

LAMPLIGHTER

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion of Ki Tisa contains the commandment of the half-shekel, symbolic of the mitzva of tzedaka (charity).

There are several ways in which an individual can give tzedaka. The first is when a person is kindly and giving by nature, or when he understands intellectually the need to help his fellow man. This is, however, considered to be the lowest level of giving tzedaka.

A higher level is when a person gives tzedaka because G-d has commanded him to. In this instance the incentive is not personal, but stems from the desire to obey G-d's will. A mitzva is an absolute that is not subject to intellectual or emotional considerations. Thus, when a person gives tzedaka out of a sense of obedience, his action is imbued with greater power. Yet even here there can be personal motivations mixed in, such as the fear of punishment or the desire to receive reward (material or spiritual) in this world or the next.

Above these two levels is the giving of tzedaka "without the intent of receiving a reward." In this instance, the mitzva (commandment) is fulfilled out of pure and simple obedience to G-d, without any thought of recompense whatsoever. The person wants to fulfill G-d's will, and enjoys doing so.

The mitzva of the half-shekel, however, represents the very highest category of giving tzedaka. On the verse in this week's portion, "This shall they give...a half-shekel...an offering to G-d" (the commandment for every Jew to give the half-shekel), the Jerusalem Talmud comments: "G-d removed a coin of fire from under the Throne of Glory and showed it to Moses, saying, 'This shall they give.' " Indeed, the "secret" of the half-shekel is related to the idea of "a coin of fire."

The nature of fire is to always ascend upward; it has no "weight" or fixed, definable form. Similarly, the optimal way to give tzedaka is with a fiery "flame" and enthusiasm, without any personal considerations or motives. In this scenario, the Jew just naturally desires to fulfill G-d's will, and doesn't even look for other reasons or justifications.

Nonetheless, it is significant that G-d showed Moses a "coin of fire," rather than just a flame. When a person gives tzedaka (or does any other mitzva, for that matter), theoretical abstracts are not enough. The point is to bring down that fiery enthusiasm to where it can actually help someone, and express it in the realm of concrete action.

When the mitzva of tzedaka is done in this manner, a Jew will give unconditionally, without waiting for specific times and without waiting to be asked. His inner "fire" will prompt him to seek out those in need, and he will give repeatedly, over and over again.

The Golden Calf in the Middle of the Tabernacle

By Levi Avtzon

"Okay, Hebrews. Build Me a Tabernacle, and put into it an ark, menorah, altars, skins, vessels. Those who serve there should wear such-and-such clothes, and the high priest must have his own unique eight-part wardrobe."

That, in a nutshell, is the summary of the two Torah portions of Terumah and Tetzaveh.

Following them come the next set of two portions, Vayakhel and Pekudei, which relate how the Jews followed the commandments and prepared the Temple for G-d. Perfect.

If only things made so much sense. Alas, we have a problem.

Between these two sets of two, there appears another portion that has absolutely nothing to do with building G-d's home. On the contrary! Ki Tisa describes an event which is the antithetical theme of building a home for the L-rd - the sin of the Golden Calf, G-d's anger, and the consequent plague and punishments.

How did golden calves manage to enter in middle of the most holy story describing the building of an earthly home for Almighty G-d? Kind of a bad idea for a halftime show, don't you think? Between planning and building the Temple, we'll discuss tablet smashing, idolatry, adultery, and a bunch of other fiascos. What a plan!

Do you want to hear the answer that Rebbe gave to this question just nine days before his stroke in 1992? You might say that the answer he presented is apropos to our situation. You decide.

The world beats to a three-string sequence. Every plan and goal happens in three stages. First comes the plan, then comes the implementation of the plan, and then comes the ultimate reward and benefit from the project.

Example: First you plan your business with the end goal in mind. Then you run your business. Then you (hopefully) reap the profit. High, low, high.

Stage 1 is beautiful, idyllic, rosy, heartwarming. "Oh, how stunning will everything be once my plan is put into action!" Alas, this is still in the dream stage. It's only the potential for success.

It is only once we enter stage 2 that we are taking real steps towards the end line. You can reach the real high only if you went through the low. You can climb Mt. Everest only if you climb Mt. Everest. You can have a productive day only if you go out and be productive. You can only become a doctor if you b-e-c-o-m-e (10+ long years) a doctor.

In Ki Tisa we read of all three stages. We read of the giving of the first tablets by G-d to a perfect nation. Then the Jews sin—they enter the "real life" of struggle, mistakes and imperfection. Then, and only then, do we move to the big stage: the second set of tablets, the concept of repentance, G-d revealing the 13 attributes of mercy, and the beautiful shine and radiance of the face of Moses. This would've not been revealed had we stayed in the idyllic stage.

