

# Lamplighter

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In the Torah portion Shoftim we find the verse, "For man is the tree of the field." What, though, is the connection between human beings and trees?

At first glance, there seems to be little in common between the two. Man is the crown of creation, the only being with the capacity of speech, whereas a tree is on a much lower level, even lower than an animal. Why, then, does the Torah equate us with mere trees?

The unique characteristic of a plant is its intimate connection with the ground, its source of life and sustenance. Although both animals and people also receive their sustenance from the earth (and indeed were even created from it), the relationship is less direct. Humans and animals are not bound to the earth by their roots and are free to move about. A plant, on the other hand, must always be connected to the ground; if it is uprooted, it will wither and die.

A tree expresses this concept even more. Bound to the earth, it must suffer the harsh punishment of the elements throughout the four seasons of the year, yet annually bears its fruit (unlike annuals, which live for only one season). A tree has such a strong connection to its source that even the changes in season do it no harm.

It is in this respect that man resembles the tree of the field. He, too, is unable to exist if cut off from his source of life. His soul requires a constant and continuous bond with the source of his existence. This intimate connection and relationship with G-d is the trait which man may learn from the trees and adopt and strengthen for himself.

The source of life for the Jew is the Torah, and he draws his strength and vitality from it. It is true that most Jews cannot spend their entire day engrossed in Torah study and must venture out into the world to "make a dwelling place for G-d down here below." Nevertheless, when a busy businessman dedicates a small amount of time in the morning and evening to learning Torah, the influence is felt throughout the day. We derive meaning and inspiration for the rest of the day from the time that was actually spent learning Torah.

One must always bear in mind that "man is the tree of the field" - he is always bound by his roots to his source of life. Even as one actively pursues a life of commerce, or whatever one's profession may be, he must strive to feel that intimate bond with his Creator. The Torah that is learned during those few moments will permeate one's entire life and create a Torah-true atmosphere.

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

## The Human Traffic Sign

By Naftali Silberberg

I saw him this past spring as I was walking to the synagogue on a hot Shabbat morning in Los Angeles. He was standing at the entrance of a strip mall that I was passing, his front and back covered by identical cumbersome cardboard signs advertising an absolutely fantabulous sale by one of the stores in the mall. He was still there a few hours later when I returned from the synagogue, several empty water bottles lying at his feet.

It got me thinking. Even if this person was being paid only minimum wage, it would almost certainly be more economical for the store owner to go to the print shop and order a standard print sign. Why the need for the human advertisement?

Then again, when was the last time that a conventional sign really caught my attention? And as I looked at the busy thoroughfare, it was clear that many motorists were slowing to get a look; one even quickly turned on his blinker and entered the mall's next entrance.

Apparently, living breathing signs are worth the extra cost. I'm pretty sure that entrepreneurs wouldn't be throwing out their hard-earned money on an unproven advertising gimmick.

In no less than four places, the Torah discusses the law of the "Cities of Refuge" (Exodus 21, Numbers 35, Deuteronomy 4 and 19), the safe havens established for those who were guilty of manslaughter, where they could escape the wrath of a vengeful next of kin.

Perhaps the reason why the Torah chooses to repeat this law several times is due to one of the powerful and eternal lessons this mitzvah teaches.

We are all haunted and pursued by past indiscretions, as well as unhealthy and un-spiritual tendencies. But there is a "safe haven" to where we can escape and find serenity. As our Sages tell us (Talmud, Makkot 10), "The words of Torah are a refuge." Through thoroughly immersing ourselves - "exiling" ourselves - within the teachings of the Torah, we are granted the wherewithal to successfully fend off all the impulses that hound us.

In Deuteronomy 19:3, the Torah instructs us to "prepare the roads" that leads to the cities of refuge. The Talmud (ibid.) explains that it is an imperative upon the community to ensure that the roads leading to the cities remain maintained and unobstructed, and furthermore, every crossroads must have a prominent sign directing the person to the closest *Miklat* (refuge).

The Rebbe explained the contemporary lesson that this detail of the law offers. It is our duty, the Rebbe says, to stand at life's crossroads with a large arrow sign, and loudly proclaim to all: "This is the way to refuge. Here's the Torah. Here's how you live it. Here's how you find peace and tranquillity."

We need to be signs. For our chance acquaintances, for our friends, for our children.

We can print posters. We can buy books for our children that teach them the proper path; we can use wonderful words and homilies to persuade them of the beauty of Torah.

Or we can be living signs.

Yes, it requires a deeper commitment. It could mean standing in the heat for hours.

