

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This Shabbat we begin reading from the Book of Numbers, whose Hebrew name, Bamidbar, means "in the desert." There are many places in the world that, from a Jewish perspective, are "deserts." Lacking even the most basic necessities of a Jewish community, the surrounding atmosphere is not one of Torah and sanctity. From a physical standpoint it might be a luxurious garden spot, but in the spiritual sense it is a "desolate wasteland."

A Jew finding himself in such a location might think that it is impossible to lead an authentic Jewish life under these conditions. He might even begin to compromise his Judaism, at first relinquishing those elements he doesn't consider "essential," yet gradually giving up things that really are. "Here it is different," he may say to himself. "A Jew cannot be expected to behave the same as if he lived in a traditional, Jewish neighborhood."

However, when we consider this week's Torah portion, the fallacy of such thinking becomes apparent. The Torah relates how the task of carrying the numerous components and vessels of the Sanctuary was divided among the Levite families. It describes how the journeys were conducted and how the Sanctuary was erected in every location the Jewish people encamped. Indeed, it is quite astounding when we remember that all this occurred in a barren wilderness, devoid of human habitation.

How was this possible in a place without life, let alone any trace of holiness or Judaism? And yet, the very first thing the Jews did upon arriving in an encampment was to erect the Sanctuary, immediately transforming it into a holy place where they could serve G-d!

The Torah thus teaches that G-d has not limited the power of holiness to operate only under certain specific conditions. Wherever a Jew goes, be it a "desolate wasteland" in the physical or spiritual sense, he has the ability to establish a "sanctuary" to G-d, to sanctify that place and spread the light of Torah and mitzvot (commandments).

All that is necessary is to allow the inner light of the G-dly soul to illuminate, to light up the correct path to follow. The Jew will then see how all obstacles and difficulties will disappear, until he too will reach the "Holy Land."

This concept, which applies to all Jews, is especially relevant to Jewish women. In the same way that the Jewish women were the first to contribute to the physical Sanctuary, so too do they play a unique role in erecting a spiritual sanctuary to G-d. As the "akeret habayit," the core and mainstay of the home, the Jewish woman has the unique ability to establish a Jewish tone in the home, and the strength to protect her family from negative influences.

Census Takers

By Elisha Greenbaum

Where I live, it happens once every five years. They come knocking on your door asking for your completed census form. Invariably you haven't finished or you've lost or poured coffee on your first copy, so they've got to come back all over again.

Who are these people and what do they do the other 59 months?

An army of nomads on short-term contracts tramp the streets of Australia delivering census forms and then collecting them a few days later. Tens of thousands of recent retirees and jobless people receive their brief burst of gainful employment and then slink away to await their next fleeting moment in the sun. It's fair to say that as occupations go, census collecting doesn't rate highly as a resume-builder, nor is the pay scale particularly generous.

Contrast the attitude of the Bureau of Statistics to G-d's approach to counting the Jewish people. To record the exact number of souls belonging to each family and tribe, He deputized Moses and Aaron, the best and the brightest of our nation, to go around collating information and recording data.

Moses and Aaron?! Surely they had more productive things to do with their time. They could have been teaching Torah to the masses or running religious services in the Temple, why waste their precious time and efforts filling a job that could have been done by any flunky? I can't imagine modern-day politicians door-knocking my neighborhood in person (though they do insist on phoning me just prior to the election to play pre-recorded political announcements).

Every Jew is infinitely precious. A spark of G-dliness shines within us, and it is a privilege and pleasure to be chosen to minister to G-d's nation. Moses and Aaron were uniquely qualified to appreciate the individual worth of every Jew, and to present this information to G-d.

The opportunity to meet others on their own turf, to become involved in their lives and learn about their pains and pleasures, is a unique gift. We can all become census takers for G-d, getting out among the people, finding out about their lives, helping them in times of sorrow and rejoicing in their simchas. There is nothing embarrassing about compassion, nor is it degrading to offer to help.

Don't wait at home till they come to you, but get out there with a clipboard to discover the wants and desires of your neighbors. If G-d cares enough to ask, and Moses and Aaron in their time bothered to find out, surely we can opt in on that occupation and find out where the Jews are living, and what we can do to make them happy.

Slice of LIFE

Jerusalem Journey

by Tamar Wisemon

The night is calm, the weather warm despite the late hour. A faint breeze filters through the sheltered courtyard, brushing our hands and faces, as if reminding us, "Now is not the time to sleep, but time to learn." White bulbous lamps break the darkness, their light reflecting off the open books on our laps, etching ripples in the Jerusalem-stone wall that props us up. Melodious crickets accompany the low murmur of eighty young women in forty pairs studying a single text.

