

# LAMPLIGHTER

15 Menachem-Av  
Parshas  
Va'eschanan  
**1358**  
27 July  
5778/2018

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah reading, Vaetchanan, contains the Shema, the fundamental prayer in Jewish liturgy. When a person recites the Shema, he is not merely declaring that there is only one G-d. The intent of the Shema is that all existence is one with Him.

Judaism does not believe that the spiritual and the physical can be separated from each other. We do not believe in a G-d who sits in the heavens and allows the world to function however it desires. Instead, the spiritual and the physical are both manifestations of a single unity.

This is what we mean when we say "G-d is one" - that G-d's oneness embraces everything that we see, hear, or become aware of.

These concepts are hinted at by echad, the Hebrew word for one. That word is made up of three letters. The first letter, the alef, stands for the Ein Sof, G-d's infinity. The second, the chet, is equivalent to the number eight, referring to the seven spiritual realms and our material earth. The last letter, the dalet, equivalent to four, alludes to the four directions of this earth. What is inferred is that the alef, G-d's infinite transcendence, permeates the chet, all eight levels of existence, and more particularly, the dalet, the four directions of our world. Wherever we go, there is nothing apart from Him.

On this basis, we can understand why the Shema is the message associated with our people's martyrs. When a martyr gives up his life for his faith, he is making a statement that he refuses to separate the physical from the spiritual. He will not live a life that does not reflect his inner G-dly essence.

If he is forced to sever the connection between the two and live in contradiction to what he believes and knows is right, then he would rather not live. For he cannot conceive of a life that runs contrary to his spiritual core. For him, the oneness of G-d is an actual - not merely a theoretical - reality.

The Shema continues with the command to love G-d. That command raises a question: How can the Torah command us to love? You either feel love or you don't. No one can tell you to feel something that you don't.

That's why the commandment to love G-d follows after the declaration of G-d's oneness. When a person understands the oneness of G-d and appreciates how He is in every element of existence, he will be spurred to feelings of love. For intellect gives birth to emotion and our awareness of G-d prompts us to love Him.

After, the Shema mentions several commandments - to study Torah, wear tefilin, and affix mezuzot on our doorposts. For it is through these deeds - and by extension, the totality of Jewish observance - that the oneness proclaimed in the Shema is made part of our everyday lives.

## To Study Our Children

*By Dovid Hazdan*

One of the sacred tasks of parents and teachers is to educate the next generation and to impart to our children the knowledge and values of our Torah. We cannot be content with our own study—we have to teach the young.

This mitzvah is featured in this week's Torah portion in the words of the Shema which we recite thrice daily: "... teach them to your children, to discuss them, while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise ..."

What is intriguing is that the great codifier Maimonides, as well as R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi in his code of Jewish law, present the laws relating to teaching Torah to our children before presenting the laws of studying Torah. It seems quite obvious that one cannot teach before studying. Why would the laws pertaining to teaching a child precede the adult's requirement to learn?

The power and advantage of a developed, adult, mature mind is magnified by life's experiences. The theoretical insights that are gleaned are enhanced and embellished by the wealth amassed through the challenges and circumstances of one's past.

But there is a deficiency and handicap in an adult's approach to absorbing the words of Torah. So often, objectivity, humility and serenity of spirit are casualties of preconceived ideas. Our entrenched frames of reference capture data into existing files predetermined and predefined. Our life's experiences have formed calluses on our attitudes and philosophies. We cling to familiar paths formed by habitual past journeys. We evaluate with prejudices and perspectives already firmly formed. We begin to judge by our decisions, rather than decide by our judgments.

How often are we left unmoved by a truth because we are self-consciously aware of the ramifications of accepting such truths? We fit teachings into lifestyles rather than confront the challenge of change. We quote and emphasize to subjectively endorse and support, rather than to aspire and strive for uncharted new heights. The laws of studying Torah are preceded by the laws of teaching a child, to remind us how to absorb the words of G-d. The learning of a young child—so eager, so fresh, so open, so inspired and so unencumbered by baggage—is like "ink written on fresh paper," teaching us the art of true Torah study.

