

# Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1475 JULY 9<sup>TH</sup> '22 י' תמוז תשפ"ב

פרשת בלק

PARSHAT BALAK  
AVOT CHAPTER 6

ב"ה



The Lonely  
People of Faith  
Rabbi Moshe Taragin  
Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion  
page 44

ויקה בלק את-  
בלעם ראש הפעור  
הנשקף על-פני  
הישימן

במדבר כ"ג, פסוק כ"ח



The Haftorah Comes  
to Life Each Week in  
Torah Tidbits!  
See page 58

**YERUSHALAYIM** IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT **BALAK**

Candles 7:12PM • Earliest 6:19PM • Havdala 8:30PM • Rabbeinu Tam 9:05PM



## This week's Torah Tidbits cover image!

**Photo By: Julian Alper**

My wife and I made Aliyah in 2014 and live in Teveria overlooking the beautiful Kinneret. We feel so blessed to have a wonderful view of the Kinneret from our window and from there I photographed this sunrise.

**About the Photo:** We think we know what inspired Bilaam to declare such sublime prose

מה־טבו אהליך יעקב משכנתיך ישראל

How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov, your dwelling places O Yisrael (Bamidbar 24:5).

Balak took Bilaam to the peak of Peor, which overlooks the face of the Yeshimon (Bamidbar 23:28). From there one can see a sieve-like shape (Miriam's well) in the Kinneret (Rashi to Bamidbar 21:20). Who could fail to be so inspired!

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\*Rabbi Daniel Mann's Dvar Torah can be found at [www.torahtidbits.com](http://www.torahtidbits.com)



## KIDDUSH LEVANA

Last Opportunity To Say Kiddush Levana Until **15 Tammuz, Wed. July 13, until 1:43 am**

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



| CANDLES | EARLIEST | BALAK                                   | HAVDALA | PINCHAS |          |         |
|---------|----------|---|---------|---------|----------|---------|
|         |          |   |         | Candles | Earliest | Havdala |
| 7:12    | 6:19     | Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim             | 8:30    | 7:10    | 6:18     | 8:27    |
| 7:29    | 6:22     | Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)      | 8:32    | 7:27    | 6:20     | 8:29    |
| 7:31    | 6:20     | Beit Shemesh / RBS                      | 8:31    | 7:29    | 6:19     | 8:28    |
| 7:27    | 6:20     | Gush Etzion                             | 8:30    | 7:25    | 6:18     | 8:27    |
| 7:30    | 6:22     | Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba | 8:32    | 7:28    | 6:20     | 8:30    |
| 7:28    | 6:21     | Modi'in / Chashmona'im                  | 8:31    | 7:26    | 6:19     | 8:28    |
| 7:30    | 6:22     | Netanya                                 | 8:33    | 7:28    | 6:21     | 8:30    |
| 7:28    | 6:20     | Be'er Sheva                             | 8:30    | 7:26    | 6:19     | 8:27    |
| 7:29    | 6:21     | Rehovot                                 | 8:32    | 7:27    | 6:20     | 8:29    |
| 7:12    | 6:21     | Petach Tikva                            | 8:32    | 7:10    | 6:20     | 8:29    |
| 7:29    | 6:21     | Ginot Shomron                           | 8:32    | 7:27    | 6:19     | 8:29    |
| 7:21    | 6:23     | Haifa / Zichron                         | 8:34    | 7:19    | 6:21     | 8:31    |
| 7:28    | 6:20     | Gush Shiloh                             | 8:30    | 7:26    | 6:18     | 8:28    |
| 7:30    | 6:22     | Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel                | 8:32    | 7:28    | 6:20     | 8:30    |
| 7:28    | 6:20     | Giv'at Ze'ev                            | 8:30    | 7:26    | 6:18     | 8:28    |
| 7:27    | 6:20     | Chevron / Kiryat Arba                   | 8:30    | 7:25    | 6:18     | 8:27    |
| 7:30    | 6:22     | Ashkelon                                | 8:32    | 7:28    | 6:21     | 8:29    |
| 7:29    | 6:21     | Yad Binyamin                            | 8:31    | 7:27    | 6:20     | 8:29    |
| 7:25    | 6:20     | Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden                 | 8:32    | 7:22    | 6:19     | 8:29    |
| 7:28    | 6:20     | Golan                                   | 8:31    | 7:26    | 6:18     | 8:28    |

**Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 9:05 PM** • next week - 9:03 pm

Times According to MyZmanim (20 min. before sundown in most cities,  
40 min. in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva, 30 min. in Tzfat/Haifa)



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## OTHER Z'MANIM



### JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed.- Shabbat

July 6 - 16 / 7 - 17 Tamuz

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Earliest Tallit and Tefillin            | <b>4:40 - 4:46</b>   |
| Sunrise                                 | <b>5:39 - 5:45</b>   |
| Sof Zman Kriat Shema                    | <b>9:11 - 9:15</b>   |
| Magen Avraham                           | <b>8:28 - 8:32</b>   |
| Sof Zman Tefila                         | <b>10:22 - 10:25</b> |
| (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya) |                      |
| Chatzot (Halachic Noon)                 | <b>12:43 - 12:45</b> |
| Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)         | <b>1:19 - 1:20</b>   |
| Plag Mincha                             | <b>6:19 - 6:17</b>   |
| Sunset (Including Elevation)            | <b>7:53 - 7:50</b>   |

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# DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



**RABBI AVI BERMAN**

Executive Director, OU Israel



In last week's column I discussed the power of our tefillot, particularly the ones focused on *kibbutz galuyot* (ingathering of the exiles), and the *zechut* we have as *Am Yisrael* living in *Eretz Yisrael* of seeing miracles unfold before our eyes. In just a few days we will see the miracle of, “וּקְבַץ נְדָחֵינוּ מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפוֹת” וְהֶאֱרָץ, “gather us together from the four corners of the earth,” come true.

Teachers, parents and mentors can appreciate the importance of informal education, especially when shaping the lives of children, teens and young adults. Recognizing the impact that inspiring programs can have on helping the next generation of *Am Yisrael* stay connected and feel pride in their heritage, the OU has placed a dedicated emphasis on creating programs that provide meaningful experiences for Jewish youth of all backgrounds.

This time of year is one that I look forward to as OU summer programs finally begin, many of which take place here in Israel. Soon we will see the streets of *Eretz Yisrael* filled with North American teenagers

and young professionals who are given the opportunity to experience this Holy Land. With creative programming provided, OU participants can connect to their *Yiddishkeit* and take an active role in solidifying their future as members of *Klal Yisrael*.

I spent time this past week visiting a number of group leaders. Listening to the tailored approaches with which they have created their programs and their vision for reinforcing the foundations they plan to set for participants this summer, I couldn't help but marvel at the dedication of OU staff members. On one such visit, Rabbi Jonathan Shulman, Director of the **OU Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (JLIC)** invited me to speak to 200 JLIC students here for the summer. JLIC helps Orthodox students navigate the college environment, and balance their Jewish commitments with their desire to engage the secular world. Placing rabbinic couples on over 20 college campuses across the US and Canada to serve as Torah educators and role models, I am proud of the work we've done to launch JLIC in Reichman University (IDC Herzliya) and Bar-Ilan University. Soon, we will open another program for students at Tel Aviv University.

Rabbi Shulman is leading a select group of JLIC students across a number of programs taking place this summer: **Summer in Jerusalem at Midreshet Torah v'Avodah**, **Summer in Jerusalem for Women at Midreshet Moriah** and **Ascend at Harova**. In

לעילוי נשמת

יעקב יוסף בן מרדכי הכהן ז"ל

**Jacob Rottenberg z"l**

on his 14th Yahrzeit - 10 Tamuz

Mark & Livia Rottenberg  
Shopsy & Miriam Kanarek

addition to JLIC's summer program, other OU programs taking place in Israel this summer include:

Trips for girls looking for interactive learning, meaningful chessed trips and touring Israel such as **Michlelet, Michlelet Mechina, Girls Israel Volunteer Experience (GIVE)** and **Impact Girls**.

Trips for boys looking for interactive learning, meaningful chessed trips and touring Israel such as **Kollel, Kollel Mechina** and **Impact Boys**.

Trips for teens interested in Jewish advocacy, Jewish arts, traveling and experiencing different cultures such as **JOLT, Euro Israel, Next Step, NCSY Chai, The Senior Experience, The Israel Discovery Trip** and **Israel ID**.

Trips for teens looking to volunteer while touring Israel such as **Hatzalah Rescue** and **Yaldei Ohr**.

Inclusive trips for teens led by **Yad b'Yad**, for post-10th and 11th grade high schoolers and young adults with disabilities.

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't also highlight another program that is near and dear to the hearts of OU Israel staffers - **Camp Dror**. Running for more than 25 years, Camp Dror is one of the few Orthodox sleep away camps in Israel for children in grade five through high school, giving *Olim* a transformative, inspirational, informal education summer experience

As you can clearly see, each of these programs caters to a different need in *Klal*

*Yisrael* and attracts teenagers who have a variety of interests and backgrounds. Led by people who dedicate their lives to creating memorable and formative experiences for teenagers and young adults, you can only begin to imagine the work that goes into planning these trips, the effort required to keep participants engaged during the summer, and the tireless efforts of staff members who maintain relationships after the summer concludes.

Joining these trip leaders and students, OU Israel will be welcoming members of the OU executive team including, Rabbi Moishe Bane, President, Rabbi Moshe Hauer, EVP, Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph, EVP and COO and Rabbi Micah Greenland, International Director - NCSY. We have an opportunity to show our *HaKarat HaTov* to this dynamic team that powers the OU and supports OU Israel in our efforts. If you see them over the next few weeks, please don't hesitate to stop and thank them for their impactful work.

This summer is set to be one of tremendous meaning for many of our brothers and sisters. *May HaKadosh Baruch Hu* open the hearts and minds of summer program participants to see the beauty of *Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael*. *May each trip be successful in accomplishing its goals.* And as Jews flood the streets of Eretz Yisrael over the coming weeks, may we merit to bring the Geulah Shelema together.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman  
Executive Director, OU Israel  
[aberman@ouisrael.org](mailto:aberman@ouisrael.org)

In loving memory of  
**Rabbi Macy Gordon z"l**  
on his 5th yearzeit - 10 Tamuz

# BALAK



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA  
SEDRA SUMMARY



**Rabbi Reuven  
Tradburks**  
Director of  
RCA Israel Region

The talking donkey in the story of Bilaam gives Bilaam his fame, or perhaps infamy. We like to give the donkey story attention. But far more important than Bilaam being spoken to by a donkey is that he is spoken to by G-d. He is not the only person in the Torah who enjoys communication from G-d, but he is the only non-Jew in the Torah (after the giving of the Torah) who enjoys prophecy, communication from G-d.

