

# LAMPLIGHTER

20 Elul  
Parshas  
Ki Savo  
**1363**  
31 August  
5778/2018

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion, Ki Tavo, begins with a detailed account of the mitzva of bikurim, "first fruits." The Jewish farmer was required to bring the select fruits of his crops to the Holy Temple to show his gratitude to G-d for the blessing of the land.

The precept of bikurim had various restrictions. It applied only in the Holy Land and only when the Temple was in existence. It was limited to one who owned a parcel of particularly fertile land. It was also restricted in its time of application, for the declaration of bikurim could only be made from Shavuot (late Spring) to Sukot (Fall).

Yet the precept of the "first fruits," despite its seemingly narrow application, contains a broadly applicable lesson: We are to take from the "first of the fruits of the earth" and bring them to the Kohain - priest. We are to dedicate the best of our material matters to sanctity. As Maimonides writes: "When one gives food to the needy, he should give the best and most delectable of his table; with the best of his wardrobe should he clothe the naked, and when he builds a house of worship he should render it more beautiful than his own dwelling, as it is written "all the best...is to the Alm-ghty."

The first-fruits were not burned on the altar where the physical nature would be annulled, where their materiality would be consumed and transformed into the spirituality of G-dliness. Rather the fruits were given to the Kohain to eat. In this fashion they were elevated and dedicated to a higher purpose. Similarly, our approach in life is not to "nullify" the material but to imbue it with sanctity while still remaining in its lowly material state.

One further point: the farmer is obligated to bring "...from the first of all the fruits of the earth, etc.," not all the fruits. The idea is not that the person should give away all the fruits of his labor to the sanctuary. Most of the fruits were to remain in his possession, including also some exceedingly good fruits, and only a small portion of them - the best - given to the Kohain. The underlying idea was for the first-fruits to be a representative portion of the whole harvest; the sanctity of the bikurim donation was to affect, to permeate and elevate all the fruits remaining, just as a donation of tzedaka - charity, brings an element of consecration or sanctity into all one's wealth.

## Get Back into Class!

*By Levi Avtzon*

You enjoyed preschool, you persevered through elementary school, you survived high school, and you even pulled yourself through college. Finally, you were done with study, and the time had come for you to enter the "real world" (wherever that is...).

When you walked out of the school building for the last time, and entered cloud nine where there are no classes, no strict teachers and no "How will algebra help me in my life?", you might have made a silent commitment to free yourself from the bondage of study for all eternity.

A recent study corroborates that this is what many of us do. It turns out that 1 in 4 Americans don't finish reading even one book in the course of a year! We're not only talking about scientific and religious tomes, but even novels and fun non-fiction books are sitting lonely in the storehouses of bankrupt publishers.

Tell me, isn't this a tragedy?

Jews have been called for centuries the People of the Book, and this was meant to be a compliment... We studied, we learned, we inquired, and we grew—all with the power of the Book.

Yes, of course there are many important things that need doing... Family obligations, working, and maintaining social ties all take up a lot of time. We try to be engaged, contributing members of our communities, and make the world a better place. But are we doing everything we need to do?

This week's Torah reading is titled Ki Tavo, "When you will settle." The message here is that there are times when we must settle, when we must come home, when we must forget about the world – the "real world" – and care about our own inner world.

It is not selfish to learn. It is a need. Just like one needs to eat, sleep, exercise (oy!), and spend time with family, so too there is a need to learn, to open our minds to new ideas, explore new horizons.

And, of course, when we say study, we primarily mean Torah study. Either in the good old-fashioned book form, or through the web, which is a treasure chest waiting to cater to your every Torah-academic whim.

Yes, I know you swore that you would never step foot into a class again, so with the power of the rabbinate bestowed upon me, I hereby annul your vow.

That said, get back into class.

