

# LampLighter

24 Adar  
Vayakhel-Pekudei**870**20 March  
5769/2009

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In the previous Torah portions of Teruma and Tetzaveh, G-d commanded Moses to build the Mishkan (Sanctuary) and make all its vessels. This week, in the Torah portion of Vayakel & Pekudei, G-d's command is transmitted to the Jewish people and carried out in full.

Without exception, everyone participated in the building of the Sanctuary. Their contributions, however, were not equal in value. As the Jews were not told how much to donate, some gave less and some more, according to their inclination and financial ability. Thus there were, on the one hand, contributions of gold and silver, and on the other hand, contributions of oil and wood (for people of lesser means).

Significantly, the type of contribution a Jew offered had nothing to do with his connection to the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary belonged to every Jew in equal measure: the rich man whose donation was extremely valuable, and the poor man whose donation was more humble. Every Jew was connected to the Sanctuary to the same degree.

The basis on which donations were judged is described in the verse, "...both the one who gives more and the one who gives less, provided that he does so for the sake of heaven." Although the individual contributions may have varied, the intention behind the offering was always the same. All Jews wanted to build a House for G-d; all Jews therefore shared an equal portion in its construction.

Moses emphasized this equality among Jews when he said, "See G-d has called by name Betzalel the son of Uri, the son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah... and Oholiav the son of Achisamach, of the tribe of Dan... He has filled them with wisdom of heart...of those who do any work, and of those who design artistic work." Betzalel and Oholiav were both in charge of all the artisans who worked on the Sanctuary.

Betzalel came from a very well-connected family. The grandson of Miriam, his tribe of Judah was one of the most prestigious. Oholiav, by contrast, was not distinguished by his lineage. A grandson of one of the maidservants, his tribe of Dan occupied a much lower rung on the social ladder.

And yet, both men were appointed to oversee the holy work, as it states, "Betzalel and Oholiav, and all those filled with wisdom of heart... did all kinds of work for the service of the Sanctuary."

In building the Sanctuary all Jews are equal. It makes no difference whether one is rich or poor, a descendent of the most exalted parentage or a child of the simplest people. The only qualifier is that the Jew's heart be directed toward heaven!

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

## The Antidote

by Zalman Posner

Moses breaks the tablets of the Ten Commandments, (because Israel worshipped the Golden Calf) and ascends Mount Sinai. On Yom Kippur day, after spending forty days there praying for forgiveness for the Jews, his petition for pardon was granted and he returns back to his people.

His first act on the next day was to "gather the entire congregation of Israel" and he told them the things that "G-d commanded us to do." His first lesson was the observance of the Shabbat, singling out the creation of fire among all the labour that was to be avoided on the Holy Day.

Couldn't Moses have found something more ennobling to tell the Jews at that moment? They were filled with contrition for their idolatry. They had denied the basis of Judaism, belief in G-d Himself, and now humbly sought to return to Him. It would have been more appropriate to lecture them on theology, expounding the concepts of ethical monotheism, stressing communion with the Creator through worship and meditation. This would be the logical way of vitiating the influence of the Calf-cult, of insuring against a repetition of backsliding.

Here we find the constant refrain of Torah, the theme that permeates Judaism, that it is "not study but practice which is the essential thing." Judaism's shield against assimilation, the guarantee of Israel's integrity, is not its theology but its devotion to observance of mitzvot, carrying out G-d's will in daily living. Israel's ability to withstand the golden calves of all sorts is embodied in the *tefillin*, Shabbat and dietary laws that make Torah as much a part of life as eating and making a living. Devotion to Judaism can be developed only through using Judaism, living it. Throughout history we have seen that Jews, who lived Judaism, were able to carry on the tradition; those who neglected its observance, despite earnestly professed warm feelings and love for its ideals, were ultimately lost to our people.



*Editor's note: On Sunday, March 21, 2004, ten years after the 1994 Brooklyn Bridge terrorist attack in which he was nearly killed, but still left severely disabled, Nachum Sasonkin joined 65 peers in receiving rabbinic ordination at the Rabbinical College of America-Chabad Lubavitch in Morristown, NJ.*

*To address the hundreds who've sought Nachum's reactions to this historic occasion, he chose to put his feelings in writing.*

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By the Grace of G-d  
28 Adar, 5764 - March 21, 2004  
Dear friends and well-wishers,

Thank you very much for your extraordinary outpouring of love and support. As you can well imagine, this is a very emotional day for me and, since it's easier for me to express myself in writing, I've decided to put some of my swirling thoughts in this letter.

