

# LAMPLIGHTER

23 Iyar  
Parshas Behar -  
Bechukosai  
Shabbos Mevorchim  
Shabbos Chazak

1296

19 May  
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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week we read two Torah portions, Behar and Bechukotai. Bechukotai describes the Jubilee year, the 50th year of the agricultural cycle in the land of Israel. At this time, ancestral property that was sold was returned and servants were freed. To explain: When the Jews entered the Holy Land after their journey through the desert, every member of the people was given a plot of land. If they - or their heirs - sold that land, in the fiftieth year of the agricultural cycle, that land was returned to the seller.

Similarly, if a person sold himself as a servant, he was to be released after six years. If he, nonetheless, desired to remain a servant, he was allowed to do so, but in the fiftieth year, he is also set free.

What a lesson in self-renewal! We are always saying: "If I were given a second chance, things would be different," and here Torah law establishes the concept of a second chance as a binding obligation.

The spiritual dimensions of the Torah's laws are applicable in all times and in all places. Thus although in a practical sense, the Jubilee is not practiced in the present age, in an abstract sense, it is a continuous lesson for all of us.

No matter what our present state is, G-d is giving us the wherewithal to start anew and change the direction of our lives. At every moment, we are being granted spiritual and material blessings that enable us to turn our lives around and bring about goodness for ourselves, our families, and the people around us.

Our Sages teach: "A rich man is rich only due to his mind-set. A poor man is poor only due to his mind-set." A truly wealthy man is confident that even were he to be set down in a jungle with nothing to his name, he would be able to establish himself financially in a matter of time. Conversely, a person with a poor man's mentality will soon find himself impoverished even after he was given great wealth.

What makes a man wealthy? Our Sages teach us: "Who is wealthy? One who is satisfied with his portion." That doesn't mean that he does not want to make more money; he may, but he does not feel pressured to do so. He feels the luxury of being patient, of waiting for opportunities, and then using them to the maximum of his capacity.

A poor man, by contrast, is not satisfied; he feels that he must make money. He is obsessed with want and need and those feelings cause him to act rashly, trying this scheme and to make it big.

What's the inevitable result? He loses, but he's lost far more than money. He's lost his life, because his energy and his dreams were focused on the money that he felt he had to make. Instead of enjoying life for what it is, sharing quality time with family and friends, he was always looking to what it could be when he made the money.

It doesn't have to be that way. It's not too late. The Jubilee teaches us that we can start anew. We all have the resources, because the fundamental resources are inside. Each one of us possesses a soul that is an actual part of G-d. That spiritual spark gives us the potential to bring about good and well-being for ourselves and the people close to us.

## Because It Is There

By Yanki Tauber

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, the sport of mountain-climbing was born in 1760, when a young Genevan scientist, Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, offered prize money for the first person or persons to reach the summit of Mount Blanc, Europe's tallest peak at 15,777 feet.

I suspect that it's been going on for much longer than that. Something tells me that for as long as there have been humans and mountains, humans have been climbing mountains. Not just for some "useful" purpose, but also for sport, for the challenge it poses, for no other reason—as one famous mountaineer put it—than "because it is there." Or rather, because we are here, down below, and we want to be someplace higher than here.

Consider the case of Moses. Granted, Mount Sinai was no Everest. Remember, however, that Moses was 80 years old at the time. Remember, also, that he was doing it on behalf of 600,000 people. (600,000 Jews, that is, which means that he had to contend with 600,000 opinions on which route to take, what equipment to use, etc.; indeed, Moses had to build a fence around the mountain to hold them back from having a go at it themselves.)

Now, you might say that Moses' climb wasn't just for the challenge, but for a specific purpose: to receive the Torah. Yet G-d was coming down from the heavens—an infinite number of light-years away. He certainly could have descended another few thousand feet, instead of making an octogenarian sage climb a mountainside. As, indeed, He could have programmed the Torah right into our brains, together with all the other stuff we're born knowing, instead of chiseling it into two stone tablets for us to study and decipher.

But G-d was telling us: Yes, you are so far down below, and I am so high up, that you'll never get here on your own. The only way that there can be anything eternal, infinite or true in your lives is if I come down to you. But if I came all the way down, whatever I might give you will be meaningless to you—as meaningless to you as your own existence, to which you are oblivious because you were born into it and did not struggle to achieve it.

So, says G-d, I am going to make these mountains. Mountains that will try your skills, that will consume every iota of your energy and determination. Mountains so high that they will require a superhuman effort on your part to attain their peaks.

