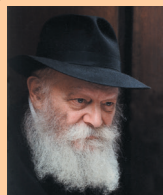


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Balak, contains the famous prophecy of Bilaam, the gentile prophet who was hired to curse the Jews, but who ended up blessing them instead. "For from the top of rocks I see him, and from hills I behold him," Bilaam began. Bilaam's entire prophecy is couched in symbolism.

Rashi, the great Torah commentator, explained the meaning of Bilaam's words: "I have looked back to their beginning and to the origins of their roots: I see they are as stable and secure as these rocks and hills, because of their Patriarchs and Matriarchs."

The Torah itself tells us that Bilaam's prophecy is allegorical, prefacing his words with the verse, "And he took up his parable, and said." Bilaam, therefore, was not only describing the physical location where he stood, but was expressing a deeper concept, one pertaining to a vital attribute of the Jewish people.

But why was it necessary for Bilaam to resort to allusions? Why couldn't he have said exactly what he meant?

In general, allegorical terms are necessary only when the subject matter does not lend itself to "regular" terminology. Deep and profound concepts are sometimes difficult to express in simple language. In such cases, an allegory is best suited for expressing these ideas.

Bilaam, with his gift of prophecy, was able to discern the eternal strength and power of the Jewish people. "Rocks" and "hills" were the closest he could come to expressing this in human terms. An allegory was necessary because the unique strength of the Jewish people, the inheritance of their forefathers, is unlike any other force in the world -- for it is a strength of the spirit and of the Jewish soul.

When speaking of physical matter, the larger and more substantial an object is, the stronger and mightier it is perceived to be. But the strength of the Jewish people lies not in their physical might, but is directly proportional to the depth of their submission to G-d.

The true strength of a Jew lies in his capacity for self sacrifice, his willingness to forfeit his very life for G-d if need be. Every Jew, when put to the ultimate test, is unwilling to be severed from his Source for even a minute.

This spiritual power is what distinguishes the Jewish nation from all others, at it states, "For it is a people that dwells alone, and is not considered among the nations." This spiritual strength is the inheritance of every Jew, passed down from our Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

Unlike physical characteristics that fluctuate from generation to generation, this inheritance remains just as strong today as it was thousands of years ago, for it comes from a holiness that is eternal and not subject to change.

From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The Great Jewish Awakening

By Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman

Following the Oct. 7 terror attacks in Israel and the ongoing war, Jewish communities across the United States are experiencing a remarkable rise in engagement and spiritual awakening, according to a new survey by Chabad.org. Conducted among Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries (shluchim) in all 50 states, the survey reveals a surge in Jewish pride, stronger connections to Israel, and a deepening of Jewish identity.

The findings reflect a community expressing a deep faith and adherence to tradition in response to the crisis.

Rabbis report increased participation in Jewish practices such as lighting Shabbat candles, putting on tefillin—often for the first time—reciting the Shema, and baking challah. Many Jews who previously engaged only occasionally, if at all, are now actively seeking ways to connect with their heritage and fellow Jews.

Key Survey Results:

- 77.3% of shluchim observed a stronger sense of Jewish pride and confidence.
- 81.5% reported heightened fear among their community members.
- 93.4% noted a deeper connection to the Jewish people and a desire to connect with others.
- 88.2% said people feel a stronger bond with Israel.
- 85.8% observed a deeper personal connection to Jewish identity.

One California shliach shared the story of a 22-year-old man who had never engaged in Jewish life before. Moved by the attacks, he came to put on tefillin for the first time, describing the experience as "reawakening the Jew" within him. In Florida, a man who once attended synagogue only

for a yearzeit has now committed to daily tefillin and weekly Shabbat services. This nationwide surge in ritual observance has even contributed to a global shortage of tefillin and mezuzahs, which must be handmade by skilled scribes.

In Georgia, a woman told her local rabbi that she unearthed her candlesticks after years and began lighting Shabbat candles again each Friday evening. Stories like these are emblematic of a broader spiritual revival, triggered by the war and a wave of antisemitism at home.

The survey was conducted ahead of the International Kinus Hashluchim, the world's largest gathering of rabbis, which brought over 6,500 Chabad emissaries to New York in November. The Kinus served as a crucial platform to share strategies for strengthening Jewish life and combating antisemitism.