May our spiritual and intellectual journeys always retain the effervescence, passion and innocence of a child. May we, this Shabbat, find comfort, optimism and belief in a world about to be redeemed, by allowing ourselves to peer through the eyes and hope of a child.

# Slice of LIFE

## In Beijing... To Stay

By Dini Freundlich

Why would a young, observant Jewish couple move to a city where there was no shul, no Jewish day school, no mikva, and where obtaining kosher food is a struggle? A city where the language spoken and written is totally different from any language they had ever heard or seen?

I was raised in South Africa, where my parents are emissaries (shluchim) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Soon after I married Rabbi Shimon Freundlich, we moved to Hong Kong. I had worked in the Chabad House in Hong Kong before I was married so the Chinese culture was not so foreign to me. We spent five years in Hong Kong after which we moved to Beijing, China, to open our own Chabad House.

People living in democratic countries have a hard time understanding the repression in China. The army is everywhere. Visas are hardly ever given to rabbis. Our home and phone are most certainly bugged. Meat, dairy and wine are illegal to import, mail is opened and appliances are heavily taxed. The closest mikva is a 4-hour flight.

There is a Chinese joke that says that the Chinese will eat everything with four legs except the table, and everything that flies except a plane! Living in China, I saw this first hand at the market.

In a country where the average person buys one small bunch of greens and a few small mushrooms, a person wanting anything more than two potatoes is looked upon as strange. So you can imagine the attention I get when I ask for 25 cucumbers, 10 heads of lettuce, 65 potatoes, 12 onions, and 40 carrots. I've become a regular sight at the market (they refer to me as "fang la" i.e. crazy), but I have made some friends as well. After all, I may be fang la

but I'm also a good, paying customer!

From the start, one of my biggest challenges was the language, so I signed up for Chinese lessons. I discovered that one word can mean many things depending on the tone used. For example: "Ma" is "mother," "linen," "horse," "scold." It all depends on the tone in which you say "Ma."

I can now hold a basic conversation in Chinese, do my shopping without too much frustration, and am learning to read and write. As part of my children's home schooling, a Chinese-language teacher teaches them twice a week.

The Beijing Jewish Community has approximately 700 Jews. Two hundred are Israeli, 250 are American/European and 250 are Russian; every event has to be in at least three languages.

We arrived in Beijing right before the High Holidays, so our first Rosh Hashana was small. But, thank G-d, things picked up quickly.

I decided to start a monthly women's Rosh Chodesh group. When twelve women attended, I was flying. But then, in the middle of the event, an even more amazing thing happened.

We went around the room to introduce ourselves. Eventually it was Roberta's turn. "You all know me so I will tell you something about me that you do not know. This past year was the worst year of my life. When I heard that Chabad was coming, I was devastated. You are all happy that Shimon and Dini are here but I am the happiest of all! I only regret wasting a year of my life in dreading their coming," she concluded. Roberta has become one of our staunchest allies and a dear friend.

With the High Holidays over and our first Rosh Chodesh group a success, we started planning Chanuka. We prepared for 30-50 people.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, the bell rang and we never closed the door after that. Before we knew it there were over 150 people. Everyone kept saying, "Only Chabad could bring the whole community together."

For Purim, we organized a great party, highlighted by the reading of the Megila (Scroll of Esther) and food, of course. This time we were prepared for

the nearly 200 people who came. One woman thanked my husband, saying that she had grown up in Israel and had always celebrated Purim with parties and merriment, but had never heard the Megila read. She did not know that listen to the Megila is an integral part of the holiday.

A few days before Passover, we arranged the first-ever Bar Mitzva on the Great Wall of China. It was an emotional, beautiful Bar Mitzva, and the locals really enjoyed the show. As all the men were wrapped in tallit and tefilin, a group of El Al flight attendants walked onto the wall. They were shocked to find a Bar Mitzva going on. Of course they all joined us, and partook of the bagels and cream cheese afterward.

