

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, *Balak*, we have the famous verse, "Ma Tov Ohalecha Yaakov, mishkenosecha Yisrael – How good are your tents Jacob, your dwellings Israel."

The wicked Balam wanted to curse the Jewish people but when he saw their modesty and fidelity he could only bless them. What did he see? He saw their tents set up in a way as to give each one privacy. There was no direct line of sight from one tent into another. He saw that they were organized according to their tribes, which was possible because of marital fidelity.

This is followed by the prophecy of Moshiach's coming. What lesson can we take from here? How does it connect to Moshiach?

Many are unaware that the Torah's laws of modesty apply to both men and women. It covers modesty in speech, dress, action and thought. We also have laws of appropriate behavior between men and women. It is these laws that have been our protection and makes us special and holy.

We find these laws difficult because they go against nature. It is natural for a man to have inappropriate thoughts. Which can bring to immodest speech and actions. While men love dress codes and uniforms it goes against the grain and is totally unnatural to women. To women, their dress is an expression of how they feel inside. If the dress code is not how they feel, it feels like a lie.

To this we have a two step plan. First, laws to set boundaries and safeguards. Second, to work on our inside so it resembles the Jewish spirit.

Don't think that this means that you have to be a prude or that you need to dress in *shmattes*. Rather, to become beautiful and dignified within and allow that to be expressed in thought, speech, action and dress.

A Jewish man is meant to be a light of decency and a living example to the world around him.

A Jewish woman is a *bat melech*, a princess, beautiful and dignified. Her presence effecting her surroundings.

When we act with modesty and fidelity we are in a position to change the world around us. We become as G-d's ambassadors to make His presence known, accepted and welcome to all. It is the foundation upon which our Torah and *Mitzvot* stand. It protects from our worst enemies because we are protected when we are G-d's ambassadors. Finally, it is the basis and starting point of our positive effect on the world that will bring Moshiach.

*Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.*

## Don't Put It Off

A goal-oriented person, especially when lecturing a procrastinator, quotes the golden rule, "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today."

A procrastinator, however, will cite the principle, "Don't do today what you can put off until tomorrow. For tomorrow you might not need to do it anymore."

Although neither of these cliches is a perfect fit for the Jewish experience of this coming Shabbat and Sunday, if we had to choose one over the other to describe the 17th of Tamuz this year, we'd side with the procrastinator.

For, even though the 17th of Tamuz is traditionally a fast day and a day of mourning, this year it will be a day of joy and pleasure. How can this be? The 17th of Tamuz this year occurs on Shabbat, and thus, the fasting and mourning are pushed off until Sunday.

The 17th of Tamuz is the date nearly 2,000 years ago when the wall surrounding the holy city of Jerusalem was breached by the Roman army. This initial cracking and breaching of the wall allowed for the eventual destruction of the Holy Temple which took place three weeks later, on the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Av.

A discussion about what to do when the 9th of Av falls on Shabbat is recorded in the *Talmud*. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says that being that the fast is postponed until Sunday, it should be altogether cancelled.

Although the ruling was ultimately decided according to a differing opinion, the concept of "If it's being put off until tomorrow, don't do it altogether" does have validity.

For certainly, when we consider that the three-week mourning period inaugurated by the 17th of Tamuz is actually a preparatory stage for the

ultimate Redemption, there is the real hope that the Redemption will come before the postponed fast can be observed.

Jewish mysticism explains that although outwardly, the fasts associated with the destruction of the Holy Temple and the subsequent exile of the Jewish people from our land seems to be entirely negative, in fact, the essence of these fasts is positive, since they are entirely connected to the Redemption. For the whole purpose of the destruction of the Holy Temple and our people's exile is solely to reach the pinnacle of existence which will take place in the Era of Moshiach.

The 17th of Tamuz is the beginning of this ultimate era. It is when the cracks and crevices were first created in the wall.

