

LAMPLIGHTER

1 Sivan
Bamidbar-Shavuot
45th day of the omer

1086

10 May
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion of Bamidbar is always read before the holiday of Shavuot, and is therefore considered part of our preparation for receiving the Torah.

It is an established rule that the name of a particular Torah portion alludes to its content. What, then, does "Bamidbar," which literally means "In the wilderness" (as well as the continuation of the verse, "of Sinai"), have to do with Shavuot?

"Wilderness" would seem to imply a very undesirable situation, an uninhabited wasteland in which nothing grows. Likewise, "Sinai" is related to the word "sina," meaning hatred, as our Sages explained, "Hatred descended into the world because of it." How, then, can these two seemingly negative concepts prepare us for the Giving of the Torah?

The answer is revealed when we consider the conditions that are necessary and conducive to Torah study. The main preparation consists of emptying the mind of worldly matters, to prevent any distractions. A person who wants to learn Torah should be completely detached from anything that might disturb his concentration.

This detachment should be not only from mundane affairs, but also from other topics within Torah that are unrelated to the subject at hand. Of course, all aspects of the Torah are interrelated, and the ultimate goal is to turn one's knowledge into practical action and to teach others. However, this is only the second step and not the first.

This optimal approach to learning Torah is alluded to in the word "wilderness." A wilderness is isolated and devoid of people, a place where there is nothing to divert one's attention. When a Jew studies Torah, he should feel as if there is nothing else in the world besides himself and the Torah, as our Sages said: "A person who does not make himself into an 'unclaimed wilderness' cannot acquire the Torah's wisdom."

Moreover, an element of "hatred" is also required as a preparation for learning Torah. A person should feel so removed from mundane matters that he simply cannot bear anything that interferes with the Torah's light.

When a Jew prepares himself in such a manner, he is guaranteed that his learning will be successful. He will then be able to go out into the world and apply his knowledge, transforming it into "a dwelling place for G-d."

For indeed, the ultimate objective is not to "hate" the world, and not even to nullify its negative aspects, but to actually transform them into good by revealing their inherent G-dliness.

Adapted from Vol. 3 of Torat Menachem Hitva'aduyot 5750

Why Didn't G-d Hire a Location Manager?

By Levi Avtzon

This week's Torah reading is called *Bamidbar*, "in the desert." It's always read before holiday of Shavuot. The connection is obvious-after all, Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah, an event that transpired in the Sinai Desert.

Ask any film producer and he or she will tell you that one of the toughest aspects of production is the preparation of the set. Countless hours are spent planning every detail, building facades, choosing props, and finding a suitable location.

Similarly, presidential candidates put much thought into selecting the venue at which they will appear to announce their candidacy and campaign. What message will he or she send by the choice to speak in that particular place? Will that selection garner maximum support?

With that in mind, is it not surprising that G-d chose to present Himself to the Jewish nation and give the Ten Commandments in the desert of all places? Why did our mission start in no man's land? What's up with the desert?

G-d certainly knew of the travel magazines' "100 best locations to vacation," of the beautiful beaches of Maui and the majestic Alps. Why, then, was the Torah given in a hot desert in middle of the summer? Surely this most dramatic moment in history warranted a more impressive backdrop!

Yet the explanation lies within the question itself. For the same reason why we would never pick Sinai - its simplicity, dullness and emptiness - is the reason why G-d chose it.

A desert is a no-show for human life, cattle and produce, a desolate area where almost nothing can live; a vast expanse of barren land, rendering it a least desirable topographic area.

G-d gave us the Torah there to teach us that our job is to transform a world which is a spiritual desert, lacking morals, ethics and humility, into a world of Torah and peace.

And more personally speaking: At times we find ourselves in a moral Sinai, when our life seems empty and dull, uninspiring, depressing and barren. There, specifically there, the Torah must enter and push us back out of the rut.

Torah is not only for the synagogue. It is for the desert as well.

