

# Lamplighter

17 Elul  
Ki Tavo  
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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

As Maimonides enumerates the Torah's 613 commandments, general commandments such as "You shall be holy" or "You shall keep my laws" are not, as a rule, considered Mitzvot in their own right. Rather, these are classified as broad directives encompassing all of Judaism.

It is therefore surprising, at first glance, that the commandment which appears in this week's Torah portion, Ki Tavo, "You shall walk in His ways," is classified as a positive mitzvah, requiring the Jew "to emulate the Holy One, Blessed Be He." "Just as G-d is gracious, so shall you be gracious. Just as G-d is merciful, so shall you be merciful. Just as G-d is pious, so shall you be pious," Maimonides writes. Indeed, the commandment implies that a Jew is required to emulate G-d to the best of his/her ability, at all times and in all circumstances.

But why is this commandment different from all other general statements in the Torah, to the point that it is characterized as a separate mitzvah? What does the verse "You shall walk in His ways" entail that other similar commandments do not?

To explain:

Maimonides classifies "You shall walk in His ways" as a distinct commandment because it contains a unique innovation not found in any other general directive in the Torah. This innovation is alluded to in the specific use of the word "walk," which implies an ongoing and perpetual sense of motion.

One of the differences between the soul of a Jew and an angel is that angels are stationary beings, fixed in their spiritual positions, whereas the Jewish soul constantly ascends from one spiritual level to the next. The Jew is constantly in motion, reaching higher and higher spiritual heights by virtue of his actions.

It sometimes happens that a Jew may observe Mitzvot, yet he remains on the same spiritual rung as before. His performance of the mitzvah did not cause him to progress or ascend any further. The commandment "You shall walk in His ways" comes to teach us that a Jew must never be stagnant, that his performance of Mitzvot must always lead to an improvement of his overall spiritual condition.

How are we to accomplish this? By observing the Torah's commandments solely because they are "His ways" — because of our desire to emulate G-d. For when we do, our spiritual ascent to higher and even higher levels of G-dliness is assured.

*(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

## Man Alive

### A Chai Elul story

By Yanki Tauber

The chassid, Rabbi Nechemia of Dubrovna (1788-1852), once recalled witnessing a Russian soldier being disciplined by his commander. The soldier's crime? While standing watch on a frigid winter night, his feet froze in their boots. "Had you remembered the oath you took to serve our Czar," his officer berated him, "the memory would have kept you warm."

"For 25 years," said Reb Nechemia, "this incident inspired my service of the Almighty."

"Life" may be extremely difficult to define, but it is instantly recognizable. Something that is alive is warm, vibrant, and ebullient. Coldness, apathy and lethargy are symptoms of deadness, even if the afflicted person or community is technically alive. And life can only come from within: when we know why we are doing something and are excited about what it will achieve, our every act and gesture throbs with vitality; when that knowledge and excitement are lacking, our actions will be dead and sluggish, and the most professionally crafted pep-talks and the most lucrative incentives will fail to pump life into them.

Three centuries ago, Jewish life was in a lethargic slump. Massacres and persecutions had devastated the Jewish community in both body and spirit. The harsh conditions, which dictated that all but a privileged few were forced to abandon their studies at a young age to help bear the burden of earning a livelihood, had cut off the masses from the Torah, the lifeblood of Jewish awareness and self-knowledge. The scholarly elite kept aloof from their unlettered brethren and regarded them with contempt.

Technically, Judaism was alive. Jews went through the motions, putting on *Tefilin* each weekday morning, praying three times a day, observing the Shabbat and the dietary laws. But the spark of life was growing cold.

Then, on the 18th day of the Hebrew month of Elul 5458 (1698), a child named Yisrael (Israel) was born. Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov added nothing new to Judaism, just as a soul adds nothing "new" to the body. But he breathed life into it — awareness, warmth, and joy. On Elul 18, 1734 — his 36th birthday — the Baal Shem Tov began to publicly disseminate his message. He spoke of the immense love that G-d has for every Jew, of the cosmic significance of every mitzvah a Jew performs, of the divine meaningfulness that resides in every blade of grass, in every event, and in every thought in the universe. He spoke to the downtrodden masses and to the aloof scholars. He gave meaning to their existence, and thus joy, and thus life.

