

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas Re'eh
Shabbos Rosh
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion of Re'ei is always read on the Shabbat preceding the month of Elul, or on the first day of Elul. Elul, the month before Rosh Hashana, is dedicated to repentance and seeking forgiveness for our sins. This portion illustrates the great power that teshuva, or returning to G-d, can have.

In general, the Torah is very stringent when it comes to laws concerning idolatry. Indeed, idol worship is one of the three transgressions, along with incest and murder, for which we are required to give up our very lives rather than commit. And in certain circumstances, the Torah decrees capital punishment for those who worship idols. Re'ei discusses the possibility of an entire town that has been led astray and is engaging in this transgression, and refuses to repent of its evil. In such a case, the entire village is destroyed.

Maimonides explained that if the inhabitants do teshuva and return to the One True G-d, then the town is not destroyed.

There is something very unique about this law. In every other instance of wrong-doing where a Jewish court is empowered to mete out punishment, the sinner's repentance has no bearing on and in no way prevents the sentence from being carried out. But in the case of the "town which was led astray," if the people do teshuva the town is allowed to remain in existence.

The explanation for this lies in the unique category created by the "town which was led astray." When an entire populace is misled to serve false gods, the town attains the status of an idolatrous community. No longer are the inhabitants viewed as individuals who are sinning, but rather the entire community, as a community, is considered as deserving the harsh punishment entailed in the Torah. But if all the people sincerely repent, they revert to their former status as individuals, and their town therefore avoids having to be destroyed.

This underscores the immense power of repentance, which can nullify even the harshest of decrees. We also learn from this chapter, if albeit in a negative fashion, the power inherent in unity. When we stand united and dedicate ourselves to good and positive causes, we can attain great heights. Conversely, when a group of people join together and unite to do evil, it causes the greatest damage and destruction.

The Jewish People draw their solidarity from the fact that all Jews the world over comprise one entity. We are likened to one soul which is divided and then put into the several million physical bodies which we inhabit. True repentance therefore reveals a Jew's inherent unity with his fellow Jews and with G-d Himself.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Philanthropic Pauper

By Mendel Kalmenson

Here's G-d on the topic of charity:

Be careful lest a reckless thought enter your heart saying, "The seventh year, the year of cancellation [of loans] is approaching," and you look begrudgingly at your destitute brother and do not give him... Rather you should give him repeatedly, and your heart should not feel bad when you give to him. For as a result, G-d, your G-d, will bless all your work and everything you do...—Deuteronomy 15:9-10.

To paraphrase: Even in tough times keep your hearts and pockets open for those who have less than you do.

This excerpt from G-d's public address to our ancestors seems to be reflected in a Jewish teaching recorded in the Code of Jewish Law, which stipulates that: "Everyone is obligated to give charity. Even people supported by charity must contribute from what they receive."

This law seems radical on the one hand, and absurd on the other.

Radical in that it demands of a man so poor as to need handouts himself, to provide assistance for others in need. The pauper is obligated to become a philanthropist even as he himself is the subject of philanthropy!

And absurd in that effectively this law obligates the wealthy to provide the poor with enough money not only to live, but to give! If the pauper donates some of the donations he receives, he's left with less and automatically needs more.

This instance is but one example of Judaism's profound departure from conventional moral thought.

Your typical code of ethics would not only exempt the poor man from giving charity, it would forbid him from doing so, due to the fact that his "generosity" comes at the expense of his benefactor, and additionally because depleting his finances any further solidifies his dependency on support.

Besides, since when does giving charity qualify as one of life's necessities; so why include that in the rich man's moral obligation towards the poor?

It's here that the Torah redefines the thing we call charity.

The kabbalists teach that before creating our world, G-d was looking to exercise and express His kindness. But you can't do charity with yourself; it's like taking money from one pocket and putting it in another.

So He created the world and its inhabitants in order to give, making us beneficiaries of the first known act of charity.

Apparently, then, man is a taker by birth.

Herein lays the novelty of the Biblical verse which tells that "G-d created us in His image."

As He is essentially a giver, so are we.