Next came Passover. We decided to use the beautiful, elegant hotel nearby for our seder. We rented one of their rooms to prepare in, and we transformed the room into a full scale kitchen/factory. The hotel staff was horrified. In contrast, the people at the market could not believe their luck. In one day, they made the money they usually make in two years. We had 150 people at our first seder, so we had the last laugh.

After Sunday school one week I was getting into a separate taxi from the rest of my family. Roberta looked at me and my little suitcase and asked if I was running away from home. On a whim, I confided to her that I was going to the closest mikva, in Hong Kong, seven hours door-to-door. She was shocked that I had to travel so far and told me she was sure we could do something locally. True to her word, she set up a meeting with the head of our apartment complex. They owed her U.S. \$10,000 and a favor and she was going to use them both to get a mikva built in Beijing.

My husband and Roberta went to a meeting with the owners of our complex. We had plans drawn up by Rabbi Meir Posen and, with G-d's help, we will soon finalize the details and start to build the first mikva on mainland China.

Oh, and in answer to that question that I asked at the beginning. There can be only one answer: A passion and burning desire to reach out to one's fellow Jew as an emissary (shlich) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

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### WEEKLY VIDEO



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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## In Defense of Geocentrism

I was pleased to note that you were good enough to publish my letter regarding the question "Does the earth revolve around the sun or vice versa?" which your columnist has discussed in recent issues.

I would have been content to leave it there, were it not for the fact that in the meantime the question was dealt with again by your columnist, and I regret to say that I noted several inaccuracies in this new statement which came under "Editor's Note" (in reply to another correspondent).

I read with great surprise the view cited in the said Editor's Note to the effect that the fact that we can calculate beforehand the time of the eclipse of the moon and of the sun, as well as calculate the orbits of space flights, etc., support the theory that the earth is moving around the sun and not vice versa. This is a most amazing argument, especially and inasmuch as it is well known that the calculations relating to the eclipses of the moon and the sun were made thousands of years before Copernicus. Moreover, one of the tables used in the calculations was that of Ptolemy, whose theory was that the sun was revolving around the earth.

I also fail to understand another line of reasoning in your Editor's Note, to the effect that when the astronauts orbited around the earth they experienced day and night every few hours, etc. This has no relevance whatever to the question of whether the sun is revolving around the earth or vice versa, but to the fact which is undisputed by anyone, namely that all of us traveling on earth can experience day and night at different intervals, regardless of whether the sun travels around the earth or vice versa. Of course, anyone circulating the earth at a great speed would experience day and night every few hours, but it has no bearing on our point of issue.

Similarly with the assertion of your editor that modern scientists can calculate the position of various planets, etc., has anything to do with the question under discussion. The position and movement of the planets were also well known before Copernicus. The only difference is that with the advancement of technology and the perfection of instruments, etc., it was possible to discover new planets, and to attain a greater accuracy with regard to the movement of the heavenly bodies, but this has no bearing on our issue.

To bring the space flights, etc., into this discussion is both confusing and misleading. As a matter of fact, if we are to deduce any proof from the attainment of success in regard to space flights, any proof that does have a bearing on our issue, "the shoe is on the other foot." For these orbital calculations, and the speed which has been possible to attain recently in spaceflights, have been made possible on the basis of the theory of relativity—in other words, on the basis of the presently accepted scientific view (in accordance with this theory) that where two bodies in space are in motion relative to one another, it is impossible scientifically to ascertain which revolves around which, or which is stationary and the other in motion. Therefore, to say that there is, or can be, "scientific proof" that the earth revolves around the sun is quite an unscientific and uncritical statement.

For the sake of clarification of this issue, I trust that you will be good enough to publish this letter also, and many thanks in anticipation.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

### To the Mother of a Child with Autism

**Question:** After our daughter was born, my husband and I didn't have children for 10 long years. Then we were finally blessed with a beautiful boy. I had big plans for him. He was going to be a doctor, maybe a rabbi, maybe both. He was going to marry a lovely Jewish girl and give me many beautiful grandchildren.