More significant for us, the reader, is that this parsha is a glimpse of the Jewish people from the other side. We have been experiencing all of Jewish history until here from our side. Avraham, Moshe, G-d speaking to us. Now the narration switches to the other side, the non-Jews watching our march to the Land. We get to see what we look like in their eyes. We've never had this perspective.

And actually, not just what we look like in their eyes – but what we look like in G-d's eyes. It's like a child and a parent.

Condolences to  
Ruchie Majerowicz Cohen and family  
on the passing of her  
**BROTHER** ז"ל

The child misbehaves and gets scolded. But then, the child overhears the parent speaking of them with a neighbor. About how wonderful the child is and how much the parent loves them.

Here too. We hear through the mouth of Bilaam what G-d thinks of the Jewish people. How blessed we are in His eyes.

This is a crucial moment. Because the book of Bamidbar could get you down. We are pivoting from the pristine desert experience, the ideal world of the mishkan in our midst, to the rough and tumble of real-life human beings with all their foibles. Complaining about water and meat and reminiscing of the good life in Egypt. Then the spies and Korach. We could wonder whether G-d is tiring of us, perhaps not as committed to His people. Perhaps we no longer deserve His love. Miriam dies, Aharon dies, Moshe is told he is about to die. Perhaps the covenant is slipping away.

And then Bilaam. Balak's plan to curse the Jewish people turns into a grand favor to us, the Jewish people. As it gives us a glimpse into what G-d thinks of us - through Bilaam's mouth.

Bilaam's blessings transform the book of Bamidbar from a focus on Jewish failing to an affirmation of the strength and power of the Jewish people and G-d's enduring love for us.



**1<sup>st</sup> aliya (Bamidbar 22:2-12)**

Balak, king of Moav, is afraid of the Jewish people; they are like an ox, licking clean all in its path. He sends messengers to Bilaam, requesting of him to curse the Jewish people. Bilaam said he would only do as G-d instructs. G-d told him not to go, for the Jewish people are

blessed.

Balak figures that if the Jewish people can defeat the strongest of the strong, Sichon and Og, then defeating the Jewish people will require more than military prowess. He recognizes that the spirit of the Jewish people is its power. It is this spirit that must be disrupted.

This story is also a powerful lesson in self-perception. The spies thought that the people of the Land viewed them as grasshoppers. Here, Balak describes the Jewish people as oxen. The difference in the 2 is who is speaking; is it *us* imagining what people think of us or is it *the people* telling us what they actually think of us? The spies had no idea what the people of the Land thought of the Jewish people; all they could do was project. What do I think that you think of me? That says far more about me than it does about you. As if to say; if I were you, I would think of me as a grasshopper. Because that is what I think of myself. Here, Balak tells us himself what he thinks of the Jewish people. Oxen. Powerful. Formidable.



**2<sup>nd</sup> aliya (22:13-20)** Bilaam told the messengers to return to Balak, as G-d instructed him not to join them. Balak tried again, with greater dignitaries as messengers. He promised Bilaam great honor. Bilaam replied that even the promise of a house

**MAZAL TOV** to the  
**AFRIAT MENDES FAMILY**  
on the birthday of  
**EDDY YOM TOV**  
BsD may he continue bringing joy  
and happiness to all!!!

**Jeff Mor**  
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full of silver and gold would not allow him to ignore G-d's word. G-d said: if these men want you to join them, you may go but only say what I tell you.

This story introduces us to the complexity of our relationship with the non-Jewish nations. Balak and Bilaam see a world of powers beyond the rational, physical world. They believe in the power to curse the people. And that this power is given to specific people. And we must assume that Bilaam had success in his powers, for Balak never questions Bilaam's ability. In addition, Bilaam enjoys communication from G-d. The Jewish people will need to contend with the world of the unseen when they enter the Land; people who believe in all sorts of powers that will vie with our G-d for our attention. There is fertile debate as to the veracity of Bilaam's powers; however, the simple reading of the story seems to indicate that he is a prophet, one who G-d speaks with and who has used his powers successfully before.



**3<sup>rd</sup> aliya (22:21-38)** Bilaam awoke, saddled his donkey and joined the noblemen of Moav.

G-d was angry. An angel with a sword appeared in front of the donkey, so it swerved to the side. It then stood in front of a narrow path; Bilaam's leg was pushed against the side. It then blocked the way of a narrow path and the donkey stopped. Bilaam hit the donkey. The donkey spoke: why did you hit me? Have I not served you loyally? Bilaam then saw the angel with its

sword. The angel spoke: you did not see what the donkey saw. Now go but only say as G-d instructs you to say. Bilaam continued with Balak's messengers, while Balak came to greet him. Why, Bilaam did you not come? Bilaam responded that he will say only what G-d instructs.

The talking donkey is a great image. Not the first animal to speak; the serpent in the garden of Eden also spoke. The speaking donkey is as if to say; there is a world out there that you just don't have a clue about. You human beings are so limited, have such impoverished perception that even the great Bilaam is embarrassingly myopic. This is one of the enduring lessons of this story: the limitations of our perception of the world.



**4<sup>th</sup> aliya (22:39-23:12)** Balak and Bilaam build 7 altars, offer offerings and peer out at the Jewish people. G-d speaks to Bilaam, placing His words in his mouth. Bilaam returns to Balak and pronounces the prophecy: How can I curse a people that is not cursed? Oh, that my lot be theirs. Balak is not happy; Bilaam affirms that he says only what G-d places in his mouth.

Bilaam unwittingly provides us with a glimpse behind the "pargod", the veil. He tells us what G-d thinks of us. Now, looking at the stories in the Torah, we might think the Jewish people are argumentative, brazen, of little faith. Perhaps G-d is a bit tepid by this point; there is a lot to

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**Hannah & Menachem Katten and family**  
on the marriage of their grandson

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be disappointed in us. But Bilaam tells us the exact opposite. The Jewish people are blessed. “How good are you”. Our errors do not impact the fundamental covenant – we are His people. A blessed people.



**5<sup>th</sup> aliya (23:13-26)** Balak and Bilaam try a different location where only part of the Jewish

people is visible. After offering offerings on 7 altars, G-d places His words in Bilaam's mouth. Bilaam returns to Balak and prophecies: G-d does not see iniquity in Israel. He is their benevolent King. They are not sorcerers; G-d acts for them. They are as lions. Balak is again unhappy; Bilaam affirms that he says what G-d instructs him to say.

What are they hoping in choosing a different location? Perhaps Bilaam and Balak acknowledge that the Jewish people as a people are blessed. But not every single Jew. We have blemishes. When G-d looks at the whole, He sees that the good outweighs the weaknesses. If we can get Him to look at the blemishes, maybe He will overlook all the good. Oh, that we could learn from Bilaam and quit glaring at the blemishes but gaze at the Jewish people as a whole.



**6<sup>th</sup> aliya (23:27-24:13)** Balak and Bilaam try again from a different spot. Bilaam avoids

his sorcery and gazes at the Jewish people. He prophecies: how wonderful are the Jewish people. They are as trees, watered gardens, powerful. G-d redeemed them; they are as crouched lions. Those that bless them are blessed. Balak is again angry; Bilaam affirms he says what G-d instructs.

Bilaam sees; Balak hears. Bilaam gazes

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at the Jewish people and sees its beauty. Balak who merely heard about the Jewish people saw them as oxen, licking clean all in their sight. Bilaam does not suffice with hearing, but looks at the people. And sees them as trees, water, and gardens.



7<sup>th</sup> **aliya (24:14-25:9)** Bilaam's prophecies regarding the other nations: all will fail to stop Israel, including Moav, Edom, Amalek, Keini. The Jewish people began to be seduced by the women of Moav, attaching to their gods. Pinchas arose and smote a Jewish man and Midianite woman before the people.

As Balak understood, the power of the Jewish people is in its relationship to G-d. Appealing to human weakness and causing the men to sin is a vulnerability of the Jewish people. Cursing may not work; reducing them to sin will.

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## HAFTARAH BALAK

### MICHA 5:6-6:8

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This week's *haftorah* makes mention of the incident of Balak the king of Moav

hiring the sorcerer Balaam to curse the Jewish people — the main topic of this week's Torah reading.

The prophet Micha prophesies about what will occur after the war of Gog and Magog, the war which precedes the coming of the Mashiach and the Final Redemption.

“And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples — like dew sent by G-d, like torrents of rain upon vegetation that does not hope for any man and does not wait for the sons of men.” The prophet describes how Hashem will remove the idols and sorcerers and how He will destroy the Jews' enemies.

Micha then goes on to rebuke the Jewish people for not observing Hashem's commandments, calling as witness the “mountains and hills” — a reference to the Avot and Imahot — and reminding them of the great things Hashem had done for them. He took them out of Egypt and replaced the curses that Balaam wanted to utter against them with blessings.

The Jewish people respond by saying that they do not know how to serve Hashem and ask for guidance. The prophet reminds

## A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

ויאמר אלוקים אל בלעם לא תלך עמהם לא תאר את העם כי ברוך הוא

And G-d spoke to Bilaam, don't go WITH them, don't curse the nation for they are blessed. ( 22:12)

There seems to be a contradiction here. This pasuk G-d denies Bilaam permission to go curse Israel. Yet, in pasuk 20, G-d allows Bilaam to go

קום לך איתם

“And G-d said to Bilaam, go WITH them”.

The Vilna Goan answers that there is a difference in the Hebrew words in the psukim...between עמהם and איתם

“Imahem” infers to identify with someone on an ideological level While “Itam” infers to be with someone but not to identify with their ideas.

G-d allows Bilaam to go with them “Itam”, to go with them physically but not to identify with their goal of cursing Israel. That is why G-d prohibits Bilaam from going with them “ Imahem”, forbidding him from identifying with their idea of cursing the blessed people of Israel

them of the Torah and that all they need to do is contained within it: “He has told you, O man, what is good, and what G-d demands of you: but to do justice, love kindness, and walk discreetly with your G-d.” ■

## STATS

40th of 54 sedras; 7th of 10 in Bamidbar  
 Written on 177.8 lines (ranks 35th)  
 2 Parshiyot; 1 closed, 1 open  
 There are 2 one-parsha sedras (Vayeitzei, Mikeitz), and then this one, on the fewest parshiyot in a sedra list  
 104 p'sukim - rank 34 (8th Bamidbar)  
 1455 words - ranks 33 (8th Bamidbar)  
 5357 letters - rank 35 (8th Bamidbar)  
 Balak is close to average for the Torah's sedras but is on the small side for Bamidbar

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Balak is one of 17 sedras in the Torah without mitzvot

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BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

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IN THE PARSHA

# Who Was Your Teacher?

Except for the saints among us, we all boast. Sometimes we boast about our own natural endowments, our good looks, or our athletic prowess. Often we boast about our achievements, social or professional.

