

# LAMPLIGHTER

6 Elul  
Parshas  
Shoftim  
**1205**  
21 August  
5775/2015

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion of Shoftim contains the verse: "And if a Levite comes...with all his desire to the place which the L-rd shall choose, then he shall serve in the name of the L-rd his G-d, as all his brothers the Levites do."

As Rashi explains, in the times of the Holy Temple, the Kohanim (priests, from the tribe of Levi) were divided into 24 groups, each of which was assigned a specific time to come to Jerusalem and perform the holy service. However, as the above verse teaches, even if a kohen were to come to the Temple out of turn, he is permitted to offer his own sacrifice and perform the specific service associated with it.

Moreover, if it happens to be one of the three major Festivals, he is allowed to participate in the communal sacrifices together with the rest of his brethren.

The reason: If a kohen is willing to abandon all his other affairs and travel to Jerusalem for the specific purpose of serving G-d, the Torah grants him this merit regardless of whether he is actually obligated to do so, or it is officially his "turn."

As Maimonides explains, in our times every Jew has the ability to serve G-d as a "Levite." When a Jew resolves to turn aside from worldly matters and dedicate himself to serving G-d, it is similar to the service of the Levites, who were distinguished from other Jews in that they did not receive a portion of land and served G-d exclusively.

The name Levi alludes to this special level of connection to G-dliness, as our Matriarch Leah declared after giving birth to him, "Now this time will my husband be joined to me [y'laveh, from the same Hebrew root as Levi]."

Maimonides further explains that when a Jew genuinely resolves to serve G-d, he becomes sanctified with the very highest level of holiness, i.e., that of the High Priest. "G-d becomes his portion and inheritance forever," Maimonides writes. In the same way that the Levites were not permitted to work for a living and were provided with all their needs by others, so too will a person who makes up his mind to serve G-d be given Divine assistance, enabling him to carry out his resolution for good. In other words, the very act of resolving to attain the level of kohen gives the Jew the potential strength and ability to do so.

When a Jew demonstrates this willingness for self-sacrifice, it doesn't matter whether it is his "turn" or not. G-d will grant him the ability and merit to perform his holy service joyfully and with gladness of heart.

*Adapted from a talk on the second day of Rosh Chodesh Elul 5747 and 3 Elul 5748*

## Resisting the Pressure

By Tali Loewenthal

Life is about keeping our sense of direction despite all the many pressures. We are pulled this way and that, sometimes into negative situations. The teachings of the Torah give us guidance about how to be aware of what is happening. Sometimes we should indeed decide to go with the flow. Sometimes we have to step back -- and say no.

The Torah gives us an interesting warning regarding this issue. It is phrased in terms of Jewish life thousands of years ago, yet it is explained by our Sages in terms which are relevant today.

The overt topic in the Torah is the *asheira* tree. There may not be any in Kew Gardens, but the Talmud tells us this was a beautiful tree which was so enchanting that people used to worship it. There was something attractive and exciting about an *asheira*. Worship of the *asheira* was very common in ancient Canaan, and Jewish people were often enticed into it. The Torah warns against it several times.

In the Torah there is an intriguing statement: "Do not plant an *asheira* or any tree near the Altar of G-d" (Deuteronomy 16:21). The Altar of G-d is, of course, in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, or, during the centuries before Solomon built the Temple, in the Divine Sanctuary which was set up at a number of different locations in turn.

Now, why should anyone think of planting an *asheira* tree in the Sanctuary or Temple? Surely, a person either worships G-d or follows the *asheira* cult. Why should he want to plant an *asheira* tree near G-d's altar in the Sanctuary?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that this is speaking of a case when the person who is in charge of the Sanctuary and the Altar is an enthusiastic Jew who wants more and more people to come to the Sanctuary. He wants more and more people to appreciate how inspiring and fulfilling it is to serve G-d. The problem is that not as many people as he would like are actually coming. So he has an idea. "Everyone is attracted by the *asheira* tree. Let me plant one near the Altar and people will come flocking to the Sanctuary of G-d".

At this point the Torah gives a warning: do not imagine that this is right, or indeed effective. True, large crowds may initially come. Unfortunately people do flock to the *asheira*. But since this attraction is itself forbidden, the initial success will not last. The intention is good: to bring more people to the Sanctuary. But the *asheira* confuses the issue. Eventually *asheira* worship might replace the Sanctuary altogether...

