

LAMPLIGHTER

13 Tamuz
Parshas
Balak
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Sighting Moshiach

by Tzvi Freeman

Question: Is it true that the Moshiach shall suddenly appear on a main street in Jerusalem, a poor old man with a wild but angelic look, spewing forth wisdom and declaring the time of redemption has arrived? If so, why will they not lock him up?

Is it true that he shall be announced on all the media worldwide at 6 pm, along with offers for free El Al tickets? If so, who will finance this?

Is there truth to that which they say, that in those enlightened days there will be only study of Torah and no more reckless fun? Is it true that the entire order of nature will change suddenly as the Anointed One appears?

Response: Yes, definitely a case for pity. No (aside from the media announcements)--it's not anything like what you describe.

The arrival of Moshiach and the accompanying turnabout in the World Order, is a very pragmatic ideal. In fact, much of it has happened already.

Of course, as Maimonides puts it, nobody really knows exactly what's going to happen--The Almighty-Master-Of-All-Plans-To-Whom-All-Is-Revealed is really concerned about the suspense factor here. But allow me to let you in on a few of the key details, as I humbly understand them:

1. The first thing Moshiach does is do away with bad marketing. That's the true villain that has held us back all these years. Ask any consumer electronics or computer engineer. We could all own household robots to do our work. We could be consuming less than 10% of the natural resources we consume now--if it weren't for those nefarious busy bodies who market quantity rather than quality. Given the true needs of most people and the productivity possible with modern technology, we should all be working an average of 2.5 hours a week. What's responsible for the other 60+ hours? Bad Marketing.

Moshiach's marketing people will get people's minds back on the right track. Thinking about real quality of life. About their relationship with the earth and with their bodies and their souls and the people around them. Once that's done, just about everything else we need to create paradise is here already.

2. The people will come up with a real wise individual and make him their mentor and leader--not the other way around like in the fairy tales. As you put it yourselves: how else can he avoid being locked up? This is stated clearly in numerous sources, for

example, "They will search out David their king...", "They will make for themselves a king and rise out of the land". It just seems pretty obvious that it's the people who make the leader -- a self-declared leader is little more than just another nut-case.

Even the Kabbalists agree that Moshiach isn't planning on a sudden appearance. Rather, the people will slowly wake up to the fact that he's already here. Just not in places people generally look.

3. The arrival of Moshiach is not much of a greater miracle than the sudden fall of the communist dictatorship. True, there will be a couple of big Signs-and-Wonders-scenarios--some that'll make the Ten Plagues and the Crossing of the Red Sea look like kid's play. Like, how about the splitting of the Euphrates, for one? But, who says glitz makes a miracle? Personally, I think Moses would have been pretty impressed by the kind of miracles that happened in Eastern Europe and on the Internet over the last few years.

Fact is, nature itself is supernatural. Just that we're too busy to notice. After a bit of time studying with Moshiach, we'll be able to see clearly without the wool pulled over our eyes.

4. You appear concerned that the World to Come may be a rather boring affair. Actually, Moshiach is when the real fun starts. There will still be the same sports, entertainment, and good, clean shopping sprees. But kicking a ball or buying clothes will be a form of meditation on the Oneness of Creation. Come to think of it, so will all human activities.

5. Hi-tech is only here now as a preparation for the technological applications of the times of Moshiach. M.I.T., IBM, Xerox-Parc--you guys ain't seen nothin' yet! When finally we become masters over our own tools--rather than the other way around--we shall start to utilize them to discover the G-dliness within Creation and within ourselves.

Wake up! There has never been a time in the history of the Jewish people like this before! In 2000 years of Exile, the last few years have been the only time that Jews in every part of the globe are free to follow the Judaism of their ancestors. Sure, there are still those who cannot leave their place of exile, but compare this to the horrible oppression of past times! As our sages put it, "There is no difference between our world now and the times of Moshiach, except for the oppression by the nations." The greatest oppression remaining is that of the materialistic (un)consciousness of the modern world.

So who, pray tell, is stopping us?



CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES FOR SHABBOS 7 - 8 JULY 14 TAMMUZ



City	In	Out	City	In	Out	City	In	Out	City	In	Out
Melbourne	4:57	5:58	Brisbane	4:49	5:54	Gold Coast	4:46	5:43	Sydney	4:42	5:41
Adelaide	5:00	5:59	Darwin	6:16	7:08	Perth	5:08	6:06	Canberra	4:47	5:47
Byron bay	4:44	5:41	Auckland	5:00	6:01	Wellington	4:47	5:51	Hobart	4:32	5:38

Slice of LIFE

When There is Nowhere to Turn

by Mirish Kiszner

It was the perfect apartment and the purchase was almost completed when, fueled by the deteriorating security situation, followed by the IDF incursion into Beit Jala, the shekel dropped steeply against the dollar. Aleksander Guravich – who had spent the better part of his week signing reams of paper at the bank, the mortgage broker, and a number of free loan societies – was suddenly obliged to come up with an additional forty thousand NIS. He didn't know where to turn.

Weaving his way through the narrow streets of Geulah on his way to the synagogue, he hardly glanced at the plastered notices glaring from the stone walls, proclaiming the names of the latest terrorism victims. His mind was elsewhere as he tossed a few coins into an outstretched palm. Numbers and figures spiraled and twisted around in his mind.

As he passed Stefansky's supermarket, a wave of wistfulness overcame him. The image of Simon rose in his mind, as he started reminiscing about his first years in the Holy Land, and how far he had come to date.

Upon his arrival to Israel from the Soviet Union, the employment agency had assigned him to care for Simon Stefansky. Aleksander had been surprised to learn that the elderly man – bent, frail and trembling; his stern old face like a withered pear – owned a veritable financial empire. That this wiry man with steel grey hair and suffering from dementia had once been a successful business tycoon was hard to imagine.

Simon's children, "You want to kill me. You're here to finish me off." immersed in the business, were relieved when the care of their father went over to Aleksander. Simon, however, wasn't shy to express his own estimation of the caretaker. "You want to kill me," he remarked rather frequently. "You're here to finish me off."

There were days, rare occasions, when Simon enjoyed some lucid moments, times when the two of them would sit together on a park bench and make small talk with little difficulty. Mostly though, Simon sat quietly, as though deep in thought, sometimes muttering softly, his eyes roving along the walls and ceilings. Aleksander cooked for him, managed his household affairs and took care of all his need with warmth and devotion.

As Aleksander turned left into a narrow side street, the synagogue with the domed rooftop and arched entranceway came into

view. Its white stones were bathed in the golden light of the afternoon sun. Once, at precisely such a time of day, when the same golden shafts of sunlight poured into the open windows of Simon's kitchen, Aleksander found the old man standing beside the cutlery drawer, pointing a kitchen knife at him.

"You want to kill me, that's why you're here," said the erstwhile business man.

"I'm here to care for you," Aleksander said, keeping his voice low. "Do you want me to leave?"

The old man said nothing.

"All right, then. I'll leave."

Simon dropped the knife, it fell with a clang. Then he wept.

"Who are you?" he asked after he'd calmed down.

"I'm Aleksander, your caretaker. Try to keep that in your memory."

"Don't make me believe that lie," he said.

Aleksander gently led Simon to the couch, fed him his dinner and tenderly put him to sleep.

Aleksander sighed. Alzheimers, terrorists, financial crisis, it all merged together in his mind somehow. "You ought to be thankful for all the good in your life," he chastised himself as he skipped up the stairs, taking them two at a time. "You have a family, you have health, you have an income, be grateful."

In those days, on a caretaker's salary, his income wouldn't have sufficed for the purchase of a home. His current profession as a chiropractor – though by no means a wealth amassing machine – improved his lifestyle, he had to admit. But his real wealth had come not from aligning vertebrae.

Good fortune had shined on him. Only a short while ago, this prayer book had felt heavy in his hands. When he'd discovered his Jewish roots. The return to his heritage had connected him to G-d, to His Torah. In its holy tomes, Aleksander had unearthed luminous jewels the likes of which he hadn't encountered while traipsing through the quarries of Tibet-Indian and Chinese philosophy. For this newfound oasis, where truth and joy actually existed, he was profoundly thankful.

Aleksander fingered his prayer book. Only a short while ago – two or three years back – this prayer book had felt heavy in his hands. In fact the first time he'd entered this synagogue altogether was an experience that had engraved itself into his mind.

