

# LAMPLIGHTER

21 Shevat  
Parshas  
Yisro  
**1283**  
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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah reading, Yitro, contains the Ten Commandments, the ultimate distillation of G-d's revelation to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai.

The commandments themselves range from the highest theological and moral concepts - "I am the L-rd your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" and "You shall have no other gods before Me" - to "simpler," ethical concepts man would seemingly figure out on his own - "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," etc.

The juxtaposition of both types of commandments teaches us a very important lesson: All of G-d's commandments, be they of a "higher" or more mundane nature, must be carried out with the same intent, i.e., solely because G-d has so commanded us. The reason we do not commit murder or steal is only because the same G-d Who declared "I am the L-rd your G-d" is the One Who has commanded us not to - not because the concepts make sense to our human intellect.

The human mind is eminently pliant and malleable, its logic often determined by a wide range of factors. Relying on intellect alone can result in a person's convincing himself that an aveira, an out-and-out sin, is actually a very great mitzva!

Without the foundation of "I am the L-rd your G-d," a Jew's observance of the "lower" commandments will be sorely lacking. A Jew's obligation is to ensure that his observance of all of G-d's mitzvot is thoroughly permeated with a sense of "I am the L-rd your G-d," even if the reason for a particular commandment appears to be perfectly understandable and obvious. With this basic principle in mind, all our deeds and actions will truly be imbued with G-dliness and holiness.

## Ladies First

By Yanki Tauber

Even in this day and age, most women graciously accept the traditional "ladies first" rule, whether it's getting off a sinking ship or going through a ballroom doorway. Commonly perceived as a concession to the weaker gender by the stronger, the rule is actually founded upon a very different rationale, at least in the Jewish tradition.

When G-d instructed Moses to prepare the people of Israel to receive the Torah at Mount Sinai some 3,300 years ago, He said: "Speak to the house of Jacob, and tell the sons of Israel" (Exodus 19:3). The "house of Jacob," our sages explain, are the women; "the sons of Israel," the men. In other words, speak first with the ladies.

Up until that point, the rule was "men first." Adam, as we all know, was created before Eve. Noah and his sons entered the ark first, followed by their wives -- at least that's the order they're listed in Genesis 7:13 (a "sinking ship" situation in the reverse, if you will). When Jacob traveled with his family, the males rode up front and the womenfolk behind them (Genesis 31:17) while Esau placed the women before the men (ibid. 36:6); the sages make note of this difference and see it as an indication of Jacob's moral superiority over his hedonistic brother.

So why did G-d give the Torah first to the women? The Midrash offers several explanations. For one thing, women are more religious than men (turns out that certain things haven't changed in all those centuries); get them to agree to accept the Torah, and the men will fall in line, too (another thing that hasn't changed). According to Rabbi Tachlifa of Caesarea, it's the other way around--the women are the rebellious ones, so they have to be won over first: "G-d said to Himself: When I created the world, I commanded Adam first, and only then Eve was commanded, with the result that she transgressed and upset the world. If I do not now call upon the women first, they will nullify the Torah."

Chassidic teaching delves deeper and finds the explanation in the essence of manliness and womanliness. Man derives from the "line of light" (kav) that penetrates the vacuum (makom panui) formed by G-d in which to create the world. But it turns out that the makom panui is not an absolute "vacuum" -- a residue of divine light remained behind, forming an invisible ether of G-dliness that pervades and underlies our existence. It is from this "residue" that the female component of creation derives.

So man is an actor, a conqueror; his role in creation is to banish the earthly darkness and bring down light from the heavens. Woman is a nurturer, relating to what is rather than what must be done, finding G-dliness within the world rather than importing it from without. Both are integral to the Creator's plan: our mission in life is to bring G-d into the world (the male role) and to make the world a home for G-d (the woman's specialty); to vanquish darkness (male), and to uncover the light implicit within the darkness (female).

