

It was a time of relentless tension and intimidation. The noose that the Soviets had so carefully placed around the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Y. Schneersohn, was tightening day by day. Everyone could sense that the situation was reaching critical mass: the Chasidim, the Rebbe's family, and the Rebbe himself. Nonetheless, the Rebbe refused to be intimidated, and persisted in his activities to strengthen and disseminate Judaism.

By Purim of 5687 (1927) the Rebbe was being harassed almost daily by the Yevsektziya (the Jewish branch of what would later develop into the K.G.B.). Members of the secret police were bursting into the Rebbe's house at all hours of the night and day, rifling through his belongings, confiscating papers and issuing threats. But the Rebbe insisted on celebrating the traditional Purim farbrengen (Chasidic gathering) in his home as always, despite the foreboding atmosphere.

The farbrengen began as usual, with the Rebbe seated at the head of the table. However, the Chasidim could immediately sense that the Rebbe was in another world. Much of the time the Rebbe's eyes were closed; from time to time his face would redden from mental exertion, and tears would roll down his cheeks. The Chasidim watched the Rebbe nervously, interspersing the Rebbe's words of Torah with Chasidic melodies.

At the height of the farbrengen the Chasidim noticed three figures slinking into the room and sitting at the end of the table. No one had any doubts about who they were. Although outwardly dressed as Chasidim, the three informers had by then become regular participants in all their gatherings.

The Rebbe was usually cautious and circumspect whenever the informers showed up, but this night would prove to be different. Several hours into the farbrengen the Rebbe suddenly rose from his seat and tore off his coat. Opening the buttons of his shirt he moved his talit katan [four-cornered garment with fringes attached to each corner] aside to expose the area over his holy heart.

"Eli Chaim!" the Rebbe called out to one of his Chasidim. "I once ordered you to do something and you refused, but I'm ordering you a second time and you must obey. I want you to go out and announce that whoever sends his children to a Soviet or Yevsektziya-run school will not live out the year!"

The Rebbe then turned to another Chasid. "Zalman! If they make a bonfire and ask you to choose between sending your children to their schools or jumping into the fire, do you know what you must do? You are to throw yourself into the flames!"

An icy fear gripped the hearts of everyone present, aware that every word the Rebbe uttered was being recorded as "evidence" against him. As if reading their minds, the Rebbe then turned his gaze on the three informers, who were clearly uncomfortable. "I know that they are here," the Rebbe said, "the men of the cursed Yevsektziya, may their name be erased. But I am not afraid of them at all!"

At that point some of the Chasidim started to sing, but the Rebbe's voice was louder. "When you see the body burning, G-d forbid, you must have no mercy. Just watch out for the head!" The Rebbe then added cryptically, "I asked my father [the Rebbe Rashab, Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber of Lubavitch], 'Just like Nikolai?' And he said, 'Yes, like Nikolai.' "

When the Rebbe saw that no one had understood his reference to Nikolai he continued. "The Kaiser Pavel once sent his son Nikolai out to war to prove his mettle. The son performed fearlessly and emerged victorious. However, when the battle was over, he began to distribute the spoils without his father's permission. The Kaiser was faced with a decision. On the one hand, Nikolai had demonstrated his military prowess, but on the other, the Kaiser wished to punish him for his disobedience. In the end Nikolai was sent to jail and imprisoned.

"I asked my father, 'The same as Nikolai?' and he said, 'Yes, like Nikolai.'" When the Chasidim grasped the Rebbe's implication they were horrified.

Hoping to impede the awful flow of words, one of the Chasidim ran into the next room to summon the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah, to try to calm her son. But as soon as the Rebbe saw her he began to weep. "Mother, I do nothing of my own volition. All my actions are in accordance with Father's wishes." The Rebbe and his mother both stood crying for some time.

No one could remain indifferent to such a scene, and the entire assembly dissolved in tears. The farbrengen ended when the Rebbe fell into a deep faint.

