

# LAMPLIGHTER

19 Shvat  
Parshas  
Yisro  
**1384**  
25 January  
5779/2019

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Yitro, contains the narrative of the most definitive event in human history - the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. In order to understand what happened at Mount Sinai, we need to examine the concept of Torah itself.

As wisdom, the Torah is Divine, and therefore higher than any other body of knowledge on earth "For it is Your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations." As a moral guide, the Torah is the epitome of all virtue, superior to any code of ethics that can ever be devised by man. All man-made ideologies and schools of philosophy contain a mixture of good and evil, truth and falsehood; in fact, any element of truth found in a particular ideology is merely a derivative of the eternal truth of Torah.

Yet the greatness of Torah far supersedes our human - and therefore limited - perception. The Torah is intrinsically connected to all of existence, as G-d created the world according to the "blueprints" contained in the Torah. Its minutest details directly affect all of creation, determining the amount and type of G-dly influence present in the world.

Observing this fundamental relationship between Torah and reality, King David declared in Psalms, "Your statutes were music to me in my dwelling place." And yet, as explained in the Talmud, G-d was not pleased by these words of praise. King David was reprimanded for comparing the Divine wisdom of the Torah to something as mundane as song. The Torah is even greater than the mere fact that physical reality is dependent on it.

What then, is the essence of Torah? Chasidic teachings explain that Torah is simply the wisdom and will of G-d, united with Him in absolute unity. G-d and the Torah are one entity. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, has granted us the opportunity to grasp the Divine by allowing us to partake of His eternal wisdom.

All other attributes and characteristics of Torah - its unlimited enlightenment, its ethical superiority, its direct influence on existence - are only secondary to this fact, the logical outgrowth of its essential nature. As Torah is a part of an infinite, omnipotent G-d, it is only natural that its perfection extends to all these other areas as well.

This eternal quality is most obviously manifested in the inner, esoteric part of the Torah, the teachings of Chasidism. Chasidism is not limited to one particular realm, but rather animates and illuminates all of Torah, which is why it is known as "the light of the Torah." The study of Chasidism therefore serves to prepare the world for the revelation of Moshiach and the Era of Redemption, when "the knowledge of G-d will cover the world like the waters of the ocean cover the sea bed."

## Doing and Listening Go Hand in Hand

*By Yitzi Hurwitz*

In preparation for the giving of the Ten Commandments, G-d says to the Jewish people: "And now, if you will truly listen to My voice, and you will keep My covenant, then you will be a treasure to Me ..."

The giving of the Ten Commandments is considered the marriage between G-d and the Jewish people. What can we learn from here about our relationship with G-d? And could this help our personal relationships?

The passuk stresses two parts of a relationship: listening ("if you will truly listen") and doing ("and you will keep My covenant").

Our ancestors replied by saying: "We will do and we will listen." Again, you have doing and listening.

Our relationship with G-d manifests itself in two ways. There is "doing," which means fulfilling mitzvahs and acting in accordance with His laws, and there is "listening," hearing G-d's voice.

What are we to hear?

The first commandment starts with the word "Anochi" ("I Am"), which is an acronym for "Ana nafshi ketavit yehavit" ("I have written My essence and given it [to you]"). G-d wants us to know Him, so He embedded His essence in the Torah.

Sometimes, we get so caught in the "doing" part that we lose the joy and meaning in what we are doing. It becomes a soulless action. G-d wants more. He wants us to listen deeply, to know Him, to know what His purpose in creating the world is. He wants more than just actions. He wants depth. Chabad Chasidic teachings help you develop this area of your relationship with G-d.

These two elements are necessary in our personal relationships as well. First, there has to be the "doing" part, without which couples simply can't function. However, the "listening" part is vital to develop strong, deep and meaningful relationships. Without listening, any relationship will eventually begin to feel hollow. This is often followed by hurt and anger.

Many husbands work hard providing for their families, yet they get the feeling that their wives seem unhappy. Listening could very well be the issue. And that goes for both sides, man and woman, for communication is key.

