

# LAMPLIGHTER

15 Adar/Shushan  
Purim  
Parshas  
Ki Tisa  
**1337**  
2 March  
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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Ki Tisa, contains one of the most misunderstood occurrences in the Torah - the sin of the Golden Calf. As it appears in the Written Torah (without the accompanying commentary), the entire account is difficult to understand. How could the same Jewish people who had just left Egypt under miraculous circumstances, received the Torah at Mount Sinai amidst open miracles and actually heard the voice of G-d utter the first two of the Ten Commandments, stoop so low as to worship a molten image?

Closer study reveals that the Jewish people were not seeking a substitute for G-d in the golden calf; what they desired was a substitute for Moses, as expressed in the verse, "The people saw that Moses was delayed in coming down ...and they said [to Aaron]: Get up, make us a god...for this man, Moses, who has taken us out of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Without Moses, the Jewish people were in a quandary. Moses was the intermediary that connected them to G-d Above, as it states, "I stand between G-d and you." Moses was the medium through which the Children of Israel were freed from Egypt and through whom they received the Torah, to the point where "the Divine Presence spoke from his throat."

Moses is referred to as "a man of G-d," for despite the fact that he was mortal, Moses existed on a spiritual plane on which he was totally united with the Divine. His function as intermediary between man and G-d served to strengthen the Jews' belief in the Creator, for it is difficult to believe in a G-d one cannot see. When the Jews beheld a human being on such a G-dly level, it strengthened their faith in G-d and connected them to Him in a tangible manner.

In this light, it is easier to understand the mistake they made. When Moses did not reappear at the time they expected him, the Jewish people feared they had lost the ability to bind themselves with the Infinite. They rightly understood that such an intermediary needs to be completely united with G-d; having just witnessed the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, at which G-d descended in a "supernal chariot" bearing the face of an ox, they decided to forge a calf of gold that would closely resemble it.

The Jewish people were correct in recognizing the need for an intermediary between man and G-d in the form of a G-dly human being; there was also nothing wrong with their choice of an inanimate object to draw holiness down into this world (G-d's voice would later issue forth from between the cherubim - fashioned in the form of two angels - above the holy ark in the Sanctuary).

Rather, their error was in taking into their own hands a matter which can only be determined by G-d. Only G-d has the authority to decide how His holiness will be transmitted; only He may choose the correct medium.

## What's the Point of Going Through the Motions?

By Elisha Greenbaum

Wherever Jews live, you can guarantee that the Lubavitchers will soon be standing around on nearby street corners and wandering into their offices, smiling at the natives and nudging them to do a mitzvah.

"Excuse me, Sir, have you had the chance to put on tefillin today?"

"Ma'am, may I interest you in a pair of Shabbat candlesticks?"

"Step right up into the mobile sukkah and shake these, please."

In the few decades since the Rebbe sent his troops out to the streets, millions and millions of Jews have snatched a few moments to roll up their sleeves in a worthy cause or to mutter a quick prayer during their lunch break. But why bother? Leave the poor guy alone; he doesn't really care. Most people agree to participate less out of fidelity to faith than to take the path of least resistance. The smooth faced young boy asked so nicely, with such sincerity, that they couldn't bring themselves to refuse. But G-d? He didn't come into the picture.

What value can there possibly be in such mitzvot? Seemingly empty words and accompanying gestures that are even less sincere. They're not fooling G-d, so why bother wasting time having people act out a meaningless charade?

Moses asked the same question.

G-d commanded the Jewish people to each offer a half-shekel coin to the Temple as an act of contrition for sinning with the Golden Calf. No matter one's personal situation, whether individually wealthy or struggling, every single Jew was to line up and hand over an identical coin to the holy coffers.

To demonstrate the exact particulars of the coin in question, G-d showed Moses a vision of a coin made from fire and insisted that every Jew donate a silver replica.

Moses didn't get it. "Okay," he argued, "I can accept that some physical form of repentance is needed to expiate our sins, but shouldn't we be given the opportunity for individual atonement? No two people think alike, nor do they act identically. Our intentions are unique to self, and surely the path of forgiveness should be tailored to our individual needs!"