There is one type of boasting that seems to be unique to the traditional Jewish community. That is a boasting not about oneself, but rather about one's teachers, or *rebbeim*. Thus, you will find young people saying, "My *rebbe* is greater than yours!" Or, "I am a student of so-and-so, so you better respect me for that!"

For some of us, it sounds strange that a person would claim religious or intellectual superiority on the basis of the identity of his teacher. After all, the piety or wisdom of a teacher does not necessarily filter down to the disciple. Nevertheless, boasting about

the greatness of one's master is fairly common in some of our circles.

My paternal grandfather, Reb Chaim Yitzchak Weinreb of blessed memory, was particularly perturbed about this phenomenon. As loyal readers of this column know, my *zaide* taught me many things. One lesson which he repeatedly emphasized was the importance of not falling prey to the tendency of boasting about whose student one was. He felt it was much more important to be able to claim that one was actually walking in the footsteps of the master, behaviorally emulating his virtues and accomplishments.

One of the prooftexts which he adduced to help drive this lesson home was a passage in the fifth chapter of *Pirkei Avot*, *Ethics of the Fathers*, which reads:

"Whoever possesses these three traits is one of the disciples of our father Abraham; whoever possesses the three opposite traits is one of the disciples of the wicked Balaam. A generous eye, a modest demeanor and a humble soul are the traits of the disciples of our father Abraham. An evil eye, an arrogant demeanor and an insatiable soul are attributes of the disciples of the wicked Balaam. What is the difference between our father Abraham's disciples and those of the wicked Balaam? Our father Abraham's disciples enjoy this world and inherit the world to come...The wicked Balaam's disciples inherit *Gehinnom* and go down to the



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pit of destruction...”

My grandfather would expound upon the above text by saying: “Imagine that a person studied for years under some great Chassidic Rebbe, dressed like him, and imitated his every gesture. Or imagine the student who attended the lectures of some great *yeshiva* head and could actually repeat every word verbatim. But if that person or student was guilty of envy, of arrogance, or of selfishness, he would be categorized by our Sages not as a disciple of the great Rebbe or Talmudist, but as the disciple of the wicked Balaam.”

He would continue to drive home his point by stressing the flip side of the teaching of *Pirkei Avot*: “On the other hand, imagine the person to whom circumstances denied the privilege of spending time with a great Chassidic Rebbe or the chance to study under the tutelage of a Talmudic giant. But if that person was generous, modest and humble, he could lay claim to the title ‘disciple of our father Abraham’.”

Balaam is the main character in this week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Balak* (*Numbers* 22:2-25:9). There is much to be gained from a careful study of Balaam’s behavior. One major lesson is that a person can be wise and famous, internationally renowned, and endowed with mystical powers and the gift of prophecy, yet be done in by the flaws of his personal character.

I no longer remember whether or not I asked my grandfather the question that occurred to me long ago about this passage in *Pirkei Avot*. I remain puzzled by why our Sages choose not to compare Balaam with his contemporary and adversary Moses.

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Why do they instead choose to contrast him with Abraham, who lived centuries before Balaam?

I have come to believe that our Sages had good reason for preferring the Balaam/Abraham comparison. I suggest that our rabbis were fascinated by the many similarities between the two. They were both prophets, but prophets whose missions were not confined to the Jewish people. Balaam was designated as a prophet for all the nations of the world, and Abraham, although the biological father of the Jewish people, was also the *av hamon goyim*, the spiritual father of all of humanity.

Both Abraham and Balaam shared the unusual power of being able to bless others effectively. Of Abraham, it is written, “I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and

curse him that curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.” (*Genesis 12:2-3*) And Balak, king of Moab, is sufficiently confident of Balaam’s abilities to say, “For I know that he whom you bless is blessed indeed, and he whom you curse is cursed.” (*Numbers 22:6*)

Furthermore, both Abraham and Balaam set off on long journeys, one to the binding of Isaac, and the other to nefariously undermine the people of Israel. Both wake up in the early morning to load their donkeys in preparation of their journeys. And each of them is accompanied upon his journey by two young servants.

The message seems clear. Two individuals who are similar to each other in so many ways can ultimately be so different that one’s disciples “inherit the World to Come,” whereas the disciples of the other “inherit *Gehinnom* and go down to the pit of destruction.”

One fails to properly use his Divinely given blessings and, because of his “evil eye, arrogant demeanor and insatiable soul,” becomes the archetype of perversion and treachery.

The other cultivates “a generous eye, a modest demeanor and a humble soul” with such success that those of us who emulate him, even if we live millennia after his death, can lay claim to being his disciples.

The next time someone asks you, “Under whom did you study? Whose disciple are you,” I hope that you can say that you are at least striving to become a disciple of Abraham. ■



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Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from  
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## The Curse of Loneliness

In the course of blessing the Jewish people, Bilaam uttered words that have come to seem to many to encapsulate Jewish history:

How can I curse whom God has not cursed?

How can I denounce the Lord has not denounced?

From the tops of crags I see them,

From the hills I gaze down:

A people that dwells alone<sup>1</sup>,

*1 A People that Dwells Alone was the title given to the collection of essays by the late Jacob Herzog. It was also the theme of the autobiography of Israeli diplomat, and brother of Israel's former Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, the late Naftali Lau-Lavie (Balaam's Prophecy: Eyewitness to History*

Not reckoning itself among nations. (*Num.* 23:8-9)

That is how it seemed during the persecutions and pogroms in Europe. It is how it seemed during the Holocaust. It is how it sometimes seems to Israel and its defenders today. We find ourselves alone. How should we understand this fact? How should we interpret this verse?

In my book *Future Tense*<sup>2</sup> I describe the moment when I first became aware of how dangerous a self-definition this can be. We were having lunch in Jerusalem, on Shavuot 5761/2001. Present was one of the world's great fighters against antisemitism, Irwin Cotler, soon to become Canada's Minister of Justice, together with a distinguished Israeli diplomat. We were talking about the forthcoming United Nations Conference against Racism at Durban in 2001.

We all had reasons to know that it was going to be a disaster for Israel. It was there in the parallel sessions of the NGOs that Israel was accused of the five cardinal sins against human rights: racism, apartheid, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and attempted genocide. The conference became, in effect, the launch-pad of a new

[Jerusalem: Toby Press, 2015]].

*2 Published by New York: Schocken, 2012.*

and vicious antisemitism. In the Middle Ages, Jews were hated because of their religion. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century they were hated because of their race. In the twenty-first century they are hated because of their nation state. As we were speaking of the likely outcome, the diplomat heaved a sigh and said, “Twas ever thus. *Am levadad yishkon*: we are the nation fated to be alone.”

The man who said those words had the best of intentions. He had spent his professional life defending Israel, and he was seeking to comfort us. His intentions were the best, and it was meant no more than as a polite remark. But I suddenly saw how dangerous such an attitude is. If you believe your fate is to be alone, that is almost certainly what will happen. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Why bother to make friends and allies if you know in advance that you will fail? How then are we to understand Bilaam’s words?

First, it should be clear that this is a very ambiguous blessing. Being alone, from a Torah perspective, is not a good thing. The first time the words “not good” appear in the Torah is in the verse, “It is not good for man to be alone.” (Gen. 2:18) The second time is when Moses’ father-in-law Yitro sees him leading alone and says, “What you are doing is not good.” (Ex. 18:17) We cannot live and thrive alone. We cannot lead alone. Isolation is not a blessing – quite the opposite.

The word *badad* appears in two other

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profoundly negative contexts. First is the case of the leper: “He shall live apart; outside the camp shall be his dwelling.” (Lev. 13:46) The second is the opening line of the book of Lamentations, “How alone is the city once thronged with people.” (Lam. 1:1) The only context in which *badad* has a positive sense is when it is applied to God (Deut. 32:12), for obvious theological reasons.

Second, Bilaam who said those words was not a lover of Israel. Hired to curse them and prevented from doing so by God, he nonetheless tried a second time, this time successfully, persuading the Moabite and Midianite women to seduce the Israelite men, as a result of which 24,000 died (Num. 25, 31:16). It was this second strategy of Bilaam – after he had already said, “How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I doom whom God has not doomed?” – that marks him out as a man profoundly hostile to the Israelites. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 105b) states that *all the blessings that Balaam bestowed on the Israelites eventually turned into curses*, with the sole exception of the blessing “How goodly are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel.” (Num. 24:5) So in the Rabbis’ view, “a people that dwells alone” eventually became not a blessing but a curse.

Third, nowhere in Tanach are we told

that it will be the fate of Israel, or Jews, to be hated. To the contrary, the prophets foresaw that there would come a time when the nations would turn to Israel for inspiration. Isaiah envisaged a day on which “Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Is. 2:3)

Zechariah foresaw that “in those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’” (Zech. 8:23) These are sufficient to cast doubt on the idea that antisemitism is eternal, incurable, woven into Jewish history and destiny.

Only in rabbinic literature do we find statements that seem to suggest that Israel is hated. Most famous is the statement of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai:

“Halachah: it is well known that Esau hates Jacob.”<sup>3</sup>

3 *Sifre, Behaalotecha, 89; Rashi to Gen. 33:4; see Kreti to Yoreh Deah ch. 88 for the halachic implications of this statement.*

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Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was known for his distrust of the Romans, whom the Rab- bis identified with Esau/Edom. It was for this reason, says the Talmud, that he had to go into hiding for thirteen years (Shab- bat 33b). His view was not shared by his contemporaries.

Those who quote this passage do so only partially and selectively. It refers to the moment at which Jacob and Esau meet after their long estrangement. Jacob has feared that Esau will try to kill him. After taking elaborate precautions and wrestling with an angel, the next morning he sees Esau. The verse then says “Esau ran to meet him and embraced him [Jacob], and throw- ing his arms around his neck, he kissed him and they [both] wept.” (Gen. 33:4)

Over the letters of the word “kissed”, as it appears in a Sefer Torah, there are dots, signalling some special meaning. It was in this context that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: “Even though it is well known that Esau hates Jacob, *at that moment he was overcome with compassion and kissed him with a full heart.*” (See Rashi ad loc.) In other words, precisely the text cited to show that antisemitism is inevitable, proves the opposite: that at the crucial encounter, Esau did *not* feel hate toward Jacob. They met, embraced, and went their separate ways without ill-will.

There is, in short, nothing in Judaism to suggest that it is the fate of Jews to be hated. It is neither written into the tex- ture of the universe nor encoded in the



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human genome. It is not the will of God. Only in moments of deep despair have Jews believed this, most notably Leo Pinsker in his 1882 tract *Auto-emancipation*, in which he said of Judeophobia, “As a psychic aberration, it is hereditary; as a disease transmitted for two thousand years, it is incurable.”