This spiritual awakening echoes a similar wave of Jewish pride following the 1967 Six-Day war. The Rebbe noted that the tremendous groundswell of Jewish pride and feeling that was sweeping the Jewish people should not be left at that, but had to be channeled toward concrete action – Jewish practice in particular. At that time he launched his international tefillin campaign, to encourage Jewish men to put on Tefillin every day, to which he added the mezuzah campaign a few years later after the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

The article was originally written in December 2023 by Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and founder of the L'chaim publication. As this Shabbat marks Rabbi Butman's yearzeit, readers are encouraged to perform a special mitzvah in his memory.

SLICE OF LIFE

The Chair We Haven't Used Since 1960



Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, longtime Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization, presenting the Rebbe with a bound copy of the *L'chaim* Publication.

My family left Russia in 1946 and settled in Paris, where we lived for seven years. In 1947, the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson, fled the Soviet Union and stayed with us for three months.

We lived in an apartment on the top floor of a large house in Paris, owned by our uncle, Rabbi Zalman Schneerson—my mother Yehudis Butman's brother and a cousin of the Rebbe. We had a dining room and two bedrooms, one of which became Rebbetzin Chana's. For years afterward, we still referred to it as "Rebbetzin Chana's room."

The Rebbe—then still known as Rabbi Schneerson—had moved to the U.S. years earlier. But in 1947, he traveled to France to reunite with his mother and bring her to New York. During his visit, he came to see her at our home twice a day, once in the morning and again in the afternoon. My mother would serve them tea and sometimes cake.

Our connection to the Rebbe's family wasn't only familial. During World War II, we had been living in Kyrgyzstan, where I was born, in the town of Frunze (now Bishkek). Not far away, in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, the Rebbe's parents lived for several months in 1944. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson had been

arrested by Soviet authorities for his rabbinic work and exiled to the region. His sentence was eventually lifted due to his poor health, and the couple moved to Alma-Ata, where he later passed away.

During that time, my father, Reb Zalman Butman, helped support the Rebbe's parents financially. When the Rebbe came to Paris, he approached my father: "Reb Zalman, I know you supported my father. I'd like to know how much it cost so I can repay you."

But my father declined: "Rabbi Schneerson, please don't speak to me about this. It was a mitzvah, and I don't want to give it away." As my father liked to say, he "merited" that the Rebbe didn't press the issue.

Shortly after the Rebbe's arrival, it happened to be my father's birthday—the first of Nissan. He asked the Rebbe for a blessing.

"You're in Nissan?" the Rebbe asked.

"Yes, today is my birthday."

"I'm also in Nissan," the Rebbe said. His birthday was on the 11th. "What year?"

"5663," my father said.

"I'm from 5662. So for eleven days out of the year, we recite the same chapter of Tehillim."

Before the Rebbe and Rebbetzin Chana returned to the U.S., a chassid named Reb Michael Lipsker organized a farbrengen. That night, the Rebbe asked for everyone's Hebrew and father's names and began analyzing each person's name in brilliant detail—drawing from Scripture, Midrash, and both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. Everyone was astounded.

My father, seated next to the Rebbe, said, "I once heard your father say, 'My son does better than me.'"

To which the Rebbe replied, "A father has to say that."

"And a son has to say that!" my father responded with a smile. That was the end of the conversation.

Before they left Paris, the Rebbe gave each member of our family a gift. For my father, he brought a newly printed Torah Or prayer book with a High Holiday machzor in the back—an

edition he himself used.

For my mother and Aunt Sarah, Reb Zalman's wife, the Rebbe purchased a complete set of fine dishes—service for twelve. We had never owned a full set before, and the Rebbe must have noticed. "Children," my mother used to say, "the Rebbe went to the store, chose the dishes, immersed them in the mikveh, and carried them up three flights of stairs to make sure we had proper dishes for our meals!"

Though most have broken over the years, a few pieces remain.

My brother Sholom Ber received a book of chassidic discourses. My older sister Leah got a stamp album. The Rebbe, during his stay, would save stamps from overseas letters and give them to her.

I received a tricycle—something completely new to us refugees. It had brakes and modern features. All my friends wanted to come and ride it.

We eventually arrived in the United States in February 1954. My mother called Rebbetzin Chana, who invited us over to her home on President Street in Crown Heights. That very evening, we were granted an audience with the Rebbe.

As we entered his office, he smiled warmly. "Children, I don't know if you remember me—but I remember you."

My mother often visited Rebbetzin Chana afterward, and I would come along, listening quietly to their conversations. When my mother passed away in 1960, Rebbetzin Chana came to our home for the shiva, as did the Rebbe and his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. The Rebbe stayed for the evening prayer and then spoke a few words.

In a shiva house, visitors traditionally wait for the mourner to speak first. So my father asked the Rebbe about the custom of reciting Kaddish sixteen times a day. The Rebbe responded with an explanation and then continued speaking for another twenty minutes.

