

# LAMPLIGHTER

26 Iyar  
Parshas  
Behar-Bechukosai  
**1347**  
11 May  
5778/2018

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week we read two Torah portions, Behar and Bechukotai. Bechukotai contains the curses and punishments to be inflicted on the Jewish people if they do not obey G-d. Even a casual reading of these misfortunes in the Torah makes our hair stand on end. Chassidic philosophy, however, teaches that by delving more deeply into the meaning of these curses we can understand that they are actually blessings.

Furthermore, these "curses" are not only blessings, but blessings of such a high order that they can only manifest themselves in their seemingly opposite form!

A perfect illustration of this concept is found in the Talmud. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai once sent his son to two Sages for a blessing. When his son returned he complained that the Sages had cursed him. "What did they say?" asked Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. "You shall sow, but not reap," answered the son. The father patiently explained that the rabbis had meant that he should grow to be the father of many children who would be healthy and not die during their father's lifetime. Likewise, every example the son gave of the rabbis' "curses" similarly contained great blessings.

But why did the rabbis go through the trouble of disguising their good intentions in such a convoluted manner? Chasidut explains that ultimate good is sometimes clothed in an outer garment of its exact opposite, precisely because it is too lofty to come into this world in any other form.

If, then, the rabbis' blessings were so lofty that they had to be "disguised" as curses, how did Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai recognize their true content?

Tanya, the basic book of Chabad Chassidic philosophy, explains that everything we perceive as evil in this world is, in reality, so good that we cannot absorb it in its true form (much in the way that an intense light hurts the eyes if one looks directly at its source). This good therefore takes the form of human suffering, just as we avert our eyes from a brightness which is too intense.

This, however, is only true at the present time. When Moshiach comes, the concealed good hidden within our afflictions will be revealed for what it is - utter and absolute blessing.

A Jew must, therefore, always accept whatever is decreed from Above, for when Moshiach comes we will see that the suffering of the exile was in truth a good of such magnitude that it could only be bestowed in such a way.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai possessed a soul capable of discerning this truth even before the coming of Moshiach. Likewise, Chasidut affords us a "taste" of the Messianic Era, enabling us to understand these inner truths which will soon become apparent, speedily in our days.

## Capitalist or Communist?

By Yossy Goldman

Karl Marx may have been the pioneer, but many other Jews were also involved in the struggle for communism, particularly in the early days of the Russian revolution. Personally, I don't think that we have any apologies to make for this phenomenon. Having suffered unbearably under successive oppressive regimes, many of those political activists genuinely thought communism would be better for the people than czarist corruption. Their sense of idealism fueled hopes for a better life and a more equitable future for all. On paper, communism was a good idea. The fact that it failed—and that the new leaders outdid their predecessors' oppression—may reflect the personalities involved as much as the system they promoted.

What is Judaism's economic system? Is there one? I would describe it as "capitalism with a conscience." In promoting free enterprise, the Torah is clearly capitalistic. But it is a conditional capitalism, and certainly a compassionate capitalism.

Winston Churchill once said, "The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings. The inherent vice of communism is the equal sharing of miseries." So Judaism introduced an open market system, where the sharing of blessings was not left to chance or wishful thinking, but was made mandatory. Our Parshah gives us a classic example.

Shemittah, the Sabbatical year, was designed to allow the land to rest and regenerate. Six years the land would be worked, but in the seventh year it would rest and lie fallow. The agricultural cycle in the Holy Land imposed strict rules and regulations on the owner of the land. No planting, no pruning, no agricultural work whatsoever in the seventh year—and whatever grew by itself would be "ownerless" and there for the taking for all. The owner could take some, but so could his workers, friends and neighbors. The landowner, in his own land, would have no more right than the stranger. For six years you own the property, but in the seventh you enjoy no special claims.