While the reason we were created was in order to take, the manner in which we were created – in his image – leaves us with an inherent need to give. It's part of our spiritual and moral make-up. It's necessary if we want to keep up our (divine) image.

The moment we stop giving part of us stops living.

Giving then is not a luxury but a necessity of life. This is not about what we do; it's about who we are; it's part of our definition.

Reaching out, then, is really reaching in.

Consequently, since giving charity means providing a poor man's needs, and giving charity so happens to be one of them, denying him that necessity of life is like denying him life itself.

How wrong it would be to let a pauper lose touch with his inner self, even if only for a short period of time; and how right it is, then, to include in his aid-package the wherewithal to give charity.

In Judaism giving is not just a hobby, repaying a debt to society, or even just the good or right thing to do; it is, rather, part of what makes us tick, like nutrition, energy, and oxygen.

In ways it's even more than those, for they contribute to the physical part of us that comes and goes, while the charity and good deeds we do give birth to the part of us that lives on forever in the memories of our beloved, contributing to the collective human legacy of giving.

So although sometimes we are forced to take in order to live, giving is life itself.

Slice of LIFE

The Best of Times

By Lewis Bokser, Philadelphia

Even today, so many years later, I blush when I recall the chutzpa displayed by six of my friends and me towards the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Schneersohn, and how we were gently turned around.

It was the best of times (1929) - we had no idea of what was to come. Several articles appeared in various Jewish newspapers available in Philadelphia in those days about one Rabbi Schneersohn who had been given the use of a house on 33rd Street by Mrs. Faggen-Miller, a woman well-known for her charitable nature. These newspapers articles quoted the Rebbe at great length and in much detail. My friends and I read these articles and joked amongst ourselves whether the Rebbe was actually planning to replace the Almighty. We discussed this with an official of our synagogue, and he suggested that we visit the Rebbe and ask him what he had in mind.

Accordingly, late one Saturday evening we all piled into the car and went to the 33rd Street address. Our intention was to confront the Rebbe and show him that we thought he was trying to displace G-d. As we climbed the steps to the front porch, we saw through the window that the living room was crowded with men. We rang the doorbell and a dignified, bearded man came to the door and inquired what we wanted. One of us responded:

"We'd like to speak to the Rebbe. We have an important question to ask."

All this time the man was taking notes. He said, "The Rebbe must know the question before he can see you."

"We'd like to know how he

expects us to keep an old-fashioned religion in a modern country." "You'll have to wait," he said. "You see there is quite a crowd before you. But come in."

We told him we'd wait on the porch as there wouldn't be room for all of us in the packed living room. In a few minutes he returned and said that the Rebbe would see us at once. He ushered us into the house, through the crowded living room, and up the stairs. We wondered why we had been admitted before all those people downstairs who had been there before us.

At the top of the stairs stood the saintly Rabbi. He was tall, handsome, with gleaming, bright eyes. He wore a large fur hat. His hand was outstretched in greeting. I was surprised since I never knew that Chasidic Jews extended their hands in greeting. "This is the happiest moment I've had in Philadelphia," he said as he started to arrange chairs around his desk. We tried to help him but he insisted that he wanted to do this task himself. Once we were seated he took a long look at each one of us and then began, "You look like very intelligent young men, and therefore I must speak on your level. You are wondering about those people downstairs who were here before you. Well, here are some of the problems for which they are asking help.

"One man's daughter is seriously ill. What can I do? Nothing more than he can do, provided he approaches G-d. He should be able to ask for a complete recovery. Another has a law suit and wants me to pray that he will win. I do not know who's right, but he can pray that the L-rd will give justice. There's a man who wants to buy a business and wants me to intercede to make sure it succeeds. If I could do that, I'd be a rich business man. But if I could not answer your question, I'd have no right to be a rabbi.

"First, I must admit a great secret which you will most likely keep. There

are 613 mitzvot; while the Lubavitcher Rebbe tries to keep them all, he finds it impossible to keep them all. So what does he do? Discard 613 mitzvot? No, he keeps as many of them as humanly possible."

With these few words he removed the venom we had brought with us. Then he asked us to try and keep as many mitzvot as we could. If we kept as many as we could, then we'd be doing the same thing as the Lubavitcher Rebbe!