Our teachers coax sleepy minds to remain open with startling insights, tempting us with inspiring Torah tidbits and treasures.

The night preceding the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Children of Israel slept. G-d Himself had to wake them up the next morning. To make amends for this lackadaisical insensitivity to the awesome gift we were about to receive, we stay awake on Shavuot night, studying Torah until dawn.

In Jewish communities throughout the world, men (and increasingly, women) gather after the evening meal for lectures by noted speakers, or study privately at home or in shul. The morning prayers are recited at daybreak, after which the weary participants return home to eat a slice of festive cheesecake and fall into bed.

But Shavuot in Jerusalem is special. When we regained the Western Wall a few days before Shavuot in the '67 Six-Day War, a tradition developed.

In the stillness of the night, Jews from all around Jerusalem walk to commemorate the festival at our holiest site. It is now four in the morning, and the star-speckled dark blue sky has barely begun to pale. The wind picks up, as it does in the transition from night to morning. I shiver slightly and button my sweater, partly from the chill and partly preparing for the journey ahead. It is still dark as we trickle forth through Bayit Vegan's silent streets. Making our way down a hill, we catch sight of others headed in the same direction, and flow into the same rhythm.

High spirited bubbling teenagers emerge from schools and youth centers, forming whirling eddies as they converge in groups and then drift apart. From apartments doorways appear couples pushing babies in strollers. We spy an occasional elder, moving staunchly forward with a cane. No longer just eighty students, we are now part of a people stream making its way through the night.

At each junction our numbers swell. The traffic lights switch dumbly between green and red, but with no cars on the road, we move on ahead. The whirring of wheels is supplanted by the soft steps of feet. Parked vehicles and locked stores have dark and vacant windows, but the street is alive. At one intersection, near Jerusalem's Great Synagogue and the Sheraton Plaza Hotel, I find myself poised on the edge of a wide road that marks the descent to the Old City. A few decades ago, I would have had to climb the ugly, square tower block beside me to catch a glimpse of the Kotel (Western Wall), then under Jordanian control. But looking down the hill today, wave upon wave of bobbing heads cascading into the valley and up again towards the walls of Jerusalem. The full width of the road is filled with walkers, yet everyone seems to have enough space to move at his or her own pace within the constant motion.

Jaffa Gate rises from the ancient soil, allowing us to pass through. Just within the walls stands

the Tower of David, a timely reminder that Shavuot is also King David's yartzeit (although the Citadel itself dates from a later period). The crowd surges down and around the Arab shuk's shuttered alleys and shallow steps, coming to a halt among a crush of people waiting to pass through a sentry post. I am channeled through a tunnel-like passageway like a leaf floating in a current, my individuality submerged in the flood of humanity around me, as in a whirlpool.

Suddenly we burst out into the floodlit plaza. The Kotel towers above, a tangible structure anchoring this surreal heavenly scene.

The Kotel plaza breathes and reverberates with the motions of hundreds of people dressed in their finery, men and women watching with weary smiles as dawn breaks over their heads. The night has given way to a pink marbled horizon streaked with gold, and the Kotel is bathed in the light of a new day. Giddy from lack of sleep, I open my prayerbook with a feeling of fulfillment.

My Shavuot morning journey is unlike any other visit to the Kotel. There are no guided tours of foreigners, clicking cameras and posing for group shots. No buses and taxis jostling at the entrance. Just silent waves of praying figures, each of whom has walked for up to two hours to be here. Together we stand before the Kotel, as our forefathers stood centuries before, awaiting the day when the Temple will be rebuilt and the sea of people who walk through the night to reach her will become an ocean.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

A Shavuot Message

..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 neighbors and the respect for their property even if it be an ox or an ass, 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, that turned out to be the most depraved nation of the world, making an ideal of murder and robbery, etc. Anyone who knows how insignificant was the minority of Germans who opposed the Hitler regime, 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

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

Eight

Question: What is the spiritual significance of the number eight?

Answer: In kabbalistic teachings, the number seven symbolizes perfection – perfection that is achievable via natural means – while eight symbolizes that which is beyond nature and its (inherently limited) perfection.

Some examples:

a) G-d created the world and its natural order in seven days.

b) Between the holidays of Passover and Shavuot we count seven weeks. During these weeks we work on perfecting our seven emotions (love, fear, compassion, ambition, humility, bonding and receptiveness)—one emotion per week. At the conclusion of these seven weeks we have sufficiently perfected ourselves to be worthy of receiving the Torah on Shavuot. A completed person has control over all seven emotions.

c) The Holy Temple's menorah, which served to illuminate the natural world with the holy glow of spirituality, had seven branches.

d) There are seven colors of the rainbow and seven musical notes. When something has seven parts, it symbolizes that it has reached its state of completion: the seven notes of the diatonic scale make one complete octave, etc.