G-d set up a system where you must drop to reach the top. Perfection is achieved by imperfection.

Our home for Him is built by amateur builders, crooky contractors and wannabe architects. We might stumble, tumble, crumble or fumble, but we keep on trying. We live up to our mistakes and we commit to do better next time. And G-d loves that.

Of course, this doesn't legitimize sin heaven forbid, but once the deed is done, it must serve as the thrust that will launch us into the orbit of G-d. Let every descent serve as step up to achieve our lifetime goal of making the entire world a home for Him.

So that is why we read of idolatry in middle of building G-d's home; Because the road to heaven is paved with bad intentions—and repentance!

Slice of LIFE

Hold On to Your Roots

By Samantha Barnett

Pink equals punk. A mohawk means you're a rebel. Long beards indicate wisdom. Flowing hair on a woman is attractive, but it makes a man into a hippie. There are "good hair days" and "bad hair days." Why is hair so important? Is it just an accessory to our face, or does it define us?

I started to ponder this question when attending my first hair cutting party. There's a Jewish custom whereby a boy receives his first haircut on his third birthday. The haircutting celebration is called an upsherin, and its purpose is to mark the beginning of the child's Jewish education.

It started out like any other child's birthday celebration. The smoke from the grill filled the backyard with the hot smell of summer. Adults roamed around the buffet table, piling potato salad, barbecued chicken and coleslaw onto their plates. Tons of children jumped up and down on the moon bounce like bunnies. Others ran around holding hands and giggling. Little girls stood mesmerized by the cotton candy machine, as they twirled the pink fluff onto paper cones.

"May I have your attention, please?" said the father of the birthday boy. His black hat gave him a look of authority. He was standing in front of the house and speaking over a microphone.

The birthday boy stood on a chair as everyone gathered around him. Jacob was dressed in his finest gray suit, complete with a vest and a maroon yarmulke. Long white tzitzit strings hung from his waist. With his perfectly golden locks falling just below his ears, he reminded me of a poster baby from the nineteenth century.

The father stood behind his child. He asked that before a person cut the hair they put some money in the purple plush Torah-shaped charity box. The money would go to charity.

Jacob gazed up at his mother. She smiled at him as she held the scissors in her hand and passed them to the child's grandfather.

"I want to do it!" Jacob protested, motioning to the scissors in his mother's

hand. The crowd giggled at the unexpected chutzpah of the child.

The father proceeded to call the names of the people who would clip off a curl. The grandparents had the first honors, then the parents, the aunts and uncles, cousins, and finally the friends of the family.

Nothing fazed Jacob. He stood patiently eating a hot dog and drinking a Coke as each guest snipped off a lock. His mom came by every once in a while, fixing his velvet head covering and making sure to pin up his sideburns, the part of the hair a Jew is not supposed to cut, so they wouldn't accidentally be removed by one of the guests.

Suddenly, I heard my name called. I felt my feet heavily thump as I took three to five steps to approach the child. I reached deep into my purse, pulling out a few coins to put in the charity box. The father handed me the scissors. I held them in my hand for a second as I stared at the back of this kid's head.

"Where should I cut?" I asked the mother. I was so afraid to do it wrong. Being a self-titled fashionista, I wouldn't want to give a bad haircut to anyone.

The mother pointed to a place where a few curls remained. In all honesty, I'd never given anyone a haircut before, but I felt that this was not a good time to mention that piece of information.

Imitating the calmness of my own hairdresser, I took an inch of yellow strands between my fingers and proceeded to trim. I was being careful not to pull. He stood as still as a statue as I tried to keep my hand steady. Cutting hair was a lot more difficult than cutting paper. Time slowed as I rushed to finish. As I trimmed, the curls fell, and I grabbed them in my hand and placed them in the plastic bag.

I don't remember my first haircut. I have no idea what the person who cut my hair even looked like. Was it a man or a woman? Were they nice to me? Did my mom or dad hold my hand and tell me that it was going to be okay? Did I know my hair would grow back? Did I feel trapped under that gigantic cape they put on me? Did I feel that I couldn't escape because the chair was so high? I don't remember if I cried as I saw my precious brown curls fall to the ground. Was I traumatized that something that was attached to me a few minutes ago was now trash? Was I happy when I looked in the mirror afterwards?

