

# LAMPLIGHTER

28 Shevat  
Parshas Mishpatim  
Shabbos Mevorchim  
Parshas Shekalim  
**1284**  
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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

One of the commandments contained in this week's Torah portion, Mishpatim, is "If you will lend money to any of My people." Lending money to a poor person is considered a mitzva.

According to our Sages, G-d performs all of the same mitzvot He commands the Jewish people to observe. "He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel." The Torah's "statutes" and "judgments" are G-d's statutes and judgments! Thus, G-d too observes the mitzva of "lending money to the poor," as it were.

Let us examine exactly what is involved in the transaction of a loan:

A loan consists of one person giving money to another, even though he is not obligated to do so. The money is a gift; the borrower does not give anything in exchange. Nonetheless, the person on the receiving end of the transaction is obliged to eventually repay the giver.

The Holy One, Blessed Be He, observes all of the Torah's commandments. G-d's "loan" to us, however, consists of the strengths and abilities He endows us with to succeed in our daily lives.

These gifts are not measured, nor does G-d grant them only to the deserving, just as monetary loans are not made solely to those in dire need. And yet, they are still "loans" and must therefore be repaid. But how do we repay our debt? By utilizing our strengths and abilities to carry out our Divinely-appointed mission in life, observing G-d's "statutes" and "judgments" in fulfillment of His will.

## A Matter of Ethics

*By Shlomo Yaffe*

A large part of the story of the Jews' acceptance of the Torah is actually found at the end of this week's Torah portion—Mishpatim (Exodus 21-24). This includes the famous statement by the Jewish people, Na'aseh Venishma—"We will do (first) and (then) we will hear and understand"—a complete acceptance of G-d without caveats.

But why is this important element not included in its seemingly proper place in the Torah reading of Yitro (Exodus 18-20)—which tells the story of the Giving of the Torah?

I believe the answer lies in a concept expounded by Rabbi Judah Halevi in his great work, the Kuzari. He discusses the statements by prophets such as Jeremiah, Isaiah and Amos, apparently denigrating and belittling the sacrifices offered by many of the Jews at the end of the First Temple period. How are these statements reconciled with the explicit commandments in the Torah regarding offering sacrifices? And after all, we pray thrice daily for the restoration of the Holy Temple and its sacrificial service!

The Kuzari posits that the Torah was given to a nation comprised of whole, decent human beings. Otherwise, we would not have been worthy of receiving this precious gift. This is why the prophets criticized the sacrifices of those who did injustice to others. They were not opposed to the sacrifices; they recognized that a korban – which in Hebrew literally means to "draw close," not "sacrifice" – is about coming closer to G-d. If we care about G-d, however, we do not trample those created in His image. And if we do not care about G-d, why bring a sacrifice? Can He be bribed? G-d derives pleasure from our sincere desire to draw close to Him—not a holy barbeque. If we are stuck in moral mire, we cannot rise to the heights of heaven.

So too in our case: the Torah reading of Mishpatim discusses the basics of civil law. How we treat each other, how we fulfill our financial and fiduciary obligations, etc. It is about justice and equity to other human beings.

G-d inserted the reading of Mishpatim before going back in time to discuss key elements of the narrative of the giving of the Torah. This is His way of saying: "Before you can receive the Torah fully—study Mishpatim! Be good, decent, upright human beings who respects others' selves, dignity and property. When you have done that, then I can give you the Torah and uplift you to be a 'goy kadosh,' a holy nation."

If we are not properly developed human beings, "mentschen," there is no vessel for the Torah to rest upon—we cannot build a lasting building on swampland.

But if our humanity and decency and honesty are present, then we are a solid foundation upon which we can build the edifice of Torah and Judaism.

