

# L'Chaim

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January 28, 2011 – 23 Shevat, 5771

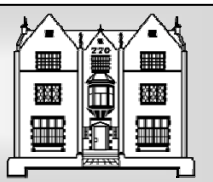
1156: MISHPATIM

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## Living with the REBBE



Last week we read about the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. This week, in the portion of Mishpatim, we begin learning the specific commandments the Torah contains.

There are three categories of mitzvot in the Torah: Chukim (statutes) are commandments that are above our understanding. Eidot (testimonies) are mitzvot that we would not have arrived at without the Torah. However, once G-d commanded us to obey them, we are able to understand their rationale. Mishpatim (judgments) are simple commandments that are compelled by human logic, laws that society would keep even if the Torah had not commanded observance.

Most of the Torah portion of Mishpatim deals with these seemingly self-evident laws. Which leads to the following question:

After the extraordinary spectacle at Mount Sinai, why does the Torah stress the rational category of mitzvot, as opposed to the others? Furthermore, why was a supernatural revelation necessary for rules and regulations we would have figured out on our own?

The answer is that the Torah is teaching us how to relate to the whole concept of rational mitzvot. The natural inclination is to base these mitzvot on our intellectual understanding. It hardly seems even necessary to believe in G-d to arrive at the conclusion that it is wrong to harm others, or that we must compensate someone we have injured. These principles are patently obvious.

However, by enumerating the "logical" judgments first, the Torah emphasizes that even these mitzvot must be observed out of faith in G-d. We obey the Torah's rational laws not because they are logical, but because G-d has commanded us to obey them. Indeed, the only basis and source of all mitzvot, regardless of whether or not we understand them, is our Divinely-given Torah.

This is important for several reasons:

A truly ethical life cannot be based on the human intellect, as it is simply too flexible and open to manipulation by the will. If a person really wants to do something, not only will he develop a philosophy by which such action is justified, but he will even turn it into a "mitzva"! The human mind can also devise logical "proofs" for contradictory theorems. It is thus too unreliable a foundation for a moral existence.

Moreover, just as G-d is Infinite and without end, so too is His holy Torah. Even the simplest and most logical mitzvot are endlessly deep. If a Jew observes a mitzva only because he understands it, he misses out on all its inner significance.

By basing our observance on faith, we ensure that our moral system will be stable and unwavering. We also connect ourselves to G-d through even the most "logical" of mitzvot. ■

*Adapted from Volume 16 & 3 of Likutei Sichot*

### Envelopes

Pity the poor envelope. As we do more and more of our correspondence electronically, email is making obsolete regular mail - otherwise known, at first derisively but now somewhat affectionately, as "snail mail."

Before email, we sent letters using envelopes. The pre-gummed envelopes we're used to didn't appear until almost 1900.

Have you ever looked at an envelope, how it's put together? It's really a folded diamond, creased and folded. Open one up and you'll see. The flap - the part we moisten and seal - overlaps the rest, which is pre-sealed. You can see how it's put together by noticing the angle lines of the seal.

We never really think about envelopes until we need one - or can't find the right size. But the introduction of the envelope, and the standardization of the postage stamp, probably had a bigger impact on correspondence, business and general communication than we realize.

What's the purpose of an envelope? Well, it envelops - it covers, conceals and protects - the contents within. The envelope itself doesn't seem that important - it's the letter inside that has value. But the envelope, thin as it is, forms an important barrier - it keeps out prying eyes, keeping our thoughts and feelings private and reserved for the recipient.

An envelope also is a first barrier against damage. If a letter gets wet, stepped on, dropped in

the dirt - often the letter itself survives, at least enough to convey its message - while the envelope around it is of course ruined.

Spiritually we have our envelopes - those "thin barriers" between us and the vicissitudes of the world. An "envelope" might be a moment of hesitation before yielding to temptation - before indulging in some gossip, or embarrassing or derogatory remark. An envelope might be the moment of quiet meditation right when lighting candles Friday before Shabbat - a chance to mark the separation we're about to make between holy and weekday.