Learning how to listen will bring meaning to your relationship, and a smile to the mouth of your spouse.

# Slice of LIFE

## Before I Said “Yes” to Tefillin

By John Yaakov Guterson

In 1975–76, my senior year at the University of Washington in Seattle, I lived at the Chabad House on Campus.

Now, don't get me wrong. I wasn't observant in the least. My interview went something like this:

Rabbi Samuels: “So . . . tell me about your Jewish background.”

Me: “I won the attendance award twice for the Temple de Hirsch choir. My father drove me there every Saturday, even when it snowed.”

Rabbi Samuels: “You're in.”

And so I moved in. Chabad of Seattle, led by head shliach (emissary) Rabbi Sholom Ber Levitin and Rabbi Yechezkel Kornfeld, had wisely purchased a former sorority house. So there I was, right in the midst of Greek Row, with a room of my own and dinner, all for \$75 per month—clearly the best deal on campus!

Or so I thought. My first Saturday there, I was suddenly awakened all too early. “Please, please, John, can you help us out—we need you for a minyan.”

“What? What are you talking about?” I exclaimed. Having been told by Rabbi Samuels that the only rule was to have my head covered while I was in the house, I was quite perturbed by this sudden inflation of expectations. They pleaded that all I had to do was to be there, to sit in shul. I told them I just wanted to read my novel. They said okay. So I sat there. They prayed. I read.

From then on, every Saturday morning, I would rise early and get out of there, determined to avoid the minyan. Have you ever strolled on a college campus on a Saturday at eight in the morning? No one is around, no one is up. But I was—because I wasn't going to get trapped.

Rabbi Samuels never lost sight of his mission. He sold delicious tuna and egg salad sandwiches at the Student Union Building for a nickel less than what they cost in the cafeteria—anything for a

Jewish student to eat kosher. He told me how special I was because my grandparents came from Yekaterinoslav, where the Rebbe was born, and that it was extremely likely that the Rebbe's father officiated at their wedding. And then, when my stereo was stolen from my room one Friday night, Rabbi Samuels promised with absolute certainty that it would be found, because the theft happened while I was at the Chabad House Shabbat meal. Sure enough, two months later, the stereo was located. Rabbi Samuels, in his loving way, never let me forget that.

That year, the Rebbe had also sent yeshivah students to Seattle. To me, these fellows—who were about my age—looked like they were from another planet. They seemed totally out of touch with the earthiness, the humanist spirit, of the great Pacific Northwest. I simply did not relate.

However, two of the yeshivah students engaged me. One, Abba Perlmutter, talked with me relentlessly about baseball—whether it was Carlton Fisk's dramatic home run just inside the foul pole, or Joe Morgan's on-base percentage, Abba knew it all. And then, after our two-week nonstop baseball talk, without missing a beat, he asked if I knew anything about hockey, “because that's the sport I really know well.” Go figure.

The other student, Mendy Gluckowski, talked politics with me, specifically about Ronald Reagan. In 1976 he predicted that Reagan really had his eye on becoming president in 1980 and ushering in a whole new wave of conservatism in America. I told Mendy he was completely crazy . . . but, it turned out, he was precisely correct.

Smart guys. Great guys. Guys who connected with me where I was at.

But not when it came to tefillin. I must have been asked 60 times during that year if I would put on tefillin, and 60 times I said no. To me, those black boxes and straps made no logical sense.

As much as I admired Rabbi Samuels, Abba and Mendy, I held my own, steadfast in my conviction that humanism and making the world a better place simply had no space for such an ancient rite. Upon their offer, I would respond with a simple “no, thank you.” I wouldn't

debate, I wouldn't get riled up. Just a “no.” Adispassionate “no.” An unfazed “no.”

None of this, of course, affected our friendship. But the tefillin remained untouched.

Two years later, I had moved to the East Coast and was teaching history at a high school in Boston. One night I received a desperate call from my parents: “John, we're very worried about your sister. She's somewhere in Brooklyn, living with that Chabad group. Please check up on her and, if you can, influence her to leave.”

