

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas Shoftim
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Shoftim, opens with the mitzva: "Judges and officers you shall place at all your gates."

The Torah is eternal; so too are all its commandments. Appointing "judges and officers" thus applies in every age and in all locations, and contains a practical directive for our daily lives.

Every Jew is an entire world, a microcosm of the greater world at large. And just as the world is divided into regions and cities, so too may the individual Jew be said to inhabit various "cities" in which he lives and acts. These "cities" are the thoughts we think, the words we speak, and the deeds and actions we perform.

As with every city, the domains of thought, speech and deed are protected by gates; indeed, it is a mitzva to install them at their entrance. A gate is a portal, a doorway through which all who wish to enter the city must pass. A gate can be opened and closed; when it is firmly shut, no one can intrude.

The Torah's instruction to appoint "judges and officers" at the gates of our individual "cities" is directed to all Jews, young and old. Furthermore, all Jews are endowed with the ability to carry out the command successfully.

When a Jew is aroused to perform good deeds, he must open his "gate" as wide as it will go. But if, G-d forbid, his "city" is in danger of invasion by the Evil Inclination, he must shut the "gate" immediately and refuse it access.

How do we lead a G-dly life? How is it possible to carry out G-d's will? By properly utilizing the limbs and organs with which we are blessed.

A Jew's eyes can be used for reading Jewish books in which is written G-d's laws about how to conduct our lives. Our ears can be used to listen to the counsel of our teachers and to hear only words that are appropriate; our nose, to breathe the pure air of Torah and mitzvot, in a wholesome environment where we can breathe freely. Similarly, a Jew's mouth can open to accept kosher food and drink, and to speak words of respect and love.

And who is the "judge" who makes these decisions? The "judge" is our intellect, our capacity for rational thought; the "officer" within us makes sure that the "judge's" decisions are enforced.

When we all make the right judgments and obey the Torah's commands, we will merit, with G-d's help, the appointment of the "judges and officers" of the Sanhedrin of the Third Holy Temple, and the complete Redemption with Moshiach, may it be now!

(Adapted for Maayan Chai from Likutei Sichot, Volume 14)

Leave the Do-Gooders Alone

By Levi Avtzon

Some lessons in the Torah are transmitted in the form of laws; others are conveyed through stories, or even an extra or missing word or letter. Some lessons require a teacher or sage to unlock the message and the relevance to the 21st century; other messages scream out to even the amateurish eye.

Take this one for example:

In this week's Torah reading, we learn about certain individuals who were exempt from participating in battle: He who recently built a home, planted a vineyard, or was fortunate enough to marry his soul-mate.

And then the Torah concludes:

Is there a man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, so that he should not cause the heart of his brothers to melt, as his heart. (Deuteronomy 20:8)

Did that verse scream out to you? Here is what it shouted out to me:

There are two types of people: those who do, and those who belittle those who do; those who care, and those whose only care is to destroy those who care.

There is the "simple" person who sells lemonade and donates the proceeds to a worthy cause vs. the "intellectual" who scoffs, "Do you really think that your six dollars can make a difference?"

The revolutionary vs. the "C'mon, who do you think you are—Moses?!"

Says the Torah: If you don't want to be part of the solution, at least don't be part of the problem. Go home! Get out of the way of the child who thinks she can change the world. Don't share your political opinions with the soldier who is willing to give his life for your freedom. Stay far away from visionaries. Go smoke cigars with your bitter buddies, but do leave the do-gooders alone!

Just because you decided against leaving your footprints in the sands of time, that's no excuse for knocking other people off their feet.

And for all the proud members of the "doer group," please take these words to heart:

Let your hearts not be faint; you shall not be afraid, alarmed, or terrified because of them. For G-d, your G-d, is the One who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you. (Ibid. 20:3-4)

With G-d on our side, we can walk proudly and swiftly in the sands of time.

Slice of LIFE

Release

by Rabbi Rafael Kahan (o.b.m.)

I was born in the year 1889, in Nevel. The 1930s were difficult years; years of perpetual dangers, terror, and privation. In 1939, I was to be put to the greatest test which I had ever faced in my life. That which I knew was unavoidable, finally caught up with me.

Late one night, a few days after Purim, agents of the Secret Police came and arrested me. In the prison of the Secret Police, my interrogation, which lasted for six months, began. I was accused of a variety of "crimes," particularly of engaging in activities harmful to the people and the country. For, any activity to strengthen religious adherence and observance was regarded as "counter-revolutionary," and subject to most severe punishments. I was also accused of being a spy for a foreign country!