"Behold, he stands behind our wall, he looks in at the windows; he peers through the **crevices**" (*Song of Songs*). On this verse the Rebbe explains, "Moshiach is standing on the other side of a wall that is already cracked and crumbling... Moshiach is watching and waiting in anticipation: When are we finally going to finish off our sundry outstanding task, and complete what needs to be done to refine and elevate the world? If we do not see him, it is because it is our wall that is standing in the way."

Celebrate Shabbat this week; Shabbat is a taste of the World to Come! And particularly this Shabbat, which is essentially and intrinsically connected to the Redemption. And as we celebrate and delight in Shabbat, let's contemplate which spiritually refining and elevating tasks we need to do (that should not be pushed off to tomorrow!) so that our wall no longer obstructs Moshiach's presence but reveals him entirely.





# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Continued from previous issue

Some of them have been fortunate in making fateful encounters, by design or "accident" (everything is, of course, by Divine Providence) which have put them on the right track. Others, unfortunately, are still groping in the dark. It is the momentous duty and challenge of our day to help these young Jewish men and women to find their way back to the "fountains of living waters" to quench their thirst for life. We of Lubavitch have made it our "business" to do all we can to help them. But this, of course, is the duty and privilege of every Jew, since the commandment "Love thy fellow as thyself" applies to every one of us.

Needless to say, the transition from one mode of living to another, is fraught with trials and tribulations. Therefore, the sooner this critical period is over, the better. It requires determination and fortitude, and where these are not lacking (they are certainly not lacking potentially, and need only be brought to the surface), the difficulties will turn out to be much less insurmountable than they had loomed at first. It may sometimes require an initial leap to break away from the past, but then slowly but surely the going becomes increasingly easier. One must try to shorten the birth pangs of the transition and all the sooner emerge into the new-found world of Torah and Mitzvos (oommandments), which holds the key to inner harmony and peace, true fulfillment and happiness.

From what has been said above, you will readily understand what my views are on the subject matter of your letter. You write about the clash between your original decision to follow what you know as the right way and your parents' reactions. But even from the parents' viewpoint, surely their first and ultimate desire is to see their children happy. Whatever their ideas of happiness may be, they surely realize that without inner harmony and peace of mind, life is a very dismal thing. Looking at the situation from

their viewpoint, if you act under pressure and accept a life of compromise, it is possible that for a time friction will be avoided. But one must think in terms of a lifetime, not of immediate expedience; and, as outlined above, and as clearly indicated in your letter, this is the kind of life with which you will not be able to make peace. Sooner or later your parents will notice, or instinctively feel, that they had defeated their own objective.

The limitations of a letter must curtail the discussion. However, I trust it will suffice in presenting salient points which you could elaborate yourself.

Before concluding, I want to make reference to the person who figured in your encounter, whose life may well serve as an illustration. As you probably know, he was born and brought up, together with the rest of his family under the Communist regime. There seemed no possibility, nor any hope, in the natural order of things, to escape from there. One might have concluded that the only thing to do under the circumstances was to adjust oneself to the prevailing conditions; all the more so, since the religious minority to which he and his family belonged was not only a minority, but one which had been singled out for ruthless persecution by a dictatorial regime, which could not be toppled by democratic processes. Nevertheless, he and his brothers and family remained steadfast and would make no compromise and concession. Now he and his brothers have established their own homes in this free country on the same foundations of the Torah and Mitzvos of their parental home under the Communists, and they need not be ashamed of their past.

They realize that the freedom and opportunity which they enjoy here impose upon them additional obligations towards their fellow-Jews. They also realize that after such a large proportion of our people has been brutally annihilated in the Second World War, the obligation of every surviving Jew is so much the greater.

What has been said in this letter is by way of general analysis and throwing some light on the situation and its solution. As for the method how to bring it about, this must be decided upon in the light of the personalities involved, as well as the circumstances and factors. A friendly and pleasant approach, coupled with adequate firmness, is the method and way of the Torah. It is also the most effective method.