The 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul is also the birthday of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the "Chabad" branch of Chassidism. Rabbi Schneur Zalman was the disciple of the Baal Shem Tov's disciple, Rabbi DovBer of Mezerich, and thus regarded himself as the Baal Shem Tov's spiritual grandson. He was born exactly 47 years after his "grandfather" on Elul 18, 5505 (1745), and his teachings and works carried the Baal Shem Tov's vitalization of Judaism to greater mystical heights, deeper intellectual depths and yet broader realms of application in the daily life of the Jew.

*Chai Elul*, Hebrew for "the 18th of Elul," also means "the life of Elul" (the 22 letters of Holy Tongue also double as numbers; so every word has a numerical value, or *gematria*). Therefore the Rebbes of Chabad taught: "Chai Elul infuses life into the month of Elul, and via Elul — the month of divine compassion and our month of soul-searching and stocktaking — into the entire year and entire life of the Jew."



## Shabbos Candles

by Jill K. Lerner

Twenty years ago I was out shopping when someone gave me candles to light for Shabbos. I didn't even know them, they were just handing candles out to anyone Jewish, and though I thought their gift was odd at the time, I took them.

When I got home, I read the instructions that came with the candles, but in the end decided that this just wasn't a ritual I wanted to keep, after all, I didn't even know what Shabbos was, in fact my only Jewish education came from my grandmother who simply said, "You're Jewish; that's all you need to know."

Years passed. I had long ago forgotten those candles, when the same thing happened again. One Friday, I was again offered Shabbos candles. By now I was acquainted with a few observant Jews and was somewhat familiar with the custom of lighting candles before Shabbos, so this time it seemed like a good idea, so I decided to do it. Determined to perform the mitzvah (commandment) that evening, I read the instructions which came with the candles. There was also a moving piece which described the beauty of lighting candles and the significance of this venerable tradition. All this touched and warmed something inside me. That Friday evening, for the very first time in my life, I lit Shabbos candles.

I continued to light Shabbos candles every week. A year later my daughter, Chana, was born. Unlike me, my daughter saw her mother light Shabbos candles every week from the very first Friday of her life. When Chana turned three, for her birthday I bought her a candle holder of her very own, so that she too could start lighting candles. I had read about this

custom of young girls lighting candles in the candle lighting brochure and decided to embrace the custom. My daughter lit candles (with help, of course) from then on.

When summer came, my grandmother came for a visit for a few months from Florida. Whenever my grandmother would come we would visit her on Friday afternoon before Shabbos. By then Chana, then three and a half, was already "experienced" at lighting Shabbos candles, Chana happily told her great-grandmother all about candle lighting. We always made sure to follow the instructions in those candle lighting brochures to light Shabbos candles at the right time in order to honour the Sabbath; therefore, we would leave early in order to have enough time to get home for candle lighting.

One Friday afternoon, the three of us were enjoying a lively conversation when I noticed the time was getting late and we had to leave. We really were reluctant to bring that beautiful visit to end, but I didn't see that there was any other choice, we would have to go home to light the Shabbos candles. Imagine my surprise when my grandmother suggested that we light candles there at her bungalow! I was delighted to agree and even offered to bring the food I had prepared to her bungalow so we could all have Shabbos dinner together, I drove home and returned speedily for our impromptu Shabbos dinner. Chana was eager to show her great-grandmother how she could light her candle and recite the blessing, and did so as her great-grandmother watched intently. My grandmother appeared captivated.

I hesitantly asked my grandmother if she would like to light candles. As far as I knew, she had never lit Shabbos candles in her life. I was delighted when she agreed and began to set more candles on the table, just as I was considering how to offer her assistance, she reached for the matches, and lit the candles without a hesitation. Imagine my shock when she then recited the blessing clearly in its entirety with no prompting!

I was astonished. How could this be?

How did she know the blessing? How did she learn it? I had never seen her light Shabbos candles before, and it seemed impossible for her to be able to say a blessing from having heard my daughter say it once.