This is but one of many examples of Judaism's "capitalism with a conscience." There are many other legislated obligations to the poor—not optional extras, not even pious recommendations, but clear mandatory contributions to the less fortunate. The ten percent tithes, as well as the obligation to leave to the poor the unharvested corners of one's field, the gleanings, and the forgotten sheaves are all part of the system of compassionate capitalism.

Judaism thus presents an economic system which boasts the best of both worlds—the advantages of an unfettered free market, allowing personal expression and success relative to hard work, without the drawbacks of corporate greed. If the land belongs to G-d, then we have no exclusive ownership over it. G-d bestows His blessings upon us, but clearly, the deal is that we must share. Without Torah law, capitalism fails. Unbridled ambition and the lust for money and power lead to monopolies and conglomerates that leave no room for the next guy and widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots. The Sabbatical year is one of many checks and balances that keep our capitalism kosher and kind.

Some people are too businesslike. Everything is measured and exact. Business is business. If I invited you for Shabbat, then I won't repeat the invitation until you reciprocate first. If you gave my son \$50 for his bar mitzvah, then that is exactly what I will give your son. We should be softer, more flexible, not so hard, tough and businesslike. By all means, be a capitalist, but be a kosher capitalist. What a person is "worth" financially should be irrelevant to the respect you accord to him. Retain the traditional Jewish characteristics of kindness, compassion, tzedakah and chesed, generosity of spirit, heart—and pocket.

May you make lots of money, and encourage G-d to keep showering you with His blessings by sharing it generously with others.

# Slice of LIFE

## That Last Talk

By Steven Edell

When my mother became ill nearly twenty years ago, we knew that it meant many hospital visits and treatments, and that she might not be with us a lot longer. Being in Israel, with my parents near San Francisco, meant making arrangements for a quick trip to the United States.

"Don't worry," Mom said, with a heavy bandage from the treatments across her neck and part of her right shoulder, "I'm strong and will beat this."

"Don't worry," said the doctors, "She has a good chance to live many more years." I worried a little less. But then when my mother told me that when the ultimate happens she wants to be cremated, alarm bells went off in my head.

Jewish law does not permit cremation. Your body and soul are on loan to you, Jewish teachings explain, and when you move on, you return them to your Creator. And at some time in the future (may it be speedily in our days) Moshiach, the Messiah, will come and G-d will resurrect all the souls of all time, to live on a peaceful earth forever. This is a basic tenet of Judaism. Part of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith.

Being the only religious member of my family didn't help the situation.

I approached my mother to try in a simple way to explain the importance of having a proper Jewish burial, but she would have none of it. "Besides," she said very philosophically, "it is not my time yet. I will know when it is my time, and I will talk with you then."

Years passed - fifteen to be exact. And true to the doctors' and my mother's words, she bounced back from each and every illness she had.

Unfortunately there were quite a few, and each time she would get ill I would worry, make preparations, and be comforted when told that the treatments worked.

But each treatment weakened her such that it was harder and harder for her to take the next one, and in late fall 1994 my sister called me with the terrifying news: Mom is again sick and she's too weak to get any more treatments. This time, the illness will be fatal.

While I made arrangements to visit as soon as possible, I started asking people, "How do I handle my mother's wish to be cremated?" Being a computer professional I asked a lot of my questions on the internet as well.

Mail-Jewish is an Orthodox internet discussion forum, and when I raised the question there I got all sorts of responses. I thought about them all, only knowing that no matter what would happen I wanted to visit and have that last conversation promised to me by my mother so many years earlier.

There were two other internet sources that I turned to, one was a large yeshiva here in Jerusalem that has a "question-answer" setup. I asked a lot of questions and got from them a tremendous wealth of understanding from a Jewish perspective of what is considered "cremation."

The other source of information was "Lubavitch in Cyberspace," or Rabbi Y. Y. Kazen, of blessed memory. I remember sending a "help" command to the "listserv" and getting back a personal message: "Hi. I'm the listserv, and help, and sysop. Basically, I do everything. What did you want? -YYK."