Standing behind Simon's wheelchair with his long dark hair caressing his shoulders, and the vibrant colors of his t-shirt screaming out from among the black-hatted, white-shirted congregants. He felt awkward and obtrusive and he wanted only to merge into the walls of the synagogue, to remain unnoticed.

And then a young man with laughing eyes with tefillin wrapped around his arm approached him.

"Why don't you come pray?"

The question was thrown at him with the nonchalance of a friend who wonders at his friend's hesitation before crossing the threshold of his home. The invitation pleased him; it was a gesture that made him feel welcome. Yet there was no denying the barricade that stood between him and the prayers.

"I don't know how..." he answered simply.

The lines on the man's forehead etched a little deeper. "So?" he said. His dancing, laughing eyes stood still for a moment, in

thought. Then the corners of his mouth smiled again and he patted Aleksander on the back. "We'll teach you," he said.

And here he was, a few short years later. The synagogue was quickly filling up as more congregants unhooked themselves from their day's activities. The voice of the one leading the services rang out, "Ashrei..." Aleksander closed his eyes savoring the distinct tenor. He had been taught well. First the Shema, later the Amidah. These kind people had appreciated him, looked beneath his exterior. In this synagogue he wasn't defined then as the Russian caretaker, just like the chiropractor wasn't his identity now. Here he always was Mr. Aleksander Guravich—a respected person all his own, a valuable member of society.

The prayers now concluded, the congregants dispersed, the dim hues of twilight filtered in through the large oval windows. Only Aleksander, immersed in conversation with his Creator, lingered still. "G-d," he murmured. "If you want me to buy the apartment so that my wife and I could have a place to live, so that we are able to raise our children...if this is Your will, help me, please. I have no one to turn to but You."

A feeling of peace settled over him like a winged dove. He'd handed his worries over to the Master Planner. It was time to go home, time to spend time with his family, time to wrap up the day in tranquility and harmony.

When he entered his two-room apartment, the folding cots and cribs had already made their appearance across the dining room floor as it did every evening. The children freshly bathed and pajama clad clambered over him and giggled loudly as he tossed them playfully in the air. Elena, his wife, turned from the tiny kitchen sink and greeted her husband with a strange look.

"You didn't tell me you spoke to them..." she said.

"Spoke to whom?"

Elena wiped her hands in her apron and hastened to undo the strings. Aleksander, realizing that something was afoot, said not a word as he followed her movements with his eyes. Then, from the single kitchen cabinet, Elena removed a small envelope.

"A loan, likely?" she asked with an expression of mingled rapture and curiosity.

Aleksander cast a quick glance at the sender's address. "Family Stefansky," it read.

"This just came by a private messenger service. Maybe half an hour ago. You did talk to them, didn't you?" queried his wife.

"Not in a year, I haven't," replied Aleksander. "Not since Simon passed away."

He turned the envelope over in his hands. A check slipped out. Under "Pay To" the name Aleksander Guravich was written in a neat scrawl. Amount: 40,000 shekels.

"A loan?" asked Simon's son when Aleksander phoned him. "No, why should we send you a loan?... A mistake? No, nothing of the sort... 4,000 instead of 40,000? Not at all."

"The litigation attorney recently finished reviewing our father's will. Our father, of late memory, wanted 40,000 shekels to go to you."

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Continued from Last Edition

Rebbe, Convince My Son to Go to College

If, as we have said, the material benefits of a college degree are doubtful, there can be no doubt, however, as to the obvious dangers when a Yeshiva boy is subjected several times during the week to such radical changes of atmosphere and ideology as exist between the Yeshiva and the college, where the majority of students are gentiles, and the majority of the Jewish students are unfortunately not religious, etc. It is impossible for a student to avoid contact with fellow students and professors. Hence, even if your son would have liked to go to college, it would have been highly problematical as to the advisability of it, as it is impossible to foresee what conflicts and dangers it would entail. But now that you are fortunate that your son does not want to do it but rather devote his time to the Yeshiva and to remain in its healthy and conflict-free atmosphere, surely he should be encouraged in his wise determination.

I am aware, of course, that there are boys who together with their Yeshiva education attend college. I have occasion to meet with them, and I can assure you that very few come out unscathed from the tremendous conflicts involved. Even those who on the surface appear to be wholesome have no peace of mind, and very, very few indeed of those who mixed Yeshiva with college have remained completely wholesome inwardly as well as outwardly.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

Where Are the 600,000 Letters of the Torah?