Or, better yet: specifically for the desert.

Slice of LIFE

The Engraved Soul of a Jew

In the 1940's, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Y. Schneersohn, sent emissaries to visit various Jewish communities.

Their purpose was not to collect funds for the Rebbe's sacred institutions; in fact, these emissaries would refuse even unsolicited donations.

Fund-raising was not the function of these special emissaries; these emissaries had a purely spiritual assignment: to bring Chasidic warmth, with new inspiration and vitality, to the communities they visited.

When I lived in Chicago, I was privileged to join in the hearty welcome of the distinguished emissary whom the Rebbe had sent to Chicago.

In the midst of his crowded schedule, the emissary inquired after a certain individual, a Mr. L. He told us that the Rebbe had specifically instructed him to pay a visit to this Mr. L., who happened to come from a long line of distinguished Lubavitcher Chasidim.

However, having arrived in this country when he was a young boy, he gradually became "Americanized" and drifted somewhat from Judaism. The Rebbe, therefore, sent his emissary to give him a spiritual "shot in the arm."

It turned out that Mr. L. was a prominent businessman, with whom some of us had a nodding acquaintance. This information seemed encouraging to the Rebbe's emissary.

We put through a call to Mr. L.'s office and an appointment was arranged. Several local rabbis, including the rabbi of the Lubavitcher shul where Mr. L. was a dues-paying member, accompanied the emissary to Mr. L.'s house. I was also one of the visiting party.

Mr. L. received his visitors with sincere warmth.

An intimate and animated conversation followed, in the course of

which the emissary reminisced about his acquaintance with Mr. L.'s grandfather.

Mr. L. warmed up, and he too, spoke nostalgically about his parents' and grandparents' homes, where the Chasidic customs were a daily experience, and where Shabbat and Yom Tov were truly joyous occasions of lasting inspiration.

The mission accomplished, the venerable emissary rose to take leave, whereupon Mr. L. brought out his check book, and asked to whom he should make his check payable.

"My dear friend," the emissary told him, "I did not come to solicit financial contributions, and I trust you will not be offended if I absolutely decline to take any money from you."

This obviously puzzled Mr. L. "Surely you did not come all the way from New York in order to pay me a social visit," Mr. L. said.

"Let me explain it to you," the Rabbi of Mr. L.'s shul replied.

"You know that a Torah scroll is written in a special way, by a scribe, with a quill and special black ink on special parchment.

"It sometimes happens, especially when the Sefer Torah is not used for a length of time that a letter fades, and according to Jewish law, if a letter is missing in the Torah it is no longer 'kosher.' It therefore must be repaired by a scribe.

"The Rebbe has taught us that every Jew is a Sefer Torah.

"There are letters and words, which the Jew spells out in his daily conduct -- Shabbat, keeping kosher, Jewish Marriage Laws, raising children to a life of Torah and mitzvot -- all these are the 'letters' which make up the living Sefer Torah, namely, the Jew.

Sometimes it happens that one of these letters becomes faded.

So the Rebbe sends us, the 'scribes,' from time to time, to freshen up some of the faded letters, and make each one of us a perfect Sefer Torah."

Moved and grateful, Mr. L. bade us farewell, and we left him to digest the food for thought which was so aptly provided for him.

When the emissary returned to New York, he reported to the Rebbe on his activities and included a detailed description of what had transpired at Mr. L.'s home.

The Rebbe said, "It was indeed a very interesting explanation that was given to Mr. L., but the analogy was not true in all respects. It is true that a Jew is a Sefer Torah, but with a difference."

The Rebbe went on to explain:

"There are two ways of making an inscription. One can write with a quill or pen and ink, or one can engrave like the Ten Commandments which were engraved in stone.

"What is the difference between these two methods? Writing with a pen, or quill, means applying ink to paper or parchment.

"The ink and the parchment are separate entities, but they are skillfully joined by the writers. But because they are separate entities, it is possible for the ink to fade, or be erased.

