

LAMPLIGHTER

6 Elul
Parshas
Shoftim
1361
17 August
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Manipulation

By Elisha Greenbaum

I have a friend who is a physical therapist, specializing in infants' care. I was fascinated when she told me her opinion that Jewish infants from religious backgrounds have above average ability in manipulating tiny objects; clutching them between their fingers and then releasing them on request. She reckons that rather than being due to any innate, natural ability, this skill is a direct consequence of the practice these children have in gripping coins and then placing them in a charity box.

I doubt that any scientist has ever run a double-blind study comparing and contrasting kids from various backgrounds and correlating those results against frequency of charitable giving, and I couldn't find anything about it on Google, but it is certainly interesting to speculate. We do believe in training our children to give charity from a young age. We try to ingrain habits and attitudes even in infancy, so that when they're old enough to understand what they're doing, they'll keep up the practice.

I read an article wherein someone describes his return journey to tradition. He told of going for a walk with his religious host family one afternoon; the adults deep in conversation, the kids running on ahead. Suddenly they saw the four-year-old on her hands and knees, scrabbling for something on the ground. All excited she came running back to her parents; "Look mummy and daddy, I found charity!"

"I was shocked," said the author. "The kid wasn't excited about finding a coin on the street so that she could buy lollies, but so that she could give charity. When I saw how even a child can be educated with this disposition, I decided then and there that I wanted the same for my future family."

The Torah describes man as the "tree of the fields." I've personally never understood the analogy. Why a tree, of all things? What character traits, life experiences or growth-ring patterns can a tree achieve to compare to ourselves?

But there is one comparison that does bear fruit: even the tiniest influence on a plant while in its developmental stage has dramatic affect on future growth. Whereas a mature tree can stand unbowed against the winds of change and the toxic influences of pollution, a juvenile plant is far more vulnerable. Providing positive stimuli will result in proud, upstanding and fertile trees, while any negative influences, no matter how slight, will have drastic consequences on future yields.

We can have the same affect on our children. Provide them with suitable nourishment and positive examples and they'll thrive, developing into the proud face of our future. Train them to empathize with others, to give to other people and charitable causes and, when they mature, they will provide shade and sustenance for all those in need.

However, if we stunt their growth, provide bad examples and inappropriate breeding conditions, they're prone to degenerate into nothing but sterile decay.

At a tender age, even the slightest negative impression can have drastic consequences, and it is up to us, the parents and guardians, to plant and prune judiciously, cultivating a prized crop for future enjoyment.

Slice of LIFE

Four Days in Brussels

My name is Meir Zeiler. My business is manufacturing and selling velvet fabric. I live in Kiryat Malachi in the south of Israel and travel extensively around the world for trade fairs and exhibitions to market our products. For 25 years I made business or exhibition trips outside of Israel only after consulting with the Lubavitcher Rebbe and, thank G-d, I've experienced great success in these efforts.

During flights and exhibits there's plenty of free time, and I take advantage of it for the Rebbe's Tefillin Campaign [which began during the Six Day War in 1967]. When setting up exhibits I always arrange a small cubicle for myself to which I can invite Jews to put on tefillin conveniently, and drink light beverages if they wish. I've kept up this custom through the years, and in this too I've met success. Generally speaking, Jews relate to me as a solid businessman, and when they meet me personally, they discover someone proud of his Jewishness, with a full beard. I've always felt that in this way I'm able to add some holiness to the world.

In late 1994 we learned of an international textile exhibition to be held in Brussels for four days, two days of which coincided with Rosh HaShanah. That left one-and-a half days for a presentation. I felt very uncertain about participating: the sum needed to set up a pavilion and pay the staff, plus hotel accommodations, would be in the vicinity of \$30,000.

