

# LAMPLIGHTER

25 Sivan  
Shabbos  
Mevorchim Taamuz  
Parshas Shelach

1406

28 June  
5779/2019

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Parshah, we read the story of the spies who traveled from the desert to the holy land to scout, ahead of the Israelites' entry. They returned from the holy land and gave a negative report about the land. This report broke the morale of the Jewish Nation.

These spies were no ordinary men. They were the leaders of their tribes, selected by Moses for this mission. Their report was not animated by fear of physical defeat; instead they feared a spiritual defeat.

In the wilderness, each of the Israelites' needs was met by a direct gift from G-d. Their bread was the Manna which fell from the heavens; their water came from Miriam's Well; their clothes never needed repair.

The possession of the land of Israel meant a new kind of responsibility. The Manna was to cease. Bread would come only through toil. The miracles would be replaced by labor; and with labor came the danger of a new preoccupation.

The spies feared that the concern to work the land and make a living might eventually leave the Israelites with less time and energy for the service of G-d. When the spies said, "It is a land which eats up its inhabitants," they meant that the land and its labor, and the resulting preoccupation with the materialistic world, would "swallow up" and consume all their energy. They thought that spirituality flourishes best in seclusion, in the protected peace of the wilderness where even the food was "from the heavens."

And yet, the spies were wrong. The purpose of life is not the elevation of the soul: it is the sanctification of the world.

The end to which every mitzva aims, is to make a dwelling place for G-d in the world. To bring G-d within the world, not above it.

Every Jew may feel the doubts that plagued the spies. While involved with Jewish activities, they feel wholly given over to the spiritual demands of Judaism. But in their work, they can see little or no religious significance.

But they are making the spies' mistake, of placing G-d outside the world, of failing to respond to G-d's presence in every human transaction, forgetting the imperative to "Know Him in all your ways."

The essence of spirituality lies in a Jew reaching out beyond himself to their fellow Jew, extending holiness to everything they touch, knowing that this or any situation is within the domain of G-d.

## A Leader's Faith

By Menachem Feldman

His daughter asks him if she should try out for the sports team. He thinks she is not up to it. He wants to protect her from failure. So he tells her not to try. He tells her that it will be too difficult. He tells her that the sport is not that much fun anyway. He tells her that she will be much happier if she would just do something else.

His employee approaches him with a brilliant new idea. He loves the idea, but he does not believe his team can pull it off successfully. He tells them it's too risky, too much work, and ultimately it is not a good idea.

He is acting like the biblical spies.

The children of Israel's journey through the desert took a disastrous turn when they asked Moses to dispatch spies to the land of Canaan to scout out the land and its inhabitants. Moses handpicked 12 leaders, one per tribe, and sent them off. They returned to Moses and the people, and reported that despite G-d's assurances, conquering the land was impossible:

"We came to the land to which you sent us, and it is flowing with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who inhabit the land are mighty, and the cities are extremely huge and fortified, and there we saw even the offspring of the giant. . . . we are unable to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."

They spread an evil report about the land which they had scouted, telling the children of Israel, "The land we passed through to explore is a land that consumes its inhabitants."

Virtually all the commentators ask the same question: How is it possible that the spies had a complete loss of faith after experiencing all the miracles of the Exodus firsthand? How is it possible that great men, handpicked by Moses, failed to maintain their trust in G-d?

Perhaps we can suggest that the spies never lost faith in G-d or in His ability to perform miracles. They trusted G-d, but they did not trust the people.

Sure, they thought, G-d is perfectly capable of performing miracles if He wishes to do so. The problem, the spies thought, was that there was no chance the people would remain loyal to G-d, and deserving of His protection. They therefore concluded that conquering Canaan was impossible, because the people were not up to the task.

Seeking to protect their beloved people from failure, the spies reacted like the father trying to discourage his daughter in order to protect her from failure. They said that the task was too difficult: "We are unable to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." They told the people that the land is not desirable in the first place: "The land we passed through to explore is a land that consumes its inhabitants."

The spies may have acted out of love, but they failed both the mission and the people they were meant to serve. In moments of challenge, a leader must lift up, inspire, teach, encourage and show others how to discover the reservoirs of faith, courage and strength hidden within the soul.

We are all leaders in our circle of influence. Our family and friends look to us for guidance. We must remember never to underestimate and discourage as the spies did, for we must always be like Moses, Joshua and Caleb, who believed in the people and sought to discover within them the treasures that lay hidden deep within their souls.

