

# LAMPLIGHTER

25 Nisan  
Parshas Shemini  
Shabbos  
Mevorchim  
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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion of Shemini opens with a description of the eighth and final day of the consecration of the Sanctuary, the day when the Divine Presence first rested therein. The name of the portion - Shemini - means "eighth" and alludes to the special significance held by the number eight. Eight symbolizes that which is above the laws of nature and the boundaries of our physical world. It stands for that aspect of G-dliness which exists even beyond the realm of our human powers of description.

One would think that the contents of so lofty a section of the Torah would deal with correspondingly lofty subject matter - philosophy, belief in G-d, metaphysics - but we find that Shemini delineates the laws between kosher and non-kosher animals. Why such a mundane a subject for a Torah portion which is supposed to express so high a level of holiness?

In many instances, a fine line exists between that which is kosher and that which is forbidden. A kosher animal whose windpipe and esophagus are only partially severed when slaughtered is not fit for consumption. A difference of only a fraction of a centimeter can determine whether or not the flesh of the animal is kosher or not, as Jewish law prescribes that both windpipe and trachea be more than half severed with one movement of the knife.

In our own lives, we also occasionally must make decisions which are as fine as a hair's breadth. Choosing between good and evil when the choices are obvious and blatant is much easier than making a decision between two extremely fine points. For such decision making, extra help from Above is necessary.

The Evil Inclination sometimes disguises itself in a "robe of holiness." It discourages a person from performing a mitzva through guile and doubt, presenting all sorts of seemingly plausible and erudite excuses. A person may become confused when the two paths of action before him both seem to have merit. The Evil Inclination can even make a sin appear to be an actual mitzva.

How are we to overcome the wiles and cunning of the Evil Inclination? How can we be sure that the decisions we make are the right ones? By learning the lesson which is taught in Shemini.

Man alone, bound as he is by the laws of nature and the limitations of the human intellect, cannot always overcome his Evil Inclination. But when a person gives himself over to G-d, Who is not bound by any natural law and is infinite, and asks His help to "distinguish between the unclean and the clean," one can indeed conquer the Evil Inclination and avoid falling into its net.

A Jew's connection to G-d is so strong that it cannot be split asunder by any power on earth. When a Jew does a mitzva (commandment) - mitzva comes from the Hebrew word for binding together and connecting - he ties himself to G-d with a supernatural strength. Armed with this power, we can see through the mask of the Evil Inclination when we are presented with even the finest points of contention.

## A Tale of Two Extremes

By Elisha Greenbaum

In this week's Torah portion, Shemini, there is a total contrast between the topics addressed at the beginning to that of the end. It starts off so spiritually. Moses inaugurates the Tabernacle and hands the reins to Aaron and the priests. There are days of celebrating and rejoicing. Spirituality reigns supreme and a new era of goodness and G-dliness is ushered into the world.

The tail end of the portion is so pedestrian in contrast. In excruciating detail, G-d lists the animals that a Jew may not eat. There are signs given for permitted land animals and fish, and a list of birds that can never appear on our menus. The Torah describes the process of contracting various ritual impurities and finishes off with an admonition to keep ourselves pure and holy.

I've never understood it. Is this the culmination of our becoming a nation? That is what G-d demands of us? Instead of sitting and basking in the presence of G-d or developing an appreciation for spirituality, we're expected to leaf our way through a description of scavenging beasts. Couldn't we stick to the high road? Let's talk about truth, justice and the rabbinical way, rather than take the low road of filth, avoidance and disagreeability.

The same degeneration of purpose appears in the Yom Kippur prayers. We start off the day so puritanical and determined. We thrill to descriptions of G-d's mercy and wonders. We resolve to remain perfect and committed to our mission and religion. However, as the sun sets, we pull out a Torah scroll and, instead of all the high-minded prayers of the morning, we recite a list of forbidden sexual encounters and perversities. It seems so out of context with the moment. Why ruin the mood with depictions of unpleasantness when we could appeal to our better feelings with stirring calls to idealism and religiosity?