Soon I was explaining my difficulty to him and asking for suggestions. After quite a few emails back and forth, with YYK's help and guidance, I knew what I wanted to do. First, I needed to go and visit Mom. I would

not upset or trouble any of my relatives with this, nor try to convince them to accept Torah's stance. And of course I would have my talk and show my mother Torah's viewpoints on death and dying and cremation. And I would pray. A lot and hard.

In February 1995 I visited Mom for ten days. Her brothers, her brothers' children, and my sister all came visiting during the weekdays. On Shabbat, Mom and I were alone. Friday night I prepared a traditional Shabbat as best as I could with her, with lighting candles, singing the prayers to welcome Shabbat, saying kiddush over wine and Hamotzei over the bread, having a good meal, singing Shabbat songs and saying the Birkat Hamazon after finishing to eat. Before each part I explained to Mom what each meant, what was the importance of each piece. "It's been a very long time since those things were done in my house," she said, looking on somewhat intrigued by the experience.

After Birkat Hamazon we sat down and talked. Usually Mom went to bed around 7pm. but that night we stayed up talking until after 11. And all she said afterwards was that she'd think about it.

The next evening, Saturday night, my sister and brother came over and we all called Mom's brother, the executor of her affairs. I still remember how shocked we all were when she said to him, near the end of the conversation, "Oh, and one more thing: change my will so it says that I will have a normal burial, and not to be cremated."

My mother, may G-d remember her soul with kindness and mercy, passed away six weeks later, a little over a week before Passover 1995, 6 Nisan 5755. She was buried as per her request, in accordance with Jewish law, with all of her family present saying the Mourner's Kaddish by her grave.

May we all merit the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.

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### WEEKLY VIDEO



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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## Pay Attention to Your Children

By the Grace of G-d  
4 Shevat 5725  
[January 7, 1965]  
Brooklyn, N.Y.  
Greeting and Blessing!

. . . the Torah likens a human being to a tree. Thereby the Torah teaches us an important lesson, particularly in the field of child education.

When the tree is young, especially when it is still in the stage of a seedling, every good care given it in that early stage, however insignificant it may seem, is an investment which in due course amplifies itself many times, and the full effects become evident in the mature, fruit-bearing tree.

Likewise is the minute attention given to a child, even where the benefit for the moment appears to be quite small, so much so that one may wonder if it is worth the effort. For even a "small" benefit may in time turn out to be of a lasting quality and extraordinary proportions, reaching into the daily conduct according to the Torah and Mitzvot; and as our Sages of blessed memory expressed it: "What are real fruits?—the Mitzvot." Therefore every effort is justified in the field of Chinuch, for what is at stake is the whole future of the student and his life-long benefit.

(Excerpt from a letter)

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

### Should a Jewish State Have an Army?

**Question:** Should a Jewish state have an Army? Isn't it un-Jewish to kill people? How would Judaism apply the law from the Ten Commandments, "You shall not kill" in modern Israel?

**Answer:** You may be surprised to learn that nowhere in the Ten Commandments or the entire Bible does it say "You shall not kill". Understanding this is vital to a true appreciation of Biblical morality.

The original Hebrew is "Lo tirtzach", which means "Do not murder". The Hebrew word for killing is "hariga", a completely different verb. There is a world of significance in this choice of words.

Murder is the taking of innocent life, which is always forbidden. Killing is the taking of any life, which is sometimes permitted or even obligatory. The Bible commands us to kill those who have irreversibly lost their innocence. There are two categories of such people:

1) Someone who is found guilty in a court of certain crimes, such as murder or kidnapping.

2) Someone who is posing a clear and direct threat to the lives of innocents. An example would be an armed gunman who breaks into someone else's home (Exodus 22:2).

I believe this is the most consistent and compassionate moral system. Above all else, innocent life is protected, both by the commandment not to murder and the commandment to kill those who are a threat to innocent people.