We have other envelopes - spiritual items that envelop us. A tallit (prayer shawl) is an envelope. The Clouds of Glory that protected the Jews in the wilderness - that was an envelope. In fact, the Divine Presence - the Shechina - can be seen as G-dliness enveloping us.

Like the envelope around our letter, we rarely pay attention to these barely detectable spiritual cocoons that protect our spiritual privacy and keep out the dirt and intrusions of the world that threaten to soil those moments of - well, the kind of revelation and joy that comes from receiving a long expected, or unexpected, letter from a friend or relative.

So the next time you put on a tallit, cover your eyes before lighting Shabbat candles, hesitate and turn away from some negative word or image - remember your own envelopes, and how something so fragile can be such a safeguard. ■

## MEZUZAH DID YOU KNOW???



### CHECK IT OUT!

**What:** Certified Scribe will be checking/repairing mezuzah scrolls & tefillin  
**When:** Sunday January 30 - Tuesday February 1  
**Where:** Chabad of Scottsdale (10215 N Scottsdale Rd., Scottsdale, AZ 85253)  
**How:** Email [mezuzahfund@gmail.com](mailto:mezuzahfund@gmail.com) OR call Brandon at 480-338-5683  
**Why:** By Jewish Law, all mezuzahs and tefillin should be checked by a certified Scribe twice every seven years at a minimum. Even good, kosher mezuzah scrolls and tefillin deteriorate over time and can become pasul or unkosher. There are many recorded stories of people's fortunes taking dramatic turns for the better once they discovered/rectified having unkosher tefillin or mezuzahs on their homes or offices.  
**Cost:** Tefillin Check/Repair, Exterior \$20/set      Mezuzah Checking \$8/scroll  
Tefillin Check/Repair, Complete \$75/set  
 New, beautiful, hand-scribed mezuzah scrolls will also be available for purchase. ■  
**SPACE IS LIMITED – ADVANCED RESERVATIONS ONLY**

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Shabbat we bless the new month. As this year is a leap year, there are two months of Adar, the first being Adar I and the second Adar II. Adar is associated with an increase in joy. The Talmud explains that during the month of Adar, Jewish "mazel" (colloquially translated as fortune) is very potent. The mazel (or source of influence) of a Jew refers to the higher levels of his soul, which are connected to the essence of G-d at all times. In Adar, we have the opportunity to draw down an abundance of holy energy through good deeds imbued with joy.

Interestingly, our Sages taught that "Israel has no mazel" ("ein mazel l'Yisrael"), meaning that Jews are above being influenced by the stars and planets, which are known as "mazelot."

By changing the vowels under the Hebrew letters slightly, "ein mazel l'Yisrael" can be read "Ayin - the Infinite - is the mazel of Israel." The Jewish people receive their influence from G-d from a transcendent level, the transmission of which is particularly powerful in the month of Adar.

The name Adar has several meanings, one of which is cloak or mantel. This is a reference to G-d's compassion for the His people, the Jews. The purpose of a garment is to provide us with warmth. In Adar (or Adar II in a leap year), when the holiday of Purim occurs, we experience the warmth and comfort of G-d. A garment also conceals the body of the person who wears it. Similarly, the miracle of Purim was "dressed" in a series of natural events.

The word Adar is a combination of the Hebrew letter "alef" and the word "dar," meaning "G-d dwells." (Just as alef is the initial letter in the alphabet, so too is G-d the "first.") G-d created the earth in order to have a dwelling place in the physical world. Through the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvot, we create an abode for Almighty G-d.

May the positive influence of Adar be expressed in the advent of the true and complete Redemption with Moshiach in the immediate future. ■

## The Rebbe Writes

2 Menachem Av, 5734 (1974)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 1st.

The reply in detail to the contents of your letter you will no doubt have received from your father, with whom I discussed it at some length. Nevertheless, I want to put down in writing some of the points and briefly at any rate.

First of all, I am grateful to note your concern, indeed profound concern, for your parents. This does not surprise me, of course, knowing your father and your upbringing. But it is nevertheless gratifying to see it expressed in a letter.

As for the subject matter of your letter, it is surely unnecessary to point out to you that when one thinks about the well-being of any person, including above all, his inner harmony and peace, one must obviously think not in terms of the immediate days and weeks, but also how it will be in the long run. This should be the consideration in regard to all affairs, but especially so when it is a question of where to settle down.