I denied everything. But in view of the charges that were brought against me, I knew that there was little hope for me to escape alive from their clutches. My only hope and prayer was that my body, at least, would be surrendered to my family to be buried in a Jewish cemetery.

Days, weeks and months rolled by. Sitting in a damp cell for so long on a diet of bread and water, my health quickly began to fail. It reached a point where I could no longer get up from my straw mat. Only my mind seemed to remain unaffected.

Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur came and went. The Ten Days of Repentance were days of real repentance for me. I resolved that if G-d would spare me, I would make amends for all the things in which I had been remiss.

Immediately after Yom Kippur, I began to feel that I was getting my strength back. Unbelievable as it seemed to me, I felt stronger every day. My body responded well, except for my legs, which remained semi-paralysed. I lay on my mat with half drawn-up legs. Eventually I was transferred to the prison

infirmary.

During Chanuka, I found out I had been sentenced to be deported for five years of hard labour to take effect when I would recover my health. Meanwhile I was kept in the prison infirmary for nearly four more months. Needless to say, I thanked G-d for every day that I was alive.

A few days after Purim, I "celebrated" the anniversary of my imprisonment. It was exactly a year since I was arrested, a long year. On this very day I was transferred to the city hospital; here I was to be treated for my legs, so that my sentence could be carried out as soon as I was able to walk.

It is difficult to describe what a relief the change was for me. My wife and children who had despaired of ever seeing me again were now able to visit me. They brought me hot kosher food every day; I had not had one hot meal during that entire year. They also brought me a Mishna and a book of Psalms, which I had missed so much.

Months passed thus. One day in the summer, the prison doctor arrived. He was obviously sent by the Secret Police to examine me and determine my condition. He examined my stiff, half-bent legs, and left without saying a word. A terrible thought suddenly entered my mind: perhaps they would send me back to prison, to serve my five years deportation sentence there! The thought was horrifying. I decided to seek comfort in Psalms. When I opened it, the top line caught my eye: "And His prisoners He does not despise" (Ps. 69:34).

It seemed like a heaven-sent message, and it filled me with courage and hope; my anxiety disappeared.

A few days later I began to feel that my knees were easing. When my legs did not respond to any treatments, the doctors gave up hope and left me alone. I had also made peace with the idea that I might be crippled for life. But now, suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, the stiffness in my knees began to give way! Slowly and by stages I was able to stretch my legs more and more, until I discovered, to my delight, that I could straighten out my legs and bend them again. My legs were cured! Soon, however, I began to contemplate the situation with mixed feelings. If my

legs were cured, I would be deported and forced to carry out my severe sentence. Should I inform the authorities that my legs were in good shape, so that I would be deported without delay and arrive at my destination before Rosh Hashana? Or should I keep quiet, and let G-d guide my destiny? I decided to keep quiet, at least until the more auspicious time that begins with the Sabbath after Tisha B'Av known as "Shabbat Nachamu."

The night after Tisha B'Av I had a wonderful dream. I was in a room together with Rabbi Sholom Ber, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe. His radiant face and penetrating eyes were turned towards me. Nearby was his son and successor, the Lubavitcher Rebbe [the previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn]. I was reciting aloud the Morning Blessings, while the Rebbe answered "Amen" after each blessing. When I reached the last one ("Who removes sleep from my eyes") the Rebbe motioned to me to recite it quietly. Just then, I awoke.

I had a feeling that my liberation was near. All day I waited for a sign of my freedom, but nothing special happened. The only unexpected occurrence was a visit from a hospital doctor. The doctor examined my legs, which I kept bent and stiff as before, and went his way without a word. Later I learned that was not only the "sign" I was waiting for, but the actual reprieve, for the doctor had marked my record "incurable." An official medical report was then sent to the Secret Police telling them that my condition was beyond hope, and that I would never use my legs again!

I had no intention of proving the doctors wrong. A few days later I was taken out of bed in a litter and carried into an ambulance, which sped me back to prison. I was not worried, however. I realized that I was being taken there in order to be discharged! And that is what happened.

To this day, when my friends who know what happened to me see me walking in the street, they give me a knowing look, as if to say, "There is a walking miracle." What a wonderful feeling it is to have a pair of healthy legs!

