

LampLighter

21 Iyar
Behar-Bechukotai

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This weeks Torah portion is Behar – Bechukotai, which contains the laws of Shemita, the commandment to allow the holy land of Israel to lie fallow every seventh year.

“When you come into the land which I give you...six years shall you sow your field...but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of rest for the land, a Sabbath for the L-rd: your field you shall not sow, and your vineyard you shall not prune.”

As reward for this mitzva (commandment), G-d promises to provide the Jewish people with sustenance in overwhelming abundance, more than enough to compensate for their cessation of labour for an entire year.

“And if you should say, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year? For behold, we are not permitted to sow, and we cannot gather in our harvest,’ then will I command My blessing to you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth a harvest for three years.”

During the sixth year, sufficient crops will be harvested to last throughout the sixth, seventh, and even eighth year of the cycle.

Symbolically, the sixth year of the Shemita cycle alludes to the six thousand years of the world’s existence; the seventh year alludes to the Messianic Era.

The service of the Jewish people throughout the first six thousand years has served to ready the world for the ultimate Sabbath of the seventh millennium, when peace and tranquillity will reign triumphant.

We find ourselves now at the end of the six thousand year period. “What will we eat during the seventh year?” we ask.

How can our lowly generation, which is on an infinitely lower spiritual level than that of our forefathers, possibly bring about the Final Redemption?

G-d reassures us that we need not worry: “I will command My blessing to you in the sixth year,” we are promised.

G-d has endowed our generation with special strengths and abilities, for despite our spiritual poverty, we have a merit previous generations did not - that extra measure of self- sacrifice necessary for preserving the spark of Jewishness throughout the darkness of the exile.

This special power has been granted precisely to our generation, the last generation of exile and the first of Redemption, in order to prepare the world and sow the seeds of the great revelation of G-dliness about to begin.

When Moshiach comes, speedily in our day, G-d’s promise to “bring forth a harvest for three years” will find ultimate fulfillment in the three distinct phases of the Final Redemption: the Messianic Era, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the seventh millennium itself.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Meaning and Chaos

By Tali Loewenthal

What is the relationship between goodness, kindness, selflessness on one hand and material success on the other? Does goodness lead to health and prosperity? This question, at the heart of mankind’s search for meaning, is frequently discussed in Jewish teachings.

Our Parshah presents us with a firm statement on this subject: “If you walk in My statutes, I will provide you with rain at the right time, the land will bear its crops and the trees will provide fruit... You will live securely in the land... But if you do not listen to Me and do not keep these laws... You will plant your crops in vain; because your enemies will eat them... you will flee even when no-one is chasing you...”

In just a few brush strokes these passages paint two pictures: one of “Redemption”, i.e. national and individual wholeness, and the other of *Galut*, ie Exile, a state of fragmentation and conflict.

The picture of Redemption depicts a state of union between the spiritual and physical aspects of life wherein good actions produce good effects. In addition body and soul are in harmony on every level of being. People serve G-d, and therefore the crops grow and there is peace. Life has meaning.

The second picture, that of *Galut*, comes as a punishment; yet the state of *Galut* is not simply punishment and suffering, but *chaos*. *Galut* is the separation of spirit from matter.

In the state of *Galut*, the goodness of the individual or of the community may not be rewarded in immediate material terms. Sometimes the crops will grow, sometimes not. Even if they do grow, sometimes the enemy will capture them. There is constant uncertainty. *Galut* is a dislocation between matter and spirit, body and soul. Good people might be stricken with horrifying disease and pain; the wicked often seem to enjoy peace and prosperity.

On a deeper level, even in the state of *Galut* there is a relationship between one’s actions and the events which follow. Yet it is governed by an infinite Divine logic not completely accessible to our minds. To understand it we would have to be able to take into account spiritual realms, the world of souls. We would have to be able to appreciate processes in creation which have to unfold. If the full spiritual panorama were accessible to us, we would indeed see precise reward for each individual action. But this is not apparent in the physical world which we see before our eyes.