In situations like this I always directed my questions to the Rebbe through Rabbi Binyamin Klein [one of the Rebbe's main secretaries], so once again I turned to him first for advice. Rabbi Klein's response was that the Rebbe always encouraged me to participate in exhibitions, and thank G-d I've always been successful. "Go along your time-proven path," he said. "For sure you'll succeed as you have until now."

I took the advice, got organized, and set out. Armed with an additional pair of tefillin, a shofar, a Machzor, and a

stockpile of kosher food, we opened our exhibit in Brussels.

In the afternoon hours of erev Rosh HaShanah, we arranged to close our pavilion and adjust the curtain with a sign: Closed for the Jewish New Year, plus a notice that the stall would be closed two days. As we were finishing, a man, who appeared about 70, accompanied by a woman (his wife, we presumed), came toward us.

As he became aware of the sign and the closed curtain, he looked angrily at my staff people and yelled: "What! What's going on here? Who closes an exhibit for something as trivial as this? No one in 1994 relates seriously to Rosh HaShanah!" - His anger and volume increasing with each passing moment.

I came out from the pavilion when I heard all the noise outside, and introduced myself as the one in charge. "How can I help you?" I asked him.

I barely finished the sentence, when he exploded at me in a torrent of Yiddish: "Who on earth appointed you to close an exhibit because of some insignificant Jewish holiday?! In the world of the 90s who still believes in this lunacy! Days of Judgment? What we went through in Poland - myself, and my family who were destroyed on Rosh HaShanah in Auschwitz' ovens- confirms one thing only: There's no judgment; there's no judge! Drop this craziness! Throw it away! Leave your exhibit open, stay here, and let's sit down to do some business."

"I want to tell you something," I said to him, putting my hand on his shoulder. "There is a judgment, and there is a judge. Every last one of my family was also murdered in the Holocaust. But specifically doing this, closing on Rosh HaShanah - is my revenge against Hitler, on the Days of Judgment. And specifically because there is a judgment and a judge, I'm going to do yet another mitzvah and help you put on tefillin. Here, inside...."

That set him boiling again: "What! Tefillin? We left those back there. What worth, what point has any of this after the Holocaust?! How you waste your time...."

This time I cut him off. "Come. Let's talk," I told him. "I'll worry about my time. You saw I didn't react when you wasted my staff's time. Come. Nothing compares to putting on tefillin in the final hours before Rosh HaShanah, the Day of Judgment."

He is furious: "Forget it!" he bellows, but he follows me inside nevertheless.

Finally we're standing alone in my cubicle, away from the crowd gathered around the exhibit. Suddenly he's compliant, like a child. He rolls up his left sleeve; I take the tefillin and start putting them on him, and he repeats after me word by word: Baruch Atah...tefillin.

When he starts reciting the Shema Yisrael prayer [which twice mentions the commandment of tefillin], I turn away for a moment to answer a phone call from abroad. In the middle of the conversation I see him from the corner of my eye break down crying like a child, his whole body shaking. Then he stops. He can't finish the Shema, and sits down completely drained, stammering, "I can't...I can't." He's sobbing, "It's too much...I can't any more," and his hand moves over his heart.

It was a while before he calmed down. Someone brought him some cold water to wash his face, and a cup of tea. His wife, standing by him the whole time, was stunned, speechless; the crowd surrounded us, staring, tense.

When he was composed I asked him what he did; what brought him to the exhibit. He told me his name was Lieberman, and said that at the age of 18 he had gone through the Holocaust. He managed to survive, and reach Chile, where the Jewish community put him back on his feet. But he fled from anything with the faintest scent of Judaism.

"For 55 years I've avoided all this," he said. "I raised a small family, and didn't worry about passing along any Jewish values. I live in an exclusive gentile area. I built up a fish canning factory, and I'm quite successful in production and marketing.

"A few days ago the strangest feeling came over me. I felt a need, an internal push, to do something, that I couldn't explain to myself. Without a great deal of thought, I decided to take a trip, and try my hand at opening some new business. I haven't any idea at all how I wound up at this exhibition, and I have no explanation why I put on tefillin...."