# Slice of LIFE

## The Cabdriver

By Yaakov Brawer

The minchah, or afternoon, prayer is the shortest of the three daily services. Moreover, the time for this prayer often arrives while we are still immersed in our work. People are tired and busy, and it is difficult to divest oneself of the effects of a day at the office in order to generate proper intention and emotional involvement. Thus, little minchah often receives short shrift. Paradoxically, in spite of these seeming disadvantages, minchah is a uniquely sublime and transcendent service. In the chassidic view of things, it is invariably the small, the inconspicuous, the inconvenient action that is of greatest consequence. Although this concept is elucidated in holy books, the Almighty saw fit to teach it to me by devising circumstances in which I would learn it through an experience.

It has long been my privilege to speak at the Shabbaton held every year at the end of December in Crown Heights. I would usually arrive in New York on Thursday or Friday, and leave the following Sunday. I always scheduled my return flight to allow me the opportunity to join the Lubavitcher Rebbe's minyan (prayer quorum) for minchah on Sunday afternoon.

On one such occasion many years ago, I had arranged to fly back to Montreal at 4:30 PM. That Sunday morning, I began to worry about my return trip. I am a very nervous traveler, and I generally insist on being at the airport at least a full hour in advance of my flight. Why had I decided to leave so early? The Rebbe's minyan generally began at 3:15, and usually ended at 3:30. Allowing myself 15 minutes to return to where I was staying, I could leave for LaGuardia no earlier than 3:45.

What if traffic was heavy? What if a tire went flat? What if a tree had fallen across the Interboro Parkway, and it being Sunday, the road crews took their sweet time in removing it? I calmed myself with the thought that these possibilities were very unlikely, and that if I left at 3:45 sharp I would probably make my flight.

I then embarked on my yearly nerve-racking ritual of arranging for a ride to LaGuardia Airport. In those days there was only one car service in Crown Heights, and it was run by chassidim, a class of people for whom time means nothing. I walked into the storefront office and told them I wanted a car to take me to LaGuardia at 3:45. I emphasized (several times) that 3:45 does not mean 3:50, or even 3:46. I was not interested in approximations. The proprietor, in soothing tones, assured me of a car at precisely 3:45. They were professionals with considerable experience in this business, and there was absolutely nothing to worry about.

I started to leave, but I remembered something as I got to the door. I turned to the boss and asked him whether he wouldn't care to know the address to which the car should be sent. "Oh yes, of course, sorry." You see the sort of people I was dealing with.

By 3:00 PM I was packed into the little synagogue in which the Rebbe prayed minchah. Every student attending one of the two local yeshivahs, as well as numerous neighborhood residents and out-of-town guests, were competing for space in that small room. My bones ached and I couldn't breathe, but this did not trouble me. This was normal. What bothered me was the time. 3:15, 3:16, 3:17. At 3:20 the Rebbe came in, and minchah began. I tried to concentrate on my prayer, reminding myself that I was in the same minyan as my holy Rebbe. However, my overwrought brain simply would not mind. It perversely dwelt on my

imminent betrayal by the car service.

In the course of my struggles with myself, I became aware of a soft sobbing sound. I had already raced through my prayer, and I was able to glance sideways at my neighbor. He was a tall, thin, bearded man, dressed in chassidic garb. His eyes were closed and tears streamed down his cheeks. His face was intense with concentration. He prayed slowly and with obvious effort.

In spite of myself, I was touched. I could not imagine what sort of terrible trouble lay behind that heartfelt prayer. Perhaps he had a sick child at home, or some crushing financial burden. I assumed that he was an out-of-town visitor seeking the Rebbe's aid, and I could not help feeling guilty about my own silly preoccupations with the car service, the airport, etc. I mentally wished him the best and hoped that things would turn out well for him.

Minchah completed, I raced back to my host's home, and by 3:42 I was awaiting the promised car with fire in my eyes, certain that it would not show. At precisely 3:45, a noisy, rusty station wagon, belching blue exhaust, rolled up, and the driver waved me in. I couldn't believe it. I put my suitcase in the back and then climbed in next to the driver.