And so, a respectful son, I went to Crown Heights. Lo and behold, my sister was happy and healthy as could be.

The next morning, just out of curiosity, I wandered over to Chabad's beginner yeshivah, Hadar HaTorah, on Eastern Parkway. As I stood outside, looking through the open doorway, I saw a bearded young man at the top of a steep flight of stairs. “Good morning,” he said. “Would you like to put on tefillin?”

I was caught off guard, speechless. He looked at me; I looked at him.

Tefillin. Two black boxes with words of Torah inside. Two black leather straps. All made from a cow's hide, transforming the physical to the spiritual.

Tefillin. Submitting head and heart—in essence, self—to a Higher Power, to G-d.

Tefillin. A connection to 3,300 years of Jewish history.

But none of that occurred to me at that moment. All I could think of was Rabbi Samuels, Rabbi Levitin and Rabbi Kornfeld, Abba and Mendy. I thought of their sincerity, their unabashed devotion. I thought about all they had given of themselves to settle in the exile of Seattle. I thought about the purchase of a huge former sorority house on campus just so fellows like me, who seemingly didn't care, would have a place to eat kosher and a place to be (or escape from) on Shabbat.

I was suddenly filled with a feeling of resonance, a feeling of home.

Shluchim may never know the impact they make, but, thanks to G-d, thanks to the wisdom of the Rebbe, they always do make an impact. It's just that sometimes it takes time to sink in.

Gently, the young man repeated, “Would you like to put on tefillin?”

I looked up.

After 61 loving requests, I guess I was ready.

And I climbed those stairs.

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

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

Editors: Shmuel Kesselman,  
Zalman Serebryanski

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

Email: [lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au](mailto:lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au)

*The Lamplighter contains words from sacred writings. Please do not deface or discard.*

ISSUE 1384

B"H

## LAY TEFILLIN

LIVE INSPIRED

Find out how Tefillin can transform your day

To obtain your own pair of Tefillin, visit

☎ 0405-766-241 ☎ [WWW.TEFILLINBANK.COM](http://WWW.TEFILLINBANK.COM)

☎ [AUSTRALIA@TEFILLINBANK.COM](mailto:AUSTRALIA@TEFILLINBANK.COM)

Content printed with permission from

## Chabad.ORG

The Official homepage for worldwide Chabad-Lubavitch movement that promotes Judaism and provides daily Torah lectures and Jewish insights



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## The value of a positive attitude; the importance of one's physical health

Blessings and greetings,

I received the telegram and your letter relating that you arrived in peace. I was happy that, thank G-d, the journey was satisfactory and that you found everything at your [destination] to be satisfactory. However, I was pained by the fact that, as apparent from your letter, you feel broken-spirited, something that is not appropriate at this time or situation.

It is superfluous to elaborate that the intent of the verse: "The sacrifices G-d [desires] are a broken spirit" is not that a person should feel broken-spirited and broken-hearted. This is injurious to one's health and has a [harmful] effect on one's nerves. Moreover, when one feels broken-spirited, one takes everything that happens more acutely and harder than they actually are. My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, related that his father, the Rebbe Rashab, once told him: "See how precious a Jewish body is! For its sake, there was such a great outpouring of the Torah and its mitzvos." Now, when a person is given something as precious as the body, one must exert himself, trying in a serious manner, for the body to be healthy so that it can fulfill what [G-d] desires from it. As Rambam writes (Hilchos Deos 4:1: "For [maintaining] a healthy and sound body is among the ways of G-d." And in a letter (printed in HaTamim) of the Maggid of Mezritch to his son, [R. Avraham,] the holy angel, he writes: "A small hole in the body makes a large hole in the soul." I am not writing [this] merely for the sake of sermonizing, but in the hope that [these words] will raise your [spirits], and through you, those of your husband. (Although the Zohar states: "The strength of the soul is the weakness of the body," the intent is that the desires of the body are weakened, but not, Heaven forbid, that the health of the body is weakened. As we see in actual fact, when the body is healthy, it is possible to have a greater [positive] effect in all matters, and in particular, regarding one's love of G-d, the love of the Torah and the love of one's fellow Jew.)