For better or for worse, this is the struggle of humanity. It is never enough to rely on one's natural abilities or innate connection with the divine. Whether we like it or not, life is a daily struggle against the profane and the immoral. It is as much an act of courage to refuse to partake of forbidden flesh or a perverse pleasure as it is to shelter in the tent of Torah, communing with G-d.

No one is immune from temptation. Dressed all in white on Yom Kippur, we must still hold true to our morals and determine to remain connected to G-d.

It is not easy. We can sympathize and understand. Even those with the greatest spiritual gifts and accomplishments struggle to remain perfect at all times and under all circumstances. There is nothing unnatural about sin. No one is immune from temptation. The choices we make directly impact on our future and those whom we love and respect. All we can do is hope and pray to somehow find the courage and conviction to remain at all times true to our G-d and beliefs.

# Slice of LIFE

## A Mezuzah Pointed the Right Way

by Sarah Schmerler

My mother, Dr. Miriam Schmerler, a devout woman all her life, had been living in a nursing home for seven and a half years. Suffering from Alzheimer's, she couldn't remember my name, the faces of her family - practically anything, but with one exception: she remembered her Hebrew. She could intone every prayer with the cantor, and she could even correct the grammar of the volunteer teacher who came to the Home to give a weekly lesson from the Torah portion. Judaism was Mom's life, just as it always had been.

One Friday afternoon, just an hour before Shabbat, a phone call came to me from the very kind, non-Jewish administrator of the Home. "Ma'am," he said, "I wasn't consulted on this, but it appears that the funding will soon be cut for your mother's kosher meals. Would you like to voice any objections?"

"Yes, I certainly would!" I replied. There just wasn't much I could do so late on a Friday afternoon.

I felt distressed, unable to give Mom immediate help on this vital issue. Before I hung up, however, I happened to ask the administrator, "Do you know what a mezuzah is?"

"Yes," she said, "I believe I do."

"Well, speaking of 'kosher,' did you know that a mezuzah must also be kosher, and so it must be checked periodically by a qualified scribe? I'm wondering if you know when the mezuzos at the Home

were last checked."

Of course she didn't know if any of the mezuzos in the Home had ever been checked. We both admitted that it might take a long time to go through administrative channels to find out. I thanked her, and realized that even if the kosher food would be a tough bureaucratic struggle, perhaps I could take things into my own hands regarding Mom's mezuzah.

After Shabbat, I consulted my rabbi. "Halachically speaking," he said, "checking the mezuzah on your mother's door is her responsibility, not the Home's. As a resident there, she falls under the category of a renter in a large facility. As a renter, she must look out for her own mezuzah. Seeing as she's unable to do so, the burden falls on you, her child." Indeed, one kosher issue that I could control!

That week my brother and I began the struggle for my mother's right to kosher food, and we were met by harsh resistance. My brother decided that we needed legal counsel. Investigations were launched into the practices of the Home, and it was getting ugly. However, on my private quest for a kosher mezuzah, one call to the local Chabad Center was enough.

I called the Center on Tuesday and told the young rebbetzin my story. She told her husband. The very next day, Mom got a visit and a mezuzah check-up. The rabbi emailed me, "I'm not a scribe, so I could only check it informally, but one thing is for certain: your mother's mezuzah was affixed upside-down! It is also lacking a wrapper on the outside to protect it." He said he would return shortly to the Home to reinstall the mezuzah right side up. In a later email, I told him he might as well just replace the parchment and give it a wrapper.

However, as soon as the rabbi had turned the mezuzah right side up, I received news from the administrator that the funding for Mom's kosher food was already a done-deal! Apparently, the funder was bluffing, and it was entirely in my rights to secure kosher food.

Also, mysteriously, there were now mezuzos affixed on all the rooms of the Home. No one was able to tell me where these had come from.

As if all that wasn't enough, a big check my husband had been owed for over six months, and which we desperately needed, arrived in the mail. He carried the envelope up the stairs, calling out, "Our problems are solved!" and tears of relief came to my eyes. At the same time, some part of me was not surprised.