Why should each of us be forced to perform the same seemingly meaningless rituals? If you enjoy putting on tefillin, or appreciate the aura of Shabbat candles, you indulge yourself; but why beg me or nudge me to join in when I don't think, feel or believe as you do?

That was precisely the attitude that G-d came to counter with the coin of fire. To you it might look like a stolid silver coin, emotionally detached and one-size-fits-none, but, from the Divine perspective, flames of purpose and passion blaze out of every action of every Jew. We are all individuals, G-d speaks to each of us and we respond in kind. We may not know it at the time, we may be too unsophisticated to appreciate the incredible change we undergo; yet we are assured that every mitzvah we do ignites within us a spark of G-d.

In practical terms, too, meeting those young boys and girls and agreeing to do just one mitzvah more has been the initial spark for hundreds of thousands of Jews to a reawakening to G-d and Judaism. Those seemingly minor acts of observance resonate within the soul of a Jew like a branding iron of enlightenment and become the driving force towards inspiration.

# Slice of LIFE

## A Modern Day Purim Lesson

By Tuvia Bolton

Shlomo was getting to the age when he should begin looking for a bride. The custom of ultra-orthodox Jews in Jerusalem (Yerushalayim) was to marry young and he was already nineteen. But as much as he tried he just couldn't seem to find anything.

So he was overjoyed when his aunt in Brooklyn called and said she had found the perfect match for him. The girl was attractive, serious, intelligent, the same age as he from a good family and her father was a known Talmudic scholar.

Now the only problem was how to get there. There was the problem of money for tickets and also in those days (1950) it was no easy matter getting permission from the army to leave Israel. But after several months of nerve-wracking efforts he finally was on the ship to America.

The girl was all they said she was. They met several times, found favor in each other's eyes, decided to marry and even made an engagement party but then for some reason, after the party she suddenly broke off the engagement.

Shlomo was heartbroken and confused. He was virtually alone in the U.S.A. he couldn't really stay by his aunt and uncle for long. His parents wanted him to come back home but he couldn't bear to return empty-handed. The other alternative was to go to a Yeshiva and continue learning Torah, but he wasn't in the mood for that either.

With a lot of free time on his hands it wasn't long before he met other young men in the same situation and one of them, another Yershualmi like himself, convinced him to go with him to Cleveland where they could find work. After all it says in Pirke Avot (2:2) "Torah without work will bring to sin"

In Cleveland it wasn't long before he concluded that, as the Talmud teaches: "When one goes to a city one should do according to their customs".

The first thing to go was the Chassidic garb and payot (earlocks), then his Tzitzit and beard. Soon he found himself skipping the prayers, then neglecting to put on Tefillin and finally, little by little he dropped all the commandments. In the course of a few months he was his own master, earning a lot of money and free as a bird!

Over a year later he went back to

Brooklyn to visit his aunt and uncle for Purim dressed in the most modern fashion. Of course he put a Yarmulke on his head so they would think that he was still somewhat observant but still he was surprised at their shock when they saw him. He himself didn't realize how far he had gone.

But he recovered quickly, put on a debonair smile, stepped right in and began talking as though nothing had happened. Exactly the opposite; he tried convincing them that they should explain to his parents that "America is different. Time is money."

After finishing the sumptuous Purim meal the next afternoon he went for a walk. His family lived in the Crown Heights area of Brooklyn so it was no surprise to see a few Lubavitcher Chassidim running in the street. He stopped one of them, said "Happy Purim!! Where are you headed?" "The Lubavitcher Rebbe is speaking." They answered, "Why don't you come?"

A few minutes later Shlomo found himself in a large room, perhaps a Synagogue, together with some two hundred, well-dressed, religious Jews all in good spirits. Several shook his hand wished him "A frailachen Purim!" and even offered him a l'chiam but he declined....he hated vodka. In fact he decided he had had enough, he turned to the door and suddenly the Rebbe began speaking.

