

# LAMPLIGHTER

13 Tammuz  
Balak  
1092  
21 June  
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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week we read the Torah portion of Balak. In the portion, it is related that when King Balak asked Bilaam to curse the Jewish people, Bilaam responded by uttering several prophecies. The first one established that it was impossible to curse the Jews, as they are especially beloved by G-d. "How shall I curse whom G-d has not cursed? And how shall I execrate whom the L-rd has not execrated?" he said. Bilaam's second prophecy went even further: Not only is it impossible to curse the Jewish people, but they deserve special blessing because of their good deeds: "Behold, I have received [the word] to bless; and when He has blessed, I cannot call it back."

Bilaam then cites one of the special qualities of the Jews: "Behold, it is a people that shall rise up as a lioness, and as a lion shall it raise itself." As Rashi explains, this means that "when [the Jews] awaken from their sleep in the morning, they show the strength of a lion to seize the commandments - to put on *Tzitzit* (fringes), to recite the Shema, and to don *Tefillin*."

According to Rashi, whose explanation is based on a Midrash, the main reason G-d loves the Jews so much is their willingness to "seize the commandments." Not satisfied to merely observe mitzvot (commandments) in a routine manner, they "seize" and "grab" them as an expression of their eagerness.

Reaching out to grab something is an indication of how much a person wants to possess a particular object. If he is not that interested in the object, he will not stick out his hand or rush to take it.

In fact, the Jewish people love G-d's mitzvot so much that immediately upon arising, they "attack" them with the forcefulness of a lion. As soon as they regain consciousness they "put on *Tzitzit*, recite the Shema, don *Tefillin*, etc."

On a deeper level, the act of "seizing" indicates an action that transcends logic. In the service of G-d, this is the level of *mesirut nefesh*, self-sacrifice, the "illogical" willingness of the Jew to give up his life for the sake of G-d. When we say that a Jew "seizes" the commandments, it means that he observes mitzvot with a sense of *mesirut nefesh*.

This brings to mind a statement of the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, who encouraged his Chasidim to actively demonstrate self-sacrifice in the face of Communist oppression: "Jews, you must grab *mesirut nefesh* now. Grab it! Because the time for *mesirut nefesh* is about to end. The day is coming very soon when there will be complete religious freedom; you will look for *mesirut nefesh* but will not find any."

Indeed, in the merit of the Jewish people's self-sacrifice throughout the generations, we will very soon merit the fulfillment of the rest of Bilaam's prophecy - "a scepter shall arise out of Israel" - the coming of Moshiach, speedily.

*Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Vol. 33*

## Counting Other People's Money

By Rochel Holzkenner

"Modesty is one of my more outstanding qualities" - Anonymous.

Growing up, there was a song I'd enjoy from an album called "Journeys." It was a parody about wedding extravagance. In the song a man tells his friend about the wedding he's planning for his daughter. Flowers would be imported from overseas, a hundred-person band would entertain the guests with their symphony, and an outlandish Viennese table would culminate the meal. Finally, each guest would receive a token gift before leaving: an entire set of the Talmud.

"But what about modesty?" asks his friend after hearing of the lavish plans.

"But of course!" the father of the bride responds. "On the invitation I will write that all guests should come to the wedding in modest attire."

Apparently, there are many facets to this trait we call modesty. While the way you dress may be the most obvious, modesty is certainly not limited to appearance.

In biblical times, modesty played a pivotal role in thwarting Balaam's evil intent. Balaam was a non-Jewish prophet employed by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the Jewish people. Now Balaam knew that a military attack would be futile; the Jews had a track record of supernatural and forceful victories in war. So Balaam tried to weaken them at their source, by mitigating their spiritual connectivity. As a spiritual guru, he felt he had the skills needed to undermine their connection to G d.

Ironically, whenever Balaam opened his mouth to curse the Jewish people, out flowed the most magnificent blessings. Finally, after his second fruitless attempt to lash out words of destruction, he said something very telling; telling since it exposed the reason for his inability to curse them.