# Slice of LIFE

## “It should be better and better”

I was born in Israel, but when I was six years old my parents immigrated to the United States and initially settled in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. At this time we were not associated with Chabad, but my father would occasionally pray at 770 Eastern Parkway, the Chabad Headquarters. My first encounter with the Rebbe happened then – in 1951 – when he first took over the leadership of Lubavitch.

I had come with my father, and I recall that the synagogue was packed. I felt a little lost, and I was looking around for a prayer book, a siddur, but could not find one. Then I saw a siddur perched on the table where the Rebbe sat. The Rebbe motioned for me to sit next to him and pray from his siddur together with him. So I did. The chasidim didn't like that and they started motioning to me to move away. The Rebbe looked up and said, “Vos vilt ir fun im, es davent zich zeir gut mit im!” Which means, “What do you want from him? My prayers are going very well with him!”

I had many more encounters after that, some of which were quite special.

During one audience with the Rebbe in 1973 – after I was married already and had three children – I mentioned to the Rebbe that my oldest daughter would turn five on the 11th of Nissan, which also happened to be the Rebbe's birthday. I asked the Rebbe, “Since there is a custom among the chasidim to take on an additional mitzvah or a mitzvah upgrade on each birthday, I'd like to know if there is something I can do in conjunction with my daughter's birthday?”

The Rebbe smiled and said, “Had you not asked me, I wouldn't have told you, but since you did ask, I will suggest that your daughter start lighting Shabbos candles.” This was a full year before the Rebbe initiated his Shabbos Candle Lighting Campaign to have all girls begin lighting candles so, at this time, it was a strange idea. The Rebbe saw that I was surprised, and he said, “I can tell you this

– the additional light that enters the house will bring in more joy.”

When I walked out of the Rebbe's room, I felt that I was walking on a cloud, because the Rebbe told me something which was totally new; he had given me a new directive. Of course, my five-year-old daughter began to light Shabbos candles, and this custom has carried to the next generation.

On another occasion, the Rebbe really saved my wife from terrible agony. She was in the seventh month of pregnancy and in such pain that she literally could not get out of bed. The baby was pressing on a nerve. Very concerned, I called the Rebbe's office. That very evening, I received an answer: “Check your tefillin.”

I immediately brought the tefillin to Rabbi Yosef Silverman, the world-renowned scribe in Montreal, to be checked. A few hours later, he called me, “I would like you to come over here.” I asked, “Did you find anything wrong?” He answered, “The writing is nice, but these scrolls were not intended for these containers. So the scrolls fell over and, instead of standing vertically, they were in a horizontal position. However, I fixed the problem by supporting them, so now they can stand as they should.”

After I picked up the tefillin, I went home. This was about three or four o'clock in the afternoon. And what do I see, my wife is standing in the kitchen. I was shocked, because she had been in such pain she could not get up. I asked her, “When did you start feeling better?” She said, “I don't know, about an hour-and-a-half ago.”

Then I told her the story. We both realized that just at the moment the fallen tefillin had been placed upright, she was able to stand up from her sickbed.

Another story that I would like to tell – this happened around Chanukah time in 1977 – concerns my business. At that time I owned a travel agency in Montreal, and I had an offer to move it to a better location but at considerably higher rent. I didn't know what to do so, of course, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe.

Absorbed with my concerns, I had forgotten that people had been asked to refrain from writing to the Rebbe at this time – this was two months after his heart attack – and, when I realized that, I kicked

myself for sending that letter. The Rebbe had said many times already: “When you have a question, first ask advice of your friends.” Letters to the Rebbe were only for matters of life or death.

In any case, I was glad when I received no answer. I had hoped that the letter never arrived, or if it did, that a secretary had put it away. As it was, I made the decision myself, and I moved my office.

Some months later, come Passover time, I was visiting my parents in New York, and I went to Crown Heights the night after the holiday. The Rebbe was handing out wine from his cup, and I was one of the people who went up to him to receive it. When he handed me the wine, he said, “This is for your new office.”

So, you see, he kept everyone in his mind! It amazed me that he remembered my little request so many months later! I was truly shocked.

On another occasion – in 1988 – my brother Naftali went up to receive the wine from the Rebbe's cup. This was Shavous time. And when the Rebbe gave it to him, he asked my brother, “What's new with you?” Naftali was taken aback. He hadn't expected the Rebbe to speak to him, and he suddenly felt tongue-tied.