"On the other hand, engraving means forming letters and words within the very stone itself; nothing is superimposed upon the material -- the material and the letter are one. Such letters cannot be erased, nor can they fade.

"So long as the material exists, the letters are there. However, while no actual fading or erasure is possible in this case, there is a possibility of dust and grime gathering and covering up the engraved letters. If this happens, one must only clear away the dust and grime, and the letters will again be revealed in their original freshness."

The Rebbe concluded:

"A Jew is a Sefer Torah, but not a written one. He is rather like the Ten Commandments -- engraved.

"The Torah and mitzvot are an integral part of the Jewish soul; they are engraved in his mind and heart. You do not have to 'rewrite' a Jew; all you have to do is help him brush away the dust and grime of environmental influences which have temporarily covered up his true self - the 'pintele Yid'. This is why a Jewish heart is always awake and responsive."

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ISSUE 1086

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Before *Hakkafos* on the eve of Simchas Torah in the year 5702 (1941), the Rebbe Rayatz announced that a *Sefer Torah* was going to be written especially "to greet our righteous *Moshiach*." The writing began *Beis Iyar* (the birthday of the Rebbe Maharash). Though the *Sefer Torah* was started in 5702, its final letters were not completed until the ninth of Shvat, 5730 (1970), on the afternoon of *erev Shabbos*. Sensing the historic nature of the occasion, thousands of Chassidim from near and far converged on the *beis midrash* of Lubavitch in Brooklyn for this solemn and moving ceremony.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
21 Menachem Av, 5710 [1950]
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In reply to your letter of 16 Menachem Av concerning your wife's health: You write of reasons for which she cannot conceive. However, this appears to be incomprehensible, because the beginning of your letter mentions that in the month of Elul 5709 she was pregnant. If so, this can certainly be the case now, too.

It therefore seems to me that your wife should not undertake anything that would - according to what you write - be risky. Let her once again consult a medical specialist as to what she should do and he will no doubt find a moderate course of action. Through the agency of a particular doctor and a particular medication everything will pass, and the blessing of my revered father-in-law [the Rebbe Rayatz] (*May I serve as an atonement for his resting-place!*) will be fulfilled - that G-d will gladden your hearts with healthy and viable offspring.

You write further that from this whole situation your wife has become nervous, and so on.

It should be explained to her that the A-lmighty directs the world in the manner that is best. He knows what is best, and He wrote in the Torah that children are a blessing. Jews are therefore deserving of it. And if this blessing is sometimes delayed, it should be known that we all have a great Rebbe, my revered father-in-law, and in due course he will make all his blessings materialize for all those who are bound to him.

However, one must hold tightly on to the bonds of *hiskashrus* [connection] with him. If, instead, one begins to be apprehensive about the fulfillment of his blessings, and this makes one become nervous, this is an indication of weakness, G-d forbid, in one's trust and in one's *hiskashrus*. In particular, if it also affects one's health, it is certainly nothing more than the counsel of the [Evil] Inclination.

She and you yourself must be strong in your trust "in G-d and in Moshe, His servant," of our generation - that is, my revered father-in-law - and this in itself will help expedite and actualize his holy blessing for healthy and viable offspring and for all good things.

Before candle-lighting, your wife no doubt makes a donation to the charity that carries the name of Rabbeinu Meir Baal HaNess, and every day you no doubt recite the Rebbe's chapter of *Tehillim*, which is currently chapter 71.

When your wife becomes pregnant, in a good and auspicious hour, you will presumably not publicize the fact at the early stages, but you will immediately notify the Rebbe [Rayatz] at the holy resting-place.

With blessings,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Shavuot

The holiday of Shavuot is the day on which we celebrate the great revelation of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, 3,325 years ago. The souls of all Jews, from all times, came together to hear the Ten Commandments from G d Himself. This year, on Wednesday, May 15, 2013, go to your local synagogue to hear the Ten Commandments and reaffirm the covenant with G d and His Torah. Since we all stood at Mount Sinai, we must all reaffirm our commitment. Babies, young children, the elderly, all that are able should attend.