"It states in the Talmud that when Moshiach arrives the revelation of G-d will be so great that it will outshine the holiness of all of the Jewish holidays ...except for Purim. The Zohar says that Purim is even higher than Yom HaKipurim; KiPurim is only LIKE (Ki) Purim."

"But can this be?" The Rebbe continued. "How can a drunken festival like Purim be higher than the holiest and solemn Day of Atonement?"

Shlomo's curiosity had been aroused. The question was a good one. The Rebbe paused and continued.

"The reason is, because on Purim the Jews were willing to sacrifice their lives rather than deny their Judaism... M'sirot Nefesh!

"The decree of Haman and Achashverosh was 'To kill, destroy and annihilate all JEWS'. Anyone that declared that he wasn't a Jew would escape. But although the decree hung over their heads for a full year, not one Jew even THOUGHT to do it.

"That's why Purim can erase sins and arouse sinners to repentance that even Yom Kippur cannot; just as G-d forgave the Jews then for eating at the meal of Achashverosh and bowing to Haman.

"That was a nice answer!" Shlomo thought to himself. "This Lubavitcher Rebbe

is a pretty smart fellow."

But the Rebbe didn't stop.

"For instance, an observant G-d fearing young man can fool himself by saying, "Torah without work brings to sin" and "When one goes to a city one should do according to their customs" and 'Time is money' until he falls so low that he stops acting like a Jew; no Tefillin, no kosher, no Shabbat! Yom Kippur passed him by and didn't affect him at all. But Purim has the power to stir the essence of his Jewish soul and bring him back to his senses."

Shlomo began to blush. "Could he be talking about me?" He thought to himself... "nahhh, no way!" He concluded. "It's just a coincidence".

The Rebbe continued, "It could be that he even came all the way from Jerusalem where there is a complicated law about places that are 'close but not seen', or 'seen but not close' (Aruch Chiam 688:2). In other words; he is close but he thinks he is not seen, he might even see but he is still far away."

Shlomo realized that the Rebbe meant him! He must have some sort of X-ray vision! But he comforted himself by saying that at least no one in the room knows what the Rebbe is talking about.... and turned to go.

But everyone was staring at him and smiling! "The Rebbe is looking at you!" someone said.

He turned back and the Rebbe was motioning for him to make a l'chiam. Someone gave him a small plastic cup but the Rebbe shook his head 'no' and indicated with his hands he should give him a big one.

Shlomo tried to protest, but in vain. They brought him a big cup, filled it with vodka and everyone in the room waited for him to finish it. "Well, that's that!" He thought to himself. But everyone was still smiling and staring at him. The Rebbe was motioning for him to drink a second. He complied and didn't remember what happened afterward.

The next morning he woke up on a bench in the synagogue with a few other sleeping Chassidim strewn about him on the tables. His modern suit was filthy with vomit and his head was pounding.

He staggered back to his aunt and uncle's house, told them only half of the story, took a shower and asked if he could borrow his uncle's Tefillin to pray with.

That morning he prayed 'Shachrit' (Morning prayer) as never before. A few weeks later he returned back to Israel and a few months after that returned to look and act like a Yershualmi but with a completely different heart; Judaism was dear. Today he is happily married with children and grandchildren of his own.

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### WEEKLY VIDEO



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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## Effort Brings Success

By the Grace of G-d  
14th of Teveth, 5718 [January 6th, 1958]  
Brooklyn, N.Y.  
Mrs. Malke Sarah Kuperman  
Bronx, New York  
Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter, and was pleased to read about the good work of the women's group, about which you write that it is going along by itself, with little effort on your part. In this connection I would like to point out what is explained in Chassidus [chassidic teachings], that even where a thing is so established that it is going on by itself, without outside effort, it is clear, however, how much better it would go where there is an additional effort from outside. This is explained in connection with the well-known saying of our Sages, "Effort with success, believe; success without effort, do not believe," which has been said about the study of the Torah and the observance of the Mitzvoth, even in connection with people of great mental capacity, etc. For, true success comes only after suitable efforts.