"How goodly are your tents, O Jacob; your dwelling places, O Israel!" (Numbers 24:5)

The Midrash explains that Balaam was noting the modest way in which the tents of Israel were aligned. They were staggered so the windows of one tent had no visual access to the windows of its neighbouring tent. At each of their stops over their forty-year trek, the people made sure to erect their tents in this modest arrangement. Apparently it was this exceptionally sensitive quality amongst them that made it impossible for Balaam to harm them.

Modesty means having healthy boundaries. Today modesty is underrated. As worldly beings, we're hooked on TV shows that dig into the most personal parts of peoples' lives and display them to millions of viewers. Conversely, many teens (and adults) are misled to believe that if they don't expose what is meant to be sacred and private they are prudish.

People who are careful not to speak *lashon hara*, gossip, are merely expressing their appreciation for healthy boundaries. Who gave you permission to analyse another's life? You shouldn't be looking in their window. And if you are exposed to a private bit of information about your friend, be sensitive. Gossiping is violating the sacred space of another person.

The Jews were in transit, and yet they still made sure to uphold this subtle expression of modesty as they assembled their tents. Preserving strong and healthy boundaries was high on their priority list. Mirroring their efforts G d shielded them from harm with a protective barrier, and Balaam was just unable to mitigate their prowess.

"How goodly are your tents, O Jacob!"

# Slice of LIFE

## My Purpose in Life

This story occurred some twenty years ago in New York as Mr. Fogel (fictitious name) a middle-aged Chabad Chassid was listening to a tape of one of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's speeches while driving home late one evening from work. He had heard this one particular one tens of times but for some reason he liked it.

But suddenly one sentence really struck him. It was as though the Rebbe was speaking directly to him,:

"As is known, the Baal Shem Tov said that a soul can come into this world for seventy, eighty years just to do a favour for someone, especially a fellow Jew."

Suddenly Mr. Fogel became lost in thought. 'Could it be that I could live my entire life and never fulfill my purpose! Could such a thing really happen? After all who knows the secret ways of G-d if not the Baal Shem Tov?'

He became serious. His eyes even began to fill with tears and he began to pray.

'Please, Hashem, guide me to do what I'm supposed to do, I don't want to miss my purpose!'

Deep in thought he began to imagine the hundreds (today there are thousands) of Chassidim all over the world going 'out of their ways' to wake up Jews. Nothing is more important. Nothing! But what about him?!

When he came out of his reverie he realized that he was in a strange place and it took him a few seconds to figure out what happened. He had passed his turn-off, gotten off the expressway several stops too late and now was in a different district of Brooklyn.

He was looking for a place to make a U-turn when something caught his eye. To his right, at the side of the road was an older man standing before the open hood of a stalled car.

The street was unusually empty so Mr. Fogel slowed down, opened his right side window and had a better look. The fellow looked up at him and signalled. It didn't look suspicious so he pulled over and asked what was wrong.

"Ahh! What rotten luck! I can't figure it out." The fellow yelled out. "The thing just

died on me! Now I'm really stuck!! A tow truck stopped about ten minutes ago but they wanted six hundred dollars to tow me home! Six hundred! And I only live fifteen minutes away!"

Mr. Fogel pulled his car even closer and the fellow continued.

"And I'm stalled in a no parking zone. Look at this! Even if I caught a taxi, if I leave the car here, they'll tow it away."

"Fogel pointed to a spot about fifty yards ahead and said, "Just don't worry. G-d will help. Here, look over there! About a hundred feet away is a place you can park. See! I'll push you. Get in your car and I'll push you. Then you can take a taxi home."

"Thanks!" he yelled back as he walked to open the door to his car. "But I've been waiting here for a long time and not one taxi has passed. Look! The road is deserted. But I guess you're right. Worrying doesn't help."

Mr. Fogel was totally convinced that this fellow was telling the truth. So after pushing him to the parking place and the fellow locked his car up, he offered to take him home. After all it was only a fifteen minute ride.

The old fellow couldn't stop thanking him. He got into Fogel's car and kept talking. "Wow! Thanks a million! I really appreciate this! Now all we have to do, my wife and I that is, is order a cab." He looked at his watch, "Whew! It's really late! I hope we don't miss our plane. We're flying to Florida to visit our daughter and the plane is leaving in an hour."