# Slice of LIFE

## From Darkness to Light

by Rabbi Aaron L. Raskin

I'll never forget the day I was sitting in class at United Lubavitch Yeshiva. I must have been 14, 15 years old and my English teacher, George Landberg, put down his chalk and interrupted the lecture. He was a fine teacher; usually he liked to talk to us about all sorts of linguistic things, like onomatopoeia in poems or characters in fiction. That day, however, he told us an amazing story that was not fiction, but pure fact. A real miracle had occurred to real people himself and his tragically blind son, Daniel.

This story began in 1973 in New York, when Daniel Landberg was born with normal eyesight. According to state law, however, all newborns must have their eyes treated with a one-percent silver nitrate solution while still in the hospital, as a prophylactic against eye infection. A nurse's assistant who was inexperienced and incompetent came on duty, and a tragic mix-up occurred. She reached for a stick of silver nitrite of the sort intended for cleaning the umbilical cord. This solution is 70 times stronger than the 1% intended for ophthalmological use and is highly corrosive. Both of Daniel's eyes were burned by the chemical, his skin scarred, and his eyelashes gone. Worst of all, he was blinded.

For three weeks, Daniel's parents kept him in the hospital, receiving antibiotic treatments and getting tests from one specialist after another in an attempt to cure him. None of them believed that Daniel's sight could return. To make matters worse, each was more callous than the next in their treatment of the Landbergs themselves. Why was this couple even bothering? It was clear the child would forever be blind.

A window of hope opened when one Dr. Hornblasse took up their case but not quite in the way the Landbergs had expected. Dr. Hornblasse was an ophthalmologist who two years prior had

returned from Vietnam, was an expert in chemical burns and, what's more, an observant Jew. Dr. Hornblasse applied himself to Daniel's case with a prognosis for healing that others had ignored. He wrote to the Center for Disease Control in Washington and obtained their permission to use steroids on Daniel that had not yet been approved. He also took a more personal interest in Daniel's healing, suggesting Jewish channels of healing. In particular, he shared with the couple how a healing from G-d had occurred for him, personally. His own father had suffered a heart attack, and the prognosis was very bad. A religious man, he wrote to the Lubavitcher Rebbe and asked for a blessing. He received one, and within a week, his father was cured. "Might not the Landbergs do the same?"



urged the doctor.

The means to implement Dr. Hornblasse's suggestion were actually close at hand. George already had a connection to Lubavitch, having worked at ULY for ten years; what's more, his principal, Rabbi Mendel Tenenbaum, had access to the Rebbe. Mr. Landberg asked Rabbi Tenenbaum to approach the Rebbe. In no time he was face-to-face with the Rebbe in private audience, beseeching him on Daniel's behalf. The Rebbe gave his blessing.

One week later, the Landbergs got a call from Dr. Hornblasse in the hospital, "I'm witnessing a miracle," he told them, "I'm watching all the conjunctiva and stain ooze out of his eyes. I dare say I'm confident that his vision will return!" Indeed, within a short time, Daniel was no

longer blind.

The Rebbe didn't exact any payment or thanks, but Rabbi Tenenbaum pursued Mr. Landberg. "You owe us," he asserted. "Now you must put on tefilin every day!"

At first, Mr. Landberg was a bit stunned; he didn't have the mitzva (commandment) of tefilin anywhere on his personal spiritual radar; it was completely unfamiliar to him. But he was a good father, and he saw an inkling of what Rabbi Tenenbaum was after. No matter how skeptical he was, he observed. The road to medically ensure Daniel's newfound sight was a long and often hard one, but through it all, every day, George Landberg laid tefilin.

When Daniel was only six months old, he developed cysts on his cornea. Daniel was scheduled for surgery, but Dr. Hornblasse had strong feelings against it. The child had so many steroids in his system, he felt anesthesia would be risky. He delayed the surgery. Then one night, Daniel rubbed his eyes in his sleep and broke the cysts. No surgery was necessary.

When Daniel was ten, a different sort of cyst developed on his eyelid. It would affect the shape of his cornea and hence required surgery. When the surgeons went in to remove the cyst, they also removed a great deal of scar tissue on the underside of his eyelid, further relieving the pressure on his cornea and improving his vision.