But living signs cause heads to turn like no other means of advertisement can.



## Stories of the Rebbe and Harav Meir Greenberg

By *Nochum Greenberg*

Harav Meir Greenberg of blessed memory was a rabbi's rabbi. The Rebbe referred to him in public as a great Lamdan (Torah scholar). When the issue as to who should be the rabbi in Crown Heights arose, a prominent community leader mentioned his name as a possible candidate to the Rebbe. The Rebbe's response was that he was qualified to be the Rabbi of a city like Warsaw, one of the largest and most influential Jewish communities in pre-war Europe. In his humility, Rabbi Greenberg used to quip, that the Rebbe probably meant post-war Warsaw, where virtually no Jews remained...

Rabbi Meir Greenberg was the chief rabbi of Paterson New Jersey what was once a large Kehillah with a population of close to 40,000 Jews, in this capacity he was the rabbi of seven Shuls! In addition he was responsible for the kashrus of dozens of establishments. He often encountered stiff resistance from certain powerful elements in his community when he insisted on certain standards of Jewish observance be implemented, particularly in the realm of Kashrus.

In one instance the party that was forced to accede to his demands decided to get even with him. This unscrupulous individual had an uncle who was the head of the IRS (Internal Revenue Service, the government agency that collects taxes) of that entire region. They fabricated a charge against the rabbi that he did something criminal with respect to the payment of taxes and an investigation was, inevitably, going to commence.

When the head of the IRS wants to destroy a person he is fully capable of

doing just that. Even if one comes out of the investigation clean, the damage could already be done once the allegations are made and publicized in the press. Rabbi Greenberg thus realized that the only way out was to go to see the Rebbe. He succeeded in getting an audience with the Rebbe (known in Chassidic circles as Yechidus) without much delay, citing the emergency nature of this matter that if not "nipped in the bud" would likely have a catastrophic outcome.

When Harav Greenberg told the Rebbe of his very serious dilemma, the Rebbe laughed. He noted that, while he heard the Previous Rebbe laugh, it was the first time he heard the Rebbe laugh out loud. Usually the Rebbe would express his joy with a broad, captivating smile. But this was eerily and surprisingly different. Harav Greenberg's interpretation of the Rebbe's laughter was based on the Kabbalistic notion that "laughter sweetens the judgments." When a Tzadik laughs he is invoking the Divine power of delight that has the power to neutralize and transform the negative energies.

The Rebbe then made a sweeping and dismissive gesture with his hand and declared the Hebrew words of the Amidah that translate as: "And the informers shall have no hope." And that was the last he heard of this threat or anything threatening from those individuals. The Rebbe nullified every trace of the libellous accusation directed at him with a laugh and a sweeping declaration.

At another occasion Harav Greenberg had a private audience with the Rebbe with one of his congregants whose name was Sol Waxberg. Sol Waxberg was a sickly man in his sixties. When he entered the Rebbe's room, the Rebbe asked him if he preferred to converse in Yiddish or in English. Mr Waxberg was an American born college graduate, so he was more comfortable in English than he was in Yiddish of which he had but rudimentary knowledge. When he replied that he preferred English, the Rebbe proceeded to converse with him in a very sophisticated fashion using words that

were not familiar to Mr. Waxberg. He then asked the Rebbe if they could better converse in Yiddish... Harav Greenberg commented that it seemed that the Rebbe wanted to connect with him in Yiddish.

As was mentioned, Mr. Waxberg was a sickly man afflicted with many physical ailments (heart failure among other things) and bemoaned the fact that the doctors who were pessimistic about his medical condition, predicted that he did not have much longer to live. The Rebbe assured him that he would live another twenty years. Indeed, he lived exactly another twenty years...

About seven years after his initial meeting with the Rebbe, Harav Greenberg took Mr. Waxberg to the Rebbe after a Holiday Farbrengen for Kos Shel Bracha (where the Rebbe would distribute wine left over from the Havdalah ceremony). When he approached the Rebbe he said, "Rebbe, you probably don't remember me!" The Rebbe quickly responded by telling him his name and profession; information he had shared with the Rebbe seven years earlier...

In his first Yechidus, the Rebbe asked Mr. Waxberg if he ever saw the Previous Rebbe. He answered that he did not have the privilege to see him. The Rebbe told him to look into the eyes of Harav Greenberg's who saw the Previous Rebbe, and that by doing so it would be as if he saw the Rebbe himself!