Now, my brother had been married for four years already and he had no children. He had written to the Rebbe asking for a blessing, but at that moment he didn't have the wherewithal to repeat his request. But the Rebbe said in Yiddish, “Zol zain besser un besser” – which means “it should be better and better,” except that he used our last name Besser and said “besser un besser.”

When my brother told me this, I knew this had to be important. Nine months to the day, a baby boy was born to him. Nine months to the day!

The Rebbe had said “besser un besser” on the 7th of Sivan, and the baby was born on the 6th of Adar – so exactly nine months later there was one Besser and another Besser – the next generation of Bessers was born.

*Rabbi Shlomo Besser, an activist dedicated to preserving the Jewish cemeteries of Eastern Europe, succeeded his father as the rabbi of Congregation Bnei Israel Chaim on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. He was interviewed for JEM's My Encounter with the Rebbe project in his parents' home in July of 2014.*

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B"H

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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

**“I do not know where you stand with regard to bitachon.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
14 Menachem Av, 5710 [1950]  
Brooklyn  
Greetings and Blessings!

[A certain chassid had written to the Rebbe that the location of his workplace did not allow him to fully discharge some of his spiritual obligations. After discussing the halachic leniencies proposed by various authorities for such a predicament, the Rebbe concludes as follows:]

All the above was written because I do not know where you stand with regard to the attribute of bitachon, your trust in G-d. However, if you are strong in this (see Biurei Zohar, beginning of Parshas Vaeira) with simple faith, and if you seek an [alternative] medium for your livelihood (see Kuntreis U'Maayan, sec. 25), G-d will grant you your livelihood in a place where there is a minyan and so on, and you will be able to carry out all your obligations in the above-mentioned areas.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

### Are Jews a Race or a Religion?

By Aron Moss

**Question:** Are Jews a race or a religion? Or both? Or neither?

**Answer:** We are all of the above. A race. A religion. Both. And neither.

We're a bit complicated. And really quite simple. Let's use some talmudic-style deduction to get to the bottom of it.

Jews are members of a religion called Judaism. We descend from spiritual trailblazers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, founders of a belief system around one G-d and moral living. Our nationhood did not start in a country, but in an idea. Our identity comes from the Torah. So being a Jew is clearly a religious thing.

But if Jewishness is a religious identity, then a Jew who is not religious, doesn't believe in G-d or follow the Torah would no longer be Jewish. But that is not the case at all. A Jew is a Jew no matter what they do. This is not so with other religions. A Catholic who never steps foot in church is no longer called Catholic. A Muslim who repudiates Islam is called an apostate. But a Jew who never goes to shul is called business as usual.

You can't be a part of a religion if you don't practice it. Yet a non-practicing Jew is still a Jew, often proudly so. Which implies that we are not a religion but a race. Being Jewish is something you are born with and it remains who you are regardless of your actions or beliefs. You can't rescind your ethnicity. So obviously being Jewish is not a religious thing but rather a racial thing.

But if that is true, how is it that Jews are so ethnically diverse? We have pale Jews from Poland and dark Jews from Dehli, Jews who have their gefilte fish sweet, Jews who have their gefilte fish salty, and Jews who never have gefilte fish at all. What ethnic ties could possibly bind such polar opposites?

And furthermore, if being Jewish is an ethnic thing, how is it possible to convert to Judaism? There is no such thing as changing ethnicity. You can choose to become a citizen of Greece, but you can't choose to become an ethnic Greek. Yet anyone can choose to become a Jew by converting according to Jewish law.

The possibility of choosing Jewishness makes it seem like a religious identity. The impossibility of losing Jewishness makes it seem like an ethnic identity. So what is it?

It is both. And neither. Being Jewish is deeper than religion, and deeper than race.

Jewishness is in your soul. It is a soul identity.

You get a Jewish soul by being born to a Jewish mother, or converting according to Jewish law. Whether by birth or by choice, once you have the Jewish soul, it is the deepest layer of your identity. And it never goes away.

You can deny that you're Jewish, ignore it, practice another religion or no religion at all. But you are still Jewish. Because your soul is. The colour of your skin or the flavour of your gefilte fish can't change the fact. You have a Jewish soul. And every Jewish soul wants to be Jewish and live Jewishly.

On the surface, a Jew may seem disconnected from Judaism. But beneath the surface the fire of their soul is always burning. Jewishness sometimes gets buried under layers of resistance, caused by pain from bad experiences, fear of persecution, or just ignorance. But when a little crack appears in those layers, the light of the soul shines through, and the Jew returns to Judaism.

Every Jewish soul eventually comes back home. It may take years. It may take generations. But we can't stay away from our Jewishness. It's not just a race we belong to, it's not just a religion we believe in, it's our soul, it's who we are.