I hope to hear good tidings from you regarding your health and the health of your husband. May G-d enable us all to merit to share only good tidings between a person and his friend, both in material matters and spiritual ones....

With blessings for proper health, [and] that you derive nachas — Yiddishe nachas and chassidische nachas from all your descendants and all the members of your household.

M. Schneerson

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

### Tablets Geometry

By Yehuda Shurpin

**Question:** What Shape Were the Luchot: Round, Square or Rectangular?

**Answer:** Although the most popular way to depict the Luchot (Tablets) is with rounded tops, there is actually no authentic source in Jewish tradition for this. The main source for this erroneous image seems to come from Christian art during the Renaissance, with some depictions dating even earlier.

To be sure, one can also find old Jewish books and manuscripts with illustrated title pages that have the Luchot depicted with rounded tops. Keep in mind, however, that hundreds of years ago most Jewish books were printed by non-Jews (not to mention the fact that they were, for the most part, censored for anything that could be construed as being anti-Christian or anti-government). One need only to glance at some of the more "colorful" illustrations to know that these were most definitely not commissioned by the authors.

Now that we have established that they were boxlike, we can address the question of whether the Luchot were square or rectangular.

#### Square or Rectangle?

The Babylonian Talmud discusses how the Luchot fit perfectly in the Ark of the Covenant together with the Torah scroll written by Moses. According to tradition, the Luchot were square blocks of stone, six handbreadths tall by six handbreadths wide, and three handbreadths deep. In modern measurements, that would be about 48.006cm × 48.006cm × 25.146cm.

In other words, according to the Babylonian Talmud, it seems clear that the faces of the Luchot were square.

#### A Divergent Tradition?

However, in several places the Jerusalem Talmud gives the dimensions of the Luchot as being six handbreadths tall by three handbreadths wide, making them rectangular in shape.

Many commentaries take this at face value and accept that there are divergent traditions in the two Talmuds (in which case we generally follow the Babylonian Talmud, see The Two Talmuds). Some, however, attempt to reconcile the two.

One explanation of Tosafot is that the Tablets were truly three handbreadths wide. The tradition in the Babylonian Talmud that states that each tablet was six handbreadths wide means that if you were to place the broken tablets next to the (second) unbroken tablets, you would get six handbreadths for each set of tablets, and that was how much space was taken up in the Ark (which contained both sets of tablets).

#### In Conclusion

Since the rounded tops are not the authentic shape of the Luchot, the Lubavitcher Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, - strongly urged that we should make the utmost effort to depict them as square or rectangular.

## A WORD

from the Director

*Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka (whose anniversary of passing we commemorate this coming Monday) was a jewel, a true queen. Not merely by virtue of her noble ancestry (descending from all the first six Rebbes of Chabad), nor even of her exalted position as Rebbetzin of the Rebbe. She was a true queen in her own right, too.*

*She was a queen in her exalted qualities of character. The Rebbetzin was sensitive and compassionate to others, without being in any way condescending. For every person she met, every visitor to her home, even young children, she always had the right words to suit the situation.*

*The Rebbetzin was a queen intellectually, too. Coming from a long line of great Torah scholars, she was, not surprisingly, a true intellectual. She was learned and erudite, fluent in seven languages, well-versed in many fields of knowledge, with solidly-based opinions on a variety of subjects.*

*When her father passed away in 1950, the Chasidim called upon her husband as the obvious successor. But the Rebbe refused to even consider it. When the pressure became strong, he threatened to depart into self-imposed exile.*

*It was the Rebbetzin who finally convinced him: "You can't let my father's 30 years of self-sacrifice on behalf of the Jewish people go to waste." Reluctantly, the Rebbe accepted the mantle of leadership.*