This is a very serious question even when one is at the crossroads, and much more so when one has already been settled in a place and contemplates changing it.

Now, with regard to your father, and knowing him, I have no doubt that he could feel in his element only in a place where he can fully utilize the knowledge which he has acquired and the qualities which G-d has bestowed upon him, that is, to utilize them in the fullest measure for the benefit of the many.

By comparison with this, personal amenities - and I mean this also in a spiritual sense - are not the decisive factor, and perhaps no factor at all.

All the above would be true even if it was a matter of conjecture. But in this case, after he has been so successful in his accomplishments in the past, there is no room for any doubt whatever as to the importance of this overriding consideration.

On the basis of what has been said above, supported by what you and all the other members of the family have seen of your father's hatzlocho [success] not only in your city, but South Africa as a whole, you will surely realize without any shadow of a doubt that your father will feel in his element and be truly happy if he continues his present situation in your country.

Moreover, it is surely unnecessary to bring special proof that the trend of assimilation, even assimilation in its coarsest form, namely intermarriage, is still very strong in all of South Africa, and that the work and fight to turn back this trend will still be required for a long time.

Fortunately, experience has shown that where there is a suitable and determined person with courage and determination to guide the young generation, the response is gratifying, and often highly gratifying. This has also been the experience of your father, who has succeeded, with G-d's help, to literally save many Jewish men and women from complete assimilation and to lead them in the way of G-d within the Jewish fold.

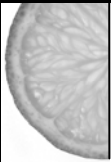
To return to you, I of course inquired from your father about your activities, as well as about those of the other children, in the spreading of Yiddishkeit [Judaism].

May G-d grant strength in accordance with the saying of our Sage, "He who has 100, desires 200, and having achieved 200, desires 400." If ambition grows with achievement, even in material things, how much more should this be the case in matters of the spirit, which are the essential aspect of Jewish life.

I trust that you have read about the Five Mitzvah Campaigns which I have been urging recently, also pointing out that Jewish daughters and women have their part in these activities, and a very important part. I am confident that you and your friends are taking an active part in them.

With blessing,

P.S. Inasmuch as I understand that your letter was written with your father's knowledge, I am sending him a copy of my reply. ■



# SLICE OF LIFE

## A Spiritual Ripple

by Steve Hyatt

When I was a young boy I could sit for hours on the shores of Morgan's Pond in my hometown of Waterford, Connecticut. Every once in awhile I'd pick up a pebble and toss it into the pond and watch as the ripples cascaded across the surface.

It has been many years since I threw those pebbles into Morgan's Pond. But recently an event occurred that reminded me of the pond and the ripples that caused such fascination.

One Tuesday I arrived at work to find an official looking letter on my desk; a Federal agency had decided to audit one of my Human Resources programs. Despite the fact that I run a tight ship I was horrified that the "Feds" were coming into my shop. Although I had never dealt with this branch of government before, I immediately felt guilty. I had absolutely no reason to feel that way, but these were the "Feds"!

Unfortunately for me, the visit would not be for another 30 days; that's a very long time when you are dealing with the unknown. As the days passed I became more and more despondent. The people I worked with, the people I lived with and the people I davened (prayed) with, all began to notice my unexplained plunge into despair.

I became depressed. I had never, ever been to such a dark place. About a week before the "visit" my Chabad rabbi Mendel Cunin sat me down and demanded to know what was wrong. I was so distraught that I could hardly get the words out to explain the situation. And in truth, I must have sounded like a raving lunatic because unless you were in my shoes, my concerns just didn't make sense. Rabbi Cunin gave me many words of encouragement but I didn't want to hear them.

The Shabbat before the "visit" I was davening in shul hardly listening to the rabbi and barely reading the words in my prayerbook. Negative thoughts about what would happen on Monday and the possible loss of my job bombarded me. I

slid into a deeper, darker depression.