*Rabbi Meir Greenberg served as Chief Rabbi of Worcester Massachusetts and Paterson, New Jersey for a combined tenure of over a half a century. He was sought far and wide for his Halachic opinions and guidance in Jewish communal matters. He was also the Rosh Yeshiva of the Morristown Lubavitch Yeshiva known as the rabbinical College of America. And served as president of the Igud Harabbnim, the Rabbinical Alliance of America. He is the author of two acclaimed, profoundly scholarly works and has inspired thousands with his knowledge, Chassidic warmth and dedication.*

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

ISSUE 998

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Our Sages say, 'If you see the kingdoms provoking one another, expect the footsteps of Moshiach.' The *Yalkut Shimoni* states 'The year in which Moshiach is revealed, all the nations of the world will be at strife with each other. The King of Persia will provoke the King of the Arabs... all the nations of the world will be confused and afraid. And G-d says to the Jews, 'My children, don't be afraid; everything I did, I did only for your sake... The time of your Redemption has arrived'...'"

# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



Dear Children:

I was happy to receive your drawings together with the letter from your kindergarten teacher...

In your drawings I saw little boys and girls, and trees and flowers...and I want to take this opportunity to tell you of the great love and affection that my father-in-law, the Rebbe, possessed towards all Jewish boys and girls, young and old - but especially towards the young. The Rebbe was concerned about their education and their well-being wherever they were, and in every boy and girl he saw a sapling that would one day grow to be a beautiful fruit-tree with delicious fruits.

However, this growth all depends on whether the boy or girl wants it and works for it - just as we see with a tree: When you plant a seed or a tender sapling, you have to protect it from weeds and from all kinds of damage, you have to water it etc., until it grows and becomes a tree, bearing good fruits.

It is the same with every boy and girl; G-d has said (through his prophet) that you are "...the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, in which I take pride," The Creator - may He be blessed - has planted within you a holy Neshama, a soul, which is actually a part of G-d above. You must protect this G-dly "seed" from weeds and from damage, which means from bad influences. You must supply it with life-giving water, and the only water is the life-giving Torah and its mitzvot [commandments] which bring life to those who observe them. If you do this, dear children, G-d will give you His blessing over and over, so that you will succeed in becoming "trees" bearing good and praiseworthy fruits, bringing joy to your parents and teachers, and bringing pride and glory to our people, the people of the Children of Israel...

## A WORD from the Director

*During the month of Elul that we just entered, there is a custom to sound the shofar each morning. The call of the shofar is intended to wake us up, reminding us to return to G-d and to prepare for the upcoming Days of Awe.*

*There are a number of historic moments throughout Jewish history when the shofar was blown. The first of these was at Mount Sinai. There, the Torah was given in the presence of an intense, constantly increasing, shofar blast.*

*Another renowned shofar blowing mentioned in our prayers is that of the "Great Shofar," which will be blown upon the arrival of Moshiach.*

*What is the connection between these two events?*

*The Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai was an experience that pulled people out of their previous state of existence. The G-dly revelation was so intense that "their souls flew out of their bodies"; they were taken out of their worldly boundaries and elevated to a much higher plane.*

*The Era of Moshiach will precipitate a similar restructuring of our lives, causing us to break out of the limitations of this physical world and reach to a higher level of existence. The prerequisite for this transformation is the desire to change, which must be present now, even before Moshiach has arrived.*

*This is a common thread joining the revelation at Mount Sinai with the days of Moshiach - the element of change and the improvement of the world at large. The shofar, central to both events, inspires one to abandon one's previous level in order to reach higher levels.*

*Even today, the shofar has a similar effect. We can and must achieve an inner change.*

*The time for change is now, even before the Rosh Hashanah begins. May we hear, this year, the sounding of the Great Shofar in the rebuilt Holy Temple in Jerusalem with Moshiach, NOW!*

*J. I. Gutnick*

### Why we Blow the *Shofar* in The month of Elul

The sound of the Shofar, is the call to Teshuvah. Teshuvah means returning to your true self. As we get closer to the High Holidays, we start looking back at our year and see that we've gone off the track here and there. We find that we have not allowed our souls to dictate our actions.

In the month of Elul, we start making our way back—to G-D, to our souls, to our true selves. The sound of the shofar is the wordless cry of the soul, yearning to break free of the prison of the mundane.

The shofar is said to "confuse Satan" about what day is actually Rosh Hashanah and prevent his negative interfering with New Year. (Satan is not a guy with horns running around with a pitchfork. "Satan" in Hebrew means to "block" or to "push away." "Satan" is the forces of negativity that G-d creates to challenge us and "block" our way to fulfilling our mandate. The sound of the shofar awakens within us the pre-verbal, transcendent commitment that silences the voice of darkness.)