And when you reach the summit, I'll be there waiting for you.

# Slice of LIFE

## Who Am I?

by Moshe

It's a simple enough question, but until recently, I hadn't been able to answer it. "Who are you?" For years I was proud of who I was. I had no worries in the world. I was making great money, living a life of fun, fancy and fast cars, and thought that nothing or no one could touch me. For years I was a professional criminal.

And then my world came crashing down. I was caught. I was found guilty. And I am now in the process of serving a 12-year sentence in the Ramla prison in Israel.

The day I entered the jail, I lost my identity. To the prison system, I was merely a number. I had a name, but no one knew it as I never used it. I only knew how to be a criminal. So behind bars, who was I? What defined me?

I was a prisoner. And when you are a prisoner you have no definition. You have no status in the underworld and no status in the real world. You are nothing.

Then I got a glimpse, for the first time in my life, into my religion. I met the prison rabbi. The inmates simply called him "Jacobs." For the first time in my life, I began to learn the real answer. I am a Jew.

I am a Jew who never really cared that he was a Jew. I am a Jew who was raised, like most Israelis, with the basic traditions, but with little care or understanding as to what any of it meant. My parents were immigrants. What was passed down well was the poverty, the illiteracy, and the hopelessness that many immigrant families have experienced. And, what got passed down was the need to survive and thrive at any cost. And that was exactly what I did.

I was a great criminal. I knew how to lie, cheat, steal, and essentially get whatever I wanted whenever I wanted. I had no qualms about my actions. I felt I was just helping make the world a little more balanced. It wasn't my fault that I was raised with barely enough food to eat. I couldn't change what I was given, but I

could change what I would get. And so, from a very young age, I learned what was profitable. Drugs and weapons were profitable. What I didn't realize was that they were also deadly.

Few believe this, but I think I really wanted to get caught. Call it pop-psychology, but I think my getting caught was my cry for help. I knew something needed to change, but for the first time, I didn't know how to do it. I only knew how to do wrong. Getting caught and thrown in jail was a real blessing - and not even so much one in disguise. I really think it saved my life. But it was the prison chaplain who saved my soul. He introduced me to who I was, to who I am, and to who I want to be.

Fishel, aka, "Jacobs," made sure the kitchen was kosher, there were mezuzas on all the doors, and that other rabbis did their jobs in the cell-block yeshivas by giving classes in Torah throughout the week.

At first when I watched Jacobs make his rounds, I thought that if he knew what was good for him he'd better stay away from me. I was in a cell-block with a lot of tough guys, men who would stab you in the blink of an eye if they needed to. Upon mentioning my thoughts to a fellow inmate, I was informed that Jacobs was a black-belt in karate and if I was smart, I may want to stay away from him. I figured I would rely on the age-old idea that if you can't beat them, join them. He couldn't be that bad if the other inmates liked him so much.

The first time he entered my cell, I realized that this meeting was going to be different. Here was someone who didn't care about my criminal past, wasn't impressed with my rap record, and only wanted to focus on what's inside me. No one had ever taken the time to ask or care about what was going on in there. He did. He took one good look at me, and his eyes entered a place so deep within - a place I didn't even know existed.

He explained to me that he is a Chabad-Lubavitch chasid, and his job was to help Jews discover what it means to be Jewish. That was it. Simple as could be. Here was an intelligent man, whose main goal in life was to teach me that I am a Jew.

Here was someone who embodied the exact opposite of everything I knew. I knew people who were nothing, but pretended to be something. "Fake it 'till you make it." Here was an American, who wrote books, and was a success in other ways, yet to him it meant nothing. All that mattered was helping others. And, he told me that all Lubavitchers tried to be exactly like that.

Working with prisoners is no easy task. Let's be honest here. We are the garbage of the world. We are the people

you hate, and rightly so. There is a reason we are behind bars. We did something that landed us here. With few exceptions, we deserve to be where we are.

So what kind of person with other career choices chooses to work with us? This was the first question I asked Jacobs when he entered my cell. His answer blew me away. He told me that the same question was asked to his Rebbe, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, in regards to how he didn't tire standing for hours, handing out dollars to thousands upon thousands of people. The Rebbe answered that when you count diamonds you don't get tired.

Fishel added that even when those diamonds end up in a pile of mud, when you know there are diamonds, you'll stick your hand in and pull them out. The mud may cover the diamond, but it can't penetrate it or diminish its beauty and value. And the mud will wash off. I was a diamond. Most certainly covered in mud, if not worse, but a diamond nonetheless.