Ten years ago this month, my mother, sitting at the side of my hospital bed in S. Vincent Hospital in Manhattan, believed that this day would come. Probably no one else did.

I was eighteen years old, in a coma, with a bullet in my brain. On March 1, 1994, I was riding in a van with fourteen of my classmates. We were returning to Brooklyn from visiting the Manhattan hospital where our Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (of righteous memory), had undergone surgery. As we got on the Brooklyn Bridge, a Lebanese terrorist opened fire, strafing our van with fifteen rounds of machinegun fire. My friend, Ari Halberstam, age 16, was killed. Two other friends, Levi Wilhelm and Yankel Schapiro, were badly injured.

In the article on the front page of the New York Times, I was pronounced brain dead.

But my parents, siblings and friends refused to give up. They sat by my bedside, they talked and sang to me, even though it didn't seem likely that I could hear them. Three weeks later I regained a hazy consciousness. Several more weeks passed before I realized where I was and learned what had happened to Ari, my friends and me.

Even after I awoke, my medical prognosis was not good at all. About ten percent of my

brain was gone. I was completely paralysed. Doctors doubted whether I would ever be able to walk, talk, or even eat.

I communicated by blinking my eyes - once for yes, twice for no. Once, after being examined, a sharp wire which had been left under my foot caused me extraordinary pain. Though my sister noticed my tears I had no way of telling her why I was crying. For an hour we exhausted each other until her questioning finally touched upon my foot.

But while struggling for breath on a respirator, I thought repeatedly of a passage in my daily prayers and its Talmudic interpretation: "With each and every breath we need to praise G-d." Unlike ever before, I became aware of each breath, appreciated every movement, every human interaction.

It took years of gruelling therapy to relearn the things I learned as a toddler: to focus my vision, to walk, to speak, to swallow. (For a year I was fed with a tube in my stomach.) But with the help of extraordinary doctors, nurses, therapists, homeopaths, and friends, I slowly but surely regained more and more function.

I still have a bullet lodged in my brain. My speech is slurred. I have difficulty maintaining balance when I walk. But I am determined that, with the help of G-d, these will not stop me from doing what I know I was born to do.

Thank G-d, I married an extraordinary person and G-d has already blessed Nechama Dina and I with our first child, Chaya Mushka. We pray to G-d for many more.

I always believed that I would make it. Seeing my mother's smiling optimism, remembering the Rebbe's spirited and always forward-looking approach, I believed that I would regain my abilities, and what has always been the most important thing in my life: the ability to help others.

You see, I'm not the first rabbi in my family.

My great-grandfather and namesake, Nachum Shmarya Sasonkin, was sent by the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe to Batum (in the Soviet Republic of Georgia) in the 1920s. His mission was to lead the local Jewish community in their heroic fight to preserve their heritage and faith.

His son, Moshe Sasonkin, was arrested by Stalin's henchmen for that very work and sent to Siberia. He never came back. My father, Rabbi Avraham Sasonkin, never knew his own father - he was two months old when Moshe was taken away. Raised by his grandfather under the Soviet regime, he later immigrated to Israel. Together with my mother he moved, at the Rebbe's behest, to the Taanachim region in Northern Israel to work with poverty-stricken families and socially disadvantaged youths.

My maternal grandfather, Rabbi Sholom Posner, came to America in the 1920s and served as a rabbi for more than sixty years, first in Chicago and later in Pittsburgh, where he and my grandmother built a vibrant Jewish community. He was one of the first of thousands of now famous Chabad-Lubavitch "shluchim" dispatched by the Rebbe to pioneer Jewish outreach in America.

In newspaper interviews they gave over the years, my angel-like doctors and therapists expressed amazement about my case. The pain I endured, the determination I displayed, the progress I made. A number of them have been quoted saying, "We've never seen anything like it."

But to me, it couldn't have been any other way. Not after all those years studying the Rebbe's teachings and participating in the farbrengens (chassidic gatherings), listening to him speak.

This is what being a chassid of the Rebbe always meant to me: that you dedicate your life to helping others, and do whatever it takes to be able to do so. All my life, I knew that I'm going to be a "shliach." My seven siblings are scattered around the world doing that very work. My brother Moshe, for example, risks his life to serve the Israeli population in Metulah near the Syrian border.

All my life I knew that my life's goal is to help a fellow human being in the quest to better him/herself, and help a fellow Jew in the quest to better connect with his and her heritage and people.