Antisemitism is not mysterious, unfathomable, or inexorable. It is a complex phenomenon that has mutated over time, and it has identifiable roots - social, economic, political, cultural, and theological. It can be fought; it can be defeated. But it will not be fought or defeated if people think that it is Jacob’s fate to be hated by “Esau” or to be “the people that dwells alone,” a pariah among peoples, a leper among nations, an outcast in the international arena.

What then does the phrase “a people that dwells alone” mean? It means a people prepared to stand alone if need be, living by its own moral code, having the courage to be

different and to take the road less travelled.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch offered a fine insight by focusing on the nuance between “people” (*am*) and “nation” (*goy*) – or as we might say nowadays, “society” and “state.”<sup>4</sup> Israel uniquely became a society before it was a state. It had laws before it had a land. It was a people – a group bound together by a common code and culture – before it was a nation, that is, a political entity. As I noted in *Future Tense*, the word *peoplehood* first appeared in 1992, and its early uses were almost entirely in reference to Jews.<sup>5</sup> What makes Jews different, according to Hirsch’s reading of Bilaam, is that *Jews are a distinctive people*, that is, a group defined by shared memories and collective responsibilities, “not reckoned among the nations” since they are capable of surviving even without nationhood, even in exile and dispersion. Israel’s strength lies not in nationalism but in building a society based on justice and human dignity.

The battle against antisemitism can be won, but it will not be if Jews believe that we are destined to be alone. That is Bilaam’s curse, not God’s blessing. ■

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4 *Samson Raphael Hirsch, Commentary to Numbers 23:9.*

5 *Rabbi Sacks, Future Tense, p. 25.*

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The G'mara in Makkot (24a-b) tells us something interesting about the final pasuk of this week's haftarah

*“Six hundred and thirteen mitzvot were given to Moshe.....Along came David and established them upon eleven ethical requirements (see Tehillim: 15); ....along came Yishayahu and established them on six ethical requirements (see Sefer Yishayahu: 33; 15) .....along came Michah and established them on three ethical requirements: (Sefer Michah: 6; 8) ...”Asot mishpat, v’ahavat chesed v’hatzne’ah lechet ‘im Elokecha”*

The haftarah for parashat Balak is taken from the two final prakim of Sefer Michah (5&6), both being part of the final section of the book and share a common theme. This final section is one of comfort and consolation which foresees the defeat of Israel's enemies and the arrival of the promised Mashiach. Our haftarah closes this section with the insistence that all of this, the victories over her foes, her return from exile and the arrival of the scion of David to rule over Israel, will be

brought solely by Hashem Himself – much as G-d had redeemed them many times in the past. It is in these psukim that Michah reminds the nation of how Hashem saved them from the plot of Balak and from the efforts of Bila'am to curse Israel – hence the connection to our parasha.

But the most well-known part of this selection is its final verse, that which is quoted in Masechet Makkot. Commenting on these three “ethical requirements”, HaRav Soloveitchik focuses primarily on the final one in trying to understand the importance of “hatzne’ah lechet”, walking humbly with G-d. Certainly, the value of doing justice (“asot mishpat”) is a pillar of any moral society – especially for the Jew. Indeed, Tanach is replete with the demand for justice, starting from the very beginning of our nationhood, as Hashem, explaining his choice of Avraham by explaining that Avraham is one who would pass down to his descendants, “...derech Hashem...”. G-d's way, that is “la'asot tzdaka umishpat,” – doing charity and



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JUSTICE” (Breishit 18;19). Likewise, the ethical requirement of “ahavat chesed”, is a very part of Hashem’s character that we are told to emulate. He is an “Oseh CHESED la’alafim” and the One who is “notzer CHESED l’alafim” (Shmot 20:6; 34:7).

Yet, the Rav wonders, why is “walking humbly” regarded as the third “ethical responsibility”? How does this equal the importance of the other two requirements? In analyzing the human condition and the story of the Jew, the Rav comments (I paraphrase):

“Catharsis of religious life is the awareness of long interludes during which Man finds himself an infinite distance from G-d. Even a prophet encounters moments of exile from the presence of the Almighty, (but) those periods of dark despair contain the cathartic element which cleanses and redeems religious life”.

The Rav continues: “The breaking of the *luchot* is an experience that every committed individual must endure. On the life-long journey....one (will) find oneself bankrupt and forlorn. (And) Man must be cognizant of this tragic fact.”

In effect, the Rav sees the requirement of “walk humbly” as a constant realization that he can falter and fall, for he is not perfect. Only with the humble realization that will fall can he then have the strength to rise up again to overcome any future vicissitudes of life.

Those who fail to “walk humbly”, who see life only as a string of successes, cannot survive when he finds himself an infinite distance from G-d. Walking humbly therefore, is, in the view of Rav Soloveitchik, the very requirement for one to survive as a committed and hopeful Jew. ■

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## Leaving One's Comfort Zone

In Parshat Balak, Bilam is hired by Balak to curse the Jews. Bilam seeks God's permission, which he does not immediately receive. Bilam, however, is persistent with executing upon his desired request and seeks ways to accomplish his goal.

There is one event in particular that stands out due to its unique nature, or rather supernatural component. A donkey miraculously speaks to Bilam. This is something that is far from ordinary, yet Bilam dismisses it as if it was routine and unremarkable.

Most people experiencing a talking donkey would likely be in shock at this unnatural phenomenon and recognize that it contains a message from God. How is it that Bilam who himself was a prophet ignored the significance of this extraordinary miracle?

Rabbenu Bechaya explains that Bilam was so fixated on his goal, his brazenness prevented him from recognizing the obvious. If one does not internalize what is before their eyes, the event has no impact on their future.

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In the Haggada we state צא ולמד מה בקש לבן הארמי – “**go out** and learn what Lavan desired to do...”. The Lubavitcher Rebbe asks - why is it necessary to include the word *tzei*, **go out**? It would have sufficed to just state *lemad*, learn. What does the word *tzei* add?

In the Haggada, the statement precedes a section of quotes and interpretations of *pesukim* from the Torah. The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the word *tzei* is hinting to us that we should have a certain attitude when we learn Torah. At times, one hears a halacha *shiur* or learns a new law and reacts negatively, stating, what I do and have done is correct. The new idea must be a “chumra” (stringency). I can ignore it. However, we must be honest with ourselves regarding our *avodat Hashem*.

We all have preconceived notions of what we think is correct and what we think “should be” the halacha. *Tzei ulemad*, whenever we learn something, we have to *go out* of our **comfort zone**, leaving behind our assumptions and preconceived notions, and have an open heart and mind to seek the truth.

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About twenty years ago, I gave a *shiur* on the topic of *tevilat keilim*, the requirement to immerse dishes made by a non-Jew in a *mikve*. One of my students informed me that the next day, all day, he was busy immersing all of his family's dishes, pots, cutlery, and so forth into a *mikve*. Apparently, he told his mother what we had learned and his mother, who was unfamiliar with this halacha, contacted her Rabbi to inquire as to whether this was an extra stringency or an actual requirement. After she was told it is in fact a halachic requirement, she immediately requested that all of their utensils be immersed in a local *mikve*, despite the hardship. She acted in a noble fashion, allowing halacha to shape her life and implementing a *tzei uleamad* approach.

Bilam's failure in part was due to his stubbornness, which led him to ignore the miraculous communication from God before his eyes. May we be able to keep an open mind and leave our comfort zone so that we can always act in the correct manner. This is true with respect to halachic issues as well with respect to the way to listen to and treat others. As we see from Bilam's behavior, stubbornness prevents growth and can ultimately lead to failure. ■



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# Mountain Momentum

“*Ki mei-rosh tzurim erenu, u’migevaot ashurenu,*” I see [this nation] from mountain tops, and gaze on it from the heights (*Bamidbar 23:9*). We find tremendous power and encouragement in this famous poetic prophecy from Bilam. Rashi understands that Bilam was referring to our strong foundations, our *Avot* and *Imahot*, symbols of bedrock strength who infused us with our unique, distinctive identity.

The *Shem M’Shmuel* focuses on the reference to our *Avot* as “*tzurim*” strong rocks. They represent the bedrock of our *mesorah*, the core logic of Torah transmitted to each generation. The *Avot* are also described as “*eitanim*,” the strong ones. They are the ones who have given us the strength to keep the Torah without wavering, even in the most difficult of situations. The *Imahot* are compared to the “*gevaot*,” the hilltops that are crafted from piles of dirt. The soft, pliable quality of dirt represents the function of the mothers, teaching softly to the heart and engaging the emotions of each generation. They personify the pure heart of the Jew yearning for *kedushah*. Additionally, dirt is where vegetation can grow and flourish. So too, our mothers as

caretakers create the setting for *ehrich* generations to prosper.

This same theme, the strong elemental protection our *Avot* and *Imahot*, is likewise found when *Am Yisrael* waged war against Amalek (*Shemot 17:8-13*). Moshe Rabbeinu says, “I will stand *al rosh hagivah*, on top of the hill.” The midrash teaches that Moshe was drawing on the merits of the *Avot* and *Imahot*. As Moshe ascended to the *rosh*, he accessed the merit of the *Avot*, of the *givah*, he accessed the merit of the *Imahot*. The midrash continues. When Moshe Rabbeinu got tired, Aharon and Chur took a rock and placed it under Moshe for him to sit on. By sitting on the rock, Moshe Rabbeinu connected to the *zechut* of the *Avot*, and the *Imahot*.

The Yom Kippur *avodah* (*Vayikra 16:3-34*) is yet another time when we evoke the *zechut* of both the *Avot* and *Imahot*. Here the midrash teaches how each of the sacrifices on Yom Kippur correspond to each of the *Avot*. The cow represents Avraham Avinu, as he served that to his guests. The ram represents Yitzchak Avinu, as a ram was offered in his place at the *Akeidah*. The goat represents Yaakov Avinu who brought two kids to his father to obtain his blessing. The *Imahot* are alluded to in the four garments worn by the Kohen Gadol during the *avodah*, the *zechut* of our mothers wrap us and protect us as clothing. The *Imrei Emet* notes that the first

letters of each article of clothing worn by the Kohen - *avnet, mitznefet, ketonet, and michnas* – spell *Imchem*, your mothers.