Years and years have passed. Today Daniel is in his forties. Daniel's vision isn't perfect, but it is amazingly good, and all he has remaining is a scar on the cornea of his right eye. He drives a car, coaches high school football, and has a child of his own. What's more, Daniel himself lays tefilin every day and is passing his connection to the mitzva on to his young son. He knows, without question, that health and tefilin go together.

"We do feel it was all miraculous," Rita Landberg, Daniel's mom, concludes. "There was this special blessing. It was miraculous that we found Dr. Hornblasse and that we had a connection to Rabbi Tenenbaum, and that he, in turn, got a private audience with the Rebbe. Tefilin will always be intertwined with Daniel's wellbeing. There is no doubt that his health is directly connected to the mitzva."

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Editors: Shlomo Chaim Kesselman and Mendel Bacher

P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

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ISSUE 1284

## SOUL COFFEE

*The ego is not to be destroyed. It, too, is a creation of G-d—and all that He made, He made within divine purpose.*

*Only this: that the ego must know that it is a creation, and that all He made, He made with divine purpose.*



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## Torah and Mitzvahs: Because We Were Told, or Because We Understand?

The highlight of the Sidra Mishpotim is to be found in its concluding keynote, which summarizes the proper approach to all G-d's commandments on the principles of Naaseh V'Nishma, namely that Naaseh—the actual doing and fulfillment of the Mitzvoth—must come before V'Nishma—intellectual comprehension.

In light of the above, the contents of the Sidra coming under the heading Mishpotim seem to be in contradiction to the principle of Naaseh V'Nishma, as will be seen from the following:

It is well known that the Mitzvoth are generally classified into three categories: Chukkim, Eidos and Mishpotim.

Chukkim are the Mitzvoth which are purely religious in the sense that they have not been given a "rational" explanation.

Eidos are the Mitzvoth which are "testimonies," recalling and testifying to certain events, such as Yetzias Mitzraim, etc.

Mishpotim are those Mitzvoth which are "understandable" by human reason, such as laws of social justice, ethics and morality.

Thus, according to the principle of Naaseh V'Nishma, mentioned above, one would have expected that the first Sidra that follows Mattan Torah would deal with Chukkim, rather than Mishpotim, and should have been named accordingly.

The explanation, however, is that a Jew is expected to attain such a high degree of perfection, where his entire life is based on an absolute obedience to G-d's Will, so that his fulfillment even of the so-called "rational" Mitzvoth, the Mishpotim, is motivated solely by his desire to fulfill G-d's Will, and not by his own "approval" or consent. In other words, the highest expression of Naaseh V'Nishma is to be found precisely in the Mishpotim, the validity of which is not in human reason, but in the fact that they have been ordained by G-d, from Sinai, just like all other Mitzvoth of the Torah.

If there may have been a time in the past when the need of the Divine origin of the laws of morality and ethics (Mishpotim) in the Torah had to be explained, no such proof is necessary in our day and age, especially after we have seen the total bankruptcy of man-invented ideologies and systems, and when the Prophetic outcry against those who "misrepresent darkness for light and bitterness for sweet" is so much in place.

It is for this reason also that the Ten Commandments, including such "understandable" laws as "thou shalt not steal," etc., are preceded by "I am G-d, thy G-d."

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

### Moses' Death

**Question:** How do we know when Moses died?

**Answer:** Moses died on the seventh of Adar.

The Talmud proves this as follows:

In Deuteronomy 34:8 we read that the Jews mourned for thirty days following Moses' death in the Plains of Moab. This area borders Israel, just east of the Jordan River.

The book of Joshua begins with G-d's command to bring the Jewish people across the Jordan River. G-d specifies that they are to cross in three days time. This instruction was given immediately after Moses died, meaning at the earliest possible opportunity after his death. This would have been following the thirty days of mourning.