For the first twenty-four centuries of history, humanity had its hands full battling darkness. So the male component dominated. But then came the day when G-d, yearning for the home He desired when He made the world, prepared to reveal Himself on a mountaintop in the Sinai Desert and transmit to His chosen people a Torah outlining the plans for His home's construction. Man will still have to do battle, but all his battles will henceforth be founded upon the principle that, underneath it all, the world is a G-dly place.

Time to have a word with the ladies, said G-d to Moses.

# Slice of LIFE

## It Will be a Mazel Tov!

by Yehudis Cohen

Shabbos, the 22nd of Shevat, marks the 29th anniversary of the passing of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, the wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. She led an incredibly righteous, modest and personal life, few having the merit of her acquaintance.

Sorah Shemtov grew up in the Bronx, close to where she and her husband Rabbi Levi Shemtov now have their Chabad House in Riverdale, New York. Her family moved to Crown Heights, Brooklyn when Sorah was 12 years old. In high school, just a few weeks after her younger sister Rivky was born, Sorah was privileged to meet Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson for the first time.

Sorah's father, Dr. Robert Feldman, was the private physician of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Relates Sorah, "Rivky was born just before Passover. When she was a few weeks old, my father asked me to come with him on his weekly visit to the Rebbetzin. The Rebbetzin wanted to meet Rivky! I was to wait outside while my father brought in Rivky to the Rebbetzin, and then take her home while my father met with the Rebbetzin."

Everything went as planned, until Rivky started crying inconsolably. Dr. Feldman came outside and asked Sorah to come in, calm the baby, and hold her while the Rebbetzin visited with the newborn.

"I did not want to go in. I was very uncomfortable. I would have dressed in my Shabbat clothes and prepared myself in other ways had I known I would be going into the Rebbe's and Rebbetzin's home and meeting the Rebbetzin. 'You are the pediatrician,' I reminded my father. 'You are expert at getting babies quiet.' But for whatever reason, my father could not calm her down and insisted I come in."

Sorah went in and calmed her little sister. Despite her initial hesitation, Sorah found she was totally comfortable once she was in the Rebbetzin's presence. "My sister often went with my father during his Friday visits. When Rivky was old enough, he would bring books that the Rebbetzin would read to her. On one Friday,

when Rivky was three or four, my father told me that his visit would have to be very brief. He asked that I come and stay with Rivky after he left so that the Rebbetzin would have a chance to spend time reading and playing with her.

"At the time, we were just beginning to start thinking about shidduchim (dating for the purpose of marriage). I asked my father if it would be okay for me to speak to the Rebbetzin for guidance in this area. We posed the question to the Rebbe's secretariat and I was given the go-ahead." Sorah will not divulge the advice she received from the Rebbetzin as she believes it was specific to her. However, she does relate her surprise about some information the Rebbetzin shared. Groups of yeshiva students had been sent to various Chabad-Lubavitch yeshivas around



the world to bolster the local yeshivas. The Rebbetzin enumerated where each group was and the dates that they would return to Lubavitch World headquarters after concluding their assignments. "I was surprised that the Rebbetzin knew so many details about the yeshiva students' schedules. The Rebbetzin concluded our meeting by stating emphatically, 'There will be good news!'"

A year later, on Friday night, Yud (10) Shevat, Sorah visited the Rebbetzin to tell her that she was hoping to soon get engaged. "I was very excited to share this news with her," recalls Sorah. "When I told the Rebbetzin that we would be writing to the Rebbe on Sunday to ask for his blessing for our engagement she showered me with 'mazel tovs' and I became flustered. I had always been taught that the engagement

was not official, or even certain, until the Rebbe gave his approval. Not knowing what to say, I finally mustered the courage to say that it wasn't a 'mazel tov' yet as we hadn't gotten an answer from the Rebbe. The Rebbetzin assured me it was and would be a 'mazel tov.'