## CUSTOMS CORNER

# It Happened Once...



Failing health once forced Rabbi Chaim of Sanz to make use of the mineral baths in Baden, near Vienna. Hearing that a Chassidic Rebbe was visiting the area, an irreligious Jew named Marcus decided to pay him a visit, arriving late Saturday morning at the Sanzer Rebbe's Shabbat table. Rabbi Chaim sat at the head, surrounded by the Chassidim who had accompanied him on his trip, as well as those from Vienna and Germany who had come to be in the company of their Rebbe.

As soon as Marcus entered and sat down, the Rebbe sent small portions to him from each course that he had been served. Marcus ate a bit of fish, *Cholent*, *Kugel* and chicken, and soon thereafter, having satisfied his curiosity, he left.

Later that day Marcus went out for dinner to a restaurant—non-kosher, as usual—and ordered a sumptuous meal. But as soon as he began to eat, he suffered painful stomach cramps and began to vomit.

"They have served me terrible food here!" he exclaimed, calling over the manager to complain.

"There is nothing wrong with our food," the manager protested. "Why, just look at all the other patrons who are dining on our fine cuisine without any ill effect! It must be that *you* are unwell, sir."

Perhaps the manager was correct, Marcus thought to himself. He suddenly reminded himself of the renowned miracle-worker he had visited earlier that day, and decided to return to him and ask for a blessing that his stomach ailment be cured.

He described his problem to the Rebbe's attendant, who went into the Sanzer's room and related Marcus' request. "He is perfectly healthy," replied Rabbi Chaim. "There is nothing wrong with him! Go into the kitchen and serve him some *Kugel*, and he will be able to eat it."

After this snack, Marcus told the attendant, "Thank you—that was really delicious! I feel much better now. Please thank the Rebbe for me."

Later that night, thinking himself cured by the Rebbe's blessing, Marcus decided to make a second attempt to dine at the restaurant. To his dismay, the afternoon's incident repeated itself: as soon as he started eating, the stomach pains returned and he began to vomit. Puzzled, Marcus returned to the Sanzer Rebbe for an explanation.

"I was very ill this afternoon, and your blessing cured me. But when I went back to the restaurant, the same thing happened again!"

Rabbi Chaim smiled and told him, "There is nothing wrong with your health. But now that you have tasted our Shabbat food, your

body can no longer tolerate anything unkosher! Your body had experienced purity, and now you can eat only kosher food."

Marcus realized the truth in the Rebbe's words and accepted upon himself to observe the laws of *kashrut* (keeping kosher). One thing led to another, and he eventually returned to full observance of the Torah, even changing his name to Moshe. He returned to Sanz to live his newly chosen lifestyle in the community of the Sanzer Rebbe, and was known as "Reb Moshe Baal Teshuvah (penitent)." His previous education enabled him to write well in German, and eventually he became the Sanzer's secretary for all official matters.

After the Sanzer Rav passed away, Moshe became a Chassid of one of the Rebbe's sons, Rabbi Baruch of Gorlitz. He would constantly seek R. Baruch's advice on how he could repent for his past sins.

## Lamplighter

### Issue 1,000

With G-d's help, we will be publishing our **1,000th issue of the Lamplighter**. We are preparing a special expanded edition. We would be pleased to receive from you, our dear readers, your feelings, greetings and thoughts about our publication, which will be included in that special edition. Please write how you use this publication and how it may have influenced you in your spiritual journey. Please include any anecdotes in which the Lamplighter has played a role in changing the lives of your friends and acquaintances.

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CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS SHOFTIM • 4 ELUL • 3 SEPTEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:41 PM
	MINCHA:	5:50 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:20 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:29 AM
	MINCHA:	5:40 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:39 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:50 PM
	MAARIV:	6:35 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 2 SEPTEMBER 2011



Begins	Ends
5:41 ..... MELBOURNE .....	6:39
5:39 ..... ADELAIDE .....	6:35
5:16 ..... BRISBANE .....	6:10
6:25 ..... DARWIN .....	7:15
5:15 ..... GOLD COAST .....	6:08
5:42 ..... PERTH .....	6:37
5:19 ..... SYDNEY .....	6:15
5:26 ..... CANBERRA .....	6:23
5:29 ..... LAUNCESTON .....	6:29
5:42 ..... AUCKLAND .....	6:40
5:38 ..... WELLINGTON .....	6:38
5:27 ..... HOBART .....	6:28
5:13 ..... BYRON BAY .....	6:07

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.