## A WORD

*from the Director*

*This coming Tuesday is the first day of the month of Sivan. On this day, over 3,300 years ago, the Jewish people came to the wilderness of the Sinai desert and encamped there ready to receive the Torah.*

*The Torah tells us, "In the third month after the departure of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, on this day they came to the wilderness of Sinai. They had departed from Refidim and had arrived in the Sinai Desert, camping in the wilderness. Israel camped there opposite the mountain."*

*Interestingly, the use of the word "camp" the second time here is in singular form in Hebrew, though still speaking about all of the Jewish people.*

*The singular form of the verb is used because the Jewish people were united as one - "like one person with one heart" our Sages tell us. And it was precisely this unity that prepared and allowed the Jewish people to receive the Torah and experience the revelation of G-dliness on Mount Sinai.*

*The unity of the Jewish people preceded the revelation of the Torah. Uniting our people today can and should be a preparation for the Final Redemption when we will have the ultimate revelation of the goodness and holiness of every single Jew.*

*The Rebbe expressed this concept in a talk a number of years ago. "The Redemption will unify all of Israel, from the greatest to the smallest. For not a single Jew will remain in exile: 'You, the Children of Israel, will be gathered in one by one.' Moreover, the multitudes who will then be gathered in, are referred to in the singular: 'A great congregation will return - in the singular - here.'*

*"In preparation for this state, one should make every endeavor to unify all Jews, in a spirit of the love of a fellow Jew, and of the unity of all Israel."*

*For the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai there had to be unity of the Jewish people. And as a preparation for the revelation of the new and deeper Torah which will be revealed in the Messianic Era we would do well to heed the Rebbe's words and work towards unity and love of all Jews.*

*J. I. Gutterman*

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

## The Tenth Jew

By Yerachmiel Tilles

Torrents of rain beat down on his face, but the tempest did not prevent chassidic master Rabbi Leib Sarah's from reaching the village. It was only several hours before the beginning of Yom Kippur. He was some distance from his intended destination, but he was relieved to learn that in this village, too, there would be a minyan (quorum of ten) with which to pray—eight local villagers would be joined by two men who lived in the nearby forest.

Rabbi Leib immersed himself, in preparation for the holy day, in the purifying waters of a river which ran by the village; ate the meal which precedes the fast; and hastened to be the first in the little wooden synagogue. There he settled down to recite the various private devotions with which he was. One by one, the eight local villagers arrived in time to hear the words of Kol Nidrei. Together with Rabbi Leib, there were now nine. But there was no minyan, for it transpired that the two Jewish foresters had been imprisoned on some malicious libel.

"Perhaps we could find just one more Jew living around these parts?" asked Rabbi Leib.

"No," the villagers all assured him, "there's only us."

"Perhaps," he persisted, "there lives here some Jew who converted out of the faith of his fathers?"

The villagers were shocked to hear such an odd question from the stranger. They looked upon him quizzically.

"The doors of repentance are not locked even in the face of an apostate,"

Rabbi Leib continued. "I have heard from my teachers that even when one pokes about in the ashes, one can light upon a spark of fire..."

One of the villagers now spoke up.

"There is one apostate here," he ventured. "He is our paritz, the squire who owns this whole village. But he has been sunk in sin for forty years now. You see, the gentile daughter of the previous squire fell in love with him. So her father promised him that if he converted and married the girl, he would make him his sole heir. He didn't withstand the temptation, so he did exactly that... They had no children, and his wife died many years ago; he now lives alone in his great big house. He is a cruel master, and deals especially harshly with the Jews on his land."

"Show me his mansion," said Rabbi Leib.

He removed his tallit in a flash, and ran as fast as he could in the direction of the mansion, with his white skullcap on his head and his white kittel billowing in the wind. He knocked on the heavy door, opened it without waiting for a response, and found himself confronting the squire. For a few long, long moments they stood in silence face to face, the tzaddik and the apostate. The latter's first thought was to summon one of his henchmen to seize the uninvited intruder and hurl him into the dungeon in the backyard. But the luminous countenance and the penetrating eyes of the tzaddik softened his heart.