Finally, the *zechut* of our forefathers and mothers will also take us to the ultimate *Geulah*. “*Kol dodi hinei zeh ba, medaleg al heharim, mekapetz al hagevaot*” (*Shir Hashirim 2:8*), the redeemer will come skipping over the mountains and jumping over the hills. Just as in Egypt Hashem redeemed us in the merit of our *Avot* and *Imahot* before the time, so too, will He bring the final salvation. The *Sefat Emet* teaches that even if some say the merit of our forefathers is no longer as strong and may be only “skipping” with one leg, the merit of the *Imhaot* is still robust and viable, “jumping” with both legs. May it be soon in our days that we experience the *Geulah* in their holy merit. ■

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# For a Lifetime

Reb Meir Mirkis of Teplik was one of the closest and most dedicated *talmidim* of Reb Nosson of Breslov. He carefully followed the Rebbe Nachman of Breslov's advice and instruction and is described as "a *tza-dik gamur*... whose heart burned to serve Hashem" (*Kochvei Ohr*, Anshei Moharan 32).

Reb Nosson inquired regarding the welfare of one of Reb Meir's *chevreh* in Teplik. Reb Meir shook his head in disapproval. Shrugging his shoulders, he made a motion expressing how he was 'underwhelmed' by the spiritual state of this specific Jew. Reb Nosson responded with a tone of rebuke:

"Listen my dear Tepliker! One may certainly choose to see the world in a critical and negative way, and view everyone and everything with an *ayin ra*. One can decide to find that which is broken everywhere he

turns. Just understand the repercussions, and consider where this leads....

"Visualize this fellow sitting in his home in Teplik. You are here miles away in Breslov, judging him unfavorably and focusing on what is lacking in his spiritual life. You've sent flames of negativity that burn him and his surroundings with a fire that will spread from his house and through the *shtetl*, spreading door to door, incinerating every home, wiping out everything in its path ...until it reaches yours! After your home is consumed in flames as well, the fire will spread outward and destroy the whole world.

"So tell me, Reb Meir, this fellow might be lacking in some areas of his *avodas Hashem*... but are you the only *ehrlicheh yid* in Teplik?!"

Reb Meir's face turned red with embarrassment and regret. Looking toward the floor, he responded in a low tone: "Oy, Rebbe. Me? I too am far, far from what I



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ought to be....”

But Reb Nossen was not placated. “If with all the good you do, all the Torah you learn and all the mitzvos you perform, you are still not good enough — then who is?”

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הָעוֹי:

Bilaam raised his eyes and saw Israel dwelling according to its tribes, and the spirit of God rested upon him. He took up his parable and said, “The word of Balaam the son of Beor and the word of the man with an open eye....” (24:2-3)

*Sefer Tehillim* (7:12) reveals, וַיֵּל זֶעֶם בְּכָל יוֹם, “God is furious every day.” The Gemara (*Berachos, 7a*) explains that רַחֲמָא קַמֵּיה דְקוּדֹשׁ, “Hashem’s anger” is expressed for but a moment each day. Here a רגע, “moment” is defined as 1/58,888th of an hour. Bilaam, “the man with an open eye”, was gifted with incredible spiritual potential and power. He was the only person in history who was able to determine when that fleeting instant would happen during any given day. With his mastery of the occult, his prophetic ability and ‘open eye’, Bilaam could tap into the dark-side and identify

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that fleeting אגת, exploiting that microscopic point of anger to find opportunity to curse the Jewish People. *Ayin ra*, the capacity to find bad in others, was Balaam's specialty.

A curse seems to have power when it exposes a point of weakness, failure or fault in the other. By focusing attention on that which is lacking, broken, it awakens harmful, negative energy.

*Pirkei Avos* (5:22) juxtaposes the difference between students of Avraham Avinu, and *l'havdil*, those of the evil Bilaam: "Those who have an *ayin tovah*, a humble spirit and a humble soul, are among the disciples of our forefather Avraham. Those who have an evil eye, an arrogant spirit and a greedy soul are among the disciples of the wicked Bilaam.

The holy Maharal explains that our five basic physical senses — sound, touch, taste, smell and sight — enable us to perceive an object *as it is*. However, among these five there is one that can lose its objectivity: sight. The way we see people, events and experiences, is determined by the way we choose to envision ourselves or others. The proverbial cup is indeed both half full *and* half empty; it is our choice to see it and determine its reality through the prism of an *ayin tovah* or an *ayin ra'ah*. It is our choice to

'see' like Avraham or like Bilaam.

Cultivating the generosity of spirit of Avraham Avinu, and maintaining a healthy internal state of positivity, is key to the *midah* of *ayin tovah*. When we envision reality as good, we will not see even a speck of anger or negativity. Then we can see beneath the surface of another person to their essence, and find the glittering treasure of good points at their core. This way, we will relate to them with authentic generosity, flexibility and patience. The backbone of Jewish life, values and practice, *ahavas Yisrael*, demands an *ayin tovah* — seeing the good in everyone, and the world.

'Opening our eye' to the good in ourselves and others creates a flow of positivity and *ayin tovah*. May we learn to spotlight the good points in ourselves and others, and may this light of love and Divine favor spread from our homes to our communities, and give life to the whole world!

.....  
"וּמִנֵּה לֵן דְּרַגְעָ רְחֻמָּה? שְׁנֵאמַר: 'כִּי רַגְעָ בְּאִפּוּ חַיִּים בְּרַצוֹנִי"

From where do we derive that God is angry for only a moment?

It is said (*Psalms*, 30:6), "His anger is but for a moment; His favor is for a *lifetime!*"

(*Berachos*, 7a) ■

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Halacha and Agada in  
Contemporary Society  
**Rabbi Shmuel  
Herschler**

Tea & Coffee Available

**8:30 PM**

Semichat Chaver Program  
**Rabbi Elyada  
Goldwicht** (The Bais)

**SPECIAL EVENT**

**4:00-6:00PM**

Hebrew on the Go-  
Mezuzah Workshop for  
New Olim Families @  
JClay



TUE, JULY 12

**9:15 AM**

**Rebbetzin Smiles**  
Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla)

**9:30AM**

Minchat Chinuch-Meaning  
in Mitzvot **Rabbi Yitzchak  
Breitowitz**

**10:30AM**

Parshat HaShavua  
**Rabbi Yossi Goldin**

**2:00 PM**

Men's Talmud-Sanhedrin  
Perek 4 **Rabbi Bienenfeld**

**7:30 PM**

Safrut Course (The Bais)  
**Rabbi Tzvi Maurer**

**8:00 PM**

Sefer Shmuel **Rabbi  
Mordechai Machlis**

**SPECIAL EVENT**

**8:00PM**

ATID Three Weeks Program  
- Rabbi Menachem Nissel  
(Young Olot)

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WED, JULY 13

**9:00 AM**

Medina and Halacha

**Rabbi Shimshon Nadel**

**10:15 AM**

Contemporary Issues in  
Halacha and Hashkafa

**Rabbi Anthony Manning**

**11:30 AM**

Great Jewish Thinkers

**Rabbi Alan Kimche**

Tea & Coffee Available

**12:30 PM**- Trailblazing the

Text of Tanach- Lunch and

Learn **Rabbi Neil Winkler**

**8:30 PM**

Halachic Controversies

**Rabbi Aschi Dick**

(The Bais)

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PROGRAMS ARE FOR  
MEN ONLY

THURS, JULY 14

**9:00 AM**

Parshat HaShavua

**Rabbi Ari Kahn**

**10:15 am**

Parshat HaShavua

**Rabbi Baruch  
Taub**

(Resumes July 14)

**11:30 AM**

Unlocking the Messages  
of Chazal

**Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**

(Resumes July 28)

**2:00 PM**

Men's Talmud-Sanhedrin

Perek 4

**Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld**



**VIRTUAL SCHEDULE**

(Zoom Only Classes):

[https://us02web.zoom.](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88363420460)

[us/j/88363420460](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88363420460)

Password: OU Israel

**Rabbi Taub**

Parsha, 7:00PM

MonHalacha, 7:00PM Wed

**Rebbetzin Shatz**

(L'Ayla)-Insights of

Chazal- Tues, 5:00PM

**Rabbi Goldwicht**

Parshat HaShavua

Wed. 8:30PM

[https://us02web.zoom.](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2244321902)

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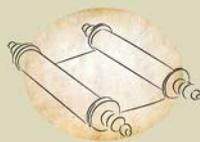
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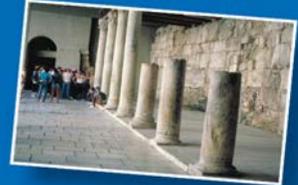


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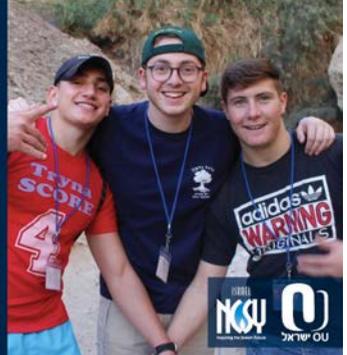
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## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

**M**a Tovu Ohalecha Yaakov, Mishkenotecha Yisrael - How good are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Yisrael...

These words which we recite each and every morning upon entering our *Batei Knesset*, were of course originally uttered by *Bilaam HaRasha*, when he intended initially to curse the Jewish people, and *Hashem*, caused these words of blessing to flow forth from his mouth instead. What exactly is the significance of this statement - How good are your tents, *Yaakov*, your dwelling places, *Yisrael*?

The *Netivot Shalom*, the *Slonimer Rebbe zy'a*, points out that as *Bilaam* was about to curse the Jewish People as a whole, instead the words uttered are uttered in the singular - *Ohalecha Yaakov* - Your (singular) tents *Yaakov*, *Mishkenotecha* - your (singular) dwelling places *Yisrael*. What served to protect *Am Yisrael* from *Bilaam*, and any other who might seek to harm us, is *Achdut*. When the Jewish People are united, as one

singular entity, we are protected from each and every *Bilaam*, who might seek to harm us.

*Rav Kook, zt'l*, offers a different insight regarding the significance of this verse. *Rav Kook* points out that an *ohel* - a tent, is a specific type of *mishkan* - dwelling place. We as Jews, explains *Rav Kook*, should always perceive ourselves as if we are dwelling in an *Ohel*, a tent. A tent is a dwelling place, providing shelter for those who are on a journey. *Rav Kook* explains that, each of us should view ourselves as if we are on a journey, moving forward in growth, striving to come closer to the *Ribono Shel Olam*, and not *chas v'shalom*, remaining stagnant, settled and stuck in one place. Each of us must learn the goodness of what it means to dwell in tents, to continue to move forward, to journey on, to grow in our *Avodat Hashem*.

The *Avodat Elazar of Kozhnitz zy'a*, offers yet another beautiful interpretation of our *pasuk*. *Ma Tovu Ohalecha Yaakov, Mishkenotecha Yisrael* - what makes *Am Yisrael* unique amongst the nations, is the fact that even our private homes become a *mishkan* - a place for the *Shechina's* presence, through the *mitzvot* we engage in each and everyday within our homes.