"Listen" said Mr. Fogel "It's no problem. You know what? I'll take you to the airport, after all it's only a half hour drive and my wife won't worry. Just don't ask questions. As soon as we get to your house get your wife and suitcases and let's go! You have no time to waste."

The old fellow tried weakly to protest but realized that this Chassid was right, so in no time he and his wife were in the car and before they knew it were at the airport.

"I can't thank you enough" said the old man as he pulled his suitcase from the trunk. "Listen, you got to let me pay you! Here, do me a favour, take a hundred dollars." He pulled a bill from his wallet. "Nu! It's the least I can do. Just take it!"

But Fogel would have no part of it. "Sorry, my friend! First of all thank G-d I don't need the money. Second, it was a favour so I don't want the money. And third it was no big deal; the whole thing took less than an hour and I enjoyed it, so I don't even

deserve the money."

But the old man insisted, even took another hundred out and kept pushing it at Fogel saying "Just take it. Nu! Don't argue. Just take it."

Until finally Mr. Fogel said. "Excuse me but you're Jewish, right?" the fellow shook his head yes. "So, listen, if you really want to repay me then, you know what? Put on Tefillin. Do you put on Tefillin? Do it every morning for a month."

The man shook his head no. In fact it was exactly what he did not want to hear. Tefillin?! No way!! I'm not doing any Mitzvos! No MITZVOS! Not me!"

"Alright, so then don't put on Tefillin." Fogel replied. "You were the one that wanted to pay. As far as I'm concerned you don't owe me anything but if you want to pay, this is what I want. Nu? What do you say? Just buy yourself a pair of Tefillin and put them on when you can. Okay?"

The old fellow looked at Fogel with foggy eyes for a second, shook his head reluctantly and said, "All right. I'll do it!"

Then he half-heartedly shook Fogel's hand, looked at his watch and ran to get a luggage cart.

As soon as he was far enough away, his wife approached Fogel with tears in her eyes, dabbed them with a small kerchief and said. "Thank you! G-d just sent you!"

She spoke in a low voice, keeping an eye on her husband to make sure he was involved with the cart but, although she tried to hide it, she was obviously very emotional, her eyes were red from crying.

"You don't know what you just did. It was a miracle! We are holocaust survivors. We met after the war, got married, moved here to New York and agreed that we wouldn't do anything Jewish. Nothing. We were mad at G-d, you know." She started crying again.

"But as we got older I began to yearn for the things from my mother's house, you know, like lighting candles before Shabbat. But each time I mentioned it my husband said 'NO MITZVOT!! Our children got married, we are alone in the house but he still says 'No Mitzvos!!'

"So, yesterday I felt so bad that I did something I haven't done since the war, I prayed.

"I begged G-d to send some miracle to change my husband's mind, and then you came. You are a miracle!!

"I'm sure that this Shabbat we will have Candles."

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ISSUE 1092

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

With the Melaveh Malkah meal at the close of Shabbos, the Shabbos Queen is escorted on her way. This meal nourishes the luz bone, and from this bone the body will be reconstituted at the time of the Resurrection.



# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d  
16 Shevat, 5724 [1964]  
Brooklyn, NY

...One of the basic messages of the Ten Commandments is contained in the fact that they begin with I am, etc., i.e. the profound principle of monotheism, which in itself was a tremendous revolutionary idea in those days of idolatry, dominated by the polytheistic culture of Egypt (as indicated in detail in the Second Commandment, where all forms of idolatry are strictly prohibited). Incidentally, the emphasis on monotheism, and the denial of polytheism, is to be seen not only in the fact that these ideas form the subject of the first two Commandments, but also in the quantity of words and detail which they contain.

At the same time, the Ten Commandments conclude with such apparently simple and obvious injunctions as, Thou shalt not steal, etc.

The profundity of monotheism, with which the Ten Commandments begin, and the simplicity of the ethical and moral laws, with which the Ten Commandments conclude, point to an important lesson, namely:

- a) The true believer in G-d is not the one who holds abstract ideas, but the one whose knowledge of G-d leads him to the proper daily conduct even in ordinary and commonplace matters, in his dealings with his neighbours and the respect for their property even if it be an ox or a donkey, etc.
- b) The ethical and moral laws, even those that are so obvious as, Thou shalt not steal, and Thou shalt not murder, will have actual validity and will be observed only if they are based on the first and second Commandments, that is to say, based on Divine authority, the authority of the One and Only G-d.