I had to quickly recover my senses in order to light my own candles. Afterwards I started asking my grandmother to explain what had happened. She told me that her mother had lit candles every Friday night, but had stopped when she was about ten years old. My grandmother knew the blessing from her childhood and recalled it when she heard my little daughter say it. Again, I was amazed. The last time my grandmother would have heard this blessing would have been over 70 years ago. It did not seem possible that she would still have a clear recollection of the candle lighting and blessing. Obviously, however she did. The most touching part for me, though, was the fact that, though she knew the blessing, she had never actually lit Shabbos candles before. That summer Friday afternoon, she lit candles for the very first time in her life together with her granddaughter and great granddaughter. It was an extremely profound experience for both myself and my grandmother.

We continued to light Shabbos candles and enjoy Shabbos dinner together for the rest of the summer. When the summer ended, my grandmother returned to Florida. Chana and I eagerly anticipated my grandmother's return the following summer so we could again enjoy a Shabbos meal together, complete with Shabbos lights. This, unfortunately, was not to be, as my grandmother passed away early the next summer.

After my grandmother's passing, I thought of her words, "You're Jewish; that's all you need to know." I realized that simply taking her words lead us to a lifetime of Jewish belief, faith and conviction. All the knowledge is ours to discover and put into practice. In her memory, Chana and I are doing just that. The lesson is, that obviously, it's never too late to start learning and to start doing.

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P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA  
Phone (03) 9525 8190  
Email: lamplighter\_weekly@hotmail.com

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ISSUE 945

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

It is well known that the Messianic Era and especially the time of the Resurrection of the Dead, is the fulfillment and culmination of the creation of the world, for which purpose it was originally created.

(Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, ch. 36 of Tanya)

# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



Chai (18) Elul, 5737 [1977]

To the Sons and Daughters of Our People Israel, Everywhere -

These are the concluding days of Elul, the month of soul-searching and honest self-appraisal with respect to the outgoing year. These days are also devoted to preparation for the New Year - may it bring all the good to all our people Israel.

It is obvious that this effort should, first of all, be applied to ensure that the outgoing year should be a complete one - namely, that it be both complete (not lacking) and perfect.

The ability to achieve this perfection is given by means of Teshuva Shleima (complete return to G-d), particularly in the last twelve days of the year, each day corresponding to a month of the outgoing year - to make good any past deficiency as well as insufficiency.

It is also self-evident that the resolutions which one makes for the coming year should likewise be perfect, which is to say that one should not be content to strive only for the most necessary and minimal, but for the highest and fullest measure, in all areas of human activity - in thought, speech and deed.

Understandably also, the degree and quality of perfection which is required of a person grows together with the person. For, as a person rises in stature, a correspondingly superior perfection is expected of him, since the perfection which accorded with his previous state is no longer good enough for his higher state. Thus, from time to time, as a person grows older and wiser, the quality of perfection in all his activities must rise in a corresponding measure.

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It has often been pointed out that man's mission in life includes also "elevating" the environment in which he lives, in accordance with the Divine intent in the entire Creation and in all its particulars, by infusing holiness and G-dliness into all the aspects of the physical world within his reach - in the so-called "Four Kingdoms" - domem, tzome'ach, chai, and medabber (inorganic matter, vegetable, animal, and man).

Significantly, this finds expression in the special Mitzvos which are connected with the beginning of the year, in the festivals of the month of Tishrei:

The Mitzvah of the Succah, the Jew's house of dwelling during the seven days of Succos, where the walls of the Succah represent the "inorganic kingdom";

The Mitzvah of the "Four Kinds" - Esrog, Lulav, myrtle and willow - which come from the vegetable kingdom;

The Mitzvah of Shofar on Rosh Hashanah, the Shofar being a horn of an animal;

And all of these things (by virtue of being Divine commandments) are elevated through the medabber, the "speaking" (human) being - the person carrying out the said (and all other) Mitzvos, whereby he elevates also himself and mankind - both in the realm of doing as well as of not doing - the latter as represented in the Mitzvah of the fast on Yom Kippur.