Yet the fact that we know that there is a deeper reality is itself a step forward. Although we are living in the world of *Galut*, so harshly depicted in the “Rebuke” in Parshah of Bechukotai, a world in which the Holocaust could take place, we can be conscious that waiting beyond the shadows is another way to live, the world of Redemption. In the closing verses of the “Rebuke” the Torah promises that Redemption is the state we ought to be in, and the one to which we will return.

Hence we should do what we can to help our earthly, physical world attain that state in which soul and body, spirit and matter, G-d and existence are one. By increasing our observance of Torah we bring the realm of Redemption that much closer.



The Rebbe Knows Tasmania

By Raquel E. HaSofer

My story starts many years before my own birth. My father grew up in Alexandria, Egypt, an avowed Communist and atheist.

In 1949, when he was expelled from Egypt for illegal political activities, he moved to Israel, became an officer in the army and met my mother. Together they became members of a non-religious kibbutz.

In 1954 they moved to Tasmania, Australia.

The small Jewish community in Tasmania was totally assimilated. The president of the community approached my father and requested of him that since he was the only Jew in the community who knew Hebrew, would he please lead the services in the synagogue?

Needless to say, my father was taken totally by surprise.

"Are you absolutely crazy?" he asked. "I am an atheist. I know nothing about religion or G-d, nor do I believe in any of it!" Nevertheless, to his own amazement, the community won him over, and my father took on the job of leading the services.

My father's belief in Communism had already been severely shaken years before when it became clear to him that the Communist "show" trials in Czechoslovakia were a sham.

As a result, he and my mother started looking into Judaism and their feelings towards G-dliness gradually grew. They began to be attracted to the Torah and mitzvot and wished to abide by at least some of them.

My mother remembered some of the laws of Shabbat and kashrut from her parents' home, so they kept whatever

they could and thirsted for more. Yet this was not enough; each day they prayed their own private prayers to G-d, that He should somehow send them some kind of information about Judaism.

My mother, in particular, became convinced that since every generation in Jewish history always had a leader, anointed by G-d, to lead the Jewish people, there must be a leader assigned to lead and help the Jews of this generation, too.

At this point she felt an urgency, and from the depth of her being cried out: "G-d! If there is a leader of this generation who has the absolute responsibility to help every Jew, then I demand of him, from this remote corner of the world, to reach out to us and help us, too!"

Soon after this, Rabbi Chaim Gutnick, a Lubavitcher rabbi from Melbourne, Australia, unexpectedly received a letter from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, telling him to go to Tasmania. Although he had no idea why he was going, Rabbi Gutnick organized a visit to Tasmania.

The moment he arrived in Tasmania, he was accosted by my parents who triumphantly announced to him: "Rabbi! You are the answer to our prayers! We have begged G-d to send us some information about how to be Jewish, and finally you are here. You must come to our house immediately and show us the ways of a Jew."

So Rabbi Gutnick helped them and came back the following year as well. The Rebbe had literally stretched out his hand to a small island in distant Australia to answer the call of two lone Jews. This was the beginning of my parents' way up the eternal ladder of Judaism and their eternal attachment to the Rebbe.

Later, it was my parents' turn to be the envoys of the Rebbe to save a Jewish soul.

One day, out of the blue, my father received an invitation to go for nine months to Malaysia, a Muslim country with no Jewish community.

He wrote to the Rebbe, who advised him to accept.

During a private audience with the Rebbe, the Rebbe told my parents that

they were going to Malaysia on a mission to save Jewish souls.

For the entire time that they were in Malaysia, however, they did not meet any Jews! They did befriend a Buddhist monk called Mahinda, to whom my father taught some elements of Chasidut. Mahinda greatly admired these teachings.

One day, after they returned home to Sydney, Australia, they were contacted by a young Jewish woman from England. She told them that she had gone to Malaysia to search for spiritual truth and had wanted to study Buddhism with Mahinda.

Mahinda asked her, "Why are you seeking truth in Buddhism? You can find all the truth you need in your own faith," and he sent her to my parents.

