floor.

"Good work, boys! Excellent! We'll have to kill him though... I'm glad you left him for me. You know what? In the morning I'll take care of him. Now, let's drink to our good fortune!" And before long they were all drunk as Lot, and forgot completely about our unfortunate hero.

Late that night, when they were all sleeping soundly, the father woke, looked around to make sure that no one else was awake, tiptoed over to our Chassid, motioned him to be silent, cut his ropes and silently ordered him to follow. He tiptoed to the door, opened it and gave the Chassid his coat. "Here is your money back," he whispered in the Chassid's ear as he pushed the wallet into his coat pocket. Then he pressed a gold coin into the Chassid's hand. "This is for charity from an old sinner. Tell your Rebbe to please pray for me. Now go! Get out of here as fast as you can... run for your life." Dawn was beginning to light the horizon, the storm had stopped, and our grateful hero was on the road back home.

When he entered the Rebbe's room, the Rebbe looked up at him and said: "I know what happened; you don't have to tell me. I was up all night interceding on your behalf."

The Chassid produced the golden coin and told of the old thief's request. The Rebbe took the coin and wedged it in a crack in the wall next to his desk, and said no more.

Fifteen years passed, and this same Chassid, who was now married with a family, became one of the Rebbe's gabbaim (secretaries). One day he answered the door to an old beggar, and told him to wait. When he entered the Rebbe's room and informed him that there was a beggar at the door, the Rebbe pulled the gold coin from the crack where it had been for the past fifteen years, and told the Chassid that this was the old man who had released him years ago.

It seems that when his wife and sons awoke and realized what he had done, they beat him and drove him from the house just some hours before the police made a surprise raid and took the mother and sons off to prison. The old man began a life of wandering and atonement, waiting for a sign that his repentance had been accepted in heaven.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Should you buy a Hebrew slave (21:2)

The first laws taught are those of an eved ivri - a Hebrew slave, for there is nothing harder for a person then to be subdued and enslaved to another. (*Ibn Ezer*)

Parshas Mishpatim opens with the laws of an eved ivri - a Hebrew slave, warning the judges not to neglect the cases they bring up for trial, delaying them to attend to "more important halachic matters", because of their "low" halachic status. (*Iturei Torah*)

Should you buy a Hebrew slave, what's the meaning of buying a slave, seemingly he becomes a slave only after the sale?! Rather the Torah is sending a message to the buyer - he must know that the man he is buying is already a slave to another master - the Master of the Universe. (*Alshich*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 13 FEBRUARY 2015

BEGINS	ENDS
8:04MELBOURNE.....	9:02
7:55ADELAIDE.....	8:52
6:17BRISBANE.....	7:10
6:59DARWIN.....	7:49
6:16GOLD COAST.....	7:10
6:52PERTH.....	7:47
7:33SYDNEY.....	8:29
7:44CANBERRA.....	8:41
8:02LAUNCESTON.....	9:03
8:04AUCKLAND.....	9:01
8:11WELLINGTON.....	9:12
8:04HOBART.....	9:06
7:16BYRON BAY.....	8:10
7:03SINGAPORE.....	7:53



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS MISHPATIM
24 SHEVAT • 13 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:04 PM
	MINCHA:	8:10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:40 PM
SHABBOS:	TEHILLIM:	8:00 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10:11 AM
	THE MOLAD FOR THE MONTH OF ADAR WILL BE	
	ON WEDNESDAY	11:59 PM (2 CHELEK)
	FARBRENGEN FOLLOWING DAVENING	
	MINCHA:	8:00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:02 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM
	MON-FRI:	8:00 PM
	MINCHA:	8:30 PM
	MAARIV:	9:00 PM