Who would have thought that being imprisoned would be the greatest thing that could have happened to me? It wasn't until I came to prison that I learned who I was. Until then I thought I knew, but I had no idea. Now, even though I am physically behind bars, I am finally free within. And though this is not a place where I want to stay, I am using every minute of my time here as an opportunity.

An opportunity for growth, repentance and change. I have begun to view my sentence as yeshiva for ex-criminals. I have a lot of time here to study Torah, and I attend a Tanya class and a class in Jewish law every day. I keep Shabbat, eat kosher food, and do mitzvot whenever I can. Funny enough, because I was so well known on the streets, other inmates are willing to attend the classes and learn because of me. Go figure.

I wait for the day of my release. I await the day when I can give back to society and try and make up for the damage I did. I yearn for the day when I can marry a wonderful woman and bring beautiful children into this world. And when I do leave these prison walls, I will know what to answer when asked who I am. I am Moshe. I am a diamond. I am a Jew.

*Rabbi Fishel Jacobs was raised in Vermont. He is an eighth-degree karate master instructor and title-holder. He worked as an officer for Israeli Prison Service. He has published numerous non-fiction books.*

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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## Art and Depression

.. I was extremely happy to read that you are working with your artistic talents, are preparing to hold an exhibition, and that you have already received favorable reviews in the press. Surely you will progress in the utilization of the talent that G-d has granted you toward the strengthening of Yiddishkeit and G-d-fearing behavior.

As to the main point of your letter, in which you complain about your circumstances, your depression, your despair, etc., and express the wish that we should meet, so that we could discuss the matter face to face.

For two good friends to get together is always a positive thing and a spiritual pleasure for them both. But to put off [the resolution of your problem] until then, and in the meantime to remain in a state of despair, G-d forbid--who can allow himself such a thing?

You do not write of the causes which bring you to this state of mind, so I cannot go into their details to show you how these "causes" are but imaginary and stem from the evil inclination--that is, that even if there is some substance to them, the fact that they lead to despair and depression is folly...

I must therefore confine myself to a general comment with which I hope to illuminate your particular situation. My comment is based on the saying by the Baal Shem Tov--which my father-in-law, the Rebbe, would often repeat--that a person can derive a lesson in the service of G-d from everything he sees or hears about.

As you are surely aware, the primary talent of an artist is his ability to step away from the externalities of the thing and, disregarding its outer form, gaze into its innerness and perceive its essence, and to be able to convey this in his painting. Thus the object is revealed as it has never before been seen, since its inner content was obscured by secondary things. The artist exposes the essence of the thing he portrays, causing the one who looks at the painting to perceive it in another, truer light, and to realize that his prior perception was deficient.

And this is one of the foundations of man's service of his Creator.

As we know from the Torah--and particularly from the teaching of Chassidism--the entirety of creation stems from the word of G-d, and the word of G-d is what brings it into existence and sustains it in every moment of time. It is only that the divine power of tzimtzum (constriction) holds the divine life-force in a state of concealment and obscurity, and we perceive only its outer form (i.e., the physical reality).

Our mission in life--based on the simple faith that "there is none else beside Him" --is that we should approach everything in life from this perspective. That we should each strive to reveal, as much as possible, the divine essence in everything, and minimize, to the extent that we are able, its concealment by the externalities of creation...

So one must take great care that secondary and external matters should not obscure the essentials of life and its ultimate purpose.

A person might experience difficulties, trials and challenges in separating the good from the bad. But these are but the means by which to achieve the purpose of life--that his soul should elevate itself through its positive deeds in this world... So one must never allow the difficulties in overcoming one's trials, or even the fact that one might occasionally fail and stumble, to overwhelm the joy that one must feel as a child of G-d...

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

### "Kenehora" - Kenahora...Pu-Pu-Pu!

**Question:** Why did Bubby, grandma, always say that? And does it really have to do with the evil eye? Is this evil eye a cousin of walking under ladders with black cats on the Friday the thirteenth?

**Answer:** The answers, in order, are: Because she loved you. Yes, but with an explanation. No.

Kenahora, although everyone thinks is a Yiddish word is actually three words slurred together in Yinglish - the vibrant language of Native Americans of the Lower East Side: kein, the Yiddish word for no or negating, ayin Hebrew for eye, and hara, Hebrew for Evil.