We still have the chair the Rebbe sat on that evening. It's upstairs in our house, unused.

Rabbi Shmuel Butman was interviewed by JEM's *My Encounter* in 2011 and 2012.



Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman at the lighting of the World's Largest Menorah

Chabad.org, the largest Jewish website in the world, received three 'Jewish Pulitzers'

Chabad.org captured three awards and recognition at the 44th Annual "American Jewish Press Association - Simon Rockower Awards Banquet". The Awards—dubbed the "Jewish Pulitzers"—have represented the pinnacle of recognition in Jewish journalism.

In the Award for Excellence in News Obituaries category, the award went to the Chabad.org's obituary for Sen. Joseph Lieberman, written by Eli Rubin and Dovid Margolin. In the same category, Chabad.org received an honorable mention recognizing Menachem Posner's tribute to Rabbi Shmuel Butman, who passed away in July 2024.

Rabbi Butman served as the director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization, and was responsible for one of the most recognizable Jewish events in the world: lighting the "World's Largest Menorah," situated on Fifth Avenue and 59th Street in Manhattan.

Ethics Chapter six

Great is Torah, for it gives life to its observers in this world, and in the World To Come. As is stated (Proverbs 4:22): "For they are life to he who finds them, and a healing to all his flesh." And it says (ibid. 3:8): "It shall be health to your navel, and marrow to your bones." And it says (3:18): "She is a tree of life for those who hold fast to her, and happy are those who support her."



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

B"H
15 Sivan, 5711,
Brooklyn, N.Y.
Greetings and blessings,
I send my greetings to all the students of the graduating class who will be advancing to higher classes and programs in their holy program of education.

The summer vacation, the days of resting and refreshing one's potentials, are beginning. They are used to marshal new energies for the next semester that is coming.

You, dear children, must know that vacation does not mean an interruption – cutting oneself off – from study and education. A Jewish child cannot be without Torah study or Jewish education for even one day, whether in the summer or the winter. On the contrary, taking into consideration the many hours of free time students have in the long summer days, you should use them to solidly review the material that you have studied already and to prepare yourself to [advance] further on your way, the way of the Torah and its mitzvos.

In this way, you will – together with marshalling new physical powers – generate fresh spiritual powers. The two together, and particularly the spiritual powers, will make a person complete and healthy.

To you, Jewish parents, who always carry the dual responsibility as parents and teachers, you must remember that, especially during the summer, the entire responsibility [for the child's education] falls on you.

I send you my blessing that G-d will grant you, dear children, [together with] your parents, teachers, and educators, material and spiritual health, with much nachas, Jewish nachas, amidst tranquility for the body and tranquility for the soul.

With blessings for a healthy summer – in both a material and spiritual sense,

Shalom u'Brocho,

Vacation time is approaching, to release youth and children from Yeshivos, Talmud

Torahs, Day Schools, etc., for a long summer recess.

The importance of a restful vacation is obvious. However, certain aspects of vacation time should be examined carefully. Is vacation time a stoppage of study, or is it a transition from one form of activity to another?

In all living forms, there is no such thing as stoppage of life, followed by a completely new start, for a stoppage of life is death and cannot serve as a temporary rest period. There can be a transition from one kind of activity to another, but not a cessation or stoppage.

For example: The two most vital organs of our body are the heart and the brain. The heart is the principal seat of "physical" life; the brain is the principal seat of "intellectual" life. Because the heart and brain have supreme control of the body, they are termed the "sovereigns of the body." Now, these organs not only do not cease to operate in a living body, but they do not even undergo a radical change in their form of activity. The other organs of the body, though they may seem to be in a state of inactivity, as in the case of sleep, do not in reality stop working.

We find this in actuality – as during sleep, breathing is slowed down considerably, but is not stopped, for the "breath of life" must always be there.

Similarly in the case of students, boys and girls, studying our Torah, Toras Chayim – "the Law of Life," restful vacation does not mean interruption and stoppage of Torah and mitzvos, G-d forbid. It means only just another way of furthering their course of study, a period during which they renew their mental abilities and increase their capacities for more intensive study later on....

Therefore, the summer vacation should be utilized to its fullest to improve your studies in both quantity and quality. Let not a day pass without the "breath of life" provided by the "Torah of Life." Let everyone have appointed times for the study of Chumash, Mishnah, Gemora, and so on, each one according to his or her standard of Torah education.