Being a chassid of the Rebbe's also means never giving up. It means knowing with absolute conviction that no matter what a person's situation is, the Almighty grants us the strength and fortitude to overcome all obstacles and fulfill our life's mission. I thought about this all the time and it helped carry me through my most difficult moments.

I have so much to be thankful for and so many to thank.

In celebrating my rabbinic ordination, I recall longingly and fondly my friend Ari Halberstam who is surely celebrating with me today from his perch in heaven.

I thank G-d for allowing me to recognize the preciousness of each breath and step I take. I pray that I continue to lead my life on a deeper level than I did before, never taking anything for granted, always recognizing His blessings. I thank Him for giving me the Torah and allowing me to appreciate its rigors and joy and fulfillment. I pray that I never tire in my quest to measure up to its standards and that I become a worthy representative and teacher of its blueprint for life. I further thank G-d for allowing me to be living testimony of His miracles and for the opportunities He's given me to infuse faith, hope and optimism in the lives of those challenged with unbearable circumstances. I pray that He allow me to continue to do so, for the sake of all who suffer.

I thank my parents and siblings who never left my side in all those difficult years.

My wonderfully dedicated doctors and therapists at S. Vincent's Manhattan Hospital, Moss Rehabilitation Centre, NYU's Rusk Institute and the Feldenkrais Center.

My friends and classmates, who came regularly to the hospital, to the rehab center, and everywhere else I needed them to lend their support.

My wonderful wife Dina and daughter Chaya. My teachers at Oholei Torah, Colel Menachem and Rabbi Herson's dedicated staff at the Rabbinical College of America-Chabad Lubavitch, for their wisdom and encouragement as I struggled through the rigorous 14-hour study days.

The Rebbe, for teaching me that all is possible.

All of you for caring and sharing.

And, again, our Father in Heaven, for giving me my life and purpose, and a second chance to achieve it.

Thank you for your warm wishes and may G-d bless you always.

Sincerely,  
Nachum Shmarya Sasonkin

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ISSUE 870

# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



## Overcoming Stress

11 Iyar, 5718 [1958]  
Greetings and Blessings!

Your letter arrived after a long break. There you write about the state of affairs in your business and say that you are worried about what the annual balance will look like.

There is certainly no need for me to expound at length on the subject of the attribute of bitachon [trust in G-d]. To have bitachon does not mean being content with studying about it in the holy books: it means trusting, actually and practically. It means that when there arrives a moment that is not as one would have liked it to be, one should firmly trust that it is no more than a passing thing. As the Torah writes, "For the L-rd your G-d is putting you to the test." And when G-d sees that one has withstood this trial, one then sees even with fleshly eyes that it was all no more than a trial - a disguise without any substance....

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13 Nissan, 5711 [1951]  
Greetings and Blessings!

Your letter duly arrived, but numerous preoccupations did not allow me to reply until now. As a matter of fact you don't need my reply, because you received a reply from my revered father-in-law, the [Previous] Rebbe, when you were here.

Nevertheless, I would like to reiterate something that I have already said a few times:

One ought to know, once and for all, that faith is not something that is meant to remain only in one's thoughts; it must permeate the whole of one's life.

You are, without any doubt, a believer. So, the very first point of belief is that G-d directs the world. And if He is capable of directing one-and-a-half billion people, then your own affairs will certainly see the fulfillment of the verse, "I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and deliver you."

Now, think this over. G-d promises, "I will sustain and deliver you." So think: Can someone from this or that land disturb G-d from fulfilling His promise (G-d forbid)? Having thought that, now consider: Is G-d really in need of your worry as to how He is going to run your affairs and solve your problems? Or will He succeed in finding good solutions even without your worrying?

After all is said and done, you must remember that the Rebbe - that is, my revered father-in-law, of saintly memory - gave you his blessing, and the blessing of a tzaddik [righteous person] is certainly fulfilled. So the blessing you received will also be fulfilled.

However, until you see the fulfillment of the blessing, you have been given two options:

Either (a) you will walk around worried in case (G-d forbid) the blessing won't be fulfilled. And then, when the blessing is fulfilled, you will have a fresh worry: Why did you have to waste so much vital energy in vain?

Or (b) you will be staunch in your trust and faith in G-d - that He will lead you along the right path and will fulfill all the blessings that you have been given. And then, when you see them being fulfilled in actual fact, you will be able to tell yourself: "Just look how well I handled this deal! I didn't worry about things that were no cause for concern."