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ISSUE 1260

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The prophet Hoshea compares the number of Jews in the era of redemption to the sand of the sea. The Midrash comments that a glass utensil that shatters can be reheated and rebuilt and the same is true of the Jewish people. This teaching sheds light on the ancient Jewish custom of shattering a glass under the chupa canopy at a wedding. The Jewish people are G-d's bride. Our marriage shattered at the time of the sin of the Golden Calf, but it will be rebuilt and blossom into full marriage in the era of redemption.

(*Techeilet Mordechai, as quoted in Yalkut Moshiah UGeula by Rabbi Dovid Dubov*)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Elul 5th, 5712 [1952]

I have received your letter of August 7th, in which you express your very deep appreciation for the education and upbringing which your youngest son has received at the Yeshivah in the last four years, which you recognize to be the finest thing that could have happened to him, for which you feel thankful to me. Thanks are not due to me, of course, but to the Almighty who has given you such a fine son, whose desire it is to be a "vessel" to receive the right upbringing in Torah with Yiras Shamaim [fear of heaven], rooted in Chasidus. To him also gratitude is due for the recognition stemming from this Chinuch [education], that one is steadily to advance along this road like all things connected with Kedushah [holiness] which must raise higher and higher toward G-d the infinite. This is particularly true in the age of youth and adolescence, the impressionable age, when the right education and upbringing is bound to bring ever-growing fruit for the whole life.

Pursuant to the above, and to the spirit of your letter, I must say that I was greatly surprised and chagrined to read the conclusion of your letter which is so contradictory to its introduction, that you wish him to remain in - . This is all the more disappointing in view of the fact that only this summer he has become Bar-Mitzvah, when the Jew just enters into his obligatory life of Torah and Mitzvos [commandments]. At this critical stage you consider uprooting him from the environment and upbringing which has been so beneficial to him, because you and your wife cannot be separated from him anymore.

I fully appreciate, of course, the feelings of parents, especially towards such a son as - , and separation undeniably is a great hardship. On the other hand, it is also self-evident that when it concerns the moulding of one's son's character and upbringing which is to last him for the rest of his life and thereafter, the temporary separation of a few years is comparatively negligible considering the reward and what is at stake.

... The paramount factor is this:

At all times, and more so nowadays, everything should be done to spare one's child any crisis in his life, for there are enough crises in life beyond our control. Inasmuch as your son has become so attached to the Yeshivah environment and has benefited from it so much, has many friends among the students, etc., there can be no doubt that to take him away from it and placing him in another environment, even one of Torah with Yiras Shamaim, but surely not identical with this one, is bound to create a crisis, which will be both apparent and hidden, deep in his innermost being, which may have lasting effects, G-d forbid.

Being also acquainted with the general state of Torah education in - , I know that there is a basic difference in the approach to the whole problem between here and there, and the transition would by no means be a smooth one, involving either a cardinal change or a breach, G-d forbid, an experience which should be avoided even in the case of an adult, let alone a child, especially such a sensitive one as your son.

I must therefore emphasize again that you must weigh the physical and especially spiritual well-being of your son against the temporary separation from him. There is also the advice of our Sages, "Go into exile to a place of Torah" (Avoth 4:1 3).

Let me finally add that, based upon my observations and life experience, I am certain that when parents concede to the above saying of our Sages, despite their personal sacrifice, it is amply rewarded with the joy and happiness of their children. I trust you will bear with me for being so outspoken in this problem, since I consider it my duty, having personal knowledge of the factors and knowing your son intimately. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of return to New York before Rosh Hashanah, for that special atmosphere that prevails here at that time, where he longs to be together with his friends, during prayers and at meal time, and be inspired together with them by all that he sees, hears and feels here.

I pray that you make this decision without undue difficulty, and the Almighty will surely reward you with much joy from him and your other children.

Our Sages say that the words of the Torah "And ye shall teach them diligently unto thy children" refer also to one's disciples; and truly the students are treated here like one's own children. I shall therefore feel greatly relieved to hear that you have made the right decision with regard to - .

Wishing you and yours a kesiva vechasima tovah [inscribed and sealed for good],

CUSTOMS CORNER

Selichot are meant to be recited with a minyan. Why is that? First of all, we are assured that any prayers recited with a minyan are not turned away by G-d. However, there is another reason that is unique to Selichot: At the heart of Selichot are the Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy, which G-d taught Moses as a tool to obtain divine forgiveness. According to the Talmud, G-d revealed the Thirteen Attributes while "wrapped in a tallit, like a cantor leading the congregation." Therefore, they are considered *davar sheb'kedusha*, "words of holiness," which are said with a "congregation," i.e., a minyan, just like Kaddish.