Question: *I have been told that there are 600,000 letters in the Torah scroll, and I always understood this to be the case. However, I was recently made aware that if one actually counts the letters, one would find that there are just over half that amount of letters in a standard Torah scroll. How do we reconcile the number 600,000 with the more accurate count?*

Answer: There are 304,800-plus letters in the Torah, but as you noted, we often hear of the 600,000 letters in the Torah. Several non-standard methods of counting are offered to arrive at the number 600,000.

One is given by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad. The count includes vowel letters that are not included in the text, but are implied in the pronunciation of the word. If they were all to be written out, there would be many more letters in a Torah scroll.

Another view explains that the count of 304,800-plus letters includes only those that we see, black ink against white parchment. But there are also the letters in white against black. The heavenly, non-physical version of the Torah is described as black fire on white fire, and both the black and white are equally meaningful. The black are the letters we see, while the white, the inverse space between the black, are the letters we don't see. The count of 600,000 includes both the black and the white letters.

Knowing this, there's an interesting law about the writing in a Torah scroll that now makes a lot of sense: If any letter has no space around it, the entire Torah is invalid, even though all the letters are complete. According to what we've just said, this is easy to understand: Although the revealed black letters would be complete, a hidden white letter would be missing.

There's yet more significance to the idea of inverse letters. The 600,000 letters correspond to the 600,000 souls of Israel. Although there are many more than 600,000 Jews, there are 600,000 general souls which divide into the individual sparks that become each of our souls. Some are of the black letters; their place in Torah is clear. It holds their life and purpose. The black stands out in strong contrast to the surrounding space.

Those of the inverse, white letters may not see where they fit into Torah. The space around the letter isn't seen in its own right, it simply enables the black letter to be seen. Perhaps a soul is here to allow another to shine, but that soul is integral. If a black letter lacks the surrounding white letters, the entire scroll is invalid.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming Tuesday, the 17th of Tammuz, is a fast day. It commemorates, among other things, the beginning of the destruction of the second Holy Temple. It also begins the three-week mourning period for the destruction of both Holy Temples.

Our prophets declared that in the future, the fast days will be transformed into festival days of rejoicing and happiness. The nature of that happiness will surpass even that of the traditional holidays, for it will be rejoicing that was preceded by sorrow. Just as light that was preceded by darkness is more appreciated, so, too, is rejoicing which was preceded by sorrow.

When will all of this take place, this transformation of sorrow into rejoicing and darkness into light? This will happen in the Messianic Era.

Turning darkness into light or sorrow into joy is intimately related to the state of exile in which we now find ourselves. Our Sages taught that "Every descent is for the purpose of an ascent."

One might wonder, though, couldn't All Powerful G-d have arranged things in such a way that we could have had a tremendous "ascent" without having had to endure the descent of the sufferings of this prolonged exile?

The purpose of a descent is to allow us to reach a much higher level than we could possibly have reached had we just climbed in a natural manner.

When faced with adversity or challenge, a person draws on inner strengths he didn't even know existed, in order to successfully accomplish his goal. We've all heard stories about a parent lifting a car off of a small child trapped under it, G-d forbid. In a normal situation the parent doesn't have the ability to lift thousands of pounds. But, because of the disaster, the parent is able to muster strength to achieve his goal.

The same holds true with the challenges of exile. Through them we will reach even higher than we could have under normal circumstances, thereby refining ourselves. By overcoming our challenges, we become more receptive and better able to receive the G-dly revelations of the Messianic Era.

J. I. Gutnick

Here's my *Story*

Personal Encounters
With The Rebbe. Culled From JEM's
'My Encounter' Project

Rabbi Aharon Leizer Ceitlin



I was a yeshiva student on shlichus in Safed, Israel, in 1984. In addition to our own full-time studies, we were involved in many outreach activities across the city, including running a kindergarten program and

giving Torah classes.

On several occasions, the Rebbe had asked that his chasidim report on their outreach activities once a month, preferably at the beginning of each month, on Rosh Chodesh. Usually, I would be the one to write the report of our activities on behalf of the yeshiva administration.