"My name is Leib Sarah's," began the visitor. "It was my privilege to know Rabbi Israel, the Baal Shem Tov, who was admired also by the gentile noblemen. From his mouth I once heard that every Jew should utter the sort of prayer that was first said by King David: 'Save me, O L-rd, from blood-guilt.' But the word used for 'blood' (damim) can also be translated as 'money.' So my teacher expounded the verse as follows: 'Save me, so that I should never regard money as my L-rd...'"

"Now my mother, whose name was Sarah, was a holy woman. One day the son of one of the local gentry took it into his head to marry her, and promised her wealth and status if she would agree, but she sanctified the name of Israel. In order to save herself from that villain, she quickly got married to an old Jewish pauper who was a schoolteacher. You did not have the good

fortune to withstand the test, and for silver and gold you were willing to betray your faith. Realize, though, that there is nothing that can stand in the way of repentance. Moreover, there are those who in one hour earn their portion in the World to Come. Now is that hour! Today is the eve of Yom Kippur. The sun will soon set. The Jews who live in your village are short one man to make up a minyan. Come along now with me, and be the tenth man. For the Torah tells us: 'The tenth shall be holy unto G-d.'"

The squire paled at the words spoken by this white-clothed man with the singular face. And meanwhile, down the road, the eight local villagers waited in shul, huddled together in frozen dread. Who could tell what calamity this odd stranger was about to bring down upon their heads?

The door burst open, and in rushed Rabbi Leib, followed closely by the paritz. The latter's gaze was downcast, and his eyelashes were heavy with tears. At a sign from Rabbi Leib, one of the villagers handed the apostate a tallit. He enveloped himself in it, covering his head and face entirely. Rabbi Leib now stepped forward to the Holy Ark, and took out two scrolls of the Torah. One he gave to the oldest villager present, and the other—to the paritz. Between them at the bimah stood Rabbi Leib, and he began to solemnly chant the traditional tune for the opening lines of the Kol Nidrei prayer: "By the sanction of the Almighty, and by the sanction of the congregation, . . . we declare it permissible to pray together with those who have sinned . . ."

A deep sigh broke forth from the depths of the broken man's heart. No man there could stand unmoved, and they all wept with him. Throughout all the prayers of the evening, and from dawn of the next day right until nightfall, the paritz stood in prayer, humbled and contrite. And as his sobs shook his whole body as he recited the confession, the other nine shuddered with him.

At the climax of the Ne'ilah service, when the congregation was about to utter together the words "Shema Yisrael," the paritz leaned forward until his head was deep inside the Holy Ark, embraced the Torah scrolls that stood there, and in a mighty voice that petrified those present, cried out: "Hear, O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One!" He then stood up straight, and began to declare with all his might: "The L-rd is G-d!" With each repetition his voice grew louder. Finally, as he cried it out for the seventh time, his soul flew from his body.

That same night they brought the remains of the paritz to burial in the nearby town. Rabbi Leib himself took part in the purification and preparation of the body for burial, and for the rest of his life observed the yahrzeit of this penitent every Yom Kippur by saying kaddish for the elevation of his soul.

## 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.

In Bechukotai 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.

## CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 11 - 12 May	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	5:05	6:03
Adelaide	5:06	6:03
Brisbane	4:52	5:45
Darwin	6:12	7:03
Gold Coast	4:49	5:43
Perth	5:13	6:08
Sydney	4:48	5:44
Canberra	4:53	5:50
Launceston	4:49	5:49
Auckland	5:08	6:06
Wellington	4:58	5:59
Hobart	4:44	5:46
Byron Bay	4:47	5:42

## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

### PARSHAS BEHAR-BECHUKOSAI • 26 IYAR • 11 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	5.10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	5.40 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9.41 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	MOLAD WILL BE	TUESDAY 5.21 (6 chalakim) AM
	FARBRENGEN AFTER DAVENING	
	MINCHA	5.00 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	5.05 PM
	MAARIV	5.55 PM