A WORD

from the Director

We recently entered the month of Elul, the month of preparation for the High Holidays that commence with Rosh Hashana, it is appropriate to discuss customs of the month.

It is customary during Elul to have our Mezuzah parchments (the actual Mezuzot) examined by a knowledgeable person or scribe to ascertain that they have not become unfit.

The Zohar, which contains the more esoteric aspects of Judaism, explains that the effect of having Mezuzot on one's doors is to provide protection by G-d from the time a person leaves his home until he returns.

This aspect of "protection" is hinted to by the Hebrew letter "shin" that appears on most Mezuzah covers. The shin is the first of three letters, shin - Dalet - Yud that spell out one of G-d's names. Those letters are also an acronym for Shomer Daltot Yisrael - Guardian of the Doors of Israel.

We must keep in mind, though, that the Mezuzah is not a charm or amulet; it is also not just a symbol or quaint ritual, to tell the outside world that this is a Jewish home.

A Mezuzah can be compared to a helmet. A soldier wears a helmet to protect him from enemy bullets and a Mezuzah, too, protects us, our family and our possessions from harm.

Yet, "bad" things do sometimes happen to someone with Mezuzot on his doors. How is this possible? If, while wearing a helmet, an enemy bullet does manage to wound a soldier, it is the enemy bullet, and the enemy bullet alone which has pierced him. The helmet provides added protection, but is not the only factor involved in the soldier's safety.

Have your Mezuzot checked soon. If you don't have Mezuzot or you need more, purchase them from a reputable Judaica store or certified scribe. Or call your local Chabad centre for assistance.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Rabbi Meir of Premishian was such a holy person that many other holy men in their own right came to seek his advice and blessing. A certain Tzadik once came to see Rabbi Meir, asking for his blessing because he planned to settle in Eretz Yisrael. Rabbi Meir listened and then said,

"And how do you expect to raise the money for this journey?"

"I hope to visit some relatives. When I tell them of my plans, I am sure that they will help me raise the money."

Rabbi Meir was sunk in thought. He seemed disturbed. "Your idea does not appeal to me. You will be wasting months of precious time which could be far better devoted to Torah study. But I see that you are determined to go. Let me suggest something: why don't you stay here with me for some time first? I guarantee to raise the money for your traveling expenses."

The visitor thought it over, then decided to accept the offer. The Rebbe did not dismiss him but told his attendant to show in the next person who was waiting to see him.

A rich man opened the door and was about to enter when suddenly he spied the man already there. He hesitated on the threshold. Still, the attendant had told him to enter. Was there a mistake? He stood there, not knowing whether to advance or retreat. The passing moments seemed like an eternity. Finally Rabbi Meir spoke, telling him to enter.

"I have a story to tell you," he said. Then, turning to the visiting Tzadik, he added, "but I would like you to hear it too." Once again facing the rich man he continued, "It has a worthwhile moral that will do both of you good."

"Many years ago there lived a very prosperous Jew who owned much property. But Moshe was a very stingy person, a miser. He never let a person into his home. If a poor man came knocking at the door, begging for something to eat, he would tell him to go to his neighbour, Matisyahu, a worthy, G-d fearing Jew. 'He will feel far more comfortable there,' Moshe would say to himself.

"And, indeed, this was true. While Matisyahu was not a man of means like his wealthy neighbour, still, his family always had food on their table. And there was always room for one person more, no matter how shabby or dirty the visitor. Reb Matisyahu's home and heart were big enough for everyone in need.

"All of the townspeople felt a lot of respect for Matisyahu. He was so good, so kind, so hospitable! But if you think that they held him in higher esteem than the stingy Moshe, you are wrong. It is human nature to respect a man with money and they all treated Moshe with a special reverence, even though they knew how stingy he was.

"The injustice of this caused turmoil in heaven. The angels came before the heavenly court demanding that Moshe be stripped of his wealth and that these riches be given to none other than Matisyahu the neighbour, who had never denied anyone his help or hospitality. But before the sentence was carried out, Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet) came before the court and said, 'A person should not be judged just by hearsay. I will descend to earth and give Moshe one last chance. I must see if he really is such a miser.'