In Joshua 4:19 we are told that the Jews crossed the river on the tenth of Nissan. If we subtract the three days between the command and actual crossing, plus the thirty days of mourning, we find the date of Moses' passing is the seventh of Adar.

Incidentally, the seventh of Adar is also Moses' birthday. This we derive from what Moses said on the day of his death (Deuteronomy 31:2): "Today I am one hundred and twenty years old."

## A WORD

from the Director

*This Shabbat is "Shabbat Shekalim," when we read about the mitzva of the "half-shekel" the Jews were commanded to give as atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. The half-shekalim were used to bring the communal offerings on behalf of the entire Jewish people. Every person had to give the same amount, "ten gera," which was the equivalent of half of "a holy shekel."*

*It didn't matter if a Jew was rich or poor - everyone was required to give a half-shekel, and in fact, it was forbidden to give more. For the Jewish people and G-d are one entity; without G-d, they are only half of a single whole.*

*According to Chasidic philosophy, the "ten gera" are an allusion to the ten powers of the soul. The mitzva teaches that our ten soul powers are only "half a shekel," and that in order to be a complete entity, one must join together with another Jew.*

*The half-shekels were used to conduct a census of the Jewish people. A census emphasizes the unique importance of every individual. At the same time, it also underscores the fact that every Jew's true existence is bound up with his fellow man's. It is only when a Jew fulfills the commandment to "Love your fellow man as yourself" that he can reach his own individual fulfillment and potential.*

*This is one of the reasons Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidic philosophy, placed the declaration, "Behold, I accept upon myself the fulfillment of the mitzva, 'Love your fellow man as yourself,'" at the very beginning of the prayer book. Indeed, this principle should be the foundation of all our daily activities.*

*When Moshiach comes, the communal sacrifices will again be purchased from the half-shekels we will give. Yet even now we can still perform a service representative of the half-shekel - giving to tzedaka (charity). When we recognize the fundamental unity we share with others, it prompts us to increase our donations to tzedaka and give generously.*

*May all our efforts hasten the rebuilding of the Holy Temple with Moshiach, immediately and at once.*

J. I. Gutnick

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

By the year 1843 word of the disputes in the Jewish community had reached the Czar's court. An order was issued that representatives be chosen to appear in Petersburg, where a commission, headed by the minister Count Uvarov would meet to decide which "brand" of Judaism was correct.

Each group selected a representative: The Chasidim of White Russia chose Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch; the Polish Chasidim, Reb Israel Halperin of Berdichev; the Mitnagdim chose Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin; the Maskilim chose to represent their viewpoint, Bezalel Stern, who was the director of the Jewish school in Odessa. Other Jewish dignitaries had been invited, but declined. Every delegate was permitted to bring an advisor; the Lubavitcher Rebbe brought his son, Reb Yehuda Leib.

When the meeting had convened, Count Uvarov explained that it was not the intention of the Czar to overturn or annul any Jewish law or custom, merely to elucidate and clarify matters.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel was accorded due respect by the ministers, and he successfully answered all the questions that were put to him, which devolved mainly on matters of Chasidut and Kabala.

One of the questions asked of all of the representatives was, "What is the purpose of studying Chasidut and Kabala?"

Bezalel Stern replied that the study was totally unnecessary. Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin made no reply at all. When it came the turn of Rabbi Menachem Mendel and Reb Yisroel Halperin, they answered that this study is indispensable to all Jews.

On Friday afternoon, Count Uvarov made an announcement: "The question of the study of Kabala and Chasidut will be decided according to Torah, that is, according to the majority opinion. Since Stern and I hold that it is not necessary and Yitzchak holds his peace, which indicates that he is also against it, and only Schneersohn and Halperin are in favor, I rule that this study be abolished!"

Rabbi Menachem Mendel stood up and with a bitter cry emanating from his heart declared, "Whatever may happen, the study of Kabala and Chasidut cannot be abolished!"

Count Uvarov was beside himself with fury. "Arrest him!" he barked at his guards, and they immediately led the Rebbe from the room. Count Uvarov paced like an enraged tiger, while the other members of the commission looked on in horror.