When the davening was over, I robotically took my regular seat at the Kiddush. The herring was passed around, the cups were filled and my buddies all engaged in a discussion about the week's Torah portion. After a few minutes of spirited discussion, Rabbi Cunin pulled out a copy of the N'shei Chabad Newsletter and asked me to read out loud a story he'd marked. I had no desire whatsoever to participate in this ridiculous exercise. I attempted to pass the magazine to my friend sitting next to me. But the rabbi, in a very authoritative voice, insisted that I read it.

Quietly, I began to read the three page article. It was a story written by gentleman living in Australia who was becoming more observant. He was sharing his personal spiritual journey.

I completed the first page and again tried to pass the magazine to my friend. The rabbi insisted I continue to read. Not wanting to make a scene I continued. I finished the second page and thought to myself, "What am I doing here. These people just don't understand what I'm going through and the rabbi has me reading this rah-rah story. Does he really think this is going to cheer me up?"

About half way down the third page I read something that made me feel like my entire body had suddenly been hit with an electric shock. It was as if my heart had stopped and the doctor used a defibrillator to restart it. I finished the sentence and started to cry. I tried to continue but I couldn't utter a word. I passed the magazine to my friend, Marc, and this time the rabbi didn't say a word. Marc finished reading the article as I sobbed silently. When he was done, everyone was silent as they waited for me to say something. Overcome with emotion all I could do was mumble a "thank you" to the rabbi for sharing the story with me.

As the moments ticked by I started to feel better. At the conclusion of the Kiddush I walked outside with my buddies and started my walk home. About 100 yards up the mountain I started to cry; no matter how much I tried I could not stop. By the time I arrived at my front door and kissed the mezuzah I was all cried out. As I walked through the door I felt "different." I was no longer in that deep, dark place. I was no longer afraid.

On Monday morning I got up and davened with renewed vigor. I wasn't over-confident but I wasn't afraid either. When I walked through the front door of my office building the gentleman conducting the audit was waiting for me in the lobby. We sat down in my office. He explained what he wanted to see and the process began. Four days later he met with my boss and me and shared that he had found only one small violation and with a small adjustment we could rectify the situation and all would be well.

I assured him the correction would be made and walked him to the door. Over the next few days we corrected the problem, sent the official notification to the auditor and put the issue behind us. The next Shabbat I was ready to "party" with my boys! I shared the results of the audit, everyone applauded and we noshed on a little herring and said "l'chaim."

As I walked home, my mind drifted back to the pebbles I used to throw into Morgan's Pond and the resulting ripples. I couldn't help but wonder at what I'd read the week before that guided me out of the darkness and back to the light. The author of the article wrote that his spiritual journey started after he read a story in L'Chaim about a fellow Jew, living in Wilmington, Delaware. The story, "Grandpa Charlie Would Be Proud" was written by me 10 years earlier after I'd said Kiddush for my 1<sup>st</sup> time ever at Rabbi Chuni Vogel's Shabbat table.

The mystical pebble G-d helped me toss into the spiritual waters after that first Kiddush generated a holy spark that rippled through the universe for 10 years before finding its way back to the "shores" of Rabbi Mendel Cunin's Shabbat table, in Reno Nevada, on the exact day Shlomo Yakov ben Moshe Pinchus needed it most. Coincidence...I think not! ■

Mr. Hyatt's other articles in L'Chaim can be found at [Kugelhead.blogspot.com](http://Kugelhead.blogspot.com)

## Moshiach Matters

In this week's Torah portion we read: "For six years he shall serve and in the seventh year he shall be set free" (Exodus 21:2). The six years hint to the six kingdoms where the Jews will be in exile: Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Media/Persia, Greece and Rome - our current exile. At the end of the exile of Rome we will be set free by Moshiach who will redeem us from this exile. ■ (Iturei Torah)

## What's In A Name?

**ELIJAHU** means "the L-rd is my G-d." Eliyahu (Elijah) was one of the earliest prophets (I Kings 17:1). He is said to be present at every brit mila (circumcision) and many stories are told of how he came to the aid of Jews in desperate need. Eliyahu will announce the arrival of Moshiach and at that time will answer all questions that have puzzled scholars throughout the ages.

**EIDEL** is Yiddish, meaning, "delicate, gentle." The Baal Shem Tov's daughter, Eidel, was honored by Chasidim as if she had been a rebbe herself. Her father regarded her as being on an equal standing with his other disciples.