"I didn't use my future husband's name but referred to him the whole time as 'the bochur.' At one point in the conversation, the Rebbetzin very delicately said, 'May I ask the name of the young man?' I told her that it was Levi Yitzchak Shemtov."

"Bentzion Shemtov's grandson?" asked Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. When Sorah answered in the affirmative, "The Rebbetzin's face lit up! Then the Rebbetzin said, 'I am very happy because now I know that you will speak Yiddish to your children!'"

Sorah's mother tongue is English and all of her conversations with the Rebbetzin were in English. But the Rebbetzin's delighted response about speaking to their future children in Yiddish gave her the confidence and determination to make Yiddish the language that she speaks to her children to this very day.

That Sunday, the young couple wrote a letter to the Rebbe and received his blessing for their marriage. A small engagement party in the Feldman home was scheduled to be held a few weeks later.

Tuesday evening, nine days after Sorah and Levi Shemtov became engaged, Dr. Feldman accompanied the Rebbetzin to the hospital. The Rebbetzin was in tremendous pain and a group of doctors had determined that she needed to be hospitalized. Dr. Feldman later related that throughout the drive to the hospital, the Rebbetzin deflected the conversation from herself and her condition. Instead she asked Dr. Feldman to tell her how the young couple was doing, if they had found an apartment yet and to fill her in on how all the preparations for the wedding were going.

Soon after the Rebbetzin arrived at the hospital she requested a glass of water. Shortly after midnight, the Rebbetzin's pure soul left this world. The Rebbetzin's great-grandmother and grandmother had also asked for a glass of water before their passing. Jewish teachings explain that the righteous often ask for water before their passing. One explanation is that their souls thereby leave this world after reciting the blessing before water, "...everything is created through His word" and the blessing after "...Who creates many souls." This blessing will be said at the resurrection of the dead in the Messianic Era.

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ISSUE 1283

## SOUL COFFEE

*As a person treats others here below, so he is treated above.*

*Perhaps someone once tried to tell you about the ugly deeds of another. You responded, "I'm not interested." And you didn't listen.*

*There will be a time when a heavenly being will come to report on your doings here on earth. G-d will also say, "I'm not interested. I don't want to even listen."*



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## Message to a Yartzeit Gathering

A Yartzeit is generally associated with two mixed feelings. On the one hand, as we learn from our sacred sources, the soul of the departed enjoys on the day of its Yartzeit an elevation, passing from one spiritual world into a higher one, closer to its creator. This is, therefore, a day of rejoicing for the soul, the hence a day of corresponding joy also for the near and dear ones left behind, for long and happy life.

On the other hand, the Yartzeit naturally refreshes in the mind the loss sustained by children in the passing of their parents, giving rise to a feeling of sadness.

In truth, however, the Yartzeit should not call forth any feeling of sadness, but rather a feeling of earnest reflection, introspection and self-examination. With a view to attuning one's life on this earth to the life-path of the soul Above, which is constantly on the ascent. This is to say, just as the soul On High is continuously rising, year after year, going "from strength to strength," so must also all those left behind on this earth, who are the associated with the departed soul, steadily go from strength to strength, through advancement in "Torah, worship, and the practice of good deeds."

In this way, also, children give the greatest possible joy to their dear departed parents.

This also underlines the basic view of our religion, that in reality there is no 'death' in matters of G-dliness, Torah and Mitzvot, experience this transition is one direction only – going strength from strength, higher and higher, first in this world and later in the following world – Olam Haba – always on the ascent.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

### Why are some people deaf?

**Question:** My four-year-old asked me some hard questions that I wasn't sure how to answer, like "Why did G-d make people deaf? Did they do something bad?" I tried explaining that somehow everything G-d does is for the best even if we don't understand why, but I felt it wasn't the best answer I could have given. Could you guide me how to answer her?

**Answer:** No human being is complete on his own. Each of us are lacking in some areas and have strengths in others. A blind person may have an especially keen intellect, and a deaf person, profound emotional strength. No one has it all. This means we need each other.