Then we were asked for our Jewish names and the names of our mothers. We also offered our legal names and addresses but he said he had no use for them. Several of the boys put their hands in their pockets, but he stopped them with a gesture, thanked us, and said he had no use for money. He wanted mitzvot. He asked us whether we put on tefilin every day. Several admitted they had given it up. He even offered them tefilin so they could fulfil the mitzva. All of us promised to try to live up to his suggestions. He then blessed us individually, shook hands again, and we left.

We stood on the porch for nearly two hours digesting the visit. Everyone agreed to pray at least once a day. One said he would give up his Saturday work as a dental technician and some months later he even prevailed upon his employer to do the same.

One of us, Gabriel Lowenthal, of blessed memory, attached himself to a synagogue and taught what he had learned from the Rebbe's philosophy to many others. I have lost track of some of the boys, but I'm sure the ten minutes we spent with the Rebbe strengthened the spirit of Judaism in all of us. The Depression and later World War II gave me little hope of ever gaining more light from Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak. However, I found the continued inspiration from his son-in-law, the Rebbe, to keep as many of the 613 mitzvot as I can.

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ISSUE 1259

MOSHIACH MATTERS

"See! This day I place before you a blessing" (Deut. 11:26)

The blessing in this verse does not refer to anything specific; rather, it is a comprehensive statement which includes all the blessings G-d confers on every Jew. First and foremost, therefore, it refers to the ultimate blessing of all the complete Redemption through Moshiach. By using the emphatic "See!" the Torah stresses that the Messianic Redemption is not something theoretical or academic, but rather something that will be evident with our eyes of flesh - and this very day!
(The Rebbe, Shabbat Parshat Re'eh, 5751)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Free Translation

Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5735 [1975]

To the Sons and Daughters of Our People Israel, Everywhere, G-d bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

The month of Elul, bringing the current year to a close, is - as is well known - the Month of Divine Mercy and Grace. It is also the time for every Jew to make a soul-searching self-evaluation (cheshbon hanefesh) in regard to the outgoing year - of all the achievements and failures and missed opportunities; it is the month of Teshuva (Repentance) - regret for the past and good resolutions for the future, by way of preparation for the coming year, with a view to making certain that the new year will be a better one in every respect.

The auspicious nature of the month of Elul is explained by the Alter Rebbe [Rabbi Shneur Zalman], author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch, by means of the parable of the 'King in the Field':

When a king is about to return to his royal city, the inhabitants of the city go out to meet the king and to welcome him in the field. Then everyone who so wishes may come out to greet the king, and the king receives everyone graciously and shows a friendly face to everyone... Later on, when the king proceeds to the city, they follow... So in the month of Elul, G-d makes His countenance to shine on you, which refers to the emanation of the Thirteen Attributes, that it be in a manner of face to face.

Thus, the month of Elul is a time of (great responsibility as well as of) great opportunity, since this is the time of the year when G-d causes His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy to shine forth, making it possible for every Jew - regardless of how the situation was in the past - to attach oneself to G-d with heart and soul, in a way that induces action, expressed in a substantial increase (in quantity and quality) in the study of the Torah and in the fulfilment of its mitzvot [commandments].

May G-d grant that each and all of us should take the fullest advantage of this auspicious period in all that has been said above,

Elul is a time of great opportunity, since this is the time of the year when G-d causes His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy to shine forth, making it possible for every Jew to attach oneself to G-d with heart and soul...

And reflect with a soulful reflection, to the extent of it permeating and guiding the daily conduct, on the words of David, the Sweet Singer of the Songs of our People Israel, in the Psalm that we begin to recite on Rosh Chodesh Elul, twice daily [chapter 27 of Psalms]:

'G-d is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?... my oppressors and enemies have stumbled and fallen; if an army besiege me, my heart shall not fear... now my head is raised... teach me, O G-d, Your way... hope unto G-d, be strong and let your heart be fortified and hope unto G-d...'