*When her husband was chosen to be Rebbe, the Rebbetzin knew what it would mean to her own personal life. For, as the Rebbetzin stated publicly about her own father, he had "belonged to the Chasidim." Yet it was the Rebbetzin who had the awesome courage to finally persuade the Rebbe to take on the responsibility of leadership.*

*The famous Rabbi Akiva said of his wife Rachel - "Mine and yours are hers," that his own Torah and the Torah he taught his thousands of students were thanks to Rachel's self-sacrifice. So, too, do we owe the prodigious accomplishments of the Rebbe's Chasidim throughout the world who have touched the lives of millions of people, to Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka's self-sacrificing devotion to her husband for almost 60 years. May her great memory be blessed.*

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED



**Fifty-Year-Old Honey**

By Yerachmiel Tilles

Less than a week after the tzaddik Rabbi Levi Yitzchak moved to Berditchev in 1785 to serve as chief rabbi there, three men knocked on his door to ask him to judge a case of Jewish law between them. It would be his very first case as a rabbinical judge in his new position.

A wealthy merchant from the nearby town of Chmielnik had brought several barrels filled with honey to sell at the big fair in Berditchev. Unfortunately, just then the price of honey dropped sharply. Not wanting to suffer a loss on his investment, he asked an acquaintance to store the honey for him until the price rose again.

The two were old friends, and the local man was happy to oblige. Knowing each other to be completely honest, they didn't write down anything of their arrangement or call in witnesses.

Time went by. The price of honey remained low, so the barrels remained in their Berditchev cellar, untouched and unnoticed.

More time went by. The man on whose property the honey was stored contracted a fatal disease and passed away. Everything happened so quickly that he never had a chance to explain to his family anything about the state of his affairs.

More time passed. The price of honey finally began to slowly climb. When the increase became significant, the owner of the barrels showed up at his deceased friend's house and claimed his honey from the sons who had inherited and taken over their father's business. They, however, having heard nothing about it from their father, refused to honor the Chmielniker merchant's claim. After some discussion, they decided to proceed to the beit din (rabbinical court) to present the case before the new Rabbi.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak listened to the litigants carefully, even though the law in such a case was clear. Of course he would have to rule against the out-of-town merchant. Even if there had been witnesses or a signed document, Torah law stipulates that no claims against "orphans" (i.e., heirs who are disadvantaged by the fact that they have no way of knowing what transpired between the deceased and their litigant) can be collected without first swearing an oath as to the validity of one's claim; and here there were neither documents nor witnesses.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak hesitated to pronounce his verdict and finalize the case. Two nagging thoughts disturbed him. Why, in his first days in his new position, did the Almighty arrange for his inaugural judgment to be something so straightforward and clear-cut, with no room left to budge and no right to attempt any sort of compromise? Could it be a hint from heaven that his practice to always pursue accommodation and compromise was not correct? That only adhering strictly to the letter of the law can be considered the way of truth?

The other thought that made him uncomfortable was: Why did the Supernal Judge arrange it so that his very first ruling in this town would be considered bizarre by the entire populace? After all, the merchant from Chmielnik was well known to everyone in town as a scrupulously honest man, as someone who was already wealthy and as such immune to monetary pressures, and as far from theft as east is from west. Furthermore, everyone knew that the merchant and the deceased were old friends who trusted each other implicitly, never resorting to documents or witnesses in their transactions. Surely, the entire town would be paying attention to the first ruling handed down by their new rabbi. Everyone was sure to wonder: Why should the law of the Torah be so opposite to common sense? "Why me, and why now?" thought Rabbi Levi Yitzchak to himself.

He couldn't bring himself to issue the verdict just yet. The contradiction between the natural sense of what was right and the law of the Torah was too great. Even though the claimant and defendants anxiously awaited his word, he asked them to excuse him for a few more minutes. Turning aside to a corner of the room, he poured forth in silent prayer his frustration, beseeching G-d to enlighten him with understanding.