Exactly three months later, shortly after midnight on the 15th of Sivan, the Soviet secret police invaded the Rebbe's house and arrested him for crimes against the state. The Rebbe was held until the 12th/13th of Tamuz, when he was liberated in a miraculous manner - for which reason these dates have been celebrated as the Previous Rebbe's Festival of Redemption ever since.

לעילוי נשמת
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Dedicated in memory of
RABBI SHMUEL M. BUTMAN, OBM
Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization
and founder of the L'chaim Publication

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THOUGHTS THAT COUNT
On the Weekly Torah Portion

Speak to the Children of Israel, that they bring to you a completely red cow on which there is no blemish, that has never borne a yoke (Num. 19:14)

Comments Rashi: "It should be perfect in redness; if there were two black hairs upon it, it would be disqualified." In the same way a red heifer is prevented from being "perfect" by the appearance of two black hairs, so too is a Jew's perfection disqualified by even the slightest "hairsbreadth" of dishonesty or deception, as it states, "You shall be perfect [whole] with the L-rd your G-d."*(Chidushei HaRim)*

And [Moses] said to them, "Hear now, you rebels, must we bring you forth water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10)

Calling the Jewish people "rebels" was considered a very grave sin for a person on Moses' spiritual level. For when Jews are in trouble, the proper thing to do is help rather than chastise them. *(Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Barditchev)*

Therefore it is said in the book of the wars of the L-rd (Num. 21:14)

The "book of the wars of the L-rd" refers to a specific volume recording all G-d's battles on behalf of those who fear Him. It is quite possible that the book dates back to our forefather Abraham, as many ancient manuscripts have been lost over the millennia: The Words and Testimony of Nathan; The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel; and King Solomon's Songs and Parables. *(Ibn Ezra)*

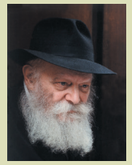
Lo, it is a people that shall live alone, and among the nations shall not be reckoned (Num. 23:9)

When the Jewish people are "alone," separate and distinguished from the gentiles, their existence is secure and they are respected by the nations. If, however, they begin to assimilate and copy their non-Jewish neighbors, they "shall not be reckoned" - they lose their importance and high esteem. *(Divrei Eliezer)*



8:13 PM *Candle Lighting Time*
NY Metro Area
11 Tammuz // June 26
Torah Portion *Chukas - Balak*
Ethics: Ch 5
Shabbat ends **9:21 PM**

בס"ד
L'Chaim
1929
11 Tammuz, 5786
June 26 2026
The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person
נוסד תוך ימי השלושים
Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"Jerusalem has mountains around it, and the L-rd is around His people from now and to eternity" (Psalms 125:2)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE
from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week we read two Torah portions, Chukat and Balak. Balak, the king of Moab, hired Bilaam, a gentile prophet, to curse the Jewish people. Earlier in the Torah we read of another another nation who was also a sworn enemy of the Children of Israel, Amalek.

Mystical texts state that there in an inherent connection between Bilaam and Amalek. An illusion to this is seen when writing their names in Hebrew: when combining the first two letters of Bilaam (bet-lamed) with the first two letters of Amalek (ayin-mem), it spells Bilaam; and when combining the remaining two letters of Bilaam (ayin-mem) with the remaining two letters of Amalek (lamed-kof), it spells Amalek.

Amalek's basic ability to confront the Jews was derived from his family relationship with them; Amalek was the descendant of Esau. "I too am the great-grandchild of Abraham and Isaac," Amalek claimed. "I have the same right to voice my opinion in matters of Torah and holiness!"

The argument that was propounded by Bilaam was similar. Bilaam was a descendant of Laban, who insisted to Jacob that "the daughters are my daughters" - i.e., that the Matriarchs through whom the Jewish people would be established were his kin. With these words Laban claimed the right to have a say in Jewish affairs. Bilaam, a member of the same family, continued his forefather's argument and demanded that his opinion be given weight when it came to Torah and mitzvot.