Now, is this relevant today? Imagine: a person is trying to promote a positive activity such as a charity evening. He or she gets the idea of having an "*asheira*". What is an *asheira* in this context? Something attractive and crowd pulling -- which happens to be inappropriate in terms of the teachings of the Torah. The Torah warns: don't do it. You will be giving the wrong message which will eventually work against any initial apparent success.

Of course, creative and exciting ideas, genuine positive crowd pullers, are vital in Jewish life today. Further, one needs a measure of sensitivity to decide what is an *asheira* and what is just an innocent, permitted attraction. One may need to take advice (that's what Rabbis and Rebbetzins are for). One certainly needs thought. And there are times to resist the pressure. But we Jews are particularly good at that -- and that is why we still exist!

# Slice of LIFE

Some thirty years ago Mr. Gold (fictional name) was a businessman. True he wasn't a big businessman but he wanted to be.

And his chance came.

It required a big investment on his part. He would have to liquidate most of his assets and borrow huge sums of money - but it was a chance to really make it big. But, on the other hand, if it didn't work it could make him a pauper for the rest of his life.

He asked friends and associates for advice and one of them suggested that he write to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He told him a few stories of the Rebbe's uncanny ability to give advice and, although Mr. Gold never held much respect for the advice of Rabbis, especially in matters of business, he made a big exception and wrote.

But a week passed and then another and he received no letter.

Unable to wait any longer he took the chance, borrowed the money, made the investment and it succeeded. Within a few months huge profits began rolling in and he was elevated to a higher level in the business world.

Then, several months later, when he was already well on his way to becoming a millionaire, the Rebbe's letter arrived.

"Disgusting!" he said to himself. "When I needed this Rebbe's advice he wasn't there, but now, after he sees that I succeeded, he probably wants to ask for a donation! Who needs him?!"

He didn't even bother reading the letter, but for some reason he didn't throw it away either. He just tossed it on his desk where it got pushed into a drawer with a lot of other papers and he forgot about it.

The years passed and his success increased until a strange 'tragedy' struck.

Shortly after he became rich his wife gave birth to a daughter. She grew into a beautiful, intelligent and charming young

woman but when she reached marriageable age for some reason none of the fellows she met found favour in her eyes; either too tall or too short, too witty or too dull, too talkative or too quiet etc.

That was until she met Shlomo (fictional name). He was, intelligent, handsome and successful but there was one 'problem'; he was of Sephardic descent.

She didn't give it much importance; in fact she enjoyed his warm, alert personality. And, indeed, there was no importance; some of the greatest scholars and 'Tzadikim' in the history of Judaism were and are Sephardic.

The problem was her father. When he heard it he exploded!

"Sephardic?!! No way!! My family came from a long line of Ashkenazic Jews! They all married Ashkenazic Jews and my daughter will not be an exception!! She will not marry a Sephardic Jew and that is FINAL!!"

But it wasn't as final as he thought.

His daughter had as strong a will as he did. She announced that, although she loved her father and wanted to honour him... she loved her fiancé as well. It was her life, she was a grown woman and she had the right to marry whoever she wanted..... without parental permission. And if necessary she would exercise her right!

This infuriated her father even more. He would show her!!

He gave an ultimatum: If she did so... if she married this fellow, he would totally disown her! He would never support her in any way! And he would not even attend the wedding!!

Whereupon she calmly replied that although it would pain her very much to lose her father she could not live her life under such intimidation. She wanted to marry and if he wanted to disown her for such a ridiculous 'crime' it was up to him.

Poor Mr. Gold was in big trouble; the whole argument had escalated into a war that was beyond his control. His pride and principles would not allow him to give in, but on the other hand he was losing his daughter!

And not just his daughter.

He began to worry, lose sleep, not eat properly and talk to himself. He couldn't think, he couldn't work, his life became grey and meaningless and to make matters worse, his wife was beginning to side with .... 'them'!

He was losing everything!

Then one day as he was sitting lethargically in his study aimlessly opening the drawers of his desk and closing them, he noticed something strange. An unopened letter! He took it out and adjusted his eyes. It was the one that he had never opened twenty one years earlier from the Lubavitcher Rebbe!

Sensing that somehow it contained something vital he opened it with trembling hands and it read (approximately) as follows:

"Dear Mr. "Gold",

"Shalom and Blessings!

"May you have much blessing and success in your financial endeavours and may you use the riches in a proper way for charity to the poor, to support Torah institutions and Torah scholars. Wishing you much Nachat (satisfaction) from your family and self and may you increase in Judaism from strength to strength.