I don't remember mine, but I have a feeling Jacob will remember his. When I got my haircut, it was an experience. But for Jacob, it was an event. I had a professional cut my hair. He had his family and friends contribute. I was one of many clients in a crowded salon. His experience happened in his own backyard.

Standing there, cutting Jacob's hair, I thought about what was so different about this event. Why have a public haircutting party?

The first thing I noticed was how

beautiful it is to value a first. An event is goal-oriented. It marks the act being performed as significant enough to mark on a calendar, take pictures of, and remember. The more work invested in something, the more it is valued. It also, in some way, legitimizes what you are doing as meaningful. The support of family and friends as you embark upon a new experience makes it more exciting, and thus, more worthwhile.

Furthermore, I realized what hair symbolizes. Both men and women worry and spend a great deal of money and time styling or coloring their hair. In fact, hair is the easiest thing on your body to change. It's so fragile: it can be removed by the smallest cut. Most of the time, the person whose hair is being cut doesn't feel a thing. However, if someone pulls your hair, it really hurts.

Hair, like a person's experiences throughout life, partially defines a person. Sometimes it's an outward expression of the way we feel inside. Other times, it portrays an image to the outside world. Throughout our life, people will make impressions on us. Every person we meet will mold us in some way. We might not even notice this happening until we look back into the mirror of what our lives have become, and even then, we may see only a reflection of what we truly are.

If we aren't careful, we could let the outside world define us. Hopefully, the only ones who make a cut into our souls are friends and family who care about us. But most important of all, we must remember our roots. If we always hark back to where we come from, then we can never stray too far from who we really are. But if we just let others mold us, we become a product of our society and not a true individual. At the same time, we should open ourselves up to learn from everyone, for that is the mark of a wise person.

Jacob, at three years old, is just beginning his life. Jacob's haircut was a rite of passage from babyhood to boyhood. He is now at the point where he can stand on his own, eat on his own, talk on his own and become his own person. For the first time, he is going outside his home, maybe even for the first time without his family, to encounter the outside world. Along the way, both positive and negative events will shape who he becomes. But, in the end, it is remembering where he comes from that will form him into the ultimate person he is destined to be.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Harmony between body and soul; the animal soul and the G-dly soul

Greetings and blessings,

I was happy to have been informed by my friend, the respected Rabbi, R. Chayim Mordechai Aizik Chodakov, that your affairs worked out in a very positive manner. May G-d grant that in the future as well, both your material and your spiritual matters will work out in a manner that is fitting for the body of a Jewish person and the soul of a Jewish person. As is understood, it is impossible for there to be peace between the two of them unless the body listens to the voice of the soul — or more particularly, that the animal soul listens to the voice of the G-dly soul.

The way this is possible is reflected by our Sages' statement: "Everyone who occupies himself in Torah study for the sake of the Torah brings about peace in the Heavenly company and in the earthly company." [Bringing about peace] in the earthly company refers to [peace between] the G-dly soul and the body and the animal soul (see the maamar entitled Heichaltzu, Likkutei Torah, Parshas Mattos). Certainly, you maintain the study sessions that we spoke about.

Enclosed is a receipt for the sum that you sent [to be distributed to charity] according to my discretion. I deposited it in Lishkas Chasha'im, the charitable fund that helps people in need discreetly, without making the matter known. As is well known, giving charity in a manner in which the identity of the giver is not known is one of the highest levels of charity. With blessings for success in material and spiritual matters,

A WORD

from the Director

This year is a leap year in the Jewish calendar. Thus, there are two months of Adar this year, known as Adar Rishon (the first Adar) and Adar Sheini (the second Adar). All special dates that occurred in a "regular" year that did not have an extra Adar are celebrated in Adar Sheini.

Our Sages teach, "With the beginning of Adar, rejoicing is increased." Every day throughout the year, we are enjoined to serve G-d with joy. But when the month of Adar begins, we are told to increase that joy.

In a leap year such as our current year, for two entire months we are expected to behave in a more joyful manner for, just as we read in the Megilla on Purim, "the month was changed for them from sorrow to joy."

What was so special about the joy of Purim that we should be expected to be joyful for an entire month? By way of analogy, light always seems brighter when it comes after darkness. In a room full of light, the flame of one candle seems insignificant. But, in a pitch-black room, even the light from one small candle can help to illuminate the entire room. Imagine, then, the impact of a spotlight in a lightless room.

Joy is similar to light. The sorrow, fear and mourning of the Jews when they thought that Haman would be able to carry out his evil plan was immense. They were in a state of total darkness. The joy that they experienced when Haman's plan was foiled was phenomenal. But it was all the more incredible for having been preceded by such darkness.