He finished speaking, and disappeared into the milling crowds. I stood there, awed by the Divine Guidance that takes a Jewish fish merchant from a deep abyss in Chile all the way to a Brussels textile exhibit - to wake up his Jewish spark, and put on tefillin.

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Torah and Space Technology

By the Grace of G-d
Prof. Zeev Greene

It was a pleasure to see you recently with your family.

Pursuant to our conversation and my question if you had any connections with NASA, I do not have in mind about a position with that agency, but rather if there was any possibility of your exercising your good influence there in regard to spreading Yiddishkeit.

What prompted me to ask this question was the fact that I had recently received the book *Challenge—Torah Views on Science and Its Problems*, edited by Aryeh Carmell and Cyril Domb (published by Feldheim).

I was certain that I would find in this book an essay by you, but I was disappointed.

Needless to say—and it is a well known principle—that it is no use crying over the past. If I mention my said disappointment, it is not to make you feel uncomfortable, but to call your attention to the fact that since there will no doubt be a further book of this kind, it would be well for you to maintain contact with the persons or circles that are connected with it so that you would have advance notice to be able to participate.

Furthermore, I am not thinking in terms of the distant future, but also of the shorter term, and the sooner the better. For, if you will look through this volume, you will no doubt find something to say to the editors, especially as among the contributors you will probably find some whom you know personally.

I mention NASA, etc., because Yiddishkeit should be brought to each and every Jew, particularly in the current year of Torah Chinuch, when everyone is urged to do the utmost to bring the Torah and Mitzvoth to all Jews, young and old, including those who are advanced in years but still young in the knowledge and experience of Yiddishkeit.

All the more so since space technology, and the space flights, including the latest Viking probes on Mars, have made a profound impression upon wide circles of Jews, being also constantly bombarded by the media with the visual effects of photographs, etc. Consequently, if all this can be used in the right direction, by finding and pointing out those aspects which may have a bearing on Torah and Mitzvoth, the psychological effect in promoting the actual observance of Mitzvoth in the daily life could be tremendous. This would be well in keeping with the directive "Chanoch lenaar al pi darko, gam ki yazkin lo yasur minenah. Inasmuch as you have had so much experience and Hatzlocho with various circles of Jewish youth, there is no need to elaborate to you on the above.

May G-d bestow His blessings on you and yours in a most generous measure, especially that you and your wife should bring up each and all of your children to a life of Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds, in good health and happy circumstances.

Wishing you and all yours Kesivo vaChasimo Tovvo.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

Is G-d Needy? He Expects Us to Pray 3 Times Daily!

Question: My family very much enjoyed being at your Shabbat table; thanks again for the invite. I meant to ask you a question that has bothered me for years. It's about prayer. Does G-d have such an ego problem that He demands His creations to constantly pray to Him, telling Him how great He is? Not to mention the all the blessings every time we eat something, go to the bathroom, wash for bread, light Shabbat candles... Is G-d so needy that He asks us to continuously bless Him?

Answer: We loved having your wonderful family over. You should be very proud of them all.

But one thing disturbed me. Your children behaved really well, but I am a little concerned about your wife.

Every time your wife gave your son anything, like a piece of chicken, a drink or a toy to play with, she insisted that he say thank you to her.

Your son acquiesced, and each time she told him to, he said thank you. This went on throughout the meal, at least a dozen times.

This is a worry. Is your wife so insecure that she needs her son to constantly acknowledge her? Is it normal to almost force someone to thank you for even basic needs like food and drink, just to build up one's own ego?

I think you get my point...

Your wife was being an exemplary mother, teaching her children a valuable lesson on gratitude and humility: when you are given something, big or small, you must acknowledge the giver. Her request to be thanked was not for herself; it was for her children. She got nothing out of her son's thanks, other than the pride in seeing her child developing his character. But your son was learning a precious lesson.