Writing a report to the Rebbe is no simple matter. Several days before, I would begin to consider what I would report and how I would write it. And you don't just dash off a letter to the Rebbe in half an hour. You need to find a block of several hours in order to prepare yourself, and then to write it properly. And then you need to decide what to write first, what deserves to be mentioned, and what to leave out. Of course, we used a typewriter – we didn't have computers in those days.

The month of Adar had been hectic, with lots of activities. Suddenly we were in Nissan, and I still hadn't written the report for Adar. There was so much to report: Purim celebrations, preparations for Pesach, many different outreach projects. Before I knew it, it was the eleventh of Nissan, the Rebbe's birthday, and I still hadn't written the report.

"This is it," I told myself. "No matter what, I'm writing this report tonight." That night, I wrote and wrote. It was 3 a.m. when I was finished; I had written eight pages.

I felt so uplifted. There were so many good things in it. So much had been done to spread yiddishkeit, plus a number of activities in honor of the Rebbe's birthday. I was sure they'd

bring the Rebbe much nachas.

But then it occurred to me. "I can't just sign off. I must finish the letter appropriately, with a blessing for the Rebbe's birthday!"

Now, this was a problem. As I saw it at the time, a yeshiva student doesn't give the Rebbe a bracha – he asks for a bracha from the Rebbe! From time to time, on special occasions, an elder chosid would stand up at a farbrengen, a chasidic gathering, and would bless the Rebbe in the name of the entire community; but never a young student!

But then I said to myself, "So what? It doesn't matter who I am! I'll give the Rebbe a bracha in the name of the administration.

"On the other hand, can I give the Rebbe a bracha on their behalf, when I'm really acting on my own? I must ask permission!" This dilemma was raging inside my head.

I knew that if I asked, there would be so many different opinions, that the report would never go out before Pesach. "Okay," I thought, "I'll sign the letter in the name of the administration, as I always do, and then I'll add a bracha in my own name."

But no, that wouldn't be nice! Would that mean that they're not blessing the Rebbe on his birthday, only I, the young student?"

Back and forth I went. It was almost morning. Finally, I made my decision: I wrote a wholehearted bracha and signed off, "The Administration."

In the morning, I sent the letter off before anyone could ask to see the report, as they occasionally did. I rushed around all morning so that they should see how busy I was with Pesach preparations, too busy to be bothered.

Three weeks went by. One clear day, a letter arrived at the yeshiva from the Rebbe. This was a cause for celebration – the thin blue airmail envelope, with the Rebbe's name and his return address, 770 Eastern Parkway.

Inside the envelope were two letters folded separately. This was quite unusual. Sometimes you might receive a two-page letter. But two pieces of paper folded separately?

Inside were two two identical letters. One was addressed to the administration, and one was addressed to me personally: "I received your letter...thank you very much. My blessings for the holiday of Pesach; may it bring you freedom from all obstacles, spiritual as well as physical. Serve Hashem with joy..."

But wait! At the end of my letter, at the bottom, there were two more lines, handwritten by the Rebbe. "Thank you for your blessing," the Rebbe had written, "When you bless another person, G-d, in turn, blesses you."

It was there in black and white. I couldn't believe my eyes. I hadn't breathed a word about what I had done to a soul. But the Rebbe knew what was in my heart! The Rebbe felt it. It's that simple.

Rabbi Aharon Eliezer Ceitlin was a Chabad shliach in Safed, Israel. He was interviewed in the My Encounter studio in New York in March, 2012.

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS BALAK • 13 TAMUZ • 7 JULY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4.57 PM
	MINCHA:	5.05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.30 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.58 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	4.55 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5.58 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	5.05 PM
	MAARIV:	5.50 PM

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Balak, the king of Moab, summons the prophet Balaam to curse the people of Israel. On the way, Balaam is berated by his donkey, who sees, before Balaam does, the angel that G-d sends to block their way. Three times, from three different vantage points, Balaam attempts to pronounce his curses; each time, blessings issue forth instead. Balaam also prophesies on the end of the days and the coming of Moshiach.

The people fall prey to the charms of the daughters of Moab, and are enticed to worship the idol Peor. When a high-ranking Israelite official publicly takes a Midianite princess into a tent, Pinchas kills them both, stopping the plague raging among the people.