Well, my plan is not working out. I had big plans for him. My son, now five years old, was diagnosed with severe autism a year ago. He is five years old and nonverbal. He is five years old and cannot dress himself. He is five years old and uses diapers around the clock. He is five years old and cannot communicate with signs or pictures, as it is all too complicated for him. He communicates by screaming or crying or kicking or grabbing what he wants.

I am infinitely sad. He will never get married and have children, let alone be a doctor or rabbi. My dream of having nachat (pride) from my son is shattered. Do you have any wisdom to share with a broken and exhausted mother?

**Answer:** I read your words and I can hear the anguish in your voice. Even if I can find some wisdom to share, it may not be able to counter that anguish. Intellect does not always speak to emotion.

But I am sure you have moments when you stand a little apart from that anguish, and at those moments you can gain perspective. It is toward this perspective that I will try to contribute.

Your son was entrusted to you, and specifically to you. G-d knew exactly what He was doing when He chose you to be this boy's mother. It's not a punishment—it's a blessing. But that doesn't mean it's easy.

Children are not given to us to be ours. They are our responsibility, not our property. Our job is to provide for their spiritual, emotional and physical needs to the best of our ability.

What we receive in return are beautiful and profound gifts. These gifts can come in several forms. And not always are the gifts what we expected.

Some children give the gift of nachat. When our children excel at school, in their professions, in their relationships and in their contributions to the world, it reflects on us, and we gain deep satisfaction from them.

But some children do not give that sort of nachat. They don't accomplish the milestones and cannot achieve the successes reached by others. These children give us something else entirely.

They shift our paradigms. They teach us new ways of loving and giving. They push our limits and extend our horizons. They demand from us a more unconditional and altruistic type of love. And they give us a gift that is more precious and hard-earned than nachat.

They give us depth.

Your dear son has presented you with a challenge, one that you did not ask for: to redefine what it means to be a mother, what it means to have a child, what it means to love, and indeed what it means to live in this world. Are we here to enjoy, or are we here to toil? Is pleasure the most important thing, or is meaning and purpose? What counts more, what I receive or what I contribute? Am I here just for me, or am I here to serve?

You have the power to answer these questions, by being the mother that only you can be to your son.

I am not saying you are lucky. I am not saying I envy you. I am not saying you have nothing to complain about. I am saying that you have a choice.

You can allow your disappointment and sorrow to eat you up, erode your marriage, sideline your healthy daughter and breed more resentment toward your son. You will be justified in doing this. No one can blame you. And no one will gain anything.

Or you can choose to look deeply at yourself and say: I am up to this. I am going to be the mother that G-d wants me to be. There will be moments of heartache and a lot of hard work. But this is my life. Maybe not the life I expected, but the life expected of me.

Doctors and rabbis can do a lot of good. But there is nothing more powerful than the good that can come to the world through the innocent soul of a boy, and the mother who loves him unconditionally.

I wish you strength and blessing.

## A WORD

from the Director

*"There were no greater festivals in Israel than the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur," the Mishna tells us. The 15th of Av corresponds this year to Friday, July 27. What is so special about the 15th of Av that it is singled out together with Yom Kippur from all the other festivals?*

*A number of special events throughout Jewish history took place on the 15th of Av. They were: 1) The tribe of Benjamin was permitted once again to marry the remainder of the Jewish people; 2) The Generation of the Desert ceased to die; they had previously been condemned to perish in the desert because of the sin of the spies; 3) Hoshea Ben Elah removed the blockades that the rebel Jeroboam had set up to prevent the Jews from going to Jerusalem for the festivals; 4) The cutting of the wood for the Holy Altar was completed; 5) Permission was granted by the Romans to bury the slain of Betar.*

*These five events in themselves do not seem adequate enough reason to make the 15th of Av a festival greater than any other. There is another, all-encompassing reason.*