The Rebbe's mission was successful: a Jewish soul was saved through their trip to Malaysia. The young woman is now married, and an active member of the Lubavitch community in Sydney.

Some time later, my mother had a stillborn child. When the doctors told her that she could not have any more children, she became depressed and frustrated.

In a private audience she asked the Rebbe for a blessing for another child. She also explained that she was very upset because she felt an overwhelming connection to the Rebbe and all the preceding Rebbes, but she did not feel a connection to the Previous Rebbe. For a moment the Rebbe looked very concerned, but then a wide smile swept across his holy face and he said, "You will, you will!"

Soon, contrary to all the doctors' opinions, my mother became pregnant, and I was born from the Rebbe's blessing on the 10th of Shevat, the yahrtzeit of the Previous Rebbe.

My connection to the Rebbe has deepened greatly through my study of his teachings at Machon Chana Women's Yeshiva in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The intensity of the atmosphere, the caring, and quality of the teaching has strengthened my eternal bond to the tzadik (holy righteous person) of the generation, the Rebbe.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



Time Is Precious

10 Iyar, 5710 (1950)

Greetings and blessings,

We are now in the midst of the days of the Counting of the Omer. We can learn a lesson in the service of G-d from every matter. From a mitzvah (commandment), in particular, we can learn many things.

The Counting of the Omer teaches us, among many other things, that time is precious. We always have to be counting. Missing a single day creates a blemish not only in the day that was missed, but in the days and weeks that follow. Conversely, when we count that day, the coming days and weeks are also blessed.

In the blessing for the Counting of the Omer, we praise G-d as E-lokeinu ("our L-rd") which means "our strength and our vitality" and "the King of the universe," implying that He controls the entire world. (As a matter of course it can be understood that He must, and will, give good to those whom He calls "My son, My firstborn, Israel.")

The above applies to any ordinary person. Even more so must it apply to someone who influences many people and whose activities effect many more Jewish people. It applies most specifically to those who have already succeeded in having an influence on others. They certainly must use every opportunity - and indeed, seek out new opportunities - to have an effect in strengthening the Torah and Judaism and spreading the Torah and the teachings of Chassidus. My revered father-in-law, the [Previous] Rebbe promised that one can rest assured that any effort undertaken will not be without results....

8 Iyar, 5710 (1950)

Greetings and blessings,

I found out, incidentally, that you have become very volatile recently and irritable.... Certainly you heard from my revered father-in-law, the [Previous] Rebbe, and learned from his talks, discourses, and letters, that there is nothing accidental in the world, but on the contrary, everything is controlled by Divine providence. On our part, we must try to align our deeds with the intent of the His providence. Who am I to say that I know the intent of His providence? Nevertheless, since I heard about the above, and it is possible for me to help - at least to a certain extent - I am therefore writing this letter.

The reason for your emotional volatility was not told to me, but it is likely to be your dissatisfaction with your present situation. The G-dly soul is not happy with your spiritual circumstances and the animal soul is not happy with your material situation. Therefore you let your body and your nerves just have their way.

It is difficult for me to give a particular answer to your assertions regarding your appraisal of your situation, because I have not heard those assertions from you directly.

I will therefore offer only a general answer according to my understanding of your situation. Since you have a greater vested interest in the matter than I do, according to Torah law, my testimony and conception of the matter is more trustworthy.

My perspective is that my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, established you in the path of light, i.e., Torah. Moreover, he did not remain content with this, and also granted you a portion in "the light of the Torah," i.e., that you and the teachers under your direction are chassidim who study the teachings of Chassidus, whether profusely, in an average way, or at least to a limited extent. And you are able to instill the fear of Heaven into your students, which is the purpose of the Torah and its mitzvos.

This was not enough. From early on, my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, led you by the hand and directed you in all your affairs. You built a home on the basis of the Torah and its mitzvos. Thank G-d you always had the means to provide for your sustenance and the sustenance of the members of your household and you have that now as well. And you have received blessings from my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, that this situation will continue in the future, and furthermore, that you will be able to give charity generously.