I therefore trust that you will make every effort to gain ever-growing success for the group. No doubt you also know my view that among the subjects to be studied by young married women's groups should be included also the subject of Taharas Hamishpocho [Family Purity]. I trust that this is so in the case of your group.

With reference to the news that you are nearly due to give birth, may G-d help you complete your pregnancy and give birth to a healthy, normal child, in a happy and auspicious hour.

With blessing,  
M. Schneerson

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

### Why the Rush for the Jewish Funeral?

**Question:** What is the reason behind the Jewish custom of burying a person almost immediately after he or she passes away? Other religions wait a few days, or sometimes weeks, before laying their dead to rest, yet we seem in a hurry to get them buried, often within 24 hours of death. What is the rush?

**Answer:** A speedy burial has benefits for the living and for the dead, while delaying a funeral unnecessarily is no good for either.

Between death and burial, the soul of the departed is in limbo between two worlds, neither fully on earth nor ready to be admitted into heaven. The soul no longer inhabits the body after death, but until the body is laid to rest, the soul cannot fully leave the body either. So it hovers around the body, in a state of disorientation at its sudden expulsion from the body that was its home for a lifetime.

Once the body returns to the dust from whence it came, the soul can return to the heaven from whence it came. And so, only after the burial does the soul begin its climb to higher realms. The soul's onward journey can't begin until the body is interred. We do not want to delay this process, so we hasten the funeral to the earliest opportunity.

This is not just for the good of the departed soul. It is also for the benefit of the mourners.

Just as the soul is in a state of confusion after death, the bereaved family goes through a stage of uncertainty immediately after the death, as they grapple to absorb what has happened. For many who experience loss, it seems unreal. They feel that they are dreaming, and the person will soon walk through the door as if nothing happened.

But reality hits at the funeral. That painful sound of dirt hitting the coffin evokes the raw pain of bereavement like nothing else can. It hurts, but it is necessary. Just as the soul cannot start moving upwards before burial, so too the mourners cannot start their long journey from grief to consolation until the grave is filled in.

This pain cannot be avoided. Only after we have allowed ourselves to grieve can we allow ourselves to heal. Only when the finality of the body's death is accepted can the eternity of the soul be experienced. The body returns to dust, the soul returns to G-d.

## A WORD

from the Director

This week's Haftara reading is about the meeting between the wicked King Achav and Elijah the prophet. We read the words "Elijah went to appear before Achav."

There are many stories of Elijah the Prophet appearing at different times and ages. And I am reminded of one such story of the Baal Shem Tov.

The Baal Shem Tov's students constantly begged him to show them the Prophet Elijah until he finally agreed. One Friday afternoon, as was their custom, the disciples were hearing words of Torah from the Baal Shem Tov. Suddenly he said, "I would like to smoke a pipe."

The Baal Shem Tov's disciples ran around looking for someone willing to lend a pipe, knowing that even the most mundane act of their Rebbe had spiritual ramifications. They returned, however, empty-handed. The Baal Shem Tov looked up and saw a Polish squire walking nearby. He asked his students if they would see if the squire was willing to lend his pipe.

The students approached the squire, and not only was he willing, but he walked over to the Baal Shem Tov to give it to him personally. The squire proceeded to light the pipe, and while the Baal Shem Tov smoked, they discussed the year's harvest, whether there would be enough grain, etc. The Baal Shem Tov's disciples, in the meantime, took no notice of the squire and discussed the teachings of their Rebbe.

After the squire left, the Baal Shem Tov declared, "I have kept my promise. I have shown you Elijah."

The disciples were shocked. "If you had told us it was Elijah, we could have asked him to teach us."

"If you had understood and asked who it was, I would have been permitted to reveal him to you. But since you did not understand, I could not do so."

As we continue to pray for Moshiach; to perform additional acts of kindness to hasten his arrival; to study about Moshiach and the Messianic Era; let us learn from the Baal Shem Tov's students by being ready to recognize Moshiach when he is revealed.