On the holiday of Purim, we recite the blessing "Sheh asa nissim - Who has performed miracles for us." In this season of miracles, may we experience the ultimate miracle, which will be to us like the brightest spot-light in Jewish history, the arrival of Moshiach, NOW!

J. I. Gutterman

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

Tefillin

By Yehuda Shurpin

Question: Why Is Tefillin Worn on the Left Arm?

Answer: The sages of the Talmud take it as a given that tefillin are put on the left arm (or the right arm of a lefty) and offer several reasons:

1. "Hand"=Left Hand

According to one tradition, whenever Scripture uses the word yad ("hand") without defining which one, it refers to the left hand. For example, the prophet Isaiah states, "Even My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand measured the heavens with handbreadths . . ." Notice that there is the "hand" and there is the "right hand," implying that the unidentified hand is the left hand.

Thus, when the Torah tells us to put tefillin on our "hand," the implication is the left hand.

2. Bind With the Writing Hand

We read, "And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand . . . And you shall inscribe them upon the doorposts of your house . . ." The juxtaposition of binding and writing teaches us that we should bind the tefillin with the same hand used to write the parchments contained therein. Just as one writes tefillin scrolls with his right hand, so should the binding be done with the right hand. This effectively means that tefillin must be worn on the left hand.

3. The Weak Arm

The third (and most widely known) reason is that in Exodus, when telling us to bind tefillin on the arm, the word yadcha ("your hand") has an extra hei at the end (ידכה). The sages explain that the elongated word can thus be read as two words (ידכה), meaning "the weak arm." Thus, tefillin are bound on the left, since it is generally the weaker arm.

4. Corresponding to the Heart

The Talmud tells us that the hand tefillin need to be placed "facing the heart." Although some interpret this as merely telling us that the tefillin need to be placed on the bicep, which is level with the heart, others explain this to be an additional reason for placing the tefillin on the left arm, which is nearer to the heart.

Although there are various reasons for putting the tefillin on the left arm, out of all of them, we are meant to bear this one in mind while putting on tefillin. In the words of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi in his siddur:

"When one puts on tefillin, he should bear in mind that G-d commanded us to write on the parchment contained in the tefillin the four specific biblical passages which mention His Unity and the Exodus from Egypt, in order that we remember the miracles and wonders He performed for us. They indicate His Unity, and demonstrate that He has the power and dominion over those above and below, to do with them as He wishes. And He has enjoined us to place the tefillin on the arm adjacent to the heart, and on the head over the brain so that we submit our soul, which is in the brain, as well as the desires and thoughts of our heart, to His service. Thus, by putting on the tefillin, one will be mindful of the Creator and restrict his pleasures."

IT HAPPENED



"Lost" in the Mail for Sixteen Years

By Shaul Wertheimer

Some 300 years ago, there lived an affluent man named Avigdor. He once brought a large sum of money to Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the chassidic movement, to be distributed to the poor on his behalf.

Accepting the contribution graciously, the Baal Shem Tov (literally, "Master of a Good Name") inquired if perhaps Avigdor would like a blessing in return. After all, the Baal Shem Tov was renowned not only as a great Torah scholar, but also as a righteous individual who had the power to give blessings.

"No thanks!" replied Avigdor arrogantly. "I am very wealthy; I own many properties, and I have servants, plenty of delicacies and everything else I want. I have more than I need!"

"You are very fortunate," replied the Baal Shem Tov. "Perhaps you would like a blessing for your family?"

"I have a large and healthy family of which I am very proud; they are a credit to me. I don't need—or want—anything."

"Well, then perhaps you can help me. May I request one thing of you?" inquired Rabbi Israel. "Can you please deliver a letter to the head of the charity committee in Brody?"

"Certainly," responded Avigdor. "I live in Brody and would be happy to assist you in this matter."

The Baal Shem Tov took out a pen and paper, wrote a letter, sealed it in an envelope and gave it to Avigdor. Avigdor took the letter, placed it in his jacket pocket and returned home. But he had so many projects on his mind that by the time he arrived in Brody he had completely forgotten about the entire encounter with Rabbi Israel.

Sixteen years passed, and the wheel of fortune suddenly turned. All of Avigdor's assets and properties were lost or destroyed. Floods ruined his fields of crops; fires destroyed his forests. Calamity after calamity. He was left penniless.