## News

**New Emissaries** Rabbi Levi and Dena Sanowicz will be arriving soon in Wayne, New Jersey, where they will direct the Friendship Circle as well as youth programs at the Chabad Center of Passaic County. Rabbi Zalman and Chanie Simon recently arrived in Slingerlands, NY, to establish a new Chabad House serving the needs of the local Jewish community. Rabbi Yosef and Estie Orenstein will be moving to Woodcliff Lake, NJ to be program directors for Valley Chabad, focusing on youth and teens. Rabbi Eli and Leah Wilansky will be arriving in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, to be program directors focusing on youth and teens for Chabad at the Beaches.

## GET YOUR MEZUZAHS CHECKED

Rabbi Moshe Liberow is a certified sofer (scribe). He will be in Scottsdale from Sunday Jan. 30 - Tues. Feb. 1 checking and repairing mezuzah scrolls and tefillin. Advanced reservations required by calling Brandon at 480-338-5683 or emailing [mezuzahfund@gmail.com](mailto:mezuzahfund@gmail.com) ■

<b>Important Times</b>	<b>January 14 – 21</b>	Brought to you by: <b>Chabad-Lubavitch in Cyberspace</b> <a href="http://www.chabad.org">www.chabad.org</a> Copyright © 2010 Lubavitch Youth Organization <a href="http://www.lchaimweekly.org">www.lchaimweekly.org</a>	Re-printed by: <b>Chabad of Scottsdale</b> (480) 998-1410 <a href="http://chabadofscottsdale.org">chabadofscottsdale.org</a> <b>The Jewish Learning Center of Scottsdale 480.443.5362</b>
<i>Shacharis</i> 7:00am   Sunday 8:00am   Monday/Thursday/Friday 6:45am <i>Minchab/Maariv</i> 5:30pm   Shabbos 5:15pm <i>Shabbat</i> <u>Shabbos Mevarchim Tehillim Minyan</u> 8:00am   <u>Shacharis</u> 9:30am <b>Light Candles 5:37pm</b> <b>Shabbat Ends 6:34pm</b>			

**It Once Happened** When Reb Aryeh Leib, who was known as the Shpoler Zeide, had been rebbe for three years, there was terrible famine in the area. The tzadik (righteous person), whose love for the poor, the needy, the widowed was unbounded, felt compelled to provide for the thousands affected by the disaster. He could neither eat nor sleep, and his heartache was so great that for weeks he couldn't bring himself to eat anything more than bread and tea.

As the famine spread to the furthest provinces of Russia, rebbes from the starving communities wrote to Shpola, begging Reb Aryeh Leib to raise a storm in the Heavens, and beg that the deadly decree be rescinded. Who, if not he, a tzadik, known to work wonders, could accomplish this? The Shpoler Zeide, on his part, wrote to ten of the greatest tzadikim of the day - Reb Zusya of Hanipoli, Reb Yaakov Shimshon of Shipitovka, Reb Ze'ev of Zhitomir, and others - requesting that they come to Shpola immediately.

They soon arrived and were seated at the long table of the Shpoler Zeide, and heard his awesome words: "My masters, I am taking the Alm-ghty to a din Torah, a lawsuit, and you are to serve as the judges. It is true that, according to the law of the Torah, the plaintiff must take his case to the place where the defendant is, but since in this unique case, 'there is no place devoid of His presence,' and since, more particularly, 'wherever ten are assembled the Divine Presence rests,' we will hold the court case here."

The holy congregation agreed, and joined in prayer, their fervent supplications battering the Gates of Heaven.

The Shpoler Zeide then instructed his aide to announce: "By the order of those gathered here, I hereby proclaim that Reb Aryeh Leib, the son of Rachel, summons the Alm-ghty to a court-case which will be duly conducted here in three days."

The holy rebbes spent the next three days together, in fasting and prayer, and no one was permitted to interrupt their devotions. On the fourth day, after they had concluded the morning prayers and they were still wrapped in their prayer shawls and adorned by their tefilin, the Shpoler Zeide solemnly signalled his aide to announce that the court case was about to begin.