My second shock came with the realization that the driver was none other than my heartbroken neighbor at minchah. As we drove off, the driver hummed a jolly chassidic melody, and seemed quite happy. We began to talk. Cautiously I asked him about his welfare: his health, the health of his family and the state of his finances. Each question elicited a hearty (if somewhat perplexed) "Thank G-d." Moreover, his wife was soon due to give birth, and he was in a particularly excited and happy mood. Gradually, it began to dawn on me that the remarkable outpouring of the heart that I had witnessed earlier was this man's ordinary, daily minchah.

Published by **The Chabad House of Caulfield** in conjunction with the

**Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.**

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ISSUE 1363

### WEEKLY VIDEO



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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

In reply to your letter from the beginning of Elul in which you describe your health status, particularly with regard to your halitosis:

It is well known that according to our Torah, the Torah of Life, whenever there is anything concerning the body that needs to be improved, the improvement should be accomplished both in a physical as well as a spiritual manner.

With regard to the spiritual aspect: Be scrupulous in avoiding forbidden and uncalled for matters that relate to the mouth [and speech] and increase your permitted and laudable speech.

That is to say, avoid slanderous speech and idle chatter and [be more careful with regard to the kashrus of your] food and drink. With regard to the positive: Increase your words of Torah and prayer; increase as well your words of inspiration to others, strengthening them in their observance of Judaism — Torah and mitzvos.

The more particular you will be in increasing all the above, the more speedily you will heal [not only spiritually, but] physically as well. Also, seek the counsel of a medical specialist; see that he provides you with a proper diet and the proper medications, for it is entirely possible that your health issues result from a dysfunctional digestive tract. ...

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

### Does Global Warming Mean the End Is Near?

**Question:** *Could global warming be a sign that the Messiah is about to arrive? I learned that the Torah predicts that in the future the "covering of the sun" will be removed, and wicked people will melt in the intense heat. Maybe this is describing the hole in the ozone layer. Could this be true? Are we about to see the destruction of the wicked? (I'm not sure which side of that I'll end up on...)*

**Answer:** The Jewish view of the end of days differs greatly from other apocalyptic visions. It will not need to be violent, and there will be no need for more wars. Even the punishment of the wicked can happen by peaceful means.

The Talmudic teaching you mention illustrates this: "In the future, there will be no need for purgatory. G-d will remove the sun from its sheath. The righteous will be healed by it, and the wicked will be punished by it."

The "sheath of the sun" could be the atmosphere, the photosphere, the ozone layer, all of the above, or something else entirely, but the Talmud here is talking about a change in spiritual climate.

In Torah teachings, the sun represents G-d's light. In our current world, this light is hidden. Just as the sun has a sheath that covers it and filters its light, so too the laws of nature cover over G-d's light in the world. The divine hand is often hard to detect, and life can sometimes seem random and meaningless. G-d is there if you look for Him, but He can easily be missed, and the world can seem like a very dark place.

But one day soon, it will all make sense. When the Messiah comes, G-d will reveal Himself, His light will shine unblocked, the veil will be lifted, and we will see that it was His hand guiding the world all along. Nothing was random, nothing was a mistake, and everything was part of His ultimate plan.

This awareness will be a healing for the righteous. They always knew that G-d was there, and it pained them that He could not be seen. They will take pleasure in feeling G-d's closeness and seeing goodness prevail, which is what they dedicated their lives to achieve.

But for the wicked, it will be a punishment. When the truth is revealed, when the game is up, they will feel the pain of having wasted their lives on emptiness and triviality. The greatest punishment is to discover that you got it wrong, that you built our life on false ground and missed out on doing so much good.

The sun will shine. The question is, are you blocking the light or helping unveil the light? Is yours a life of enduring worth, or are you preoccupied with the pettiness that will one day melt away? The future is bright. You can help make it so.