If you can see, you can help someone who can't. If you are healthy, you can help someone who isn't. If you have money, you can share it with those in need. And if you have emotional depth, you can support those in emotional turmoil.

The Talmud relates that the Roman governor Turnus Rufus challenged Rabbi Akiva with the following question: "If G-d loves the poor, why doesn't He supply them with their needs?" Rabbi Akiva's reply was, "To give us the opportunity to save ourselves from Gehinnom (hell)." Gehinnom is a world where no one ever helps anyone else, where everyone thinks only about themselves and cares not for another. We are in this world to do kindness. Every lack that one person has is an opportunity for another to fill it with love.

So let's say all of this in the language of a four-year-old:

You are a good sharer. When you share your toys with other kids who don't have those toys, you become friends. You can also share your eyes and your ears, by helping someone who can't see or hear. And they can help you too. Then we can all be friends. That's why G-d created us all with something missing. He is not punishing us for doing something wrong; He is giving us a chance to do something right.

## A WORD

from the Director

*This Shabbat is Chof Bet (22) Shevat, the yartzeit (anniversary of passing) of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, of blessed memory, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and daughter of the Previous Rebbe.*

*On the Rebbetzin's fourth yartzeit, the Rebbe explained: The Hebrew letters "chof" and "bet" are the same letters that make up the word "b'cha," in the verse, "Through you (b'cha), Israel will be blessed." This verse indicates that "through you," blessing will be drawn down to every Jew, generating positive activities, which, in turn, will lead to further activities of blessing in a pattern that will continue endlessly, forever.*

*The Hebrew word for "forever," "olam," also means "world." Olam is related to the Hebrew word "helem," meaning concealment. Our world is characterized by hiddenness, the concealment of G-dliness. This concealment allows for a soul - an actual part of G-d - to be concealed, that is, to depart from this world after its "days and years are completed" - after they have been endowed with fullness and completion through good deeds. In this context as well, the pattern mentioned above applies, as each good deed leads to more good deeds, in a never-ending sequence.*

*Chof Bet Shevat is the anniversary of the day when an "actual part of G-d" ascended from this world. Each year, on the day of the yahrtzeit, that soul ascends to a higher level, a level immeasurably higher than the peaks the soul had reached previously. This is reflected in reciting Kaddish on that day. Its recitation again on the day of the yahrtzeit, indicates a new ascent.*

*May the soul reach the ultimate level of ascent, the level to be reached at the time of the Resurrection. And may this take place in the immediate future. For ours is the last generation of the exile and the first generation of the Redemption.*

*Together with all the Jews of the present generation who will proceed to the Holy Land amidst health and joy, they will be joined by "those who lie in the dust," the souls of the previous generations, who "will arise and sing."*

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Rachel, the grandmother of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidut, was a remarkable Torah scholar in an age when that was highly unusual. She was the daughter of Baruch Batlan who was a follower of the Baal Shem of Zamotsch, and was given an excellent and wide-ranging Torah education, in keeping with the unusual custom of Chasidim to educate their daughters.

Practically from the time she could speak, she learned Torah, progressing from the simplest blessings taught to all Jewish children, to more advanced studies, even mastering the intricacies of the Talmud. She became particularly expert in the study of the Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law.

Whether out of modesty, for fear that people would regard a learned girl as odd, or to avoid an "evil eye," Rachel's father kept her scholarship a secret. When Rachel became engaged to Rabbi Shneur Zalman (who did not approve of women engaging in serious study), her scope of knowledge was not mentioned. Thus, she merely smiled when her husband said to her he assumed that her mother had taught her all the laws that a Jewish woman was required to know.

Rachel's knowledge of Jewish law was so extensive that she knew the differences in the customs which prevailed amongst the various Jewish communities. Thus, what was regarded as a strict law in one town, was treated more lightly in another.

