



## TORAH 4 TEENS

## BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



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ISRAEL

### PITCHING OUR TENTS

In this week's fascinating *Parsha, Balak*, we encounter a whirlwind of strange prophecies, blessings, curses, and even talking donkeys! Amidst all the unusual and dramatic events, in Bilaam's third blessing we find one of the most important *pesukim* and blessings in the Torah—a verse that every Jew recites each morning:

“מַה־טָּבוֹ אֶהְיֶה לְךָ יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל”

*How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel! (Bamidbar 24:5)*

With such significance that *Chazal* placed this *pasuk* before *Pesukei DeZimra* in the daily prayers, it's worth exploring more deeply why it carries such weight.

Rashi, quoting the Gemara in *Bava Batra*, teaches that Bilaam noticed how the entrances of the tents were not facing each other—preserving modesty and creating a sense of dignity and privacy.

Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin adds that we all have the ability to choose the direction we open our tents. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* says that if we open even a tiny hole the size of a needle, Hashem will expand it into a grand opening. In other words, if we make a small effort to head in the right direction, Hashem will magnify that effort and guide us further. The key is taking that first step.

But how do we know what that first step is? What is the right direction?

The *Alter Rebbe*, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, famously teaches that the word “מה” (*mah* – “what”) represents the idea of *bitul*—self-nullification. Instead of asking “why” or “how,” we ask “what” or “for whom?” It's about removing ourselves from the center and submitting to something greater—Hashem or another Jew. When we take that step, we move toward “טובו”—goodness. These are the tents of Yaakov and the dwelling places of Yisrael.

May we be *zocheh* to nullify ourselves for others, and may Hashem open for us new dwellings—speedily and in our days—with the rebuilding of the Third *Beit HaMikdash*.



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### A HIDDEN MEANING

*Parshat Balak* tells a strange story—one that Bnei Yisrael didn't even witness. Balak hires Bilaam to curse them, but Hashem flips the curse into a blessing. Bnei Yisrael never hear the curses or the blessings. Nothing about their situation visibly changes. So why does the Torah spend time retelling this story again and again?

Because it teaches us something essential: Hashem loves us—even when we don't see it. He protects us behind the scenes. Even when

we make mistakes, complain, or fall short—His love stays with us.

Like in *Sefer Hoshea*, where Hashem compares His love to that of a husband who remains committed to an unfaithful wife—hurt, but still loving.

Even the blessings we quote from Bilaam aren't truly his—they're Hashem's words. He turned a curse into a blessing out of His deep love for His people.

The Rambam reminds us:

Love has the power to turn curses into blessings.

It is the only force strong enough to overcome hate.

Love can heal the brokenness of the world.

This story isn't just about Bilaam or Bnei Yisrael. It's about how deeply Hashem loves us—even when we don't know it. ■

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