In brief, this describes your spiritual and material situation. After all that, why are you so disturbed? Is it that although certain things are granted you in hand, in addition, you have to work?! Is it that this entails heartache?! Is it that you must deal with simple people?!

The Rebbe's time and energy were certainly precious. He certainly had the right to demand more from Above than others and, nevertheless, he went through all sorts of challenges and endured them over and above the norm.

Who then can come along and indulge himself and claim, "I don't want to do that!" (which inevitably leads to the assumption) "I can't do that," and as a result, to the conclusion: "I'm walking away. I'm all upset"?! Is this the right approach....?

With good wishes for your wife and to all the members of your household, for blessing for all types of good.

A MITZVA A DAY

Positive Commandment 173: Appointing a King

When the Jewish people occupy and settle Eretz Yisrael they are commanded to appoint a king to rule the nation. This king is chosen by HaShem and the Torah guides him regarding how to conduct his kingdom. He must lead the people in the way of HaShem and be dedicated to fulfilling Torah and Mitzvot. This is learned out from the passage: "You may appoint a king upon yourselves". (Deuteronomy 17:15)

A WORD from the Director

In this weeks Torah portion we are told, "If you will walk in my chukot (statutes)..." According to Rashi, this verse refers to the study of Torah. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad Chasidism, explained that the word chukot is from the same root as the word chakika (engraving)

When we combine these two meanings for the word chukot, we arrive at the conclusion that one's study of Torah needs to be like letters engraved in stone

When letters are written with ink on paper, they are connected and united with that paper. This is like the level of Torah study in which the student becomes united with the Torah; his actions reflecting what he has learned

However, in this case the letters written with ink are still an entity distinct from the paper. Letters engraved in stone, however, have no separate existence. The letter and the stone are one. In the same way, one's study of Torah should ultimately reach the level of the engraved letter.

Winter is approaching. Winter is a time when people like to relax in their well heated homes. It is uncomfortable to have to venture out into the cold to go to a Torah lesson.

On the other hand, winter with its longer nights provides the perfect opportunity for learning Torah. Take your pick from classes, lectures or individual private study; anything which inspires and enables you to truly become one with the Torah, like the letter engraved in stone.

Our winter then will be a healthy one, both in body and spirit. And perhaps a more enjoyable one at that!

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Baal Shem Tov taught that when the Messiah arrives, he will explain the entire Torah from the perspective of each and every letter, starting from the first letter of the Torah to the last. Then he will join all the letters together into one long Name of G-d and explain the entire Torah from the total perspective. Meaning to say, first he will explain the Torah according to the unique view of every individual, so that each one will hear an explanation of Torah that rings harmoniously with the root of his soul. Then he will join all the letters together, and reveal the unity of the entire Jewish People through the Torah. (*Eliezer Shore-Bas Ayin*)

J.I. Gutnick

It Happened Once...



In the years before Reb Mordechai of Neshitz became known as a tzaddik and leader of many Chasidim, he was the rabbi of a small, poverty-stricken town far off the beaten track.

Although he held a position of authority and honour, his congregants were far too poor to pay him a decent salary, and so he was as poor as they were. His wages were so meagre that he could afford only the barest necessities of life, and to make matters worse, he received the money only sporadically. When times were really bad, he would visit the broken-down shop of the town pawnbroker who would give him a few coppers to tide him over.

Life in the small town was a difficult struggle, but Reb Mordechai's spiritual life was bright. The highlight of his life was when he would visit his rebbe, the tzadik, Reb Michel of Zlotchov.

Lacking the money to travel in comfort, Reb Mordechai would take up his walking stick and make his way to Zlotchov by foot.

With only a few crusts of bread to tide him over, he would sludge through muddy roads and forbidding woods. Only the thought of the spiritual feast or the desperately needed advice of his rebbe made the long trip bearable.

One wintry day, Reb Mordechai sat in his cold cottage, surrounded by his hungry wife and children. Of course there was not a penny in the house. Their misery was made much worse by the many puddles which dotted his cottage. These small ponds had formed from the melting ice which dripped through the holes in the roof. What was there to do, other than to undertake the arduous journey to Reb Michel of Zlotchov.