And G-d our King since the days of old will work salvation in the midst of the earth, including that in the radiance of the countenance of the King the Source of Life everyone will be blessed with a good and sweet year, both materially and spiritually,

With esteem and blessing for being 'written and sealed for good, for a good and sweet year.'

A WORD

from the Director

The month of Elul begins this Shabbat. Elul is a time of introspection and soul-searching. As the old year draws to a close, we take stock of our behaviour and make amends for any wrongs we may have committed. In preparation for the New Year, we conduct an honest assessment of our conduct, that we may be aroused to repentance and improvement of our Divine service.

During Elul, a Jew can almost sense the difference in the air. Everyone feels an inexplicable urge to draw closer to G-d, to increase in Torah and mitzvot.

The G-dly soul that every Jew possesses automatically pulls him in the direction of holiness. However, there are two basic ways to motivate a person: the "carrot" and the "stick." Fear of punishment may yield the desired results, but it usually causes more damage than benefit.

Historically, it was against this backdrop that the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples first arose. In those days, itinerant preachers would "put the fear of G-d" into simple Jews by vividly describing the punishments that would befall them if they did not walk the straight and narrow.

The Chasidic approach, however, is the exact opposite. The Baal Shem Tov emphasized the innate worth of every Jew, the value of serving G-d with purity of heart, the immense power of prayer and the beauty of the Jewish soul.

In Elul, G-d's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are manifested with particular intensity. It should thus be a time of only emphasizing the positive and increasing our love for our fellow Jew. In the merit of our good deeds (especially the mitzva of charity), each and every one of us will be found deserving, and G-d will inscribe us together with all the righteous.

J. I. Gutnick

CUSTOMS CORNER

SELICHOT

According to Ashkenazic custom, the first Selichot are recited after "halachic midnight" on the Saturday night preceding Rosh Hashanah. Since a minimum of four days of Selichot must be observed, if the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Monday or Tuesday evening, we begin reciting Selichot on the previous Saturday night. Following the Saturday night service, Selichot are recited daily before morning prayers until Rosh Hashanah (except on Shabbat).

Sephardim recite Selichot throughout the entire month of Elul.

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Jacob's parents died when he was just a little boy, but fortunately for him, an old blacksmith took him in after finding him one day by the wayside, tired and hungry, looking for a place to eat and drink.

The old blacksmith was a kind old man but had little use for learning. Thus, young Jacob did not attend cheder (school) anymore, for the old blacksmith kept him in the smithy all day, teaching him the skills of the trade.

Jacob might have forgotten how to read, let alone study, but he had in his possession a treasure with which he would not part for anything in the world. This was a thin volume of the Talmud, known as Chagiga, which the Rabbi had given him as a parting gift upon his leaving cheder.

Whenever Jacob found a free moment, he would eagerly take out his Talmud—the only holy book he had other than his prayer book—and study it religiously. He loved his precious Talmud.

Thus he grew up with the old blacksmith, far away from any Jewish settlement. Only on festivals would they leave their isolated surroundings and travel to the nearest Jewish community to be with their fellow Jews. The rest of the time, except on Shabbat, they would be working in the smithy.

When the old blacksmith passed away, he left his smithy to Jacob, for he loved him as a son. He had taught Jacob to be a skilled craftsman. But even though the peasants and wagon-drivers liked Jacob's work and were more than willing to pay the price he asked, he barely earned enough to "keep the wolf from the door," as the saying goes.

Jacob lived in poverty with neither wife nor children, but he did not complain, for he had known poverty all his life. Solitude was no hardship for him either—he was used to that, too. Jacob studied his Chagiga page-by-page, line-by-line, and word-by-word. He did this over and over again with every spare moment, until he practically knew it all by heart.

It is hard enough for a Jew to live far from a Jewish community, but it is worse still for a Jew to die in such a lonely place. Jacob was only in his fifties when G-d decided that he had finished his work on earth. He passed away with not a soul present to witness his last moments, bending over his treasure, the Talmud Chagiga.

Days passed and no one missed Jacob. The doors of the smithy were closed, but the few who called thought he had gone into town. The Jews of the nearest town were going about their business as usual, when the wailing of a veiled woman in white who ran crying through the streets pierced the quiet. People ran out of their homes and businesses to see what all the noise was about. The rabbi, too, went out and tried to calm the distressed stranger.