At this time, I wish everyone who is resolved to use his or her vacation in this productive "living" way much success, both during their vacation, as well as on returning to normal activity in their studies thereafter.

With blessing,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

"All flesh shall come to bow down before Me"

(Isaiah 66:23)

At the time of that supreme revelation of the Divine Presence, all of humanity -- even persons so unspiritual as to be described as "flesh" -- will attain a level of perceptiveness that will inspire them to bow down humbly before their Maker.

(Likutei Torah of Rabbi Shneur Zalman)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'Chaim Publication.

From the Archives

"As mentioned in the well-known prayer [recited in the Musaf service of Shabbat] 'Umipnei chatoeinu,' the only cause of the sad events in the past -- the Destruction and Exile -- was the neglect of Torah and mitzvot. Therefore, through rectifying and removing the cause, the effect will also be removed." (From a letter of the Rebbe at the conclusion of the "Three Weeks" of mourning for the destruction of the Holy Temples.)

This coming Sunday is the 17th of Tammuz, which begins the period in the Jewish calendar known as the Three Weeks or "Bein HaMeitzarim" ("Between the Straights").

In these next few weeks, as we commemorate the destruction of the Holy Temples and the beginning of our long and bitter exile, it is appropriate and commendable to strengthen and increase our observance of Torah and mitzvot. But we should do this with a unique outlook.

For, in a talk just months before his first stroke, the Rebbe stated that the Jewish people, as a whole, has already rectified the reason for the exile. At that time, the Rebbe was speaking specifically about "unwarranted hatred" which had caused the destruction of the Second Holy Temple.

The Rebbe, therefore, explained that by enhancing our ahavat Yisrael -- the love of a fellow Jew -- we would experience a foretaste of the unity and ahavat Yisrael that will be prevalent in the Messianic Era.

For, when Moshiach is revealed, the G-dly essence of everything will also be revealed. Thus, we will experience the true appreciation of our fellow Jew, and this will lead to true "love of a fellow Jew." The Rebbe also declared that "Teshuva [repentance] has already been done."

We have repented of our transgressions, the reason for the exile, and thus, at any moment, G-d can fulfill his long-overdue promise to the Jewish people and the world at large and bring the true and everlasting redemption.

At that time, according to our Sages, our days will be occupied with performing mitzvot and the pursuit of knowledge of the Divine through studying Torah, and especially the new insights into Torah that will be revealed by Moshiach.

May our additional mitzvot and enhanced Jewish knowledge tip the Heavenly scales and bring the Revelation of Moshiach now.

Shmuel Butman

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.



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1408 President St, Brooklyn, NY, 11213
phone 718 778 6000

Chairman
Director
Publishing Director
Program Director
Secretary
Administrator
Layout
Associate Editor
Chairman Editorial Comm.
Rebbe photo

Rabbi David Raskin ז"ל
Rabbi Shmuel Butman ז"ל
Rabbi Yosef Y. Butman
Rabbi Kasriel Kastel
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IT HAPPENED ONCE

There was once a chasid who was a very wealthy grain merchant. His customers were the richest county landowners. The chasid's job was to supply them with enough seed to plant their fields, and every year he would deliver hundreds of wagonloads of seeds. Due to the harshness of the local climate, the planting season was very short and even a slight delay in the schedule would cause irreparable harm to the crops. The system that had developed was this: the landowners would advance the chasid a large percentage of the actual price of the grain, thus enabling him to purchase it and transport it to them in time, the time element being the key to the entire transaction.

If he was, G-d forbid, late in delivering, not only would their purchase be void (and their planting season ruined), but the chasid would be required to pay a hefty fine to cover their losses.

Every year the grain was delivered to the same spot, a local inn that was mutually convenient to both the chasid and his customers. For many years the grain was successfully delivered, and the landowners prospered as did the chasid, who became wealthy enough to be one of the greatest supporters of the Rebbe's charitable causes.

One year, as the chasid was conducting a caravan of several hundred wagons to the point of meeting, he suddenly realized that he had made a disastrous mistake.

He cried to his manager, "We forgot to bring the seeds for our biggest customer! Not only will I have to return his advance and pay a huge fine, but my reputation will be ruined! When the other landlords hear what happened, they will cancel all future orders. No one will ever trust me again to make the delivery on time! I will be in debt for the rest of my life!"

Turning around was out of the question, for there was no time to lose in making the other orders. The catastrophe seemed to be unavoidable.

Suddenly, the chasid's demeanor changed. He began to mumble something under his breath: "The whole batch must be thoroughly boiled, yes, with such-and-such an amount of sugar, fruit juice, flavoring...yes it will be very delicious and unusual ...yes it will be perfect" and so on.