"P.S. It is known that there is no reason to give much attention to family background regarding marriage if the both bride and groom to be are both G-d fearing people. There have already been many marriages between Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews which, thank G-d, have succeeded in building an eternal home based on Torah and its commandments."

Mr. Gold took the Rebbe's advice, made peace with his daughter and her fiancé and the joy of the wedding was above all limits. Today he has several grandchildren living lives based on Torah and its commandments thanks to the 'delayed' blessing of the Rebbe.

*Source: It was told by Rabbi Y. Raices who heard it from Rabbi Gurkow of Montreal who was personally involved (Beis Moshiach vol. 596 pg. 16)*

Published by **The Chabad House of Caulfield** in conjunction with the **Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.**

Editor: Isaac Hilel  
P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

*The Lamplighter contains words from sacred writings. Please do not deface or discard.*

ISSUE 1205

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

When we reach the month of Elul, we must take stock and ask: Is it possible that eleven months of this year have passed and Moshiach has not come?! The sum total of our stocktaking is "Ad Masai - Until when must we remain in exile." (*The Rebbe, 30Av 5751 - 1991*)



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Dear Children:

I was happy to receive your drawings together with the letter from your kindergarten teacher...

In your drawings I saw little boys and girls, and trees and flowers...and I want to take this opportunity to tell you of the great love and affection that my father-in-law, the Rebbe, possessed towards all Jewish boys and girls, young and old - but especially towards the young. The Rebbe was concerned about their education and their well-being wherever they were, and in every boy and girl he saw a sapling that would one day grow to be a beautiful fruit-tree with delicious fruits.

However, this growth all depends on whether the boy or girl wants it and works for it - just as we see with a tree: When you plant a seed or a tender sapling, you have to protect it from weeds and from all kinds of damage, you have to water it etc., until it grows and becomes a tree, bearing good fruits.

It is the same with every boy and girl; G-d has said (through his prophet) that you are "...the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, in which I take pride," The Creator - may He be blessed - has planted within you a holy Neshama, a soul, which is actually a part of G-d above. You must protect this G-dly "seed" from weeds and from damage, which means from bad influences. You must supply it with life-giving water, and the only water is the life-giving Torah and its mitzvot [commandments] which bring life to those who observe them.

If you do this, dear children, G-d will give you His blessing over and over, so that you will succeed in becoming "trees" bearing good and praiseworthy fruits, bringing joy to your parents and teachers, and bringing pride and glory to our people, the people of the Children of Israel...

Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5742 [1982]

I am in receipt of your letter of the 22nd of Av, with enclosure. As requested, I will remember you in prayer for the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good with regard to yourself and all the members of your family.

There is surely no need to remind you - except in the sense of "encourage the energetic" - that there is always room for advancement in all matters of Yiddishkeit, Torah and Mitzvos, especially as you have the great Zechus [merit] of living in the Holy Land, "The Land on which G-d's Eyes are continuously, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year."

Receipt is enclosed for your Tzedoko, and may the Zechus of it additionally stand you all in good stead. It would be advisable to have the Tefillin and Mezuzos checked to make sure they are Kosher, if this has not been done within the past twelve months.

Wishing you and all yours a Kesivo veChasimo Tovo, for a good and sweet year.

## CUSTOMS CORNER

### The Mincha service

The Mincha prayer is very important because whereas Shacharit is recited in the morning before one gets involved in his daily routine and Arvit is recited at night, after one finishes with his day's work, Mincha is recited in the middle of the day, which requires a person to put his personal affairs aside in order to pay attention to G-d.

## A WORD

*from the Director*

*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...*

Once, in the city of Mechooza in Babylonia, a very poor man came to the yeshiva of Rava (270-350 c.e.). Rava was not only one of the greatest Jewish scholars of his time and head of the great academy there, but he was also extremely wealthy. Rava was renowned far and wide for his tremendous charity. No poor person ever left his home without his needs being met by the great rabbi.

So, when the poor man arrived in town, the other paupers directed him to the home of the sage and philanthropist. Rava was a good judge of character. When he called the pauper into his study, one look was sufficient to tell him that this man had not always been in such a sorry state. The man's whole demeanour, his manner of speaking and his deportment all showed that he had once been a man of means and high social station.

Rava engaged the man in conversation and, sure enough, discovered that he came from a good family and had not so long ago been a wealthy merchant. Business reversals had taken their toll on his fortune and he was reduced to begging for his daily bread. "What is it that you wish, my good man?" asked Rava.

"I am very hungry and have come here to receive something to eat," the beggar replied.

Rava was anxious to satisfy the man's needs, and so he asked him, "What do you usually eat?"