## A WORD

from the Director

*This Shabbat we bless the new month of Tamuz. (Rosh Chodesh, the "head of the month," falls out on Wednesday and Thursday.) The Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph I. Schneersohn, was informed by the Soviet authorities that he would be released from prison on Thursday, Rosh Chodesh Tamuz, 5687 (1927). The Rebbe was given permission to visit with his family for six hours, after which a train would take him to the far-off regions of the east to serve a three-year sentence in exile, for the "crime" of disseminating Judaism.*

*When the Rebbe learned that the train would arrive at its destination on Shabbat, he adamantly refused to this arrangement. "I will absolutely not travel on Shabbat!" he declared.*

*His jailers then threatened that if he did not go along with their plans, not only would he not be allowed to see his family, but he would have to serve a longer term in prison. The Rebbe replied, "I will remain in jail as long as necessary, but I will not travel on Shabbat!"*

*According to Jewish law, it is quite possible that the Rebbe would have been permitted to board the train, for reasons of pikuach nefesh (the primacy of saving a Jewish life) and the like. Nonetheless, he refused to do so, and remained in jail until the third of Tamuz.*

*The Rebbe knew that the danger to his life increased with every additional minute spent in prison. But his desire to sanctify the Name of G-d was an even stronger consideration.*

*Had the Rebbe, a public figure, agreed to be freed from prison with full knowledge that it entailed the desecration of Shabbat, it would have caused the exact opposite of a sanctification of G-d's Name. The Rebbe's conscious decision to remain in prison prevented this from happening.*

*The Previous Rebbe stood firm and immovable, demonstrating an extreme level of self-sacrifice. From this we learn that when it comes to sanctifying the Name of G-d, there is no room for hesitation or doubt.*

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED



**The Loan Gets Repaid**

By Yerachmiel Tilles

When he was a youngster, Rebbe Naftoli Katz, the head of the Rabbinical Court of Posen, was once playing outdoors with his friends. They were throwing rocks, and Naftoli accidentally hit the passenger of a fine carriage that was nearby. Unfortunately, that passenger was none other than the High Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The prince's guards arrested the boy for this act of "rebellion." He was brought to court and found guilty. His sentence: public execution.

Naftoli was to be escorted by a guard to the empire's capital, where his sentence was to be carried out. It was a difficult journey, and the stormy weather they encountered made travelling almost impossible. At one point they stopped at an inn that was owned by a Jew.

While the guard made himself comfortable in a corner by the stove, young Naftoli sat and listened to the innkeeper's sons learn Talmud with their tutor. Naftoli knew this tractate by heart, and when the boys and their tutor were stumped by a question in the tractate, Naftoli supplied them with the answer.

The innkeeper realized that this was a brilliant boy, and when he found out why Naftoli was being kept in custody, he thought of a plan to save the boy's life. The innkeeper offered the guard free food and drinks, thus convincing him to stay at the inn for a few days until the weather cleared up.

After a while the innkeeper approached the guard casually: "What would happen if a prisoner was to die in custody as he was being escorted from one city to another?" he inquired.

Replied the guard, "The escort would simply have to present a document testifying to the prisoner's death, signed by the local authorities."

Using his connections, the innkeeper obtained the required document and handed it to the guard, along with enough money to bribe him. The guard left Naftoli with the innkeeper, who took the boy in and raised him as if he was a member of his own family.

Years passed. Naftoli was of marriageable age, as was the innkeeper's daughter. The innkeeper proposed a match between the two young people and they both agreed. The wedding date was set.

One night, some time later, the innkeeper passed by Naftoli's room and heard him talking. He peeked through the keyhole and saw Naftoli sprawled on the floor, begging and pleading. "What can I do?" Naftoli was saying, "these people saved my life."

The scene repeated itself the next night. The innkeeper could not contain his curiosity, as he knew no one was in Naftoli's room, and he asked Naftoli for an explanation. "My parents keep appearing to me and telling me that your daughter is not my intended mate."

The innkeeper, realizing that a Heavenly hand was guiding the young man, told him to obey his parents' wishes, and that he bore Naftoli no ill will.

Before Naftoli left, he requested that the innkeeper give him a written account of the money paid on his behalf to bribe the guard so many years ago.

"I have merited to fulfill the mitzva of redeeming a hostage, and seek

no reimbursement," exclaimed the righteous innkeeper.