With all good wishes, and with blessing,

the world; accordingly, the ability to prophesize would be restored to the Jews 2488 years later. This corresponds to the year 4976 (1216 ce), the era of Rabbi Shmuel the Prophet, followed by Rabbi Eleazar Baal HaRokeach, Nachmanides, the Ravad, Rabbi Ezra the Prophet, Rabbi Yehuda the Chasid and others; indeed, prophecy flourished in the generation of the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples. In our generation, the Rebbe has prophesied that the time of our Redemption has arrived. (Peninei HaGeula)

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

"According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel what G-d has done" (Deut. 23:23) From this verse Maimonides derived that prophecy would return to the Jewish people. Bilaam's prophecy was uttered in the year 2488 after the creation of

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

*This Shabbat is the 17th of Tammuz. Because it is also Shabbat, the fast usually commemorated on this date is postponed until the next day.*

*The Rebbe explained that there are two ways of explaining the fact that the fast is put off:*

*It is forbidden to fast on Shabbat, because no element of sadness should be associated with this day. In particular, this applies in regard to those fasts which commemorate national calamities.*

*On a deeper level this postponement serves as a foretaste of the revelation of the true nature of the date of the fast which will surface in the Era of the Redemption when, as Maimonides writes, 'all the fasts will be nullified... and will be transformed into festivals and days of joy and rejoicing.'*

*"On an overt level, a fast day is obviously undesirable. The suffering endured on a fast is surely not pleasurable, nor appreciated. Nevertheless, the inner dimension of a fast is good, as the prophet states, 'It is a day of will unto G-d.'*

*"This contrast is openly expressed in regard to the 17th of Tammuz. On an obvious level it is associated with negative factors, the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem, which led to the destruction of the Holy Temple. Nevertheless, its inner, essential quality is good. This is even alluded to in the date itself, for 17 is numerically equivalent to the word 'tov.' This points to the intent of the exile, that it should lead the Jews to the Era of the Redemption.*

*"The connection to the Redemption also relates to Shabbat which is a foretaste of 'the era which is all Shabbat and rest for eternity.' Moreover, the mitzva of delighting in the Shabbat by partaking of material delicacies is also paralleled by 'the feast which the Holy One, blessed be He, will make for the righteous in that future era.' That feast will be an actual physical meal.*

*"For, as Chasidut explains, the ultimate reward of the Era of the Redemption will not be on the spiritual plane. Rather, it will be experienced within this material world, as the souls are enclined within the body."*

May this take place immediately!

*Shmuel Belman*

## L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



Published by Lubavitch Youth Organization  
1408 President St, Brooklyn, NY, 11213  
phone 718 778 6000

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# IT HAPPENED ONCE

*The seventeenth of Tamuz is a day that was marked for tragedy.*

Five separate momentous and tragic events occurred in the history of the Jewish people on that date. On the first occasion, Moses broke the Tablets of the Law when he descended from Mt. Sinai and saw the people dancing around the Golden Calf. Much later, during the siege of the first Holy Temple, the daily sacrifices were suspended, when they could no longer obtain sheep. Later, during the siege of the Second Temple, the Romans breached the walls of Jerusalem on the seventeenth of Tamuz. On the same, unfortunate date the Roman Apustumus burned a Torah scroll, and the last event was when an idol was placed inside the Temple Sanctuary.

When the Jews left Egypt, they followed Moses into an uncharted wilderness, completely desolate and barren. Entering the frightening desert with no provisions or supplies, it was only their complete faith in Moses and in G-d's words which he communicated to them that sustained them. For this reason, when Moses failed to return to them at the expected time, they were shaken to the core. In truth, Moses had told them, "At the end of 40 days, at the beginning of the sixth hour, I shall come and bring you the Torah." The people, however, miscalculated, counting the day he ascended the mountain as the first day of the 40 days, instead of reckoning it only a partial day.

On the sixteenth of Tamuz, the Evil Inclination assailed the people with doubt, asking them, "Where is Moses?" When they ignored his taunts, they were shown a vision of Moses lying on his deathbed. Only then did they go to Aaron and demand a replacement, for their attachment to Moses was so strong that they couldn't go on without him. The people, who had been united "as one man with one heart," now broke up into factions. Some reverted to their old behavior and worshipped the Golden Calf. Still others remained true to G-d; yet another group, totally confused, rejected G-d and the calf.