Now think back to when she used it: "Such a sheine punim, kenahora." "You've grown, kenahora." "He's making money hand over fist, kenahora." (you should only be so lucky)

I have a friend in, well, I'm not saying where they're from, because I want to protect myself from what will happen if I don't protect their anonymity. They make in the seven-digits a year (kenahora). They drive a five-year-old station wagon. He once told me why she insisted on it. Their neighbors don't have as much, and their neighbors' neighbors have even less (and they're still not slumming, mind you). If she gets a new car then her neighbor will be compelled to keep up -- and her neighbor likewise. Somewhere down the line someone is going to be hurting from racing too hard. She doesn't want that frustration to be caused by her. And not for purely altruistic reasons.

G-d gives us things. G-d does not give others these same things. This can and does cause jealousy, an unvoiced "Why does she deserve it?" and somewhere on High that energy does not dissipate. It gravitates, and brings into question "Maybe she doesn't deserve it after all?"

Those-who-have-don't-show doesn't have to be grounded in smugness. We don't want that our good fortune should accentuate what others are missing. Which is why boasting is unJewish. And why when something said could be seen as boasting, it is hurriedly whispered and sandwiched between kenahoras and pu-pu-pu's.

The pu-pu-pu, incidentally, is spitting noises. Spitting as if in disgust. It's an appropriate Yiddishism: when you see an exceptionally beautiful child you say "Miyuskeit! Pu!" ("Disgusting!")

Asking Jewish grandmothers how many grandchildren they have can risk a faux pas. While some won't hesitate to blurt out a number, others will fidget and mumble. Putting a number on a blessing is considered bad taste.

You might also notice when they are counting a Minyan they won't count one-two-three but do something more convoluted.

## A WORD

*from the Director*

*This Shabbat we bless the new month of Sivan. The most outstanding date in Sivan is the holiday of Shavuot, the festival on which we celebrate receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.*

*It is interesting to note that the festival of Shavuot does not have an independent date of its own, as do all other Jewish holidays; no month or day is specified in the Torah as the time for its celebration. It is only specified that Shavuot is the "Fiftieth Day" of the counting of the Omer - the counting which we begin on the second day of Passover, on the day after the liberation from Egyptian bondage.*

*In this way the Torah emphasizes that Shavuot is the goal of Passover: that the Season of the Giving of Our Torah is the culmination of the Season of Our Freedom. This teaches us that the true and complete freedom, both for the individual as well as for the community, and both materially and spiritually, can be attained only through Torah.*

*We live in a time and in a country where, notwithstanding external "freedom," in general we are still largely "enslaved" and at a loss how to free ourselves from the shackles of spiritual and mental confusion.*

*The only key to the bars and shackles of our enslavement is a Torah education. For our children - and every Jewish child is "our" child - this means an uncompromising Jewish education. For ourselves this means attending Torah classes, studying and reading Jewish texts privately, and teaching and inspiring others.*

*May we all merit to learn this year not only the Torah that was given and revealed to us over 3,300 years ago at Mount Sinai, but the "new Torah" that will be taught by our righteous Moshiach in the Messianic Era.*

*J. I. Gutnick*

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Once upon a time, there lived in a village a fine Jewish family with five lively children. They could have been very happy, but unfortunately, they were very poor, and the day finally came when they lacked even a few crusts of bread in the house.

In desperation, the wife came to her husband and said, "Please, go into the city and try to find someone who will lend you some money to buy bread for the children."

"You know I have no relative or friend who can help me. Do you want me to go and beg on the street? Only G-d can help us."

The wife did not reply, but when the hungry children began to cry for food, she again approached her husband and said, "Please go to the city. There perhaps you will find some way of earning money, after all, G-d can always find some way to make a miracle."

So, the husband went to the city, and when he arrived there he uttered a prayer, "Master of the Universe, You provide for all the creatures of the earth, have You nothing for my poor hungry children? Please help me in my hour of need."

His tears must have broken through the Heavens, for a moment later a stranger approached him, and in a calm voice asked, "What is wrong? Why do you weep so?"

The man unburdened his heavy heart to the kind stranger. "Don't despair. I can help you. Take me to the marketplace and sell me as a slave. With the money you get you will be able to purchase whatever you need."

The man was astonished at these words. "What are you suggesting?! How could I possibly accept such a sacrifice from you? Besides, who would believe that such a pauper as I would have such a fine slave?"

"Don't worry. We will exchange clothing. As for my sacrifice, don't worry about that either. I am a master builder, and I won't remain a slave for long. The only thing I ask is that you sell me only to the person I will point out to you and that you give me one gold coin of the coins you will receive for my sale."