From this we learn an important lesson that is valid in every generation: If someone comes along and makes an assertion that is contrary to Torah, it doesn't matter if he is the grandchild of Abraham and Isaac, or if the Matriarchs of the Jewish people are on his family tree. We are forbidden to heed his word.

"We have none but our Father in heaven upon Whom to rely!" we must respond to his argument. As Jews, there is only one yardstick by which we measure all things: the Torah. Nothing else, not even the most prestigious lineage, may enter the equation. The holy Torah is our sole criterion.

By definition, if a statement or directive is in accordance with the Torah it is good; if not, it doesn't matter who is saying it. If a Bilaam or an Amalek's words run counter to the Torah, they do not concern us in the least.

The best advice to a Jew who seeks to free himself from an Amalek or a Bilaam is yira (fear and awe) and ahava (love) of G-d, in that order. The Hebrew words themselves reveal this deep interconnection: combining the first two letter of yira (yud-resh) with the first two letters of ahava (alef-hei) spells yira; and combining the remaining two letters of yira (alef-hei) with the remaining two letters of ahava (bet-hei) spells ahava.

When a Jew possesses fear of G-d and love of G-d, there is nothing to be afraid of. Amalek and Bilaam will never succeed in defeating him.

Adapted from Volume 2 of Likutei Sichot

The Power of the Temporary Sacred Space

By Rabbi Yosef Y. Jacobson

TENTS AND DWELLINGS

This week's Torah portion, Balak, contains a striking moment. Balaam, a prophet hired to curse the Israelites, instead delivers one of the Bible's most beautiful blessings:

"How goodly are your tents, O Jacob; your dwellings, O Israel."

These words became so beloved that they are recited at the beginning of Jewish morning prayers every day. Remarkably, they come not from Moses or a Jewish prophet, but from an outsider who was transformed by what he witnessed.

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, offered a profound interpretation of this verse. Why does Balaam mention both tents and dwellings? And why associate one with Jacob and the other with Israel?

A TALE OF TWO STRUCTURES

A tent is temporary. A dwelling is permanent.

On a deeper level, these structures represent two ways of living a spiritual life.

Some people create a lasting inner home for higher awareness, purpose, and connection. Their sense of the sacred is steady and woven into daily life. They live from a place of ongoing clarity and presence.

Others struggle to sustain that connection. Work pressures, family responsibilities, uncertainty, and the endless demands of modern life can make deeper awareness feel distant. Yet even amid the noise, moments arise when the heart seeks something more.

A quiet morning. A reflective walk. A few minutes of prayer, meditation, gratitude, or honest self-examination.

These moments may not create a permanent dwelling. They are more like tents—temporary spaces in which we reconnect with what matters most.

And yet they matter deeply.

THE HEEL AND THE HEAD

The names Jacob and Israel symbolize these two states of being.

Jacob is linked to the heel—the part of us grounded in struggle, survival, and life's daily battles. Israel is associated with the head—clarity, vision, and higher consciousness.

At times we live as Israel, guided by insight and purpose. At other times we are Jacob, pulled into the pressures and complications of ordinary life.

One might assume that the permanent dwellings of Israel are spiritually superior to the temporary tents of Jacob.

But Balaam's blessing suggests otherwise.

"How goodly are your tents, O Jacob; your dwellings, O Israel."

The tents come first.

Why? Because there is something uniquely powerful about choosing meaning in the midst of distraction. When a person pauses during a busy, demanding day to reconnect with their deepest values, that act carries extraordinary significance.

A permanent dwelling is beautiful. But a tent built in the middle of life's chaos reflects a different kind of courage.

Perhaps the purpose of spiritual life is not to escape the world, but to bring depth, awareness, and meaning into it. In that sense, even a brief moment of genuine connection can transform the ordinary into something sacred.

And sometimes, a tent is exactly where that transformation begins.

L'chaim L'chaim L'chaim