"What is the trouble, good woman?" he asked her gently. "My poor husband has died and there is no one to see to his burial," she replied in sorrowful tones.

"Do not worry," he assured her. "I shall see to it that your husband will be buried in the proper manner without delay."

When the local inhabitants saw the rabbi walking with this strange woman in white, everyone turned out to inquire what it was all about. When they learned that the rabbi was escorting the woman home to attend her husband's funeral, they all closed their stores and businesses and followed.

By the time the procession reached the smithy where poor Jacob

lay—still bent over his precious volume of Talmud—the crowd had grown to include nearly every man, woman and child in the town. When the rabbi saw the size of the crowd who had come to pay their last respects to the poor smith, he turned in astonishment to the woman and asked her: "Tell me, good woman, who are you and who was your husband that he seems to be deserving of so much honour?" "My name is Chagiga," replied the veiled woman. "My husband was a good Jew who devoted fifty years to me. He treasured me and cared for me to the depth of his ability. Surely such a life's companion is deserving of the greatest honour."

"You are quite right," said the rabbi. "A Jew who honors his wife so, must indeed be a good and deserving man. It is fitting that all these people have come to do him honour."

The woman stepped aside to allow the rabbi to enter the room where Jacob lay. As his glance fell upon the open volume, he saw the name "Chagiga." He turned to look at the woman but she had vanished.

It dawned on him that she represented the spirit of Talmud Chagiga. She had repaid the honour and esteem in which Jacob had kept her throughout these long years.

Jacob was buried with the greatest honor, and was laid to rest amongst the graves of the saintliest of Jews.

"Blessed is the man who honors the Torah," declared the rabbi, "that the Torah should thus honor him."

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And G-d will allow you rest from all your enemies around and you will dwell in security (Deut. 12:10)

The usual precision in the wording of the Torah gives way here to an apparent redundancy. Obviously rest from our enemies will result in security. However this verse may in fact be giving us instruction on how to achieve "rest from our enemies." If "you shall dwell in security" between one Jew and the next, without infighting and fragmentation, we will have no reason to fear from our enemies around us.

(Glillei Zahav)

And you will say, "I wish to eat flesh," because your soul longs to eat flesh (Deut. 12:20)

The desire to eat meat originates in a person's soul. A Jew's G-dly soul "longs" to purify and elevate the spiritual sparks of holiness that are present in physical objects. The Torah states, "Not by (physical) bread alone shall a man live, but by each utterance of G-d (the G-dly spark which is hidden in it), shall a man live." Eating flesh, or eating bread, is just one way in which the concealed sparks in the physical world are purified by a Jew. The Baal Shem Tov explained that when a person gets a sudden desire to eat or drink a particular food or beverage, the reason is that his soul desires to elevate the spark within that food, as it states in Psalms, "Hungry and thirsty, their soul shall be enveloped in them."

(The Rebbe)

You shall not shut your hand from your needy brother (Deut. 15:7)

The first letters of this verse in Hebrew spell out the word "Tehillim" - Psalms. Reciting Psalms on behalf of a poor person is not enough; one must open his hand and give him material sustenance as well.

(Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin)

CANDLE LIGHTING



BEGINS:	SEPTEMBER 2, 2016	ENDS:
5:42	MELBOURNE	6:40
5:40	ADELAIDE	6:36
5:17	BRISBANE	6:10
6:25	DARWIN	7:15
5:15	GOLD COAST	6:09
5:43	PERTH	6:38
5:20	SYDNEY	6:16
5:27	CANBERRA	6:24
5:30	LAUNCESTON	6:30
5:43	AUCKLAND	6:41
5:40	WELLINGTON	6:40
5:28	HOBART	6:29
5:14	BYRON BAY	6:08

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS RE'EH • 29 AV • 2 SEPTEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:42 PM
	MINCHA:	5:50 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:15 PM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:27 AM
	MINCHA:	5:40 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:40 PM
WEEKDAYS	SHACHARIS:	8:00 AM/9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:50 PM
	MAARIV:	6:40 PM