If in a previous generation there were people who doubted the need of Divine authority for common morality and ethics, in the belief that human reason is sufficient authority for morality and ethics, our present generation has, unfortunately, in a most devastating and tragic way, refuted this mistaken notion. For, it is precisely the nation which has excelled itself in the exact sciences, the humanities and even in philosophy and ethics, which turned out to be the most depraved nation of the world, making an ideal of murder and robbery, etc. Anyone who knows how insignificant the minority of Germans who opposed the Hitler regime was, realizes that the German cult was not something which was practiced by a few individuals, but had embraced the vast majority of that nation, who considered itself the super race, etc. Surely it is unnecessary to elaborate on this at greater length.

With all good wishes, and with blessing  
[Signature]

## CUSTOMS CORNER

The fast of the 17th of the Hebrew month of Tammuz, known as *Shiva Asar B'Tammuz*, is the start of a three-week mourning period for the destruction of Jerusalem and the two Holy Temples. This year it takes place on Tuesday, June 25th.

The fast actually commemorates 5 tragic events that occurred on this date, including:

1. Moses broke the tablets when he saw the Jewish people worshipping the Golden Calf.
2. During the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, the Jews were forced to cease offering the daily sacrifices due to the lack of sheep.
3. Apostomos burned the holy Torah.
4. An idol was placed in the Holy Temple.
5. The walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans, in 69 CE, after a lengthy siege. (Three weeks later, after the Jews put up a valiant struggle, the Romans destroyed the second Holy Temple on the 9th of Av.)

On this day healthy adults-bar- or bat-mitzvah age and older-abstain from eating or drinking between dawn and nightfall.

## A WORD

*from the Director*

*In analysing this week's portion of the Torah a question arises; should a section of Torah be named Balak, who was a gentile king and enemy of the Jews, it seems inappropriate? Chassidus explains that eventually Rus the Moavite descended from Balak and so, too, Dovid HaMelech [King David]. If so, Balak represents the ultimate conversion of evil to good and bitterness to sweetness.*

*The lesson for us: When a Jew makes a just accounting of his personal situation he sees that on the one hand he is a child of G-d, as precious as an only son born to aged parents. And on the other hand he knows that he has failings, he is not living up to his role as son of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed Be He. This might bring him to a despondent feeling and it will be difficult to be joyous. Let him therefore take a lesson from Balak who was wise and had a prophetic vision that his seed would be associated with the chain of the family of King David -- how much more so a Jew, who is truly part of the great chain -- and whose soul is bound up in the soul of Moshiach.*

*This will add encouragement and strength in the Divine service of spreading Torah and Yiddishkeit. When you meet a Jew whose only connection to Judaism seems to be that he can be referred to as a "Jew", externally he is still on the lowest rung, just above being cut off. Remember, this lowliness is only superficial and it must be converted to the good, so that even the external powers will take on the power of his true essence - a being that is connected to G-d, the hidden spark of Judaism.*

*J. I. Gutnick*

## IT HAPPENED

Once...

## Two Stories from the Talmud

## The private prayer

One year there was a draught in Israel. Rain hadn't fallen for almost a year, all the communal fasts and public prayers hadn't helped, the wells were drying up, food was running out and things looked bleak.

There was no lack of holy, devoted Jews in Israel but for some reason their supplications were not answered and no one could imagine where salvation would come from.

There was one Jew that was a bit different than the others. His name was Rabbi Yona. The Talmud tells us no more than he was so exceedingly humble that even his wife and family had no idea of his spiritual achievements.

Rabbi Yona couldn't stand the suffering of his brothers. He waited and waited for rain and when it became obvious that rain was not coming he took an empty sack and the remaining money in the house and told his wife he was going to the town to see if he could buy some grain to replenish their food supply.

His wife blessed him with good luck and he made his way toward the market.

When he was sure he wasn't noticed he turned to the outskirts of the city then walked even farther to a desolate rocky spot far into the hills where he was certain that no one had ever been.