Thus, through infusing holiness into all four kingdoms of the physical world and making them into "vessels" (and instruments) of G-dliness in carrying out G-d's command - a Jew elevates them to their true perfection.

It also follows that just as in regard to his personal perfection, which is expected to rise in harmony with his rising state, so also in regard to the four kingdoms he is expected (and given the ability) to raise, from time to time, the state of perfection to which he elevates them (as explained above) - both quantitatively and qualitatively - in the manner of doing the Mitzvos (where there can be grades of performance, such as acceptable post facto; good to begin with; according to unanimous opinion; with hiddur [excellence], etc.) and their inner content.

Taking into account the assurance that G-d does not require of a human being anything beyond his capacity, it is certain that everyone, man or woman, can achieve utmost perfection in all aforesaid endeavours, "in one instant," since the person so resolved receives aid from G-d, for Whom there are no limitations.

May G-d grant that the efforts to achieve utmost perfection in the outgoing year, and the good resolutions to achieve perfection in all the above mentioned matters each day of the coming year, should bring down upon everyone G-d's blessings in all needs, material and spiritual, also in complete measure, and - very soon indeed - the complete blessing, the true and complete Redemption through our Righteous Moshiach.

## A WORD from the Director

*An individual's birthday has a very special meaning for that person. The birthday of a tzadik - a truly righteous individual - has deep significance for everyone who attempts to live according to the tzadik's teachings. A tzadik's birthday is, in some ways like the spiritual birthday of his followers.*

*The birthdays of two great tzadikim are on this Shabbos, the 18th of Elul (corresponding this year to August 28).. On the 18th ("Chai") of Elul, the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chasidic movement, and Rabbi Shneur Zalman, follower of the Baal Shem Tov and founder of Chabad Chasidut, were born.*

*These two great men dedicated their lives to teaching about the worth of every single Jew. Ahavat Yisrael - unconditional love of each Jew was at the forefront of their philosophy.*

*Today, nearly two centuries later, we benefit from the guidance and revelations of the Baal Shem Tov and Rabbi Shneur Zalman. The date of their birth, then, is not only their birthday - it is also our birthday. On our birthday we take time out to reflect on our achievements of the past year and our goals for the future.*

*It is fitting that on the birthday of these tzadikim, we reflect on how well we have followed and benefited from them, and we make our resolutions for the New Year.*

*We will, in their merit, be blessed with a K'tiva Vachatima Tova, a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.*

J. I. Gutnick

Elul, the last month of the Jewish year, is a month devoted to stocktaking and introspection. A Chassidic tradition holds that the last twelve days of the year — Elul 18 to 29 — are specifically devoted to the twelve months of the closing year: on each of these twelve days, one should review the deeds and achievements of its corresponding month.

# It Happened Once...



The Baal Shem Tov was once shown from heaven that a certain simple man called Moshe the Shepherd served G-d, blessed be He, better than he did. He longed to meet this shepherd, so he ordered his horses harnessed to his coach and travelled, with a few of his disciples, to the place where he was told the shepherd lived.

They stopped in a field at the foot of a hill and saw, on the hillside above them, a shepherd who was blowing his horn to call his flock. After the sheep gathered to him, he led them to a nearby trough to water them. While they were drinking, he looked up to heaven and began to call out loudly, "Master of the world, you are so great! You created heaven and earth, and everything else! I'm a simple man; I'm ignorant and unlearned, and I don't know how to serve you or praise you. I was orphaned as a child and raised among gentiles, so I never learned any Torah. But I can blow on my shepherd's horn like a *shofar*, with all my strength, and call out, 'The L-rd is G-d!'" After blowing with all his might on the horn, he collapsed to the ground, without an ounce of energy, and lay there motionless until his strength returned.

Then he got up and said, "Master of the world, I'm just a simple shepherd, I don't know any Torah and I don't know how to pray. What can I do for you? The only thing I know is to sing shepherds' songs!" He then began to sing loudly and fervently with all his strength until, again, he fell to the earth exhausted without an ounce of energy.