This is one of the meanings of my father-in-law's blessings to you, and not only as a blessing but also as a directive. Be happy, because - with G-d's help - the problems that you imagine to be so serious will be solved. You have nothing to worry about. You can be happy, and you can fulfill the directive of the verse, "Serve G-d with joy."...

## A MITZVA A DAY

**Positive Commandment 200: Paying Wages on Time**  
The Torah warns us to be careful when paying people who work for us. We are commanded to pay them on time and not withhold their wages. This is learned out from the words (in the Torah) "Give him his wage on the day it is due" (Deuteronomy 24:15).

## A WORD from the Director

*Following a description of various matters concerning the Sanctuary in the desert, our Torah portion discusses the observance of Shabbat.*

*As part of this discussion, we find the verse: "And the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant." Shabbat has two different qualities. One is symbolized by the first part of the verse - that the Jewish people "shall keep the Sabbath." In essence, Shabbat is intrinsically a holy day. Regardless of whether or not it is observed, it remains sanctified and separate from the rest of the week.*

*This would seem to leave little for us to do (concerning Shabbat). Considering it is intrinsically holy, does it really matter if we observe it?*

*In answer to this question we have the second part of our verse, "observing the Sabbath..." Through our observance of Shabbat - by lighting Shabbat candles, reciting kiddush, partaking of a Shabbat meal and resting (from creative work) - we actually enhance Shabbat.*

*Each one of us has the ability and opportunity to "do his/her part" to sanctify Shabbat. With each Shabbat mitzvah we observe, we bring an added holiness into this holy day.*

*It is not often that we have the opportunity to perform mitzvot whose benefit or purpose we can actually see. However, when it comes to lighting Shabbat candles, part of the commandment to "observe the Sabbath" is to see the light which the candles bring into our home. In addition to their physical light, the candles also bring along spiritual light, warmth and peace. They will permeate the home and family.*

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Unity is the key to G-d's blessings. Thus, in our daily prayers, we say "Bless us our Father, all as one." Chasidism explains that the very fact of being together "all as one," makes us worthy of blessing. And this unity will lead to the ultimate blessing - the coming of the time when G-d will "sound the great shofar," and together "with our youth and with our elders... with our sons and with our daughters," the entire Jewish people will proceed to the Holy Land, to Jerusalem and to the Third Holy Temple. May this take place in the immediate future.

*(From the last public address of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, 25 Adar 1, 1992)*

J.I. Gutnick

# It Happened Once...



The great scholar Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshutz (1695-1764) was known far and wide for his enormous erudition and remarkably sharp wit. The governor of the city of Metz took great pleasure in testing the rabbi's intellect. He would make a decree against the Jewish residents, knowing full well that Rabbi Eibeshutz would dash to his palace to intercede for his brethren. Then the governor would pose some difficult puzzle or riddle to attempt to stump the great scholar. As history records it, fortunately, Rabbi Eibeshutz always succeeded in besting his foe and having the evil decree nullified.

Once the governor issued a decree proclaiming that the Jews of Metz would be given a deadline by which they would all be required to submit to baptism. If they refused, which he knew they would, they would be forced from their homes into exile. The governor also knew from his past experience that Rabbi Eibeshutz would present himself at the governor's palace in order to plead for his people. Then he would snare the rabbi in his plot, for this time, the rabbi would surely fail.

The Jews of Metz were thrown into turmoil. None would consider conversion, but what were they to do, where could they turn? Rabbi Eibeshutz immediately went to the governor. "Your Excellency," he began, "how can you punish an entire community of innocent souls. I beg of you not to inflict this terrible suffering upon innocent women and babes."

A cold smile passed across the governor's face. "On the contrary, my dear rabbi, I am merely helping to fulfil a prophecy which is stated in scripture: 'A great trouble will ensue, so terrible as never before experienced and never to be repeated again.' This passage is interpreted to refer to the Jews. I consider it my great privilege to help bring it about."

Now came the moment the governor had waited for with such delight. With suppressed glee he turned to Rabbi Eibeshutz and continued, "But, my dear friend, I will give you the opportunity of nullifying my decree."

"And how may I do that," the rabbi asked.

"All you have to do is to answer a few questions which I will pose to you. Are you agreeable to this arrangement?" asked the governor.

"Yes, what are the questions?"

"First, tell me immediately and without hesitation how many letters there are in the [Hebrew] sentence I just quoted to you?"

With not even a pause, Rabbi Eibeshutz replied, "There are the same number as the years of your life, sixty."

The governor was astounded, but not deterred. He continued with his next question: "Now, how many words did the same sentence contain?"