On the first night of Shavuot (this year, Tuesday night, May 14, 2013), Jews throughout the world observe the centuries-old custom of conducting an all-night vigil dedicated to Torah learning and preparation for receiving the Torah anew the next morning. One explanation for this tradition is that the Jewish people did not rise early on the day G d gave the Torah, and it was necessary for G d Himself to awaken them. To compensate for their behaviour, Jews have accepted upon themselves the custom of remaining awake all night.

It is customary to eat dairy foods on the first day of Shavuot. One reason is with the giving of the Torah, the Jews became obligated to observe the kosher laws. As the Torah was given on Shabbat, no cattle could be slaughtered nor could utensils be koshered, and thus on that day they ate dairy.

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbos precedes the holiday of Shavuot which is commonly known as, and in prayers it is referred to as, "the season of the giving of our Torah." Our Sages connect the giving of the Torah with the number three, "G-d gave a threefold light to a threefold people through the third [of Amram's children]... in the third month."

Why do we obsess with the number three in reference to the giving of the Torah? Three reflects the union between two separate concepts: One, the world; Two, spirituality. Before the Torah was given these two existed on different plains. When the Torah was given the Jewish people were imbued with a strength which was capable of fusing these two. From that point and on we possessed the ability to take the one entity of physicality and combine it with the number two, spirituality, make the three, a beautiful dwelling place for the presents of G-d.

Being that we have now entered the month which contains the auspicious day on which we received this special power, the coming days must be used in preparation for "the season of the giving of our Torah." Each individual should resolve to increase his study of Torah -- both the revealed realm of Torah law and Torah's mystic dimension -- and fulfillment of Mitzvos, stressing the interrelation of thought, speech, and deed.

In particular, based on the concept that our children are the "guarantors of the Torah," efforts should be made to bring all Jewish children, even those of a very young age, to shul on Shavuot to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments. Even though the children may not appreciate what they hear, their presence has an influence on the source of their souls.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

JESTING IN EARNEST

It was a sad story that this penniless Chassid brought to his Rebbe, Rabbi Shlomo of Radomsk: his daughter was of marriageable age, and he did not know where to begin to find all the money needed for a dowry and a wedding. All this was written out in the *kvitl* note which he handed the rebbe.

The *tzadik* read it through, and exclaimed: "What is this I read here about your being 'a poor man'?! You had better leave my house at once, for our Sages teach us that 'a pauper is accounted as if dead,' and I am a *kohen*, one of the priestly family, who may not be defiled by exposure to the dead!"

The man ran out from sheer fright, but the *tzadik* called after him: "Come now, come now! This must surely be a case of a *met mitzvah*, a dead body which can be attended to by no one else, in which case a *kohen* is allowed to defile himself."

Those present laughed at the seeming jests, little suspecting that there were more to come. The *tzadik* addressed himself another time to the poor fellow: "You are worrying about marrying off your daughter. Tell me: do you have bread to eat?"

"To tell the truth," stammered the pauper, "I haven't."

"But you do say the *Hamotzi* benediction over bread every day, don't you? So where do you get the bread for that?"

"Most of it comes from my wife; she works, and earns a little."

"What a fine business!" cried the Rebbe. "His wife supports him! Shouldn't we be warned by the example of Adam, whose wife gave him something to eat? And this fellow says that his wife supports him! Tell me: in what way does your wife earn her income?"

"She goes to all the courtyards [in Hebrew: *chatseirof*] of the squires in the area, sells vegetables and whatever, and earns a little from that." the pauper replied.

"If so," said the *tzadik*, "we have a verse in the Torah [Deut 1:1] which lists place-names, and there it says '*chatserot v'diy zahav*': that if she goes to *chatseirof*, she will no doubt encounter *vadaiy zahav* [literally, "ample gold"]. Go home in peace, my good man, and the Almighty will help you, and your wife will prosper with *vadaiy zahav*."