"So Eliyahu disguised himself as a poor man and descended to earth. He knocked on Moshe's door. A servant answered. When he saw the poor, ragged, shivering man he shooed him away. 'Quick, be gone! Go, before my master sees you. He is a mean, cruel person. If he finds you here he will throw both of us out of the house.' He tried to slam the door shut but the poor man had his foot in the doorway. 'I won't take anything. Just let me warm up by the stove for a few minutes. Don't you see how cold it is outside?'

"They were still arguing, when Moshe himself arrived. 'What's going on here?' he asked. 'What do you want?' he demanded of the ragged stranger.

"The servant was so terrified at having been caught speaking to a beggar that he was struck dumb with fear. But the stranger showed no awe of the master.

"I was asking if I could come in and warm up. I wanted a small glass of strong liquor for my freezing bones.'

"You must be out of your mind. This is not a hotel, nor a charity hostel! He turned to his servant saying, 'Throw this man out at once!'

"Even though he had wanted to be kind, the servant was forced to take the poor man by the lapels and turn him out the door. He shut it tightly behind him.

"Eliyahu Hanavi stood outside in the freezing weather, weeping, pleading to be let in just for a few minutes. When he saw that there was no reaction from within, that Moshe had hardened his heart and was ignoring him, he really wept. He was weeping for Moshe's soul.

"Eliyahu returned to the heavenly court. He did not have good news. There was nothing he could say in Moshe's defence. The case rested. Moshe would have to lose his fortune, as had been ruled."

After a brief pause, Rabbi Meir continued his story. He raised his voice for emphasis.

"When I, Meir, heard of this sentence, I rushed forward to defend this Moshe. 'How can one mete out such dire punishment without warning?' I asked the heavenly court. 'I want to warn Moshe,' I declared. I will not let him be trapped like a poor helpless fly in a spider web. Every Jew deserves a second chance! Allow me to be the court's messenger. If Moshe agrees to give four hundred rubles to this righteous Jew standing here for his traveling expenses to Eretz Yisrael, and if he resolves to mend his ways, he will get his second chance. But if,' and here he lowered his voice, 'G-d forbid, he ignores this warning and persists in his stingy, evil ways, he will lose his entire fortune and become dependent upon the kindness of others for the rest of his days!'"

Rabbi Meir was silent. Turning to the rich man still standing in the door, he continued, "Moshe is here right now. Let us ask him what he says."

Moshe could not speak. He burst into tears, then fell to the floor in a faint. The Rebbe and the visitor tried to revive him. When he came back to consciousness, he turned to the Rebbe, saying, "You are so right, Rebbe; that is exactly what happened! I sinned! I have been evil! But I will turn over a new leaf, I promise. But please have mercy!"

He reached in his pocket and drew out his purse. He counted out four hundred rubles and gave them to the other man. "Please," he begged, "when you reach Jerusalem, pray for me!"

With the four hundred rubles the Tzadik and his family were able to go directly to Eretz Yisrael without delay.

As for Moshe, his home became an open house for all wayfarers, troubled people, and beggars. His reputation as a generous Ba'al tzedaka ("charity giver") travelled far and wide, and he used his great wealth to help his less fortunate brethren in every way.

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 Mitzvotecha)

The first fruits of your grain...shall you give him (Deut. 18:4)

As Rashi explains, "This refers to the Terumah contribution set aside for the priests. [The Torah] does not specify any amount, but our Rabbis said that a person of good will gives one in forty." Symbolically, "one in forty" is an allusion to Yom Kippur. Moses ascended Mount Sinai on the 1st of Elul, where he remained for 40 days, until Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is thus the most auspicious time of this 40-day period.

(Ohr HaTorah)

CANDLE LIGHTING



BEGINS:	SEPTEMBER 9, 2015	ENDS:
5:48	MELBOURNE	6:45
5:45	ADELAIDE	6:41
5:20	BRISBANE	6:13
6:25	DARWIN	7:14
5:18	GOLD COAST	6:12
5:47	PERTH	6:42
5:25	SYDNEY	6:20
5:32	CANBERRA	6:29
5:37	LAUNCESTON	6:37
5:49	AUCKLAND	6:46
5:46	WELLINGTON	6:46
5:36	HOBART	6:37
5:17	BYRON BAY	6:11

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS SHOFTIM • 6 ELUL • 9 SEPTEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:48 PM
	MINCHA:	5:55 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:20 PM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:20 AM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:45 PM
WEEKDAYS	SHACHARIS:	8.00 AM/9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:55 PM
	MAARIV:	6:45 PM