He found a place to lower himself in the cleft of some rocks, wrapped himself in his prayer shawl and began to pour his heart out to G-d.

After several minutes the clear blue sky turned grey, then ominously dark. Soon thunder and bolts of lightning announced the end of the heavenly decree and the rain began; first only a drizzle and finally fall in torrents.

Rabbi Yona climbed out of his hiding place put his prayer shawl back in the sack and headed home.

On the way people were dancing in the streets, faces to heaven weeping in gratitude and soaked with blessed rain.

When he arrived home his wife too was dancing for joy at the rain. She showed him into the house, gave him a dry set of clothes and asked if he had managed to make it to the market and get some grain.

"No" he answered "Before I got there it began to rain and I reasoned that soon there will be plenty of food for everyone at lower prices. So I came home."

## The Miraculous Rescue

In a certain town lived a kind Jew who, in his spare time, dug wells, cisterns and irrigation ditches for those traveling or passing through the area so water would be easily accessible and travellers would never suffer from thirst.

This kind Jew had a daughter who reached the age of marriage. He found a proper match for her and the date of the wedding was set.

But then tragedy struck. The girl was crossing a river on the way to make preparations for the wedding and somehow slipped and fell into the rapids and drowned.

In fact the waters were so turbulent, deep and murky that her body was never found.

When the people in the area heard the heartbreaking story they went to the man's home to comfort him but to no avail. The poor fellow was so beside himself with bitterness, grief and pain that he refused all consolation.

When Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair happened to pass by and see the crowd of people entering and leaving, he understood that they were comforting a mourner and he too entered. But the mourner refused him as well.

"What type of a Jew is this?" Rabbi Pinchas asked one of those present. "Is he the first person to ever be bereaved? I agree that death is awful but why is he different from every other mourner? Why is he so bitter?"

"Rabbi," the reply was soon in coming "This man used to dig wells and provide everyone with water and now his daughter drowned in water!!"

Answered Rabbi Pinchas "What? Can it be that he honoured his Creator with water and he now suffers because of water?!"

Just moments later cries of jubilation came from the city.

"The girl returned!"

Some say that she grabbed onto a pole that suddenly appeared in the water, others say that an angel with the form and face of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair saved her.

## Thoughts THAT COUNT

Curse me this people, for he is mightier than me (22:6)

The Hebrew phrase, *Atzum hu mimeni* ("He is mightier than me") also translates, "He is mightier from me." For in truth, the might of the people of Israel is Moshiah, who is descendent of Balak! (Ruth the Moabite, ancestress of King David, is a descendent of Balak). (*Shaloh*)

And G-d opened the mouth of the donkey (22:28)

This was to impress upon Balaam that there is no place for pride over the fact that he has been given the gift of prophecy. If it suits G-d's purposes, even a donkey will see angels and make speeches. (*Keli Yakar*)

And G-d happened upon Balaam (23:4)

The hallmark of evil and unholiness is an attitude of "It just happened." Nothing is coincidental to the Jew; every event is purposeful and significant. (*Chassidic Saying*)

## CANDLE LIGHTING: 21 JUNE 2013

BEGINS	ENDS
4:49 .....MELBOURNE .....	5:51
4:53 .....ADELAIDE .....	5:53
4:43 .....BRISBANE .....	5:40
6:12 .....DARWIN .....	7:04
4:41 .....GOLD COAST .....	5:37
5:02 .....PERTH .....	6:00
4:36 .....SYDNEY .....	5:35
4:40 .....CANBERRA .....	5:40
4:30 .....LAUNCESTON .....	5:35
4:53 .....AUCKLAND .....	5:54
4:40 .....WELLINGTON .....	5:44
4:25 .....HOBART .....	5:30
4:39 .....BYRON BAY .....	5:35
6:54 .....SINGAPORE .....	7:46



## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS BALAK

13 TAMMUZ • 21 JUNE

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:49 PM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:35 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:59 AM
	MINCHA:	4:55 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5:51 PM
TUESDAY, FAST OF 17TH OF TAMMUZ:	STARTS:	6:12 AM
	MINCHA:	4:50 PM
	ENDS:	5:38 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	MAARIV:	5:45 PM