*Yehi Ratzon*, may we merit to heed these powerful messages encrypted in this familiar *pasuk*, and may we indeed be blessed to fill our homes with *mitzvot*, and move forward, journeying together, united as one. ■

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### Dr. Alex Bailey

is a Jerusalem/Modi'in based clinical psychologist specializing in teens and young adults. Since making aliya three years ago, he has worked with dozens of gap year students at yeshivot and midrashot, helping them manage this year of independence, questioning, transition, and growth. Dr. Bailey provides parents with peace-of-mind that their children have the support they need to bridge their gap year successfully.

*DR. BAILEY ALSO SEES COUPLES,  
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**Dear OU Parenting,**

*My son spends a lot of time in front of the screen. With the summer approaching, I'm nervous that he'll be spending even more time on the computer. How much is too much, and should I set the limits even though it usually creates a big blowup between us? F.M.*

**Michal Silverstein, MSc****Dear F.M.,**

Although you didn't mention the age of your son there are certain facts that apply to almost everyone across the board. I will start with general information and move on to address specific age groups.

Most parents can recognize the signs that their child has watched too much. They often look dazed, irritable, sluggish, and bored. Although there has been awareness of excessive screen time for several years, we must acknowledge the recent spike due to the pandemic. According to research, screen time in adolescence doubled since the beginning of the pandemic. This includes only recreational use such as gaming, social media, and surfing the web, and not educational use. Whereas adolescence pre pandemic spent four hours a day on screens, they are now on screens nearly eight hours a day. Seeing this in context

is important. Our children's lives have changed drastically in the past two years and screen time is only one indication.

In general, studies have found that kids who are on screens more than two hours a day scored lower on language and thinking skills. And kids who were on screens for more than seven hours showed a thinning of the brains' cortex, which manages critical thinking and reasoning. Basically, children who aren't interacting enough with their surroundings, and aren't communicating enough with real people through dialogue, are suffering. Children learn mostly by exploring their surroundings so when that is inhibited it can negatively impact development, especially at a young age when the brain is developing rapidly.

Research has also revealed that blue light which is emitted from screens inhibits the production of melatonin which can delay sleep. In addition, playing computer games makes the brain more alert, and activated and therefore it's harder to fall asleep. Kids are turning to screens as an escape, avoiding feelings of anxiety, depression, and emptiness. When a person is on a device the pleasure sensors in the brain are activated, which reinforces more watching and can lead to screen addictions. There's a correlation between high levels of stress, sleep deprivation, and social problems due to excessive screen time.

There's a clear negative correlation

between excessive screen time and our children's wellbeing. Having said that, we also know that screens have become almost an appendage to our youth- an extension of themselves. Considering this reality, how do we as parents, guide our children towards healthy habits? How much can we or should we intervene?

Although I will offer some tips and strategies, this topic is vast and cannot be covered in one article.

**Communication-** No matter how old your child is you should communicate openly about screen use. For a young child (ages 6-12) you should set time limits (up to 2 hours a day), restrict content, use filters, and put the screen in a public place so you can supervise and watch with them sometimes. Explain that this is all part of your job as a parent to keep them safe and healthy. Considering how screen time impacts your child, it's worth setting boundaries even if it causes an argument. Depending on the age you can share more details such as the positives and negatives of screen usage. Be curious.

As they emerge into early teens you should engage them in conversation and acknowledge the struggle of navigating social media and address the benefits and drawbacks. It's very important to avoid being judgmental, and instead encourage exploration together, to decide what limits are reasonable and what can be agreed upon. If you create this open dialogue, they will know they can turn to you to ask your advice regarding content or trends on social media. The feeling that teenagers have today when they aren't on social media for a while can cause anxiety and a strong feeling of FOMO- fear of missing out.

Even adult children in their late teens early 20's can use some guidance to navigate struggles and confusion caused by social media.

Be a role model of your use of devices. Show that you can limit your usage. Be present when you're with your children and put your phone away. Also have specific times when phones are put away such as mealtime, bedtime, or family time. Less screen time is linked to stronger family and friend relationships.

Trust your child or teen. If you have open communication, they will involve you in their lives. It is not recommended to check their phones and invade their privacy. This usually leads to a cycle of lying, deception, and mistrust.

Try to enforce a healthy lifestyle consisting of adequate sleep, exercise and eating a healthy diet. The more time spent outdoors the less time your child will be on a device.

Being a parent during this time is challenging for many reasons, one of which is the excessive use of screens. As we guide our children toward healthy habits, we must remember that being connected to the Torah, the real source of meaning and perspective in our lives is key to navigating this struggle.

Be'hatzlacha ■

I would like to thank Joy Epstein, MSW, highly experienced individual and family psychotherapist for sharing her wisdom and experience with me on this topic.

Michal Silverstein has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.



## GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

# The Lonely People of Faith

Bilam arrived with a plan. It would take only a quick glance at the Jewish camp to foment Bilam's anger and, like clockwork, his venomous curses would spew. The legendary wars between Sichon-Moab were decided after Bilam placed a supernatural spell upon the Moabites, assuring a Sichon victory. Just another day at the office for Bilam and his lethal tongue. Or so he thought.

Until he noticed something unusual about these desert-dwelling Jews. They appeared unusual, different, separate, *alone*. הן עם לבדד. Their historical arch was atypical and they didn't appear to be subject to general historical calculus לא יתחשב. It quickly became apparent to Bilam that his supernatural jinxes would have no impact upon this *alone people*, with immunity against historical pressure. At that point, Bilam realized it would be a long and frustrating day at the office.

Bilam instinctively discerned our aloneness, but wasn't able to put his finger on *why* we were different. In his parting speech, Moshe completed the picture: השם בודד יחזנו ואין עמו אל נכר - we are alone because we were chosen by Hashem, and we are expected to be different from other nations.

As the children of God, our behavior and our national culture must be distinct from other nations.

But are we *really* alone? Do we completely disconnect from human history? We were selected to be different but to shape human consciousness *specifically* through our differences.

Avraham was the first Jew selected to be different. He came from a different place: from the other side of the river and from the other side of religious belief. But he crossed the river to inspire those who lived on the *other side*. After numerous rounds with kings, warriors, noblemen, and local residents, he is ultimately proclaimed to be נשיא - a prince of God who resides among ancient civilization and began to shape it. He was alone but never apart.

We are a strange people. Our religion, culture, and traditions are different from the rest of humanity, yet we are meant to educate them. Bilam was only partially correct. We live alone but are very much a part of human calculus and of the arch of human history. Alone but not apart.

### Exile and Redemption

During the past 2000 years we lived alone *and apart*. We lost the ability to directly influence human history. Relegated to the margins of history, we lived detached from the rest of humanity. This aloneness preserved our national identity against an onslaught of cultural pressure. Halacha- in

particular dietary and marital laws- preserved Jewish identity in a sea of foreign influence. In addition to halacha, culture, language, customs and traditions all marked a Jew as *different*, less susceptible to assimilatory influence. Our survival was a great anthropological miracle: a nation could survive thousands of years of dispersal and wandering without a common homeland. We lived alone and apart and this preserved our destiny.

We have now returned to the front stage of history and are slowly starting to revive our ancient secret. We remain different and alone, but not disconnected. Events surrounding the State of Israel lie at the crossroads of history. We are challenged to reenter history while still retaining our aloneness. History is shifting and the recalibration of the Jewish spirit isn't easy.

### Anti-Semitism

If Jews struggle to make sense of this riddle, our enemies are absolutely baffled. "Who are *these* Jews"? Are they separatists or are they part of the mainstream? Do they want to live apart from humanity or live amongst society and influence history"? This puzzle confounds our enemies, agitating their hostility toward a nation they can't decipher.

Haman was the first to notice this historical anomaly. Noticing our distinctive cultural mores and "abnormal" religious customs, Haman persuaded Achashverosh of genocide. ישנו עם אחד מפורד ומפרד. ודתייהם שונות. Haman was disturbed and more than a bit confused. He had witnessed the outsized influence which Daniel had wielded over the mighty Babylonian empire. Initially, having been exiled from Yerushalayim amongst



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the first wave of Jewish refugees, this young prophet refused to succumb to Babylonian culture and declined palace food. Yet he was soon promoted to be Nevuchadnezar's closest confidant. It didn't seem appropriate that these obstinate con-conformists were shaping the outline of human history.

Haman was determined not to allow this scene to unfold again. Witnessing Mordechai "sitting" in the palace courtyard, Haman determined to foil any Jewish attempt to impact Persian society. This Jewish "takeover" must be nipped in the bud. If you want to influence Persian society, join society at large. Little did he know that Esther had already been queened, and we would leave our mark upon Persia, just as we did upon the now-defunct empire of Babylonia.

The Jewish enigma, first noticed by Haman, is what riles so many antisemites. Our world is dotted with groups who disengage from mainstream culture. From aboriginal settlements in Western Canada, to Amish farms in Pennsylvania, to indigenous colonies in Amazon rainforests, to aboriginal villages across Australia, numerous tribes voluntarily detach from the modern world. These cultural and geographical barriers preserve their independent culture and their internal customs.

Generally, society admires their cultural non-conformity and their choice of a lifestyle unadulterated by the impurities of modernity. Their way of life feels quaint

and, also, provides us with a healthy reminder of our own primitive virtue when it is untainted by society. These cultures live alone *and apart* and don't stress the human imagination.

In many ways, Jews look like these cultural breakaways. We dress differently, eat differently, speak differently and marry differently. Yet, unlike these separatist cultures, we *don't* walk away from society. To the contrary, we drive humanity to a better place. We pray on behalf of all of humanity and fulfill Hashem's word to draw Him and his divine blessing into the entire world. Additionally, we have always advanced the human condition, spearheading science, politics, economics and discovery. Furthermore, we are morally driven to craft a kinder world of social equality and universal opportunity.

We are one-of-kind. Alone but not apart. Separate but engaged. This drives our many haters berserk: "Make up your mind. If you want to influence us, join us. If not, then walk away, as so many others have".

We know better. We want both, because we know that both is demanded of us. To be different, so that we can influence. To influence because we are different. Alone but not apart. ■

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Academic Institutions from the National Religious sector that held long-distance studies during Covid as documented in a special survey conducted by the National Union of Israeli Students of Maagar Mochot Institute, 2020. See survey and findings on our website. Students of Maagar Mochot Institute, 2020. See survey and findings on our website.





## DIVREI MENACHEM

BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

Special Projects Consultant, OU Israel Center  
menpmp@gmail.com

# The Evil That Men Do Lives After Them

The twists and turns that befell our people during those burning, dusty years in the desert were partly due to the finagling of crafty, scheming individuals who primarily looked after their own pernicious interests. Last week, we had issues with Korach and his cohorts; this week, we are embroiled with Bilaam.