It was a hungry, worn out Reb Mordechai who arrived one freezing morning in a village where a certain wealthy Chasid lived. Surely, he would provide a warm repast for the traveler. But no, when Reb Mordechai knocked on the door and asked for food, the Chasid replied, "Don't you know I'm marrying off my daughter tomorrow?! I don't have time to cater to every wanderer who happens to pass by!" Reb Mordechai was shocked, but he departed without a word and continued on his journey.

When he finally arrived in Zlotchov, he received a warm welcome, a warm meal and an invitation; to join the Rebbe at the wedding of a wealthy Chasid the following day. Reb Mordechai happily agreed to join the celebration. Can you imagine his surprise when they pulled up in front of the same house he had left with a rumbling stomach the day before!

When the master of the house came to greet the Rebbe, he saw that the Rebbe's companion was none other than the "beggar" he had so rudely turned away from his house. The wealthy Chasid was beside himself with remorse and shame, and he fell on the floor, pleading for forgiveness. Reb Mordechai and the Rebbe observed his outburst in silence. When the man finally calmed down Reb Mordechai spoke: "The sin of refusing to provide food for a hungry Jew is so great that it reaches the highest heavens. When the pain of that Jew reaches Heaven, it causes a very severe decree to fall upon the one who caused the

suffering." Now the wealthy man began to plead even more bitterly, until Reb Mordechai said, "I forgive you, and I hope that G-d will do the same."

Then Reb Michel spoke very solemnly: "We should all beg the Almighty to forgive, and if there should be an evil decree, let it all be vented on bricks and stones." The guests glanced at one another nervously. Suddenly screams were heard crying, "Fire! Help!"

Everyone ran outside to find people running from all sides carrying buckets of water. But it was impossible to douse the flames which had already consumed most of the surrounding buildings, property of the wealthy Chasid, who had suddenly become a poor man. Indeed, no sooner had the Rebbe spoken than his words had come true. All of the property was lost; all the lives were saved.

The next day, before Reb Michel was to leave, his host came to bid him farewell. "Remember," said the Rebbe, "we must thank G-d for whatever happens to us, for were it not for His great mercies, our sins would consume us. When you failed to provide food to a hungry traveller, it was decreed in Heaven that your entire family die on the wedding day. But instead, through intense prayers, the verdict was changed and only your property was lost."

The Chasid lived to see his fortunes restored, but every day of his life was illuminated by the lesson he had learned. He became known as one of the most charitable men in his city, and his table provided nobly for the many guests from whom his blessings came.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

For strangers and sojourners are you with Me (Leviticus 25:23)

The more a person considers himself only a sojourner and a temporary resident of this world, the closer he is to G-d. And unfortunately, the opposite is also true... (Rabbi Boruch of Mezhibozh)

Do not take of him any usury or increase ("ribit") (Leviticus 25:36)

The numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word "ribit" is 612 - one short of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah - teaching us that the mitzva of not charging interest is considered as great as all the other mitzvot combined. (Baal HaTurim)

If he is not redeemed by one of these means, he shall go out in the jubilee year (Leviticus 25:54)

The jubilee year is mentioned 14 times in this section of the Torah, alluding to the fourteen jubilee cycles the Jewish people celebrated until they were exiled from the land of Israel. (Baal HaTurim)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI

22 IYAR • 16 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:02 PM
	MINCHA:	5:10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:35 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:01 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN - FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:05 PM
	MAARIV:	5:55 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 15 MAY 2009



BEGINS		ENDS
5:02	MELBOURNE	6:01
5:04	ADELAIDE	6:01
4:50	BRISBANE	5:44
6:11	DARWIN	7:02
4:46	GOLD COAST	5:44
5:10	PERTH	6:06
4:45	SYDNEY	5:42
4:45	LAUNCESTON	5:47
5:05	AUCKLAND	6:03
4:55	WELLINGTON	5:56

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

יצוקללה"ה נב"מ ז"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.