*The five festive events on the fifteenth of Av, are the counterpart to the five tragic events of Tisha B'Av - the day when the two Holy Temples were destroyed, signaling the start of the long exile we are still enduring - tragedies which were the result of the Jews' sins. Tisha B'Av is the nadir of Jewish physical and spiritual life. The 15th of Av transforms the negativity of Tisha B'Av to the greatest good - "there were no greater festivals in Israel than the fifteenth of Av." The ultimate goal of the tragedies of the month of Av is that they should be transformed into a greater good - the supreme festival of the 15th of Av.*

*But these tragedies are not without purpose. It is specifically after the awesome decline of Tisha B'Av that we can reach the loftiest heights, heights that would otherwise be inaccessible.*

*The common theme behind all the reasons for the 15th of Av is Ahavat Yisrael, the practice of which eradicates the cause of the exile, and therefore automatically the exile itself.*

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

**A Soul's Scream**

by Yrachmiel Tilles

I was in a concentration camp in Hungary, near the Romanian border, under the rule of the accursed Nazis. When their defeat was all but official, and the once-mighty German war machine was retreating in the face of the advancing Russian troops, rumors increased of the imminent arrival of the Russians. I and two others decided to attempt to escape from the sinister clasp of the Nazis and reach the hopefully nearby and presumably friendlier arms of the Russians before the Germans could catch us.

Our plan was to sneak over at twilight, one by one, to the corral at the edge of the camp where the horses were kept. Then, as soon as it became dark, we would run as fast as we could into the nearby forest. The plot was fraught with danger and we well understood that if apprehended we would immediately be hanged, but the temptation of possible success outweighed our fear. We prepared ourselves in eager anticipation and waited, day after day, for the right moment to execute our plan.

One evening, the guards seemed lax in their attention. We decided that this was it! Carefully, we slipped over to the corral in intervals. Each of us carried a brush for grooming the horses. If anyone stopped us, we would say we had come to care for the animals.

As soon as it became dark, we sprinted toward the forest. Much to our relief, no alarm was raised. No one had even noticed! Nevertheless, we knew we didn't have much time until our disappearance would become known and the pursuit would begin. So when we reached the forest, we decided to keep running for as long as our strength would hold out in the direction we desperately estimated that the Russians were coming.

For several hours we trotted through the thick forest. Suddenly we heard frightening sounds from behind us, in the distance. Quickly we climbed as high as we could into three nearby tall trees, and waited nervously for what fate would bring.

The sounds became louder as their source drew closer. It was the barking of dogs! After a while, we saw German soldiers pounding down the route we had taken, with ferocious dogs on leashes. Thank heaven, neither soldiers nor animals noticed us as they whipped past our trees and continued deeper into the forest.

The leaves on the branches of our lofty perches were fluttering in the chilly night wind, and we too were shaking-but with fear. Nevertheless, we dared to hope that the Nazi beasts would not expend much more time hunting for us: the chances of finding us in the pitch darkness of the forest were too slim, and they would have to worry about running into the advancing Soviet troops. And so it was. After an hour or two, we saw them heading back in the direction of the camp.

Even after they were gone, we remained in our trees for another length of time, until we were absolutely convinced that none of our pursuers had remained in the area. Only then did we carefully descend to the ground, and resume trekking into the heart of the forest. Although we were already weak and exhausted, we pushed ourselves to keep moving until daylight penetrated the dense green overhead. Then, after some looking about, we found a well-hidden pit where, on the verge of imminent collapse, we felt confident enough to curl up and sleep.

At dusk, we emerged from our place of concealment and began to walk again. For three days we traveled by night and slept during the day, sustaining ourselves with berries that grew wild in the forest.

Towards morning of the fourth day, we spotted in the distance a

clearing in the forest, with a house rooted firmly in the middle of it. We approached it as silently and inconspicuously as we could, and spied it from all sides. We didn't detect any signs of life whatsoever. Convincing each other that it was safe, we gathered our nerve and entered.