Can these two individuals be compared? For Korach's conniving arose from long-standing bitterness, from a feeling of being discriminated against by Moshe and Aharon, whom he accused of nepotism. On the surface, Korach was aristocratic, wealthy, and wise, with much leadership potential; he grew up in the ranks.

Bilaam, a descendent of the wicked Lavan, came from Aram (Midrash); he had limited powers of sorcery but had, nevertheless, predicted the rise of Balak, the ruler of Moav (Rashi). But perhaps of greater import, Bilaam appears to be an agent designated by Hashem to acquiesce to the bidding of the Moabite king, now petrified of the mighty Jewish army approaching his border.

In truth, Balak's bidding to Bilaam was

that he should curse the Jews sufficiently to scare them off his borders. But, if we follow events carefully, Bilaam intended to destroy an entire people.

Korach and Bilaam were both highly skilled manipulators. However, while Korach employed brainpower, Bilaam used necromancy, along with a bag of tricks and pagan rites.

Nevertheless, Bilaam's journey exhibited a strange, ambiguous relationship with the Almighty. While Moshe implored Korach (unsuccessfully) to come to his senses, it appears that Hashem let Bilaam follow his greedy, malevolent path even as the enchanter's attempts to curse the people inevitably turned to blessings (cf. Bemidbar 22:20).

On the other hand – as with the episode of Bilaam's talking she-ass and the “invisible” angel – Hashem would impede and discredit the false prophet.

But akin to Korach, the gathering momentum moved the foreign agitator along at its own forceful and fateful rate, mustering steam along the way to disaster. Bilaam's irrational hatred of the Jews rushes him blindly, even to the point of his “rising early and saddling his donkey” in pursuit of his evil designs (ibid, v. 21). Furthermore, following each “failure” to deliver a curse, Bilaam politely and agilely dismisses Balak's rantings by twisting things around and blithely passing the blame on to God.

As with Pharaoh, blind hate and denial of Hashem's prowess appear to drive one to that critical point when the heart is hardened, and "Hester Panim" takes over. Then, evil predominates at its own pace. Indeed, when all was said and done, Bilaam achieved his goal of undermining the spiritual level of the people. He induced the Moabite and Midianite women to seduce the Jewish menfolk, thus becoming attached to Baal Peor.

Hate, greed, power, and personal ambition fester insurrection and falsehood. So, while they sing our praises, let us be wary of those who flatter us. Let us be on the watch for that guile that attacks our Achilles heel. And let us pray to Hashem for our ultimate salvation. ■

*Menachem Persoff*

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## TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

### TEFILLA

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



# Birkat Hamazon

*Chaim was quite skeptical. He was 37 years old and had been born in the Midbar. He had spent his childhood and adolescence and even his early adult years travelling through the desert, eating from the מן that fell from the sky each day, and preparing to enter into Eretz Yisrael. After finally arriving at their long-awaited destination, the people were informed that the מן was going to come to an end and soon they would need to learn to eat food from the ground. The whole idea sounded so preposterous! How could food possibly grow from the ground? The people were instructed to plant seeds and to water them every day and that eventually they would see wheat grow. Despite his skepticism, Chaim watered the magic seeds every day and to his shock, it worked! Wheat grew and the people learned how to make it into bread. You can imagine the day that Chaim took his first bite of bread! He must have been blown over with gratitude to Hashem for this unbelievable miracle.*

ברכת המזון is the only bracha explicitly mentioned in the Torah. Before he dies, Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael (Devarim 8:10-18) that Hashem will bring them to a Land filled with delicious fruits and crops, where they will not lack for anything. He then commands them

“ואכלת ושבעת וברכת” – when you eat and are satisfied, you must say ברכת המזון. He goes on to explain that this is because one needs to be very careful – when one has everything he needs, when he eats and is satiated, when he has a nice house, and plenty of cattle and sheep, and gold and silver, he can easily forget Hashem **and the מן He provided in the desert**. A person needs to remind himself through his daily Birkat HaMazon that it is not our own ability that causes us to succeed (כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה), but rather it is Hashem who provides us with that ability to succeed (הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל).

This, then, is the goal of ברכת המזון. We *bench* every time we eat in order to be reminded of the מן (and of the first time we ate bread from the ground), which reminds us that it is Hashem who is truly providing sustenance for us, even if we are actively involved in the process. **Rav Hirsch** writes that we should feel that each piece of bread that we eat is “כאילו קבלנו אותו מישרין מיד הקב”ה בכבודו ובעצמו בדרך”, “as if we received it directly from Hashem Himself miraculously from the heavens, just like the descent of the מן. We should be like Chaim and recognize that the food we eat from the ground is not less miraculous than the food we received from the sky. The same way we knew 100% that Hashem had directly provided the מן for us in the desert, we should recognize clearly that the same is true today with the food we get in seemingly more natural ways.

Why are we specifically commanded מדאורייתא to make a bracha after bread, and not after other foods? Rav Eliyahu Munk explains in his book עולם התפילות that this is to send home the message that we need to thank Hashem for even the most basic things. We might have thought that we should thank Hashem when He provides something extra for us, when we receive luxuries that are not necessary. The Torah is telling us here that it is no less important to thank Hashem on a daily basis for the basic things He provides us with in order to survive. Often, when we receive something on a constant basis, we tend to take it for granted. But it is these basic things that we receive constantly and directly from Hashem every single day that we need to be most grateful for.

In the next article, we will take a look at the structure of ברכת המזון. ■



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**RABBI AARON**

Editor, Torah Tidbits

**GOLDSCHIEDER**

# Rabbi Soloveitchik on Parenting

## *Jewish Parenting: Cultivating and Teaching*

What is the essential role of a parent? What advice can be gleaned from the Torah regarding this most serious and challenging task?

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik taught that an answer to this question can be found by comparing the parenting roles of Adam and Chava to Avraham and Sara. They responded to this calling quite differently.

The Rav draws our attention to the significance of the names of these individuals. As is well known, names found in the Torah often convey particular ideas and messages.

The name Adam relates to the word *adama* (earth). Adam's name is not identified with fatherhood. Adam's role, within the family, "is of such minimal significance that it is not worth being demonstrated by the name." (Family Redeemed, p. 106). In contrast we take note of the name of Avraham. The Torah explicitly states that his name contains *av*, fatherhood. Avraham, in his role of founding a people, teaches that unlike the "sinful-egotistic, pleasure- and power-oriented community," this new

community differs by being an "ethical, love-oriented and humble community." Therefore it deserves emphasis. Avraham, says the Rav, "redeemed and elevated" the role of fatherhood. (ibid.)

*Chava*, the name of the first woman is also telling. The Torah tells us that "The man called his wife's name Eve (*Chava*) because she was the mother of all living things (*chai*)" (*Bereshit* 3:20). Apparently the woman is naturally concerned with motherhood more so than the man with fatherhood. A woman is more inclined to desire having a child. Without question the nine months of pregnancy, with all its attendant biological and psychological changes, the birth of the child with pain and suffering, the nursing of the baby and, later, the caretaking of and attending to the child - all form a part of the motherhood experience.

Not only did the role of the male undergo a change when Avraham came on the scene, but the female did as well. "Avraham personified fatherhood as a great commitment. Sarah became the first mother in which her motherhood stemmed not from instinctual involvement due to biological pressure but from free commitment as well. What was Sara's commitment? The same as Avraham's: an educational *masorah* commitment to hand down and teach the covenant (*Brit*), God's word, the way of a covenantal life of *chesed u-tzedakah*, of kindness and charity." (Ibid., p. 108) The

Rav powerfully summed up this idea: “Sara replaced Eve...Eve’s motherhood consisted in giving life (in a natural sense) to her child...Sara’s was due to a great vision, to a new mission she took on.” (Ibid., p. 109)

When the Torah first introduces us to Avraham and Sara we immediately learn that they serve as teachers and are fully engaged in educating others, “...all the persons they had acquired in Charan” (Bereshit 12:5). The Torah expresses God’s love for the house of Avraham in the following way: “For I have known him that he shall command his children and his household after him that they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice...” (Bereshit 18:19).

### **Two Complementary Roles**

Father and mother play distinct roles in imparting Jewish values to the child. These are complementary roles. The father is responsible for the *intellectual* tradition. Talmud Torah, imparting law and directives and a skill to study is this sphere in particular. A mother provides for the child in the *experiential* domain. “It is impossible to provide one with formal training in the experiential realm. Experiences are communicated not through the word but through steady contact, through association, through osmosis, through a tear or smile, through dreamy eyes and soft melody, through the silence at twilight and the recital of *Shema*. All this is to be found in the maternal domain. The mother creates

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the mood; she is the artist who is responsible for the magnificence, solemnity and beauty. She tells the child of the great romance of Judaism. She somehow communicates to him the tremor, the heartbeat of Judaism, while playing, singing, laughing and crying.” (Ibid., p. 115)

The Rav accentuated the parents’ dual role: “We have two *massorot*, two traditions, two communities, two *shalshalot ha-kabbalah* - the massorah community of the fathers and that of the mothers. “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob (= the women) and tell the children of Israel (= the men)” (*Shemot* 19:3), “Hear my son the instruction of thy father (*mussar avicha*) and forsake not the teaching of thy mother (*torat imecha*)” (Proverbs 1:8). (Tradition, Special Issue, 1978, p. 76)

The Rav went on to describe what he learned from his mother: “Most of all I learned that Judaism expresses itself not only in formal compliance with the law but also in a living experience. She (i.e. my mother) taught me that there is a flavor, a scent and a warmth to mitzvot. I learned from her the most important thing in life - to feel the presence of the Almighty and the gentle pressure of His hand resting on my frail shoulders.” (Ibid, p.77)

### ***Eshet Chayil: The Women’s Crisis Leadership***

“Were it not for the mother, the Jews would not have been able to defy and survive so many crises which threatened to annihilate our people” (Ibid., p. 115). The

mother in times of crises acts heroically. The Torah, often, portrays the woman as the determining influencer, actually saving the male from committing grave errors (Ibid., p.116). God rejects Abraham’s plea to retain Yishmael in the covental home: “.in all that Sarah has said unto you, hearken unto her voice, for in Isaac shall your seed be called” (*Bereshit* 21:12).

A second example is Rivka taking responsibility for the covenant being transmitted to Yaakov instead of Esav (*Bereshit* 27). A third: Miriam is responsible for the emergence of Moshe as a leader and redeemer of his people. If not for her, Moshe may not have survived. She suggested to the princess that a Hebrew wet-nurse be employed for the infant, preventing Moshe from disappearing in anonymity (*Shemot* 2:2,7, 8). And the Aggadah relates that the women refused to contribute to the Golden Calf (*Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 45) while they gave generously to the Mishkan (*Shemot* 35).