Like a devoted parent who wants the best for His children, G-d trains us to thank Him. He doesn't need our thanks so much as we need to thank Him. Because everything we have, including life itself, is a gift. The minute we forget that, the minute we take even the simplest pleasures for granted, we stop living a life of wonder.

Parents who do not impart the trait of appreciation to their children are not only making life difficult for themselves, they are robbing their children of a basic tool for life. Only when we see everything as a gift can we be happy with what we have, rather than miserable about what we don't have.

So we should thank G-d for everything, even for asking us to thank Him. Gratitude is a gift too.

A WORD

from the Director

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Have your mezuzot checked soon. If you don't have mezuzot or you need more, purchase them from a reputable Judaica store or certified scribe. Or call your local Chabad-Lubavitch center for more info.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED



Saved by a Match

By Yerachmiel Tilles

Towards the end of 1930s, Poland was under rule of a semi-fascist clique called the "Government of Colonels." During this period the Jewish community, which constituted approximately ten percent of Poland's total population, was in an extremely precarious position. New edicts were being issued daily, edicts which were strangling the economic and cultural life of the Jewish minority.

After Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, the Poles were only too happy to step up their acts of anti-Semitism. One very popular ploy was to accuse a Jew of insulting the Polish people or the Polish government. The accused would be brought before a judge, usually an anti-Semite himself, who would almost always sentence the Jew to a lengthy prison term.

The Polish Treasury Department also had a hand in reducing the Jews to financial ruin. Its officers routinely interpreted the laws in a manner which served to economically break Jewish merchants and artisans. When, as often happened, a Jew was unable to meet the excessive taxes, a tax collector would come to his home or place of business and confiscate his merchandise and household furnishings.

In 1935, in the tiny village of Kreszowice, near Cracow, there lived a Jew by the name of Israel Weiner. It happened that he fell behind with his tax payments, and his home was visited by the tax collector, accompanied by a policeman. They had come to requisition his belongings in lieu of the unpaid taxes.

Among Israel Weiner's possessions was his greatly valued sewing machine. When not in use, it was draped with a linen cover adorned by an embroidered white eagle, the Polish national emblem. The tax collector ordered Weiner to lift this cover so that he and his companion could inspect what was beneath it. When they were through, Weiner lowered the cover back onto the smooth surface but, in his nervousness, did not take care to center it properly and one side hung down lower than the other. Within a few moments the cover began to slip and soon, unnoticed by Weiner, it was on the floor.

The tax collector ordered Weiner to show him another piece of furniture. As Weiner began to cross the room, followed by the two men, his foot caught hold of the crumpled cover on the floor, and he stepped on the cloth.

"Aha!" cried the policeman gleefully. "See how this Jew treats they symbol of his country!" Despite Israel Weiner's pleas and explanations, despite his pointing out that he used the cloth decorated with the Polish national symbol to cover his most prized possession, charges were drawn up and he was summoned to court.

A day was set for the trial, and a magistrate appointed. To Weiner's dismay, the judge was a notorious anti-Semite, and he knew that the probability of a severe sentence was high.

On the eve of the trial, the nervous and depressed defendant went to the Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Bentzion Halberstam, for a blessing. Weeping profusely, he told the rebbe his woeful story. The rebbe gave his blessing, expressing his hope and belief that

G-d would help the desperate man, and then added some very strange instructions.

"Tomorrow, when you go to court," the rebbe said, "take with you a matchbox containing only one match. Then, when you notice a member of the court taking out a cigar or a cigarette during the proceedings you, Israel, will step forward and offer him your matchbox."

Weiner was puzzled until the rebbe explained the rest of the plan, and

advised him to inform his lawyer about it. "You have nothing to lose, and much to gain," said the rebbe.

The next day at court, as expected, the public prosecutor released his venom on the trembling Jew.