Eight, on the other hand, is symbolic of an entity that is one step above the natural order, higher than nature and its limitations. That's why Chanukah is eight days long—the greatly outnumbered Maccabees' resolve to battle the Greeks wasn't logical or natural. They drew on reservoirs of faith and courage that are not part of normative human nature. They therefore merited a miracle higher than nature – a miracle that lasted eight days – and to commemorate this, we light on Chanukah an eight-branched menorah. In a similar vein, we circumcise our children when they are eight-day old babies, because the brit milah symbolizes our nation's supernatural and logic-defying covenant with G-d.

A WORD

from the Director

There is a Midrash which tells of how the Jewish people designated their children as the guarantors of the Torah. It is perhaps in this vein that the Rebbe stresses each year that all Jewish children should be present in the synagogue on Shavuot to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments.

Shavuot this year will take place on the evening of May 30 through the evening of April 1. The Ten Commandments will be read on the first day of Shavuot in synagogues around the world on Wednesday, May 31.

Why do we need to bring the children? So that they can become familiar with the "terms" of the guarantee. The children's presence in shul actually confirms our guarantee.

In Hebrew, the word for guarantor is "orev." Orev can also mean pleasant or sweet. What sweeter guarantors can we have than our children, who can help influence our own deeds to be pleasing?

One of many beautiful concepts in Judaism is that the Jewish soul can comprehend long before the mind does. With this in mind, we see how imperative it is to bring even babies to shul; though their minds might not yet comprehend where they are, their souls certainly do.

This Shavuot, on Wednesday, May 31, let us all bring our guarantors to shul to hear the reading of the Torah.

A very happy Shavuot.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

The Haftorah on the second day of Shavuot is from Habakuk. The following story is about the prophet Habakuk.

The prophet Habakuk lived in the Land of Israel. One evening when he and his fellow-workers had finished their work in the fields and were eating their supper, a spirit of prophecy came upon Habakuk. He saw an angel before him who told him that G-d desired that Habakuk bring a portion of his meal to the Prophet Daniel, who was in a lions' den in Babylon.

The angel took him and flew off with him, landing him a few moments later right in the very midst of the lions' den. There sat Daniel with the lions sprawling at his feet, like loyal watchdogs guarding a beloved master!

The two prophets settled down to their evening meal, happy in their chance of having a scholarly discussion. The lions did not disturb them despite their own hunger, but instead walked about the den circling Daniel and Habakuk as they ate, talked and blessed G-d for his mercies and miracles. Daniel told Habakuk how he came to be in the lions' den:

"When King Darius of Media had appointed me as his personal counselor," began Daniel, "all his courtiers became inflamed with jealousy. It did not interest them that I had already acted as counsellor to the previous Babylonian king, and that my appointment, therefore, was not a matter of favoritism, but because of my suitability. All they could feel was resentment that I was chosen and not they. So, they decided to get rid of me.

"But try as they would, they could find no crime to charge me with, and so they conspired to convince the king to enact some new law which would make me suspect.

"King Darius had until then always shown the greatest respect to our Jewish faith, and this, too, annoyed his courtiers very much. The king, who himself told me all this later, said he had not suspected a thing when his courtiers came to him with an air of extreme loyalty and asked him to give his seal to an important new law. The new edict read: 'Every citizen of the land should publicly acknowledge the king as the highest authority, and that only to him must every kind of request be made or prayer be said.'"

"I can see their plot against you now," said Habakuk. "Yes," continued Daniel, "after the king had passed this last law his courtiers watched every move I made! Naturally I was not going to allow any man made law to interfere with my prayers three times a day. These courtiers pounced upon me one day and dragged me before the king, accusing me of praying to someone other than to the king. They immediately demanded the maximum penalty for this offense - that I be thrown alive into the lions' den. This harsh punishment would serve as an example to anyone who would dare to break the new law in the future.

"King Darius, who was really not evil, but had been misled and drawn into this new law without giving it proper thought and consideration, was horrified when he saw the results of his thoughtlessness. He regarded me as a friend and honored advisor, and now he was being expected to have me mercilessly thrown to hungry lions. But, having put his royal seal to the decree, he had no choice but to carry out the law.