The Book of Proverbs dedicated its last section (31:11-31) to the woman of valor. Valor in this context is suggestive of her heroic stances and courage in time of need. In general, the valor attests to the woman playing her vital role as both tender guardian, teacher, and courageous leader.

In this context the Rav offered a homiletic insight as to the reason why the woman determines the Jewish status of a child. The covenant long-lasting quality ultimately is influenced more significantly by the mother. “The Halacha was cognizant of the greatness of the covenantal mother when it formulated the rule that *Kedushat Yisrael*, one’s status as a Jew, can be transmitted only through the woman.” (Family Redeemed, p. 120).

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### ***The Hebrew Term for Parent***

The Hebrew word for parents - *horim* - is indicative of the educational role that is required. Hora is similar to the word *morah*, teacher, which is also similar to the word *Torah*, which means lessons and guidance. In contrast the English word 'parent,' is based on the Latin "pere", which means to bring forth or to give birth to. Here the emphasis is apparently on bringing the child into the world. The Jewish stress is on rearing, cultivating and educating the child.

### ***The Ultimate Blessing***

A final thought. When Yaakov offers a blessing to his beloved son Yosef, strangely, he seems to veer away and offer a blessing to Yosef's children. "He blessed Yosef and said, "The God before whom my father walked...". This blessing addresses Ephraim and Menashe. The Zohar (Vayechi, 1:227b) asked, "Why do we not find here that Yosef is blessed?" The following beautiful answer is given: "When his sons were blessed he was blessed." In other words, the most meaningful and joyful blessing that a parent receives is when they witness their own children walking in the path of Torah, carrying on the tradition, and living a committed Jewish life. May all of us, who are blessed to be parents, merit this exalted delight. Amen. ■

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# Protecting Fruit

Many people want to protect their fruits that began to grow. The posekim dispute whether it is permissible to engage in activities in order to protect fruit (ukmei peira).

Those who are lenient cause more shemithah fruit to grow on the tree, and are essentially stringent with preventing hefseid. On the other hand, someone who is stringent and fails to protect the fruit brings about a situation in which there are barely any edible fruit. In this way, he is lenient in "the produce of the Sabbatical year is for you to eat." Thus, he forfeits the mitzvah of eating shemithah produce. Also, he causes shemithah produce to go to waste.

Note: this is not direct hefseid, since one is not actively causing the fruit to spoil, so it is permitted - the question is if this is best.

In our opinion this is a stringency that

brings about a leniency, and should be avoided.

Our ruling is, that one may follow the lenient opinion, and protect fruit even in private gardens:

Best option: Protection against pests is best when there is no contact with the tree, such as putting out traps or applying biological pesticide. These solutions can help with fruit flies and other pests.

When these solutions are not feasible, it is possible to spread netting on the tree or spray the fruit.

The last choice is wrapping each fruit. ■

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**Schedule** (All times are for Israel)

**8:00 AM • Shacharit in the  
Linda and Murray Lulicht Beit Midrash**

**9:00 AM • Introduction,  
followed by Explanatory Kinot in English**

**1:20 PM • Mincha Gedola in the Lindenbaum Library**

During Mincha, Rabbi Dr. Schacter will continue teaching in the  
Lulicht Beit Midrash for those who wish to continue learning

**5:00 PM • Conclusion of Kinot  
Mincha**



**A FEW HOURS LATER**

OK, SCRATCH THE DRESS IDEA. AND THE 57 OTHER IDEAS I HAD FOR A PRESENT... I'LL JUST... WRITE HER A BIRTHDAY CARD. HEAVEN HELP ME...

TOO BAD, DADDY! I'M MAKING LOTS OF THE THINGS SHE LIKES AND FIGHTING THINGS SHE HATES! LIKE A LION AMONG SHEEP, I TEAR THOSE THINGS APART! RRRRAARGH!



LIKE, ONE THING MUMMY HATES IS WHEN WE LEAVE LAUNDRY ALL OVER THE FLOOR, SO I DECLARED WAR ON ALL THE LAUNDRY IN THE HOUSE AND THREW ALL OUR CLOTHES OUT THE WINDOW!

THAT'S NICE, DEAR...  
"Oh, Batzi, you're so wonderful..."  
ERM...

THERE ARE PEOPLE ARE WALKING IN THE STREET WITH SOME OF OUR TROUSERS ON THEIR HEADS...HEE HEE!



AND SHE LIKES COFFEE, SO I'M MAKING HER THE BIGGEST COFFEE MUG IN THE WORLD! SHE'LL HAVE LOTS AND LOTS AND LOTS OF COFFEE!!!

"...you're so good to us, honey. Just as G-d constantly gives us only the best of everything, that's how you care for me and the kids..."

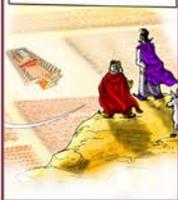


"...how could I possibly express our gratitude? Everything I have to give is from the wonders and mercies you've already given us!

Just like every commandment we perform for G-d is using the health and money and stuff HE GAVE US out of His own Loving Hand already!"



and just like He saved us from annihilation in the hands of Balak and Bilam, without us even knowing what danger we were in, completely behind our backs...



... in the same way, I know you do so much for us behind the scenes that we don't even know about...

AND SHE LIKES RED, SO I DECORATED THE WHOLE HOUSE WITH KETCHUP PATTERNS!

THERE'S A GOOD GIRL...



**SHORTLY AFTERWARDS**

UM... WELL... I'M SURE A LOT OF VERY GOOD INTENTIONS WENT INTO ALL THIS...



OH DEAR... THAT'S WHAT YOU SAY EVERY TIME DADDY MESSES UP BIG TIME...

WE JUST WANTED TO MAKE UP FOR LAST YEAR'S FIASCO...!



BUT I DON'T NEED ALL THAT FROM YOU! YES, COFFEE AND TIDY FLOORS AND RED ARE ALL GREAT IN THE RIGHT CONTEXT, BUT... ALL I REALLY NEED FROM YOU IS...



"...BE KIND, BE FAIR, AND BE QUIETLY TRUE TO YOUR G-D." JUST LIKE G-D DOESN'T NEED MOUNTAINS OF SACRIFICES, BUT BALAK AND BILAM THOUGHT THEY COULD FLATTER G-D INTO CHANGING HIS MIND WITH TONS OF SACRIFICES, BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT HE LIKES...

...ALL I NEED IS YOUR LOVE, APPRECIATION AND HAPPINESS.

WELL, IT JUST SO HAPPENS...

HEAVEN HELPED ME!





### Asher Manning Gush Chapter Director Crossroads of Intimacy

*“Family is everything”* is a well-used quote often heard in movies or found on fridge magnets. The Hebrew word for family - Mishpacha is used more times in the book of Bamidbar than any other book in Tanach (74!). Families come in all sizes - big and small, but the smallest family unit is the nuclear family - parents & children. The name nuclear stems from the Latin nucleus meaning kernel or seed. And yet, the most common use of nuclear is also most poignant regarding family. At the very core of the family structure is hidden a pulsating energy with infinite potential. The bond between husband and wife holds within it the power to create life, but when abused, the same power can be incredibly destructive.

The pinnacle of physical and emotional intimacy is no trivial matter. The place that it holds, in any given society, is a litmus test for the values and vision embedded in that civilization. Is it seen primarily as an act of pleasure and recreation, to be explored and celebrated by individuals ‘pursuing happiness’? Or is it first and foremost an investment in the future, building loving relationships that form the family unit, essential to the continuation of the community.

Bilam, in his mind’s eye, saw both options

as a tenable future for the Jewish people.

Standing on Mount Peor, a craggy peak dedicated to Baal Peor, the pagan god of hedonism, he cast his eyes towards the Jewish future. On one hand: מה טובו אוהליך יעקב - the quiet beauty of the Jewish home, the visionary dignity of the Jewish family. And on the other: ויצמד ישראל לבעל פעור - an abandonment of morals and familial responsibilities in pursuit of immediate pleasure and gratification.

Our society stands at the same crossroads today - how must we channel the nuclear fusion of loving intimacy? Do we spend it impulsively or see it as an investment in the Jewish future?



### Tehila Eckhaus 12th Grade, Efrat

This week’s parsha, Balak, we talk about Bilam and how he wanted to curse the Jewish people. Bilam’s ‘specialty’ was always finding the negative aspect of things. Throughout the parsha we see how Hashem teaches him the need to also look at the positive side of things and he ends up blessing the Jewish people. Our parsha teaches us the importance of a positive look on life. There are many reasons to be positive: 1. Those who see things in a better light having a happier and longer life. 2. Positivity influences our surroundings and gives everyone around us a happier and better feeling. 3. Negativity is not all to life, there is so much more. If we’re negative all

the time, we don't allow ourselves to see the good things in life.

For example, if someone broke their hand, instead of complaining and focusing on the negative they can look at it in a positive way and say: Indeed, I broke my hand but B"H I have hands in the first place and Be"H they will get better'. I think we must go through life with a positive mindset, saying to ourselves: 'Yeah, things can be difficult, but I'm strong! I can do it! don't give up!'. Hashem doesn't give you a challenge you can't handle. The parsha teaches us this important lesson: Even when things get hard and difficult, there is always a positive way to see everything! ■

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## Real Life Rescues

### Tel Aviv Man Revived After Nearly Drowning on Shabbat

On Shabbat evening just before 7:00 p.m., a man was in the water in the ski lake in Begin Park located in southern Tel Aviv, when he began to feel tired and couldn't swim anymore. He thrashed in the water and screamed for help before going under. A police officer in the area rushed over and helped pull the man out of the water together with other bystanders. The officer initiated CPR as emergency services were called.

Shalom Cohen, a United Hatzalah volunteer EMT living in the area, received dispatch's emergency alert, as did another United Hatzalah volunteer EMT Amit Sinai. Both volunteers were at home enjoying the quiet evening hours, Amit was on duty with the ambulance for the weekend and rushed down to the emergency vehicle, switched on the lights and sirens, and raced to the location. He saw the officer performing CPR compressions and took over from the officer after attaching a defibrillator. Amit continued compressions for the next two minutes and managed to bring back the man's pulse.

A mobile intensive care ambulance arrived as did Shalom Cohen, who was traveling in his private car and unable to drive through red lights thus making his trip there longer. The additional EMS personnel joined the effort to stabilize the patient and prepare him for transport.

"It is always a terrific feeling to save a life," Amit, a veteran EMT, said after Shabbat was over. "No matter when the emergency alert comes in, I drop what I am doing and rush over to help. But saving a life on Shabbat, for me, makes the rescue all that much sweeter. It means that I had a hand in maintaining the holiness of Shabbat and preventing a tragedy on this special day. I have to say thank you to the officer who initiated CPR as well as the rest of the team who I worked together with, we all had a part in saving this man's life."



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