J. I. Gutterman

IT HAPPENED



**A Purim Secret**

*By Yerachmiel Tilles*

Rabbi Nissan was a wealthy man who lived in Yergin, a small town near Pressburg, the capital city of Slovakia. When younger, he had been a student at the famous Pressburg yeshivah. He and his wife were already married for many years, but still had not been blessed with children. When, finally, a son was born to him in 5583 (1823), it was no surprise that he honored his former rosh yeshivah, the world-renowned scholar known as the Chatam Sofer, to perform the circumcision. Unfortunately, the brit milah, circumcision ceremony, had to be postponed because of the weak health of the baby. It wasn't till several weeks later that it was announced that it would take place on . . . Purim!

At the brit, the Chatam Sofer was glowing with "light, happiness, joy and honor." Whether it was the joy of Purim day, happiness for his former student, or a combination of both, nobody knew. After completing the circumcision, when he dipped his finger in the wine and then in the baby's mouth (following custom), he raised his voice and called out very loudly the Talmudic expression, "When wine goes in, secrets come out."

The baby was given an appropriate name for a Purim brit: Baruch Mordechai, which means "blessed be Mordechai," from the paragraph recited after the megillah readings.

The child grew. At an early age, he was already outstanding in character and religious observance. However, much to the distress of his parents, his ability to understand Torah was not at par. As a boy, he didn't seem any different than his age-mates; but after his bar mitzvah, when he entered the famous Pressburg yeshivah, it was noticeable that he was having major difficulties in his studies.

In truth, he was very diligent. He would sit absorbed in the holy books from morning to evening. But whenever he was asked to repeat or explain anything, he was unable to respond, and could only sit silently.

His less-sensitive classmates liked to make fun of him because of this. Once, when he left his place for a few minutes, they switched his volume of Talmud for one of another subject entirely, leaving it open to the page of the same number as the one he had been on. When he resumed his seat, he didn't seem to notice the difference at all.

When he turned eighteen, the Ketav Sofer (who had succeeded his recently departed father as the head of the yeshivah) advised Baruch Mordechai's parents to send him to the land of Israel. Perhaps there, where "the air of the holy land makes one wise," his studies would prosper.

Baruch Mordechai arrived in Jerusalem with a letter of recommendation from Rabbi Shraga Feldheim, mashgiach (study supervisor) at Pressburg, which said that he "is truly pious, prays with great devotion, and that his desire to learn Torah is sincere and enormous."

One of the scholarly leaders of the Jerusalem community then, Rabbi Yeshayah Bardaki, "adopted" Baruch Mordechai, concerning himself with all of his needs. He was impressed with the young man's sterling character and piety, but he could not fathom how someone who had done nothing but study Torah diligently all his life could have retained so little.

When Baruch Mordechai reached age twenty, Rabbi Bardaki found a bride for him: a simple girl from a good family in Jerusalem who wouldn't mind that her husband was an ignoramus.

Several years after the wedding, Baruch Mordechai began to work as a water-carrier. He was honest to an extreme, and as a result quickly became very popular. Every rosh chodesh, he would deliver water to his regular customers for free; he worried that over the course of the previous month water might have spilled, whereas he had charged for full buckets.

For more than forty years Baruch Mordechai toiled at his chosen profession, the whole time in joyous spirit and with gratitude to G-d for his lot. He took special satisfaction from serving the many Torah scholars within the walls of Jerusalem; he considered this a great merit and refused to accept payment from them. It

anguished him that the great scholar, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Diskin, refused to take water from him. "I cannot allow myself to be served by the likes of Reb Baruch Mordechai," he would say—but refused to explain his words.

On Purim day of 5653 (1893), at the time of the festive meal, most of the chassidim and notables of the old city of Jerusalem crowded, as every year, into the home of Rabbi Schneur Zalman Fradkin of Lublin, the celebrated author of the scholarly book *Torat Chesed*. The atmosphere was exceptionally joyous, even for a Purim celebration. The men were constantly erupting into lively song and dance, and there was a complementary flow of wine and wise words.

All of a sudden, Baruch Mordechai called out to the host in a loud voice, from the midst of the swaying chassidim, "Rebbe! Today is seventy years exactly since my brit milah."