The time came to recite the afternoon service, and Rabbi Menachem Mendel began chanting the Mincha service aloud, to the melody composed by Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Chabad Rebbe. Count Uvarov stopped pacing, transfixed by the beautiful tune.

"What is it he's saying?" he inquired of the members of the commission.

"He is praying the afternoon service," was the reply. And they explained that he was reciting a most profound passage taken from the Kabala, the very thing on which the dispute centered. Count

Uvarov listened intently to the entire service. When the Rebbe had finished praying, Uvarov opened the door and said, "Schneersohn, you are freed!"

The Rebbe then reentered the room and joined his fellow delegates. Then Uvarov turned to the Rebbe and said: "Perhaps we can figure out another way of deciding the outcome of this question. Let us say that since Yitzchak remains silent, that means he favors the study of Kabala and Chasidut. In that case, you have the majority."

With that, the holy Sabbath was ushered in and passed in peace. The final session of the commission was scheduled to convene after the Sabbath.

That day arrived and everyone sat waiting for the meeting to begin - all except Rabbi Menachem Mendel. Bezalel Stern grew impatient and decided to take a walk in the park until the Rebbe arrived. On the way to the meeting the Rebbe suddenly turned to his son and said, "Let's walk through the park."

There, of course, they met Stern. The Rebbe approached him and took him by the hand. "It is written in the holy Talmud, 'Rabbi Judah the Prince wept and said, that there are those who can attain the World to Come in an hour.' Now the time has come that you have been given by Divine Providence, the chance to gain the World to Come. You only need to tell the commission that the study of Kabbala and Chasidut is indispensable."

The words of the Rebbe hit their mark in the heart of Stern, and when it came time for him to speak, he spoke in favor of the study of Kabbala and Chasidut. Hearing him, Rabbi Yitzchak also agreed. And so, with a majority vote, the commission decided in favor of the Chasidim, and with that decision, closed its session.

## PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

*Following the revelation at Sinai, G-d legislates a series of laws for the people of Israel. These include the laws of the indentured servant; the penalties for murder, kidnapping, assault and theft; civil laws pertaining to redress of damages, the granting of loans and the responsibilities of the "Four Guardians"; and the rules governing the conduct of justice by courts of law.*

*Also included are laws warning against mistreatment of foreigners; the observance of the seasonal festivals, and the agricultural gifts that are to be brought to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem; the prohibition against cooking meat with milk; and the mitzvah of prayer. Altogether, the Parshah of Mishpatim contains 53 mitzvot—23 imperative commandments and 30 prohibitions.*

*G-d promises to bring the people of Israel to the Holy Land, and warns them against assuming the pagan ways of its current inhabitants.*

*The people of Israel proclaim, "We will do and we will hear all that G-d commands us." Leaving Aaron and Hur in charge in the Israelite camp, Moses ascends Mount Sinai and remains there for forty days and forty nights to receive the Torah from G-d.*

## CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 24-25 February	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:49	8:46
Adelaide	7:41	8:37
Brisbane	6:07	6:59
Darwin	6:54	7:43
Gold Coast	6:05	6:58
Perth	6:39	7:33
Sydney	7:20	8:15
Canberra	7:30	8:25
Launceston	7:45	8:44
Auckland	7:49	8:44
Wellington	7:54	8:53
Hobart	7:46	8:46
Byron Bay	7:05	7:58

## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS MISHPATIM SHABBOS MEVORCHIM PARSHAS SHEKALIM

• 28 SHEVAT • 24 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7.49 PM
	MINCHA:	7.55 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.20 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10.14 AM
	TEHILLIM	8.00 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	THE MOLAD FOR ADAR IS ON SUNDAY 6.20 (9 CHALAKIM) AM FARBRENGEN FOLLOWING DAVENING	
	MINCHA:	7.45 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8.46 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	7.50 PM
	MAARIV:	8.40 PM