Almost two weeks prior to all these events, I dreamt a troubling dream about Mom. In the dream, I was walking out of a large building with a number of people from my synagogue. We came upon a strange, white, industrial-type hallway with four shallow steps leading down. As we walked down these steps, I noticed a few elderly people ahead of us with canes, walkers, and nursing attendants. One of these people was Mom. Suddenly, I saw her body flip upside down and suspend in mid-air, her mouth wide open in shock. It seemed no one could help her, so I rushed down the steps and flipped her right side up. I checked to see if she was breathing, and let her recover. She was terrified, but alright. I soon put her back in the care of her attendant, and we all continued walking together.

Perhaps the most amazing part of the dream was when she was upside down, her body was rigid and tilted at a 45-degree angle-just as a mezuzah is tilted, when affixed to a doorpost.

*Sarah Schmerler writes about Judaism and fine art. She works as an art consultant, and is based in Brooklyn, NY. From the forthcoming book by Rabbi Aaron L. Raskin, edited by Matthew Brown.*

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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## Time Control

At first glance, the counting of days seems to be of no consequence, since the flow of time is beyond man's control. Yet, it is obviously very significant in that it lends emphasis to the period connecting the two most important events in Jewish history: Pesach—the liberation from Egyptian bondage, marking the birth of the Jewish people; and Shavuot—the Receiving of the Torah at Sinai, where the Jewish people became a truly free and mature nation.

Like all things with Torah, the Counting of the Omer has many aspects. To one of them I will address myself here.

Generally, the counting of things by the unit, rather than by approximation of the total, indicates the importance of the thing. The fact that each day, day after day for forty-nine days, a Brocho is said before the counting further emphasizes the importance of this thing—in this case, the value of time. The Brocho we make expresses not only our gratitude to G-d for giving us the Mitzvo of Sefira, but also our gratitude for each day which He gives us. We must learn to appreciate the precious gift of each day by making the proper use of it. The tasks we have to accomplish today cannot be postponed for tomorrow, since a day gone by is irretrievable.

Secondly, while it is true that the flow of time is beyond our control, since we can neither slow it or quicken it, expand it nor shrink it, yet in a way we can directly affect time by the content with which we fill each day of our life. When a person makes a far-reaching discovery, or reaches an important resolution, he can in effect put "ages" into minutes. On the other hand, time allowed to go by without proper content has no reality at all, however long it may last.

Correspondingly, the Torah tells us that man has been given unlimited powers not only in regard to shaping his own destiny, but also the destiny of the world in which he lives. Just as in the case of time, the real length of it is not measured in terms of quantity but in terms of quality, so also in regard to a man's efforts. Every good effort can further be expanded by the vitality and enthusiasm which he puts into it. Indeed, the period of seven weeks connecting the abovementioned two greatest historic events in Jewish life illustrates the Torah concept of time and effort as indicated above. In the course of only seven weeks, a people which has been enslaved for 210 years to most depraved taskmasters were transformed into a "Kingdom of Priests and Holy Nation," who witnessed the Divine Revelation at Sinai and received the Torah and Mitzvoth from G-d Himself.

"Lubavitch" teaches and exemplifies the principle of the predominance of form over matter, of the soul over the body. It is not the quantity—in terms of physical capacity and length of time—that is the essential factor, but it is the quality of the effort and the infinite capacity of the soul that determine the results.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

### Seven Types of Souls

**Question:** I've heard it said that the seven branches of the Menorah (candelabra) in the Holy Temple represent the seven types of souls. Can you please tell me the unique characteristics of these different souls?

**Answer:** Man was created "in the image of G-d" (Genesis 1:26). Among the many meanings inherent in this statement is that our souls' composition is the likeness G-d's divine attributes.

There are seven middot (divine emotive attributes) -- Kindness, Severity, Harmony, Perseverance, Humility, Foundation, and Royalty. While every soul possesses all seven of these middot, one of these traits is most dominant, shaping the individual soul's unique service of G-d.

Here is a brief description of the seven types of Jewish souls:

**Chesed (Kindness)** -- A soul whose service of G-d is characterized by a calm and flowing love. This soul is also overflowing with love for his fellows.