The man's expression visibly changed. "I eat fattened fowl basted with rare sauces and I drink only the finest aged wines."

Rava was taken aback by the poor man's reply. True, he had formerly been wealthy, but wouldn't it be better if he had accustomed himself to simpler fare now that his circumstances were so reduced? Rava replied to the beggar, "I understand that you may have eaten these delicacies before, but perhaps you should lower your expectations under the circumstances. After all, you can't expect most people to be able to cater to such expensive demands."

The man listened and then shrugged his shoulders. "Why should I? I am not asking for anything that belongs to those people. All the food in the world belongs only to G-d, and He is able to fulfil the needs of every living creature. If He so wishes it, the people I meet will receive the means to feed me the food which I am used to. Besides, at this point in my life, I have become too weakened to accustom myself to a change in diet. It isn't as if I simply crave these foods; I truly need to have them for my health."

As the two men continued their conversation, one of Rava's servants appeared to announce the arrival of a guest. "My master's sister has just arrived!" he announced.

Rava rose in surprise, for he hadn't seen his sister in 13 years. As he crossed the room to greet her, he noticed that she was carrying a beautifully decorated basket covered with an embroidered cloth. She presented the basket to him as a gift. When he lifted the cloth to see what

was inside, he was shocked to see a fat roasted chicken and a bottle of aged wine!

Rava was momentarily speechless as he contemplated the gift and the words that had just been spoken by the beggar.

"How fortunate am I to see so clearly the workings of G-d. For, I have not seen you in so many years, and here you are bearing exactly the foodstuffs this man has requested of me! You are a messenger from the Holy One, Blessed be He, sent to teach me the truth of G-d's providence over all of His creatures, for He surely provides each of them with his needs at the proper time."

By this time Rava's students had gathered to hear the words of their teacher. He turned to the poor man and said, "My friend, I beg your forgiveness for my hastily spoken words, for I had not understood the truth they contained. Please, sit and partake of these delicacies which were undoubtedly sent only for you."

Thus, the master and his students learned a lesson of the greatness of G-d's mercies on His creatures and to what lengths we must go to emulate His ways.

## Thoughts THAT COUNT

Judges and officers you shall appoint upon yourself...and they shall judge the people (Deut. 16:18)

First "you shall appoint upon yourself" - first you must adorn yourself, and then "they shall judge the people" - you will be able to adorn and beautify others and to judge them. In other words, most people are blind to their own faults. (*Klei Yakar*)

The Torah enjoins the judge - "you shall appoint upon yourself" - the same criteria and set of rules that you use to judge others you should apply to yourself as well. Demand of yourself the same fear of G-d that you demand from those you are judging. (*Toldot Yaakov Yosef*)

You shall set a king over yourself (Deut. 17:15)

This commandment's purpose is to instill the fear of G-d, the subjugation to Him, and the acceptance of the Yoke of Heaven. The king himself is nullified to G-d; therefore, when the nation subjugates itself to him, they nullify themselves to G-d as well. (*Derech Mitzvotcha*)

What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house (Deut. 20:8)

Moses said this to those who were to wage war. Rabbi Yosi Haglili said: This means one who is afraid because of his sins. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov added another insight: The worst thing is when a person dwells on his transgressions and sinks into a depression. When the Evil Inclination tries to entice a person to sin, it is more interested in the depression following the wrongdoing than the sin itself. The damage done by depression is greater than the damage done by the gravest transgression.

### CANDLE LIGHTING: 21 AUGUST 2015



BEGINS	ENDS
5.31 .....MELBOURNE .....	6.29
5.30 .....ADELAIDE .....	6.27
5.11 .....BRISBANE .....	6.05
6.25 .....DARWIN .....	7.15
5.09 .....GOLD COAST .....	6.03
5.35 .....PERTH .....	6.31
5.11 .....SYDNEY .....	6.08
5.18 .....CANBERRA .....	6.15
5.17 .....LAUNCESTON .....	6.18
5.33 .....AUCKLAND .....	6.31
5.27 .....WELLINGTON .....	6.28
5.14 .....HOBART .....	6.16
5.08 .....BYRON BAY .....	6.02
6.54 .....SINGAPORE .....	7.43

### CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS SHOFTIM • 6 ELUL • 21 AUGUST

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5.31 PM
	MINCHA:	5.40 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6.05 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.39 AM
	MINCHA:	5.30 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6.29 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	
	SUN-FRI:	8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	5.40 PM
	MAARIV:	6.25 PM / 9.00 PM