"Would you dare tread upon your Holy Scroll?" he challenged, his voice full of thunder. "For such a disrespectful act against his country, this man deserves the maximum sentence under the law!"

As the prosecutor continue to rant, the judge, becoming excited at the prospect of meting out a harsh punishment to this helpless Jew, began to fumble in his pocket for a cigarette. Israel, alert to such a move as he had been instructed, quickly stepped forward and offered his matchbox - containing only one match - to the judge. Absent-mindedly, the judge accepted the matchbox, lit his cigarette and tossed the empty matchbox into the waste basket.

However, in those days all matches were distributed solely by the Polish government, so every matchbox bore the emblem of the Polish national eagle. The defense lawyer, who had been waiting for this moment, jumped out of his seat. "Your honor," he cried, "I must bring a very urgent matter to your attention!"

All eyes were on him. How dare he interrupt the proceeding with such an outburst? In a ringing voice, the lawyer for the defense continued his bid for attention. "The honor of our national symbol, the Polish white eagle, has been insulted in this very room, only a moment ago!" he boomed.

As everyone stared at him in astonishment, he continued. "Look into the waste basket! You will see the image of the Polish white eagle imprinted on a matchbox, amidst the refuse. The honor of our beloved country is at stake! And it is His Honor, the magistrate himself, who is guilty of this violation!"

Stifled laughter was heard from the back of the courtroom, and then the laughter became louder and the audience began to applaud.

The defendant then sprang up, wringing his hands, and cried out, "Your Honor, I am the father of small children! Please have mercy on me! I am a devout patriot; I cover my most cherished possession with our beloved national symbol. My stepping on the white eagle emblem that was on my sewing machine cover was no more an act of disrespect than was your casting an empty matchbox into the garbage!"

The room was silent for a moment, the judge shifted in his seat. "Case dismissed!" he said.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Moses instructs the people of Israel to appoint judges and law enforcement officers in every city. "Justice, justice shall you pursue," he commands them, and you must administer it without corruption or favoritism. Crimes must be meticulously investigated and evidence thoroughly examined—a minimum of two credible witnesses is required for conviction and punishment.

In every generation, says Moses, there will be those entrusted with the task of interpreting and applying the laws of the Torah. "According to the law that they will teach you, and the judgment they will instruct you, you shall do; you shall not turn away from the thing that they say to you, to the right nor to the left."

Shoftim also includes the prohibitions against idolatry and sorcery; laws governing the appointment and behavior of a king; and guidelines for the creation of "cities of refuge" for the inadvertent murderer. Also set forth are many of the rules of war: the exemption from battle for one who has just built a home, planted a vineyard, married, or is "afraid and soft-hearted"; the requirement to offer terms of peace before attacking a city; and the prohibition against wanton destruction of something of value, exemplified by the law that forbids to cut down a fruit tree when laying siege (in this context the Torah makes the famous statement, "For man is a tree of the field").

The Parshah concludes with the law of the eglah arufah—the special procedure to be followed when a person is killed by an unknown murderer and his body is found in a field—which underscores the responsibility of the community and its leaders not only for what they do, but also for what they might have prevented from being done.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 17 - 18 August	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	5:28	6:27
Adelaide	5:28	6:25
Brisbane	5:09	6:03
Darwin	6:24	7:15
Gold Coast	5:07	6:01
Perth	5:33	6:28
Sydney	5:09	6:05
Canberra	5:15	6:12
Launceston	5:14	6:15
Auckland	5:30	6:28
Wellington	5:23	6:24
Hobart	5:11	6:13
Byron Bay	5:06	6:00

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS SHOFTIM • 6 ELUL • 17 AUGUST

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA KABBOLAS SHABBOS	5:35 PM 6:00 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA SHACHARIS MINCHA:	9:41 AM 10:00 AM 5:25 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS MINCHA MAARIV	8:00/9:15/10:00 AM 5:35 PM 6:20 PM