**Gevurah (Severity)** -- A soul who serves G-d with awe and a flaming passion. This soul is also highly disciplined, with high expectations of himself and others.

**Tiferet (Harmony)** -- The soul who has achieved a perfect synthesis of Kindness and Severity. This is accomplished through the study of Torah. Tiferet is also the source of the soul's capacity for compassion.

**Netzach (Perseverance)** -- A soul who is constantly battling and struggling, but is ultimately triumphant.

**Hod (Humility)** -- The soul who exemplifies self-abnegation in favor of allowing itself to be overwhelmed by G-d's goodness.

**Yesod (Foundation)** -- The soul whose unique talent is establishing giving relationships, intellectually or otherwise.

**Malchut** -- (Royalty) The soul who serves its Creator in a majestic manner.

In the Temple's menorah, all seven branches were hewn from a single block of pure gold. We may have different dispositions and different methods of serving G-d, but we are essentially one. We have one purpose and one mission, with different ways to accomplish the same goal -- serving our creator and being a menorah -- a guiding light -- for the entire world.

## A WORD

from the Director

*In this week's Torah portion we learn of the death of two of Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, after they brought a "strange" fire before G-d.*

*According to some commentators, the brothers brought an offering in accordance with the sacrificial laws as they had been practiced by our ancestors before the Torah was given by G-d to Moses. This, then, is what was strange about it.*

*Chasidic philosophy offers a unique explanation as to what was strange about the fire. A Jew's soul is likened to a flame, or, at times, a candle. Though placed in a body, it strives to reunite with its source, the G-dly flame. Nadav and Avihu's longing to be united with G-d was so great that they allowed their souls to leave their bodies, "consumed" by the G-dly fire.*

*However, the true purpose of the soul's descent into this world is not to leave the body and be reunited with its source. That union is meant to take place only when the soul has completed its mission. Rather, it descends to this world in order to transform and elevate its surroundings. If the soul leaves the body it cannot accomplish this.*

*Many stories have been told about great and holy people whose souls transcended this world and traversed other spiritual planes. They revel in the experience of enjoying the spiritual light and revealed G-dliness of these other worlds. But when the time comes for their souls to return to their bodies, they accede, knowing that this was the true purpose of their life to begin with.*

*Nadav and Avihu allowed their longing for G-d to supersede their mission in life - to bring G-dliness and holiness into this world.*

J. I. Gutnick

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

A severe decree was being formulated against the Jews. Rabbi Menachem Mendel, known as the "Tzemach Tzedek" (the third Lubavitcher Rebbe), sent his youngest son, Reb Shmuel (later known as the Rebbe Maharash) to Petersburg in an attempt to get the decree rescinded. Traveling with Reb Shmuel was his older brother Reb Yehuda Leib, twenty years Reb Shmuel's senior.

Before commencing the journey, Reb Shmuel insisted that Reb Yehuda Leib agree not to bless anyone during their trip. "Our father is the Rebbe and he is the only one who should give people blessings," he declared. Having no other choice, Reb Yehuda Leib agreed to these conditions.

In every town they visited along the way, people converged on Reb Yehuda Leib. They begged him, as the son of such a great tzadik (righteous person), to give them a blessing for health, a living, children, etc. To each person, Reb Yehuda Leib replied, "Go visit my father, surely he will bless you."

In one particular village, there was a woman who was especially persistent. She had not been blessed with children and was certain that, with the blessing of a tzadik (righteous person), she would indeed merit to have children of her own.

The woman stationed herself in front of Reb Yehuda Leib. She begged and pleaded, screamed and cried that he must bless her to have children. But still Reb Yehuda Leib refused to bless the woman. "Go to my father, the Rebbe," he stated simply. "Surely he will bless you."

The woman was not satisfied with this answer. She continued to cry out to Reb Yehuda Leib that he should bless her. Finally, at wit's end, Reb Yehuda Leib said, "Go to my brother. Perhaps he will bless you."