## A WORD

from the Director

*In chapter four of Pirkei Avos our Sages counsel us to be "humble of spirit before every man."*

*As we are now in the midst of Elul, when our thoughts are focused on amending our ways before the New Year, this advice is especially timely. But how are we to implement our Sages' words? What can a person do to achieve humility?*

*In truth, there are two ways. The first involves reflecting on how we are not complete as lone individuals. Perfection is only possible as part of the sum total of the Jewish people, who are described as a "single upright body." In the human body, each and every limb performs a unique function without which the body cannot survive. For example, by providing it with mobility, the foot complements and completes the head. So too is it with the "body" of the Jewish people. No matter how high a level we may attain, we are always incomplete without our fellow Jews. Reminding ourselves of this truth will cause us to feel humble and indebted to others.*

*The second way involves turning inward, concentrating on our various flaws and inadequacies. This approach will also lead to humility, but by emphasizing the negative, it will also make us feel sad. According to Chasidic philosophy, sadness is counterproductive. A Jew must always strive to serve G-d with happiness and joy. Thus this second method must be reserved for very rare occasions, such as when a person feels completely incapable of conquering his Evil Inclination and must resort to other means.*

*In general, however, the first approach is the easiest way to be "humble of spirit before every man." When we realize that we are deficient on our own, we will automatically feel humble with regard to others.*

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED



**Loyal Communist Comrades**

*By Yerachmiel Tilles*

In 1924, the Russian masses, most of whom had been fervently religious before the Revolution in 1917, were in the process of being weaned away from their religion. But, there were many - even Communist party members - who remained faithful to their religions. Many Jews retained outward appearances to show that they were good Communists, but deep within them burned the eternal Jewish spark.

One such man created a sensation in the town of Gomel. Soon after his wife gave birth to their first child, a son, he said that he was suing for divorce. The reason: his wife had the baby circumcised!

The Communists were enthusiastic about having a chance to display to Gomel's Jewish population how a young man was prepared to sacrifice family ties for his party. They immediately planned a public trial. The trial was well publicized and when the day arrived the galleries were filled to overflowing.

The judge, who was himself Jewish, called the husband first. "Tell me, Comrade, are you a loyal party member?" he asked.

"I am indeed." And the husband described his important post in the governmental hierarchy.

"Until now, have you loved your wife? Have you been on good terms?" asked the judge.

The husband replied in the affirmative.

"What then, Comrade, has happened that you wish to divorce her?" the judge asked.

"Comrade Judge, my wife gave birth to a son. I looked forward to bringing him up as a true Communist. One day, I came home and to my utter consternation found that he had been circumcised! Was I supposed to stand guard all day, neglecting my important work for the advancement of communism? I hold her responsible!" the husband said emotionally.

"Let the wife step forward," the judge ordered. "Comrade, are you guilty of perpetrating this heinous crime?"

"Comrade Judge," she wept, "it isn't true. He won't listen to me. We live in a single, rented room in someone else's house. One day I had to go shopping for food and I left my baby sleeping in his crib. I made sure to lock the door before I left. It took me longer than I expected. Just imagine how frightened I was when I found the door of our room wide open! I looked around and saw that nothing had been touched. But suddenly, I realized that my baby was gone!

"There was no one else in the house, no one to ask, no sign of any theft. I ran out into the street like a madwoman when I suddenly saw my parents and my husband's parents. Imagine my relief when I noticed my mother carrying the baby. She tried to calm me; they had just taken the baby for a walk, she told me.

"I believed them. But when I brought him home and changed his diaper I had a fit. How could my parents do this to me?" she screamed.

"Terrible," the judge shook his head. "Unbelievable that in the modern Soviet Republic these religious practices still exist. Let the child's grandparents come forward."

All four grandparents stood together. Both grandfathers had gray beards and wore long black coats. The grandmothers' heads were covered with kerchiefs. One of the grandmothers, who knew a little more Russian than the others, spoke for them all.