But when he came home and his wife asked him what he had brought back from the rebbe, he did not know what to answer.

After some time his wife came home with a package, and said: "Look here. Today I found this thing lying about in the mud."

They opened it, and found three hundred rubles -- quite a sum in those days. Half of it they set aside for their daughter's dowry and the wedding expenses and with the rest the happy man set up a little business in which he prospered for the rest of his life.

After the passing of Rabbi Shlomo of Radomsk, this chasid came to visit his son and successor as rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Yissachar, and told him the above episode.

"My father," said the *tzadik*, "was a remarkable man. Every expression of his supernatural powers and his divine inspiration he managed to clothe in jests and witticisms, so that no one should detect that there was anything extraordinary afoot."

Biographic Note:

Rabbi Shlomo HaKohen Rabinowitz of Radomsk [1803-29 Adar 1866] was the author of *Tiferet Shlomo*. His speaking ability and musical voice, and his divine inspiration, attracted thousands of Chasidic followers.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And G-d spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai (Numbers 1:1)

The Torah was given to the people of Israel in the ownerless desert. For if it were given in the Land of Israel, the residents of the Land of Israel would say, "It is ours"; and if it were given in some other place, the residents of that place would say, "It is ours." Therefore it was given in the wilderness, so that anyone who wishes to acquire it may acquire it. (*Mechilta D'Rashbi*)

Why was the Torah given in the desert? To teach us that if a person does not surrender himself to it like the desert, he cannot merit the words of Torah. And to teach us that just as the desert is endless, so is the Torah without end. (*Pesikta D'Rav Kahana*)

Raise the head of all the congregation of the children of Israel... by the number of names (1:2)

Because of G-d's great love for His people, He counts them all the time. He counted them when they left Egypt. He counted them after they fell in the wake of the sin of the Golden Calf, to know the number of the survivors. And He counted them when He came to manifest His presence within them: On the first of Nissan the Sanctuary was erected, and [one month later] on the first of Iyar He counted them. (*Rashi*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS BAMIDBAR
1 SIVAN • 10 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:05 PM
	MINCHA:	5:15 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:50 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:40 AM
	MINCHA:	5:10 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:04 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:15 PM
	MAARIV:	5:55 PM
TUESDAY, MAY 14, EREV YOM TOV:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:03 PM
	MINCHA:	5:10 PM
	MAARIV:	6:00 PM
WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, YOM TOV:	SHACHARIS	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:42 AM
	CANDLE LIGHTING:	6:02 PM
	MINCHA:	5:10 PM
THURSDAY, MAY 16, YOM TOV:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:42 AM
	MINCHA:	5:10 PM
	MAARIV:	6:00 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 10-16 MAY 2013

BEGINS			ENDS		
10th	14th	15th	11th	16th	
5:05	5:03	6:02	MELBOURNE	6:04	6:01
5:08	5:04	6:01	ADELAIDE	6:04	6:01
4:53	4:50	5:44	BRISBANE	5:46	5:44
6:13	6:12	7:03	DARWIN	7:03	7:02
4:50	4:48	5:42	GOLD COAST	5:44	5:41
5:14	5:11	6:07	PERTH	6:09	6:06
4:49	4:46	5:42	SYDNEY	5:45	5:42
4:55	4:52	5:49	CANBERRA	5:52	5:48
4:50	4:46	5:47	LAUNCESTON	5:51	5:46
5:09	5:06	6:04	AUCKLAND	6:07	6:03
5:00	4:56	5:57	WELLINGTON	6:00	5:56
4:46	4:42	5:44	HOBART	5:48	5:43
4:49	4:46	5:40	BYRON BAY	5:43	5:40
6:48	6:48	7:39	SINGAPORE	7:38	7:39