Soon after her marriage it happened that Rachel's whole family was walking home one Shabbat from shul. The men, Baruch Batlan, his son Benjamin and his son-in-law, were in front. The women followed behind, Rachel among them. They all wore gloves as there was an "eruv" in Posen [a marked area where carrying is permitted on Shabbat]. Benjamin was also carrying books which he had borrowed from the synagogue, so that he could study at home.

As they were walking, the synagogue caretaker ran up to them, calling out that the eruv had fallen. They all stopped in bewilderment, not knowing what to do with their gloves and with the books that Rachel's brother had under his arm [since without the eruv, carrying was no longer permitted]. Should they drop everything, or just remain where they were?

Baruch Batlan now called out to his daughter: "Rachel, you are an expert in Jewish Law. Tell us what are we to do?" Turning to the men, he remarked: "We are so busy studying Talmud and other such subjects, that when we are faced with a practical question of law, we do not know it. So, We must turn to Rachel."

Rabbi Shneur Zalman opened his eyes in wonderment! Was this a joke?

Rachel blushed. She feared that now her husband might be upset with her. She would not have given away her secret, but her father had "put her on the spot," and she had to answer him.

"There is no need to take off our gloves," she ventured quietly, "for this is a case of 'accidental,' and there can be no likelihood of anyone taking off his gloves and carrying them, for, as we are in company, it would immediately be noticed and the person reminded. As for the books, these should be transferred from hand to hand until we reach the yard of a non-Jew, where they can be handed from the zone of "public property" to that of "private property."

As Rachel had foreseen, her husband was adversely affected by this incident and took every opportunity to make sharp comments. Once he remarked: "The Talmud says that 'The wife of a scholar is regarded as if she too were a scholar,' but in my case, it would seem that I must be satisfied to reach the equal of my wife's status." Rachel was very grieved at his attitude.

Her father was aware of the situation and he once countered: "The Jerusalem Talmud says that 'The wife of a criminal is also considered so.' I have given my daughter to you. It now remains to be seen what you make of her. She can either become the wife of a 'scholar' or the wife of a 'criminal.' It is entirely up to you!"

Rabbi Shneur Zalman understood the implication of his father-in-law's words, and from that time, changed his harsh and critical attitude. On the contrary, he began to be proud of his wife, appreciating at last her scholarship and wonderful qualities.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, hears of the great miracles which G-d performed for the people of Israel, and comes from Midian to the Israelite camp, bringing with him Moses' wife and two sons. Jethro advises Moses to appoint a hierarchy of magistrates and judges to assist him in the task of governing and administering justice to the people.

The children of Israel camp opposite Mount Sinai, where they are told that G-d has chosen them to be His "kingdom of priests" and "holy nation." The people respond by proclaiming, "All that G-d has spoken, we shall do."

On the sixth day of the third month (Sivan), seven weeks after the Exodus, the entire nation of Israel assembles at the foot of Mount Sinai. G-d descends on the mountain amidst thunder, lightning, billows of smoke and the blast of the shofar, and summons Moses to ascend.

G-d proclaims the Ten Commandments, commanding the people of Israel to believe in G-d, not to worship idols or take G-d's name in vain, to keep the Shabbat, honor their parents, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, and not to bear false witness or covet another's property. The people cry out to Moses that the revelation is too intense for them to bear, begging him to receive the Torah from G-d and convey it to them.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 17-18 February	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:58	8:56
Adelaide	7:50	8:46
Brisbane	6:13	7:06
Darwin	6:57	7:47
Gold Coast	6:12	7:05
Perth	6:47	7:41
Sydney	7:28	8:23
Canberra	7:38	8:34
Launceston	7:55	8:55
Auckland	7:58	8:55
Wellington	8:04	9:04
Hobart	7:56	8:58
Byron Bay	7:12	8:05

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS YISRO • 21 SHEVAT • 17 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7.58 PM
	MINCHA:	8.05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.30 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10.11 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	7.50 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8.56 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.00 PM
	MAARIV:	8.45 PM