So, they proceeded to the marketplace, the stranger dressed in the pauper's clothing. When a rich-looking coach drove up, the "slave" winked in his "master's" direction, indicating that this was the appropriate buyer. The sale was transacted, and the man offered his former "slave" the gold coin. He took it, but then returned it, saying, "Keep this coin for good luck, and G-d bless you and your family with health, wealth, and much joy from you dear children."

The husband returned home to a joyous welcome, laden with all sorts of food and clothing that the family had all but forgotten existed.

Meanwhile, the slave was brought to the royal palace as a special gift for the king. When the king inquired what particular job he was best at, he replied, "I am a master builder."

The king was overjoyed at his reply, for at that time, the king was involved in planning a magnificent new palace, but an architect had not yet been engaged. The slave was given the job of constructing the new edifice. The royal storehouses of gold and silver were made available to the slave as well as the permission to hire as many workers as necessary to complete the job.

"If you complete the construction to my satisfaction within six

months, I will reward you handsomely, as well as giving you your freedom," promised the king.

That very evening, the slave, who was Elijah the Prophet, prayed to G-d that His angels descend and build the palace for the king. His prayer was answered, and that same night the palace stood in all its magnificence and glory.

When the king arose and beheld this miracle, he couldn't believe his eyes. He rushed out to inspect every corner of his new palace, stroll through its wondrous gardens, and marvel at the elegantly furnished suites. Returning to his old residence, the king immediately sent for his slave, but there was no trace of him.

The Jew had prospered through the sale of his "slave," but the thought of what had become of his benefactor haunted him every day. He was filled with guilt for having allowed the kind man to sacrifice himself for him.

Then, one day, as he walked through the market, he saw the man coming towards him. He rushed up to him and embraced him warmly. "How have you been, my dear friend? I was so worried about you all this time!"

The man smiled, "I told you I wouldn't be a slave for long," and he recounted how he had been given to the king and had built a new palace for him and had become a free man once more.

Then Elijah blessed the man again and reminded him to always be kind to the poor, love his fellow man, and walk humbly before G-d. "If you do this and instruct your children in this way, your wealth will not leave you or your children for many generations." And just as the man was about to thank him, he seemed to melt into the surrounding crowd and disappear.

## PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

*On the mountain of Sinai, G-d communicates to Moses the laws of the Sabbatical year: every seventh year, all work on the land should cease, and its produce becomes free for the taking for all, man and beast.*

*Seven Sabbatical cycles are followed by a fiftieth year—the Jubilee year, on which work on the land ceases, all indentured servants are set free, and all ancestral estates in the Holy Land that have been sold revert to their original owners.*

*Behar also contains additional laws governing the sale of lands, and the prohibitions against fraud and usury.*

*G-d promises that if the people of Israel will keep His commandments, they will enjoy material prosperity and dwell secure in their homeland. But He also delivers a harsh "rebuke," warning of the exile, persecution and other evils that will befall them if they abandon their covenant with Him.*

*Nevertheless, "Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; nor will I ever abhor them, to destroy them and to break My covenant with them; for I am the L-rd their G-d."*

*The Parshah concludes with the rules on how to calculate the values of different types of pledges made to G-d, and the mitzvah of tithing produce and livestock.*

## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

### PARSHAS BEHAR - BECHUKOSAI SHABBOS MEVORCHIM SHABBOS CHAZAK • 23 IYAR • 19 MAY

<b>FRIDAY NIGHT:</b>	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:58 PM
	MINCHA:	5:05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:35 PM
<b>SHABBOS DAY:</b>	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:44 AM
	TEHILLIM:	8:00 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	THE MOLAD FOR SIVAN IS ON THURSDAY 8.32 (12 chalakim) PM	
	FARBRENGEN FOLLOWING DAVENING	
	MINCHA:	4:55 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5:57 PM
<b>WEEKDAYS:</b>	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	MAARIV:	5:50 PM

## CANDLE LIGHTING

	Shabbos 19 - 20 May	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	4:58	5:57
Adelaide	5:00	5:58
Brisbane	4:47	5:42
Darwin	6:11	7:02
Gold Coast	4:45	5:39
Perth	5:07	6:04
Sydney	4:42	5:39
Canberra	4:47	5:45
Launceston	4:41	5:42
Auckland	5:01	6:00
Wellington	4:51	5:52
Hobart	4:36	5:39
Byron Bay	4:43	5:38