Suddenly, the owner of the honey jumped off his seat as if struck by a bolt of lightning, and exclaimed: "I remember! I remember!" So struck was he by his recollection, and so convinced of its importance and relevance, he didn't hesitate to interrupt the rabbi, who was standing in the corner, absorbed in his personal prayer.

"Honored Rabbi, please forgive me," he called out excitedly. "While waiting here I had the most amazing realization! An old memory, which I haven't thought about in many years, just flashed through my mind. Rescued from oblivion! I'm talking about something that happened fifty years ago, when I was just a young lad.

"Our father died suddenly, leaving us a large inheritance in cash and possessions. Included in this was a storage room filled with casks of wine and oil.

"One day, the father of these two young men—may his rest be peaceful—came to our home in Chmielnik. He claimed that the wine and oil were his—that he had stored it with our father for safekeeping. My brothers and I were still quite young then, and had never been involved in any of our father's business affairs. We had no idea what we were supposed to do, but we were reluctant to give up the merchandise just like that.

"We all went to the rabbi of the town and presented our case. He ruled in our favor, explaining that nothing can be taken from the inheritance of orphans without absolute proof and an oath. The wine and oil remained in our possession. After a while, we sold the entire lot for a good price.

"What I just realized is that the money we received for that wine and oil is exactly equal to the value of my honey, which is now in the possession of the sons of my departed friend!"

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's face shone with inner happiness. With his apt comparison of the two parallel events fifty years apart, the merchant had conceded his own present case. For the same reason that, as an orphan, he was entitled to keep the wine and oil that long time ago, he had to relinquish his claim on these orphans for his honey today.

Now, all was clear to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak: divine providence had presented him this case, so early in his new tenure, to teach him an important lesson. Not always is what seems obvious and true to human eyes necessarily the truth, or even fair. Absolute truth resides only with the laws of the Torah. G-d's ledger is always open, and all accounts are forever being reckoned and balanced. Some may take fifty years for resolution, others more, others less. What is guaranteed is that the Master of the Universe constantly oversees to be sure that justice is done.

**PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL**

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, hears of the great miracles which G-d performed for the people of Israel, and comes from Midian to the Israelite camp, bringing with him Moses' wife and two sons. Jethro advises Moses to appoint a hierarchy of magistrates and judges to assist him in the task of governing and administering justice to the people.

The children of Israel camp opposite Mount Sinai, where they are told that G-d has chosen them to be His "kingdom of priests" and "holy nation." The people respond by proclaiming, "All that G-d has spoken, we shall do."

On the sixth day of the third month (Sivan), seven weeks after the Exodus, the entire nation of Israel assembles at the foot of Mount Sinai. G-d descends on the mountain amidst thunder, lightning, billows of smoke and the blast of the shofar, and summons Moses to ascend.

G-d proclaims the Ten Commandments, commanding the people of Israel to believe in G-d, not to worship idols or take G-d's name in vain, to keep the Shabbat, honor their parents, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, and not to bear false witness or covet another's property. The people cry out to Moses that the revelation is too intense for them to bear, begging him to receive the Torah from G-d and convey it to them.

**CANDLE LIGHTING**



	Shabbos 25 - 26 January	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	8:21	9:22
Adelaide	8:10	9:09
Brisbane	6:27	7:23
Darwin	7:02	7:54
Gold Coast	6:27	7:23
Perth	7:05	8:02
Sydney	7:47	8:46
Canberra	7:59	8:58
Launceston	8:21	9:26
Auckland	8:20	9:20
Wellington	8:30	9:35
Hobart	8:25	9:31
Byron Bay	7:27	8:23

**CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH**

439 INKERMAN STREET, ST KILDA EAST

**PARSHAS YISRO • 19 SHVAT • 25 JANUARY**

<b>FRIDAY NIGHT:</b>	MINCHA	8:25 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	8:55 PM
<b>SHABBOS DAY:</b>	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9:57 AM
	SHACHRIS	10:00 AM
	MINCHA	8:15 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS	9:22 PM
<b>WEEKDAYS:</b>	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	8:25 PM
	MARIV	9:15 PM