Naftoli insisted and the innkeeper finally gave him a paper stating the sum paid to the guard. Naftoli left and became famous for his exceptional qualities. He married and was appointed the Rabbi of the city of Posen.

The innkeeper's daughter also married, and settled in a town near Posen. One night, as she was walking home, she was kidnapped by a wealthy landowner and brought back to his estate with obvious intentions. Despite the dangerous situation, the young woman maintained her composure. "I will go along with all your wishes," she told the landowner, "but first you must go to town to purchase some fine liquor for me." The landowner readily agreed.

While he was in town, the clever woman looked for a means of escape from the mansion. The only window she found unbarred was very high up. Realizing the jump was dangerous, she looked for something to cushion her fall. She found the landowner's heavy lambskin overcoat and, wrapping herself in it, offered a prayer and leaped out the window. Miraculously, she was not hurt. She fled home, still wrapped in the coat.

The husband was thankful for his wife's narrow escape. He related the entire incident to Rabbi Naftoli of Posen.

Rabbi Naftoli told the husband, "Your wife is a righteous woman and her level headedness is admirable. G-d is truly with her. Open the seam of the landowner's coat, and you will find money that rightfully belongs to you and your wife."

Later, the landowner came into the husband's store to make a purchase. He complained about "some Jewish woman" who had not only outwitted him, but had managed to steal his overcoat that had a large sum of money sewn inside it. The husband returned to Rabbi Naftoli and told him what the landowner had said.

"This finally concludes a much longer story," Rabbi Naftoli replied, and proceeded to tell the husband the whole story of his arrest and ransom. "That landowner," he concluded, "was the guard who had escorted me. The amount of money in the coat is the exact sum that your father-in-law paid for my release. Here, I will show you a bill which confirms the figure exactly."

**PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL**

Moses sends twelve spies to the land of Canaan. Forty days later they return, carrying a huge cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig, to report on a lush and bountiful land. But ten of the spies warn that the inhabitants of the land are giants and warriors "more powerful than we"; only Caleb and Joshua insist that the land can be conquered, as G-d has commanded.

The people weep that they'd rather return to Egypt. G-d decrees that Israel's entry into the Land shall be delayed forty years, during which time that entire generation will die out in the desert. A group of remorseful Jews storm the mountain on the border of the Land, and are routed by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

The laws of the menachot (meal, wine and oil offerings) are given, as well as the mitzvah to consecrate a portion of the dough (challah) to G-d when making bread. A man violates the Shabbat by gathering sticks, and is put to death. G-d instructs to place fringes (tzitzit) on the four corners of our garments, so that we should remember to fulfill the mitzvot (divine commandments).

**CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH**

439 INKERMAN STREET, ST KILDA EAST

**SHABBOS MEVORCHIM TAAMUZ PARSHAS SHELACH  
25 SIVAN • 28 JUNE**

|                      |                                                                                                                               |                                                                                          |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>FRIDAY NIGHT:</b> | MINCHA<br>KABBOLAS SHABBOS                                                                                                    | 5:00 PM<br>5:25 PM                                                                       |
| <b>SHABBOS DAY:</b>  | TEHILLIM<br>LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA<br>SHACHARIS<br>MOLAD: TUESDAY<br>SHABBOS MEVORCHIM FARBRENGEN<br>MINCHA<br>SHABBOS ENDS | 8:30 AM<br>9:57 AM<br>10:00 AM<br>3:38 (2 chalakim) PM<br>12:00 PM<br>4:45 PM<br>5:54 PM |
| <b>WEEKDAYS:</b>     | SHACHARIS<br>MINCHA<br>MAARIV                                                                                                 | 8:00/9:15/10:00 AM<br>5:00 PM<br>5:45 PM                                                 |

**CANDLE LIGHTING**



|            | Shabbos 28 - 29 June |      |
|------------|----------------------|------|
|            | Begins               | Ends |
| Melbourne  | 4:52                 | 5:54 |
| Adelaide   | 4:55                 | 5:55 |
| Brisbane   | 4:46                 | 5:42 |
| Darwin     | 6:14                 | 7:06 |
| Gold Coast | 4:43                 | 5:39 |
| Perth      | 5:04                 | 6:02 |
| Sydney     | 4:38                 | 5:37 |
| Canberra   | 4:42                 | 5:42 |
| Launceston | 4:33                 | 5:37 |
| Auckland   | 4:56                 | 5:57 |
| Wellington | 4:42                 | 5:47 |
| Hobart     | 4:27                 | 5:33 |
| Byron Bay  | 4:41                 | 5:37 |