The next day Moses returned to the encampment only to witness the Jews dancing before a golden idol. Suddenly, Moses saw the holy script "fly away" from the Tablets. Without the holy letters the weight of the Tablets was more than Moses could bear; he dropped them and they shattered on the ground.

How was it possible that this generation, the generation that experienced the greatest of miracles, could have fallen so low as to worship an idol? One explanation is that through their sin, all subsequent generations learned a most valuable and vital lesson: that no sin can stand in the way of true repentance. Through all the trials and tribulations which the Jews would be called upon to endure they would sometimes stumble and fall, but the path of return to G-d had been blazed by the Generation of the Wilderness. For they had committed the greatest sin, and yet they were accepted back by their Father in Heaven, Who always waits for their repentance.

Throughout the generations, our Sages have tried to fathom the many teachings inherent in this strange episode of our history. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi taught that the calf was made only in order to provide an opportunity for teshuva (repentance). The great commentator, Rashi, wrote that the nation would never have sinned, except that it was a "decree of the King," designed to provide an opening for repentance. For, if a sinner would ever say in the future, "I will not repent, for G-d will not accept me," we can say to him, "Go and learn from the making of the calf, by which the Jews denied G-d, and yet were accepted in repentance."

When the First Temple was under siege, the priests (kohanim) were able to maintain the order of daily sacrifices until the thirteenth of Tamuz, when there were no more sheep in the Temple courtyard. On that day, they began to bribe the enemy soldiers. The kohanim would lower baskets of silver and gold and the enemy would return to them a lamb in exchange. One day, in exchange for a basket of gold, the enemy returned a pig. On the seventeenth of Tamuz, the walls were finally breached, and

the final battle ensued.

The historical record is not clear about the burning of the Torah scroll by Apustumus, but it is conjectured that this event occurred several years before the destruction of the Second Temple. According to the contemporary Jewish historian Josephus, the Romans took every opportunity to provoke the Jews, and violence was not uncommon.

It happened that a Roman official was robbed on the royal road near Beit Horon. The Roman procurator sent a detachment of soldiers to arrest the villagers for failing to pursue and seize the robbers. At that point, one of the soldiers seized a Torah scroll from a nearby village, ripped it and threw it into a fire. Word of this sacrilegious deed spread through the countryside like wildfire. The Roman procurator realized that if he failed to punish the soldier, the resulting violence would be impossible to contain. He ordered that the perpetrator be hanged before his accusers, and so quiet returned for the time being.

*Adapted from Talks and Tales*



## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

*on the weekly Torah portion*

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**Who can count the dust of Jacob (Num. 23:10)**  
 Why are Jews likened to the dust of the earth? As the Baal Shem Tov explained, in the same way that the earth contains vast underground treasures and natural resources, so too does every Jew contain an immeasurable wealth of faith, love and awe of G-d – if only one digs deep enough... (*Keter Shem Tov, Hosafot*)

**He has not beheld any wrong in Jacob (Num. 23:21)**  
 Whenever a Jew does a mitzva, he creates a "good" angel; whenever he transgresses, a "bad" angel is formed. Commented Rabbi Zushe of Anipoli: "Never have I seen a complete, unblemished angel that was created by the sin of a believing Jew. These 'bad' angels are always missing a limb: this one its head, that one an arm. For as soon as the Jew sighs in remorse, it cripples the accusing angels and maims them..." (*Otzar HaChasidut*)

**There shall come a star out of Jacob (Num. 24:17)**  
 Nachmanides (the Ramban) interprets this verse as an allusion to Moshiach; according to the Jerusalem Talmud, it refers to every Jew. However, this is in no way contradictory. Every Jewish soul contains a "spark" of Moshiach. It is the individual's function to bring that spark out of concealment, as preparation for the revelation of Moshiach in the world at large. (*Likutei Sichot*)



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