"Honorable Comrade, I admit that I can't see what's wrong with our

grandchild having a circumcision like all Jewish boys. But you should know that we didn't mean to do it. It just happened."

The public galleries reverberated with howls of laughter. The judge called for silence and asked sarcastically. "How, Babushka, does a circumcision just happen?"

"We took our little grandson out for some fresh air. We came to streets where we hardly ever go. Suddenly a young rabbi walked over to us, whom we never saw before and asked, 'Don't you want your grandson to have a bris mila like every Jewish boy?' 'Of course,' we answered. So he quickly took out a knife and before we knew what was happening our grandson was circumcised!"

The gales of laughter from the galleries couldn't be contained.

"Babushka, have you finished your ridiculous story?" asked the judge.

"I have told you all," said the grandmother. "But I want you to know that I am very happy."

"Happy?" roared the judge. "About what?"

"Happy that our dear little grandson had a bris mila. Just like you, your honor! Aren't you proud to be a Jew?"

Try as he might, the judge could do nothing to stop the titters and snickers. Eventually the courtroom was brought to order. The husband was called back to the witness stand.

"Tell me, Comrade, hero of communism, if not for this most unfortunate affair, is there any other reason you have for divorcing your wife?"

"No, Comrade Judge, none whatsoever."

"If I tell you that she is not guilty, will you consider returning to her?"

"Of course, Comrade," said the husband.

"Then, here is the decision. Your wife is innocent. It is entirely the fault of the grandparents who persist in observing these religious practices. They will be fined 50 rubles. This is the decision of the Soviet Court of Gomel."

As the spectators filed out of court, they couldn't help but admire the ingenious plan of the young party-member and his wife to have their son circumcised while still retaining his high-ranking job and party membership.

The bizarre story about the stranger was, of course, to protect the mohel's identity. But, it was no secret to anyone; everyone knew the one mohel left in the city, Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi Shagalov, a young rabbi who had studied for ten years in the famous yeshiva in Lubavitch, and was one of the chasidim left in Russia by the Previous Rebbe to continue with Lubavitcher activities at great personal sacrifice.

**PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL**

Moses instructs the people of Israel: When you enter the land that G-d is giving to you as your eternal heritage, and you settle it and cultivate it, bring the first-ripened fruits (bikkurim) of your orchard to the Holy Temple, and declare your gratitude for all that G-d has done for you.

Our Parshah also includes the laws of the tithes given to the Levites and to the poor, and detailed instructions on how to proclaim the blessings and the curses on Mount Gerizim and Mount Eival—as discussed in the beginning of the Parshah of Re'eh. Moses reminds the people that they are G-d's chosen people, and that they, in turn, have chosen G-d.

The latter part of Ki Tavo consists of the Tochachah ("Rebuke"). After listing the blessings with which G-d will reward the people when they follow the laws of the Torah, Moses gives a long, harsh account of the bad things—illness, famine, poverty and exile—that shall befall them if they abandon G-d's commandments.

Moses concludes by telling the people that only today, forty years after their birth as a people, have they attained "a heart to know, eyes to see and ears to hear."

**CANDLE LIGHTING**



	Shabbos 31 August - 1 September	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	5:40	6:38
Adelaide	5:38	6:34
Brisbane	5:16	6:09
Darwin	6:25	7:15
Gold Coast	5:14	6:08
Perth	5:41	6:36
Sydney	5:18	6:14
Canberra	5:25	6:22
Launceston	5:28	6:28
Auckland	5:41	6:39
Wellington	5:37	6:37
Hobart	5:25	6:27
Byron Bay	5:13	6:06

**CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH**

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

**PARSHAS KI SAVO • 20 ELUL • 31 AUGUST**

<b>FRIDAY NIGHT:</b>	MINCHA	5.45 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	6.10 PM
<b>SHABBOS DAY:</b>	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9.29 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	5.40 PM
<b>WEEKDAYS:</b>	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	5.50 PM
	MAARIV	6.35 PM