"In the name of all the women and children of the Jews of Russia," the tzadik declared, "I hereby state my claim against the Defendant. Why does the Creator of the Universe not provide them with food, thereby preventing their death (G-d forbid) of hunger? Doesn't the Torah itself say, 'For unto Me are the Children of Israel bondsmen; they are My bondsmen'? Do we not have His promise, recorded by the Prophet Ezekiel, that even if His children should someday desire to go in the ways of the nations of the world, that this will never happen? One can draw the conclusion that the Children of Israel are the Alm-ghty's servants for all eternity.

"In that case, they should, at least, be in the category of Jewish bondsmen. Jewish law teaches that a master is required to provide for the wife and children of his bondsman. Can the Al-mighty violate his own Torah so blatantly?

"Now I'm well aware that some clever prosecuting angel will argue in defense of the Creator, saying that these servants are remiss in their service; that they don't serve their Master as well as they should. But to this bogus argument I have two replies: Firstly, where is it written that if a bondsman is lazy and doesn't work properly, his wife and children are too deprived of their sustenance? Secondly, if these servants are lacks in their performance, their Master can fault no one, but Himself. For who else gave each servant an evil inclination whose whole job and purpose it is to drive them to abandon their loyalty and to destroy their desire to serve? Why, I can swear that if this evil inclination, which the Master Himself created, would cease to exist, they would become the most perfect servants possible!"

Ten judge-tzadikim consulted their tomes of Torah to search the law for the correct verdict. After the passage of some time they stood to deliver the unanimous ruling: "This court finds in favor of Reb Aryeh Leib, the son of Rachel. The Alm-ghty is accordingly required, by whatever means at His disposal (and the whole world is His) to provide for the women and children of His People. And may the Heavenly Court above agree and support the verdict of this court in the World Below." The court pronounced its verdict three times.

Then the Shpoler Zeide asked to have vodka and refreshments served. The tzadikim said "l'chaim" and ate together in a joyous mood before departing for home. Five days after the momentous verdict had been reached the government announced a shipment of thousands of tons of grain. Immediately, the grain prices fell and before long, there were ample fresh supplies. For the entire following year, bread was bountiful for all. ■

**And these are the laws (Ex. 21:1)** The Torah portion of Mishpatim, dealing with the laws governing man's relations with his fellow man, immediately follows Yitro, which contains the laws concerning man's duties to G-d. We learn from this that even those mitzvot concerning civil matters were given at Sinai and are Divine. Only G-d, who fully understands human nature with all its weaknesses, can prescribe true and everlasting laws for the individual and for society.

## Thoughts that Count

**For by You shall not follow after a multitude to do evil (Ex. 23:2)** It is only in obscure matters, in which one path or another must be chosen, that we defer to the opinion of the majority. An issue which is clear-cut and obvious must never be decided according to popular opinion. For this reason, Jews have never allowed themselves to be swayed by the rest of the world in matters of belief and faith. (Chatam Sofer)

**And you shall serve the L-rd your G-d, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst (Ex. 23:25)** Serving G-d refers to prayer and reciting the Shema; the blessing of "your bread and your water" refers to breakfast, which, according to the Talmud, is the most beneficial meal to the body. The same is true in our spiritual lives. The Torah we learn in the morning, immediately after our prayers, affords us the best spiritual sustenance of the day, even better than the Torah we may learn later. For at that time, the spiritual awakening experienced during prayer is carried over into the learning itself. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

**The appearance of the glory of G-d was like a devouring fire (Ex. 24:17)** Explains Rashi, the great Torah commentator: Take heed to remember the Sabbath at all times, so that if you happen to find something special, set it aside for Shabbat. Likewise, our Sages state that we are not to give special names to the weekdays, but to refer to them in the context of Shabbat ("first day to Shabbat, second day to Shabbat," etc.). Thus we are constantly conscious of the upcoming Shabbat and prepare for it every day. The same applies to the Messianic Era, the "day that is entirely Shabbat and rest for life everlasting." Throughout the present "weekday" of exile we must constantly remember and remain conscious of the "Shabbat day" that is coming, preparing ourselves and everything around us for the arrival of Moshiach. (Kedushat Levi)