The manager who sat next to his boss felt a stab of pity: "He's lost his mind under the stress of such a terrible shock," he thought. But the chasid continued his murmuring for the rest of the trip.

When they finally arrived at their destination, the landowners were waiting for their delivery. But before the wagon had even stopped, the chasid had run into the inn, speaking at the top of his lungs, "I have a terrific idea for this year's punch." For one of the high points of the annual rendezvous was the partaking of a special punch which the landowners drank thirstily. This specially delicious concoction, liberally spiked with vodka, sweetened and flavored with fresh fruit juices native to the region, had become a traditional part of the grain purchase, for wasn't this as good an occasion as any other?

And so, the punch was prepared according to the chasid's recipe. As was traditional, before getting down to business, the punch was passed around, and as the landowners began to sample the brew, word spread that it was a truly heavenly concoction, the likes of which had never been tasted in those parts. The cups were refilled with truly dazzling speed, and soon the landlords were quite intoxicated, all business forgotten. Even when the chasid tried to remind them that there was business at hand they ignored him.

Night fell and with it came a torrential downpour which soaked the hundreds of grain-laden wagons. The following morning brought the terrible realization that all had been lost.

With uncharacteristic equanimity the landlords said to the chasid "Don't worry. It's not your fault that it rained. You fulfilled your part of the bargain, and we will fulfill ours." And with that, they paid him the entire amount of money which they had agreed upon.

Filled with gratitude to the Al-mighty, the chasid mounted his wagon. Not only had he

not lost money, but he had made a handsome profit. Indeed, he had witnessed how G-d "brings down the haughty and raises the humble" -- and in this case, simultaneously.

The manager, however, was at a total loss in the face of this obvious miracle. What had just occurred? he wondered. How could fortunes have reversed themselves in one split second?

"I can explain everything," the chasid began, "although at the time, I myself did not understand it. During my last audience with the Rebbe, he said something which surprised me, as I was just about to leave: 'Ki b'simcha teitzei (for with joy shall you depart). It is precisely through happiness that one is able to depart from troubles and leave them behind...'

"I couldn't imagine what the Rebbe was referring to, but as soon as I found myself in trouble, I knew the time had come to fulfill the Rebbe's wishes. Being b'simcha would bring my salvation.

"But how? How could I possibly rejoice when it seemed as if I was going to lose everything and spend the rest of my life in poverty? I decided to concentrate on the recipe for 'punch' as a means of increasing my happiness; as you can see, it was clearly the proper 'vessel' through which we were able to avoid utter catastrophe..."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the Ethics of our Fathers

Rabbi Meir said: "Whoever occupies himself with the study of Torah for its own sake merits many things..." (Avos 6:1)

The Hebrew word "osek," translated "occupies himself," related to the Hebrew word for businessman, ba'al esek. A person's occupation with the study of Torah must resemble a businessman's preoccupation with his commercial enterprise. Just as a businessman's attention is never totally diverted from his business, the Torah should always be the focus of our attention. (*Likutei Sichot*, Vol. XVII)

Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi said: "Each and every day a Heavenly Voice goes forth from Mount Horeb..." (Avos 6:2)

Our souls exist on several planes simultaneously. This Heavenly Voice reverberates, and is "heard" by our souls as they exist in the spiritual realms. And this causes our souls as they are enclothed within our bodies to be aroused to repentance. (*Likutei Sichot*, Vol. IX)

Whatever the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world, He created only for His glory; as it is stated, "Everything that is called by My name, it is for My glory that I created it; I have formed it, indeed, I have made it"; and it says, "The L-rd will reign for ever and ever." (Avos 6:11)

Never fear, says our text: "The L-rd will reign for ever and ever." However dark and twisted the world seems today, however worse the mess and blunder of mankind seems to get, mankind moves on to its destiny. By a thousand ways we can hardly surmise, mankind inches forward to its "spiritual breakthrough," when "the L-rd will reign." That day will come. It is inherent in a creation that was wrought originally to bring Him glory. (*Ethics from Sinai*, Rabbi Irving Bunim)



8:10 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
15 Tammuz / July 11
Torah Portion Balak
Ethics Ch 6
Shabbat ends 9:16 PM

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' שמואל מנחם מענדל
בן הרה"ח ר' שניאור זלמן ז"ל בוטמאן
מנהל צעירי אגודת חב"ד המרכזית

Dedicated in memory of
Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman ז"ל
Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization
and founder of the L'Chaim Publication