The rabbi answered with the same swiftness, "There are 17 words - the same as in our famous saying, 'The people of Israel lives forever' - Am Yisrael Chai L'Olmai Ad."

The governor couldn't contain his admiration. "Wonderful! Now, tell me how many Jews live in Metz and its surrounding areas?"

Again Rabbi Eibeshutz didn't hesitate: "There are 45,760 Jews in the city of Metz and all of its suburbs, Your Excellency."

The governor was momentarily thrown off guard by the rabbi's brilliant answers. But he soon regained his bearings and threw out the last and impossible demand. "I want you to write 'Israel lives forever' 45,760 times, on a parchment no larger than the ones you use for your mezuzah scrolls." This time he knew he had won and he smirked with satisfaction.

Rabbi Eibeshutz paled when he heard this absurd and impossible order. "How long do I have to fulfil your command," he asked.

"I give you one hour," was the triumphant reply. "And remember that the fate of your unfortunate brethren is in your hands."

Rabbi Eibeshutz disappeared, but when one hour had elapsed he presented himself at the governor's palace.

"Your Honour, I have in my hand a parchment with the dimensions of 2" by 4". On it is written an anagram with the solution to your puzzle. My drawing contains 15 Hebrew letters across and 19 letters down."

The governor couldn't believe his ears. He reached out his hand to take the parchment from Rabbi Eibeshutz. As he stared at it, uncomprehending, the rabbi continued to explain:

"When you read this you will see the words, 'Am Yisroel Chai L'Olmai Ad,' written in every direction. It is spelled out 45,760 different ways."

The governor was too shocked to reply, and the rabbi continued. "I request of Your Honour to cancel the decree pending your deciphering this code, since it may take you some time to work it out."

The governor agreed. It is said that the governor worked at Rabbi Eibeshutz's anagram a full year before he was able to decipher all the combinations of words. When he completed his study of it, the governor summoned the rabbi to his palace. He embraced the scholar and said, "I can truly see that your G-d has imparted His wisdom to his followers." The governor no longer tormented the Jews of his city and until the end of his life held Rabbi Eibeshutz in the highest esteem.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

**These are the things that the L-rd has commanded you to do** (Ex. 35:1)

Why is the plural "things" used, when what followed was only one commandment, the mitzva to keep Shabbat? These "things" refers to the 39 categories of creative work that are forbidden on Shabbat. During the week, a Jew's service consists of elevating and refining the material world by engaging in these tasks. On Shabbat, his service is to refrain from them, thereby completing the process of elevation. The mitzva of Shabbat thus contains all of the Torah's mitzvot within it, the underlying purpose of which is to elevate the physical realm and make it spiritual. (*Ohr HaTorah*)

**You shall not kindle any fire throughout your habitations** (Ex. 35:3)

The main reason we observe Shabbat is in remembrance of the Six Days of Creation. As fire was not created until after the first Shabbat ended, the Torah specifically singles it out - lest anyone think it isn't included in the 39 prohibited labours. (*Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshutz*)

**They came, the men with the women, whoever was generous of heart, and every man who waved a wave offering of gold unto G-d** (Ex. 35:22)

The Jews were so eager to make donations to the Sanctuary that they didn't stop to calculate the amount of gold they were contributing. Rather, they "waved it about" and gave with an open hand, like a rich benefactor who disburses his charity liberally. (*Be'er Mayim Chaim*)

### CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

#### PARSHAS VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI

25 ADAR • 21 MARCH

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:14 PM
	MINCHA:	7:26 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	7:45 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	TEHILLIM:	8:30 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
BLESS THE NEW MONTH OF NISSAN - NEW MOON:		
Thursday, March 26, 2009 - Nissan 1, 5769:		
6:23:03 (1 Chelek) AM		
MINCHA:		
7:10 PM		
SHABBOS ENDS:		
8:11 PM		
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN - FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	7:00 7:15 PM
	MAARIV:	8:05 PM

### CANDLE LIGHTING: 20 MARCH 2009



BEGINS		ENDS
7:14	MELBOURNE	8:11
7:11	ADELAIDE	8:05
5:42	BRISBANE	6:34
7:40	DARWIN	8:29
5:39	GOLD COAST	6:35
7:11	PERTH	8:04
6:50	SYDNEY	7:44
7:06	LAUNCESTON	8:04
7:16	AUCKLAND	8:11
7:17	WELLINGTON	8:14

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

### The Lubavitcher Rebbe

זצוקלה"ה נב"מ ז"ע

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