Creditors took his house and everything he owned. He was forced to sell even his clothing to feed his children. One day, while cleaning out the pockets of an old jacket he planned to sell, he found a letter—the letter that he had received from the Baal Shem Tov 16 years earlier! In a flash, he recalled his visit and his haughtiness when he thought he had everything. With tears in his eyes, he rushed to finally fulfill his mission and deliver the letter. The envelope was addressed to a Mr. Tzaddok, chairman of the charity committee of Brody.

He ran into the street and encountered one of his friends. Grabbing his arm, he said, "Where can I find Mr. Tzaddok?"

"Mr. Tzaddok? You mean Mr. Tzaddok, the chairman of the charity committee?"

"Yes, I must see him immediately!" replied Avigdor.

"He is in the synagogue," said Avigdor's friend. "I was there only a few minutes ago. Mr. Tzaddok is indeed a lucky man. Just this

morning he was elected chairman of the charity committee."

"Tell me more about Mr. Tzaddok," insisted Avigdor.

Willing to oblige, Avigdor's friend continued, "Mr. Tzaddok was born and raised here in Brody. A tailor by profession, he was always down on his luck, never able to make a decent living. He was hardly able to support his family, and they always lived in abject poverty. He sat in the back of the synagogue, and no one ever took notice of him. Despite working many hours, he never earned much; it was hard for him to scrape together enough money for even a loaf of bread for his family.

"Recently, however, the tide changed. Mr. Tzaddok was introduced to a local nobleman, and he made uniforms for all his servants. The nobleman was very satisfied with Mr. Tzaddok's craftsmanship, and his business started to pick up. He even received an order for 5,000 uniforms for the army. He became a rich man and gained respect in the eyes of the community. He did not forget his former poverty, and gave generously to many, taking an active role in communal affairs. Just this morning, he was unanimously elected chairman of the charity committee."

Hearing this story, Avigdor hurried to the synagogue and found Mr. Tzaddok busy perusing the many requests for financial assistance. He handed Mr. Tzaddok the letter. Together they read the words of the Baal Shem Tov, penned 16 years earlier:

Dear Mr. Tzaddok,

The man who brought this letter is named Avigdor. He was once very wealthy, but is now very poor. He has paid for his haughtiness. Since just this morning you were elected chairman of the charity committee, I request that you do all you can to assist him, as he has a large family to support. He will once again become successful, and this time he will be more suited to success. In case you doubt my words, I give you the following sign: Your wife is expecting a baby, and today she will give birth to a boy.

They had hardly concluded reading the letter when someone burst into the synagogue and exclaimed, "Mazel tov, Mr. Tzaddok! Your wife just had a baby boy!"

Thanks to the Baal Shem Tov's foresight, Avigdor once again became very affluent. This time, he remained humble and was admired by all.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

The people of Israel are told to each contribute exactly half a shekel of silver to the Sanctuary. Instructions are also given regarding the making of the Sanctuary's water basin, anointing oil and incense. "Wise-hearted" artisans Betzalel and Aholiav are placed in charge of the Sanctuary's construction, and the people are once again commanded to keep the Shabbat.

When Moses does not return when expected from Mount Sinai, the people make a golden calf and worship it. G-d proposes to destroy the errant nation, but Moses intercedes on their behalf. Moses descends from the mountain carrying the tablets of the testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; seeing the people dancing about their idol, he breaks the tablets, destroys the golden calf, and has the primary culprits put to death. He then returns to G-d to say: "If You do not forgive them, blot me out from the book that You have written."

G-d forgives, but says that the effect of their sin will be felt for many generations. At first G-d proposes to send His angel along with them, but Moses insists that G-d Himself accompany His people to the promised land.

Moses prepares a new set of tablets and once more ascends the mountain, where G-d reinscribes the covenant on these second tablets. On the mountain, Moses is also granted a vision of the divine thirteen attributes of mercy. So radiant is Moses' face upon his return, that he must cover it with a veil, which he removes only to speak with G-d and to teach His laws to the people.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 22 - 23 February	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:52	8:49
Adelaide	7:44	8:40
Brisbane	6:09	7:01
Darwin	6:55	7:44
Gold Coast	6:08	7:01
Perth	6:42	7:36
Sydney	7:23	8:18
Canberra	7:33	8:28
Launceston	7:48	8:48
Auckland	7:52	8:49
Wellington	7:58	8:57
Hobart	7:50	8:50
Byron Bay	7:08	8:01

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, ST KILDA EAST

PARSHAS KI SISA • 17 ADAR ALEPH • 22 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	8.00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	8.30 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	10.13 AM
	SHACHRIS	10.00 AM
	MINCHA	7.45 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS	8.49 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	7.50 PM
	MARIV	8.40 PM