After recovering, he got up again and began to call out, "Master of the world! What is it worth that I blew on my horn and sang songs for you, when you're so great? What more can I do to serve you?" He paused for a moment and said, "There's something else I know how to do and I'll do it for your honour and glory!" He then stood on his head and began to wave his feet wildly in the air. Then he did somersaults one after the other, until he collapsed on the ground, exhausted. The Baal Shem Tov and his disciples watched all this from a distance in amazement.

The shepherd lay there silently until his strength returned. Again, he began to speak and said, "Master of the world, I've done what I can, but I know it's not enough! What more can I do to serve you?" After pausing to reflect, he said, "Yesterday, the nobleman who owns the flock made a feast for his servants and, when it ended, he gave each of us a silver coin. I'm giving that coin to you as a gift, O G-d, because you created everything and you feed all your creatures, including me, Moshe the little shepherd!" Saying this, he threw the coin upward.

At that moment, the Baal Shem Tov saw a hand reach out from heaven to receive the coin. He said to his disciples, "This shepherd has taught me how to fulfil the verse: 'You shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.'"

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

Since you did not serve the L-rd your G-d out of joy and gladness of heart...you shall serve your enemies (Deut. 28:47).

Joy holds such importance in the service of G-d. The implication of the verse is that the severe punishment of serving one's enemies comes only as a result of joy lacking from our G-dly service. It is as if joy in our service awakens joy in G-d Himself and annuls all harsh judgments. (*Rabbi Shneur Zalman*)

I have not transgressed any of your commandments neither have I forgotten (Deut. 26:13).

Why were two such similar statements necessary? To teach us that it is possible to fulfil a commandment and at the same time forget it. This happens when one fulfils it without intent-while the mind is focused on other things. (*Sfat Emet*)

And G-d has avouched you this day...to keep all His commandments. (Deut. 26:18)

Is it not already stated in the previous verse, "and to keep His laws and commandments"? Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev explained that the verse "and to keep all His commandments" here refers to G-d Himself, Who is also obligated to keep His commandments to us, especially the mitzvah of "you shall not delay in paying your hired labourer," and He must give us all life and sustenance.

You shall take from the first of all the fruits which you will bring from your land, which the L-rd your G-d gives you (Deut. 26:2)

The commandment to bring the first fruits to the Temple helps combat the notion that the beautiful fruits are solely the result of one's own toil and wisdom. If you begin to feel that it is "your land," the mitzvah makes you aware that the land and its produce are that "which the L-rd your G-d gives you." (*Akeidat Yitzchak*)

It will be when you come into the land (eretz) that the Eternal, your G-d, gives you for an inheritance, and you will inherit it and dwell in it. (Deut. 26:1)

The Midrash notes that eretz is similar to ratzon (desire). When you attain the level of ratzon of G-d, you have been given a gift from above. It is an inheritance for every Jew. (*The Baal Shem Tov*)

You shall go to the place the Eternal your G-d will choose to cause His name to dwell there. (Deut. 26:2)

A Jew must know that when he goes from one place to another, he is not going on his own but is directed from Above. And the intention and purpose of this is "to cause His Name to dwell there" - that is, to make G-d known in the place to which he was divinely led. (*The Baal Shem Tov*)

Because you did not serve the Eternal your G-d with joyfulness and gladness of heart...therefore you will serve your enemy. (28:47, 48)

Rabbi Simcha Bunim explained the above verse as follows: It is not enough that "you did not serve the Eternal your G-d" but you did this with joyfulness-you were happy that you weren't serving Him!

### CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

#### PARSHAS KI TAVO 18 ELUL • 28 AUGUST

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:36 PM
	MINCHA:	5:45 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:15 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LAST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:34 AM
	MINCHA:	5:30 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:34 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:45 PM
	MAARIV:	6:30 PM

#### CANDLE LIGHTING: 27 AUGUST 2010



Begins	Ends
5:36	6:34
5:34	6:31
5:14	6:07
6:25	7:15
5:12	6:05
5:38	6:34
5:15	6:11
5:22	6:19
5:23	6:23
5:38	6:35
5:32	6:33

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

#### The Lubavitcher Rebbe

צוקללה"ה נבג"מ ז"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.