The woman repeated the entire scene in front of Reb Shmuel. She begged and pleaded, cried and screamed that Reb Shmuel bless her to have children. But nothing could move Reb Shmuel. He insisted that only his father, the Rebbe, could do anything for the woman. Seeing that she would not take "no" for an answer, Reb Shmuel told his brother and the carriage driver to get ready to leave. They quickly got into the carriage to begin their journey home and away from the woman.

But the carriage didn't budge. The woman had cleverly placed a stick in the spokes of the wheels to keep them from turning.

Reb Shmuel climbed down from the carriage and, in annoyance told the woman, "Go eat a bagel" - equivalent in today's vernacular to "go fly a kite."

Satisfied at last, the woman left Reb Shmuel and Reb

Yehuda Leib to continue their journey. She promptly went home and made bagels, concentrating all the while on the blessing that the bagel would surely elicit. It occurred to the woman that just to be sure that the blessing would really be actualized, she should maybe eat two bagels. So that is exactly what she did.

The following year, Rabbi Menachem Mendel passed away and Reb Shmuel, though the youngest of his seven sons, was chosen to succeed him as Rebbe.

One day, a man came into Reb Shmuel's study with two cakes which his wife had baked for the Rebbe. "You blessed my wife last year that she would have a child, so she has asked me to bring you these cakes in gratitude."

Reb Shmuel had no recollection of the event so the man recounted the entire episode to Reb Shmuel. He finished by saying, "You said to my wife, 'Go eat a bagel.' That is exactly what she did and your blessing came true."

"But why," asked Reb Shmuel in amazement, "are you bringing me two cakes?"

"My wife had wanted to make sure that the blessing would really materialize so she ate two bagels and had twins!" said the beaming father.

"Know," Reb Shmuel told the husband, "I saw that there was a heavenly decree that you and your wife were not destined to have children. It was only in exasperation that I told your wife to eat a bagel, not as a means of blessing. But because of her simple faith, her strong faith in the blessing of a tzadik, the decree was annulled and you and your wife were blessed with children."

## PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

*On the eighth day, following the seven days of their inauguration, Aaron and his sons begin to officiate as kohanim (priests); a fire issues forth from G-d to consume the offerings on the altar, and the divine presence comes to dwell in the Sanctuary.*

*Aaron's two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu, offer a "strange fire before G-d, which He commanded them not" and die before G-d. Aaron is silent in face of his tragedy. Moses and Aaron subsequently disagree as to a point of law regarding the offerings, but Moses concedes to Aaron that Aaron is in the right.*

*G-d commands the kosher laws, identifying the animal species permissible and forbidden for consumption. Land animals may be eaten only if they have split hooves and also chew their cud; fish must have fins and scales; a list of non-kosher birds is given, and a list of kosher insects (four types of locusts).*

*Also in Shemini are some of the laws of ritual purity, including the purifying power of the mikvah (a pool of water meeting specified qualifications) and the wellspring. Thus the people of Israel are enjoined to "differentiate between the impure and the pure."*

## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

### PARSHAS SHEMINI SHABBOS MEVORCHIM 25 NISAN • 21 APRIL

<b>FRIDAY NIGHT:</b>	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:27 PM
	MINCHA:	5:35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:00 PM
<b>SHABBOS DAY:</b>	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:33 AM
	TEHILLIM:	8:00 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	THE MOLAD FOR IYAR IS ON WEDNESDAY 7.48 (11 chalakim) AM	
	FARBRENGEN FOLLOWING DAVENING	
	MINCHA:	5:20 PM
SHABBOS ENDS:	6:24 PM	
<b>WEEKDAYS:</b>	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:25 PM
	MAARIV:	6:15 PM

## CANDLE LIGHTING

	Shabbos 21-22 April	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	5:27	6:24
Adelaide	5:26	6:21
Brisbane	5:07	5:59
Darwin	6:20	7:10
Gold Coast	5:05	5:59
Perth	5:31	6:25
Sydney	5:07	6:02
Canberra	5:14	6:09
Launceston	5:14	6:12
Auckland	5:30	6:25
Wellington	5:23	6:22
Hobart	5:11	6:10
Byron Bay	5:04	5:56