"Yet, I did not lose hope," concluded Daniel, his eyes shining with great faith in G-d. "I prayed to G-d that he show these heathens that He and He alone was, is, and ever will be the One and Only Master of the Universe which He created and controls. I prayed that He spare my life, and not allow the hungry lions to touch me, so that all people would see the miracle and acknowledge G-d's greatness above all mankind.

"Imagine, therefore, the wonder of my enemies when I was thrown

into this deep pit from which there is no escape, and instead of the famished beasts pouncing upon me and tearing me to pieces, the lions came gently fawning upon me and kneeling down before me in submission. Then they settled around me in a circle as if to protect me. This wondrous miracle left no possible doubt but that G-d chose to save me from hurt, that He is the Master, and that only what He wills takes place!"

When Daniel finished his story, he and Habakuk bade each other farewell, and the angel took Habakuk and transported him back to his home in the Land of Israel, in the same manner as he had carried him to Daniel.

Later, Habakuk heard, as did the whole world, that King Darius had Daniel removed from the den. At the same time, the King ordered that Daniel's enemies be thrown into the lions' den instead. This time, however, the lions behaved differently. As soon as the courtiers came hurtling down into the lions' den, the beasts pounced upon them and tore them apart, giving a fitting end to such cruel tyrants who wanted to give this horrible punishment to the innocent, G-d-fearing and law-abiding Daniel.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

In the Sinai Desert, G-d says to conduct a census of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses counts 603,550 men of draftable age (20 to 60 years); the tribe of Levi, numbering 22,300 males age one month and older, is counted separately. The Levites are to serve in the Sanctuary, replacing the firstborn, whose number they approximated, who were disqualified when they participated in the worshipping of the Golden Calf. The 273 firstborn who lacked a Levite to replace them had to pay a five-shekel "ransom" to redeem themselves.

When the people broke camp, the three Levite clans dismantled and transported the Sanctuary, and reassembled it at the center of the next encampment. They then erected their own tents around it: the Kohathites, who carried the Sanctuary's vessels (the Ark, menorah, etc.) in their specially designed coverings on their shoulders, camped to its south; the Gershonites, in charge of its tapestries and roof coverings, to its west; and the families of Merari, who transported its wall panels and pillars, to its north. Before the Sanctuary's entranceway, to its east, were the tents of Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons.

Beyond the Levite circle, the twelve tribes camped in four groups of three tribes each. To the east were Judah (pop. 74,600), Issachar (54,400) and Zebulun (57,400); to the south, Reuben (46,500), Simeon (59,300) and Gad (45,650); to the west, Ephraim (40,500), Manasseh (32,200) and Benjamin (35,400); and to the north, Dan (62,700), Asher (41,500) and Naphtali (53,400). This formation was kept also while traveling. Each tribe had its own nassi (prince or leader), and its own flag with its tribal color and emblem.

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS BAMIDBAR • 1 SIVAN • 26 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4.54 PM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.30 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.47 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	4.50 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5.54 PM
TUESDAY EREV SHAVUOS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4.52 PM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	MAARIV:	5.55 PM
WEDNESDAY 1ST DAY SHAVUOS:	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	ASERES HADIBROS READING:	11.30 AM
	ICE CREAM KIDS PARTY	
	ADDITIONAL LEINING:	1.00 PM
	MINCHA:	4.55 PM
	MAARIV:	5.55 PM
	CANDLE LIGHTING:	after 5.55 PM
TURSDAY 2ND DAY SHAVUOS:	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	YIZKOR:	11.20 AM
	MINCHA:	4.50 PM
	YOM TOV ENDS/MAARIV:	5.52 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	MAARIV:	5.45 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING

	Shabbos May		Shavuos May - June		
	26th	27th	30th	31st	1st
	Begins	Ends	Begins	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	4:54	5:54	4:52	5:52*	5:52
Adelaide	4:56	5:55	4:55	5:53*	5:53
Brisbane	4:45	5:39	4:44	5:39*	5:39
Darwin	6:10	7:01	6:10	7:01*	7:01
Gold Coast	4:42	5:37	4:41	5:36*	5:35
Perth	5:04	6:01	5:03	6:00*	6:00
Sydney	4:38	5:36	4:37	5:35*	5:35
Canberra	4:43	5:42	4:42	5:41*	5:40
Launceston	4:36	5:38	4:33	5:36*	5:36
Auckland	4:57	5:56	4:55	5:55*	5:55
Wellington	4:45	5:48	4:43	5:46*	5:46
Hobart	4:31	5:34	4:28	5:32*	5:32
Byron Bay	4:40	5:35	4:39	5:34*	5:34

*Light after the prescribed time, from a pre-existing flame