Everyone smiled tolerantly, figuring that such an outburst from the simple water-carrier could only be a result of all the Purim wine he had imbibed.

"If so," responded Rabbi Shneur Zalman, "you deserve an extra-large measure of l'chaim."

Immediately a large tumbler of a special strong wine was poured and passed to Baruch Mordechai, who speedily dispatched it as commanded. It had an immediate effect. The elderly water-carrier began to sing and dance energetically.

The sage's reaction was surprising. He looked up at Baruch Mordechai and shouted over the crowd, "It would be nice if you would stop fooling around already, and honor the holy assemblage with some strong words of Jewish law and lore."

Suddenly there was silence. Everyone's gaze shifted in amused anticipation to the tipsy Baruch Mordechai, as he climbed up to stand on the table and began to speak.

But then, all the grins slowly gave way to wide-eyed stares of astonishment, as it penetrated their ears that the water-carrier was discoursing enthusiastically on scholarly Purim topics, and peppering his words with learned citations from Tractate Megillah and a variety of midrashim and works of Jewish law. And he waxed on and on! Indeed, if the strong wine hadn't finally taken its toll, it seemed that he could have continued indefinitely.

Even before the holiday was over, the news of the extraordinary scholarship of the unassuming water-carrier had spread throughout Jerusalem. The community was in an uproar. How had they allowed such an accomplished scholar to be disdained in their midst, and to labor as a mere water-carrier for so many years? And how had his erudition remained hidden for so long?

A few of the elders of the community recalled hearing of the mysterious words of the Chatam Sofer seventy years before. Now, some clever minds were saying they could finally be understood.

"Wine enters, secrets emerge." Yayin, the Hebrew word for "wine" (spelled yud-yud-nun), has a numerical value of seventy—and so does sod, the Hebrew word for "secret" (spelled samech-vav-dalet)!

**PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL**

The people of Israel are told to each contribute exactly half a shekel of silver to the Sanctuary. Instructions are also given regarding the making of the Sanctuary's water basin, anointing oil and incense. "Wise-hearted" artisans Betzalel and Aholiav are placed in charge of the Sanctuary's construction, and the people are once again commanded to keep the Shabbat.

When Moses does not return when expected from Mount Sinai, the people make a golden calf and worship it. G-d proposes to destroy the errant nation, but Moses intercedes on their behalf. Moses descends from the mountain carrying the tablets of the testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; seeing the people dancing about their idol, he breaks the tablets, destroys the golden calf, and has the primary culprits put to death. He then returns to G-d to say: "If You do not forgive them, blot me out from the book that You have written."

G-d forgives, but says that the effect of their sin will be felt for many generations. At first G-d proposes to send His angel along with them, but Moses insists that G-d Himself accompany His people to the promised land.

Moses prepares a new set of tablets and once more ascends the mountain, where G-d reinscribes the covenant on these second tablets. On the mountain, Moses is also granted a vision of the divine thirteen attributes of mercy. So radiant is Moses' face upon his return, that he must cover it with a veil, which he removes only to speak with G-d and to teach His laws to the people.

**CANDLE LIGHTING**



	Shabbos 2 - 3 March	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:41	8:37
Adelaide	7:34	8:29
Brisbane	6:01	6:53
Darwin	6:51	7:40
Gold Coast	6:00	6:52
Perth	6:33	7:26
Sydney	7:13	8:07
Canberra	7:22	8:17
Launceston	7:36	8:34
Auckland	7:41	8:37
Wellington	7:45	8:43
Hobart	7:36	8:36
Byron Bay	6:59	7:52

**CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH**

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

**PARSHAS KI TISA • 17 ADAR / SHUSHAN PURIM • 2 MARCH**

<b>FRIDAY NIGHT:</b>	MINCHA	7.50 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	8.15 PM
<b>SHABBOS DAY:</b>	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	10.19 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 PM
	MINCHA	7.40 PM
<b>WEEKDAYS:</b>	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	7.40 PM
	MAARIV	8.30 PM