After exploring every room, we concluded that the house was indeed abandoned. We went up to the roof and spread out thin mattresses of straw. After three days in the forest, we were overjoyed to be able to pamper our weary bones and rest properly. Exhausted and physically broken, within a few minutes all three of us were sound asleep in a deep slumber.

I don't know how many hours we slept, but our waking was instantaneous and frightening. The door crashed loudly open with a kick! If it was Germans, we were doomed. Even if they were Russian soldiers, it might not help us much; they tended to shoot first and ask questions only afterwards.

As we bolted upright, I heard a scream of "Sh'ma Yisrael," followed immediately by a quick order barked in Russian. Three Russian officers appeared in our line of vision, led by an officer. The muzzles of their rifles were aimed directly at our foreheads.

We froze. It took me a few seconds to sort out my perceptions, whereupon I realized that the piercing shout of "Sh'ma Yisrael" had come from Bernhard, while the order in Russian had burst forth from the officer.

It turned out that they were a patrol whose job was to hunt for German soldiers trying to escape or in hiding. The commanding officer was actually a Jewish doctor, who was serving in the Russian army. As soon as he heard "Sh'ma Yisrael," he had instinctively roared the command, "Hold your fire."

Amazing! Bernhard's cry from the depths of his soul had saved our three lives. The most surprising thing was that he, unlike myself and our other companion, was a totally non-religious assimilated Jew! In fact, only his mother was Jewish, which had made him "just half-Jewish" in the eyes of our cruel captors, and as such wore a white ribbon on his arm instead of a yellow one.

To this day, two questions from this harrowing turning point in my life gnaw at my mind. Why didn't the quick-triggered Russians shoot us as soon as they spotted us on the roof? And how could it be that Bernhard, an assimilated Jew in his own eyes as well as in everyone else's, was the one who cried out "Sh'ma" so quickly and instinctively?

I guess I'll never know. But one thing I certainly learned from that incredible episode: hidden in the heart of every Jew, no matter how assimilated, is an extraordinary Jewish soul, waiting to assert itself at that moment of truth.

**PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL**

Moses tells the people of Israel how he implored G-d to allow him to enter the Land of Israel, but G-d refused, instructing him instead to ascend a mountain and see the Promised Land.

Continuing his "review of the Torah," Moses describes the Exodus from Egypt and the Giving of the Torah, declaring them unprecedented events in human history. "Has there ever occurred this great thing, or has the likes of it ever been heard? Did ever a people hear the voice of G-d speaking out of the midst of the fire . . . and live? . . . You were shown, to know, that the L-rd is G-d . . . there is none else beside Him."

Moses predicts that in future generations the people will turn away from G-d, worship idols, and be exiled from their land and scattered amongst the nations; but from there they will seek G-d, and return to obey His commandments.

Our Parshah also includes a repetition of the Ten Commandments, and the verses of the Shema, which declare the fundamentals of the Jewish faith: the unity of G-d ("Hear O Israel: the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is one"); the mitzvot to love G-d, to study His Torah, and to bind "these words" as tefillin on our arms and heads, and inscribe them in the mezuzot affixed on the doorposts of our homes.

**CANDLE LIGHTING**



	Shabbos 27 - 28 July	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	5:11	6:11
Adelaide	5:12	6:11
Brisbane	4:59	5:54
Darwin	6:21	7:13
Gold Coast	4:56	5:52
Perth	5:19	6:16
Sydney	4:54	5:52
Canberra	4:59	5:58
Launceston	4:53	5:56
Auckland	5:13	6:13
Wellington	5:03	6:06
Hobart	4:49	5:53
Byron Bay	4:54	5:50

**CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH**

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

**PARSHAS VA'ESCHANAN  
15 MENACHEM AV • 27 JULY**

<b>FRIDAY NIGHT:</b>	MINCHA	5.20 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	5.45 PM
<b>SHABBOS DAY:</b>	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9.53 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	FAST BEGINS:	5.05 PM
<b>WEEKDAYS:</b>	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	5.20 PM
	MAARIV	6.05 PM