



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Many people who have grown up in English-speaking countries heard this saying from a young age. Its intention is that even when people say negative things, ultimately they are just words that shouldn’t hurt us.

This always stuck with me. I was always the big, tall kid growing up. Kids in my class or around the neighborhood couldn’t really bother me physically, but sometimes, out of their own frustration, they would use their words against me. When this would happen, I would remind myself of this line, and tell myself that no matter what somebody said to me, it doesn’t need to make a difference in my life.

As I got older, I started to learn the way Judaism relates to the concepts of the power of words. For example, the Gemara teaches us (Megillah 15a), “Do not let the blessings of regular folk be light in your eyes.... And do not let the curses of regular folk be light in your eyes.” The idea is that when people speak, positively or negatively, they do have

an impact, whether for good or for bad. Words matter.

This seems to be the opposite of what I heard growing up. Are words really something that can never hurt us? We know that harmful words have negative consequences, and we teach our children, and ourselves, the power of speech and the importance of the words that come out of our mouths. I think what the line is getting at is not that words have no effect on our world, since they obviously do, but how they affect our self-confidence and self-worth. With regard to how we react to these insults, it is up to us to realize: they’re just words.

Throughout Jewish history, *Am Yisrael* has had words cast at us in the most negative ways. In this week’s *parsha*, *Parshat Balak*, Bilaam is commissioned to try and say the most terrible things about us. Fast forward to today, and we see that not much has changed. The past 20 months have been brutal for all those that care about the Jewish people, Israel and what is said about us around the world. All it takes is a couple minutes on the predominantly pro-Palestinian social media to see the amount of ignorance that’s out there and how that ignorance is turned into hateful words against the Jewish people, including at rallies, TV shows, and even concerts. People want to take the same role as Bilaam and curse the Jewish people, curse the IDF soldiers, curse our Prime Minister, curse our ministers, and curse the State of Israel.

Many ask why the story of Bilaam is in

לעילוי נשמת

ROSE KELMAN a”h

רוז-רשקה בת

ישעיהו ופייגה-פאני ע”ה

On her first Yartzheit 19th Tamuz

Moishe Kelman & all the family

the Torah. Ok, Bilaam tries to curse us and fails. There's drama there, but many events happened around the world during our time in the wilderness, so why include this one in the Torah? Most likely, we weren't even aware at the time it was happening. As Bilaam says, we were probably dwelling in our beautiful tents.

I think it's because of what happens after Bilaam starts to realize that he cannot curse the Jewish people: "How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed? How shall I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced?" (Bamidbar 23:8). In this context, he calls us "*Hen am levadad yishkon u'vagoyim lo yitchashav*" - "This is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

This is an incredibly powerful idea. We need this incident to be recorded in the Torah in order to have this knowledge, this realization, that we are a people destined to dwell alone on the world stage. We need it because it enables us to continue our path of truth - defending our brothers and sisters, securing our southern and northern borders, and securing ourselves from countries that we don't even share borders with - without worrying about the curses from our enemies. If we paid attention to international conspiracies against the one Jewish state, we might become paralyzed, powerless, and our enemies would take advantage of our weakness. Bilaam's message to us is necessary at this time.

Bilaam's story also teaches us that though we know our lonely path in world history, there are still those who bless us, and we must recognize and appreciate that. There are many non-Jews who pay attention to



HaKadosh Baruch Hu's blessing to Avraham Avinu: "I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you" (Bereshit 12:3), and they consistently and fervently bless the Jewish people. It's especially hard to do this today, when support for Israel is not as popular as it used to be. Amongst them are many American senators and congressmen, as well as members of parliament in European countries, and many other leaders and lay people all around the world all standing up for what they know is true.

So let me take the opportunity to thank those who bless us, and the curses of those who curse us should turn into blessings, just as they did in *Parshat Balak*. Let me also take the opportunity to thank my kindergarten

teacher (Morah Rivka) for teaching me that important concept of letting go of insults and knowing my self-worth. As we end the school year and enter summer vacation, let me thank all the teachers and *ganenot* out there for the incredible and influential hard work they do all year, and to remind them that their words stick, sometimes staying with their former students for their entire lives. On behalf of all the parents and the children who have you to thank for their education, thank you for all your hard work.

If you're a parent and you appreciate what your children's teachers have done this year, now is the perfect time to call them and thank them for a wonderful year. I'm sure that your positive words will be so meaningful to them.

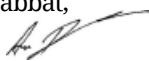
To all those starting jobs in summer camps, whether it be Camp Dror, Camp Dror Manhigut, Nofesh-Yachad, NCSY Chai, Legacy summer camp, or any of the NCSY summer camps coming to Israel with thousands of teenagers, we salute you and wish you tremendous *hatzlacha*. These are roles that educate our youth and are so important for their growth. I truly believe they are crucial for the future

of the Jewish people because as impactful as school is, summer camp many times creates role models for teenagers that are crucial for the growth of our next generation.

This past Thursday and Sunday, we had the *zechut* of having the staff of Camp Dror at the OU Israel headquarters in Har Hotzvim. I told everyone gathered there how important summer camps are as part of the Jewish education and experience of our children and encouraged them to be proud role models for the young campers looking up to them. I blessed them that they should make an incredible impact that will stay with them for many years to come.

So let me wish each and every one of my Torah Tidbits readers a beautiful, healthy and safe summer. A summer in which all of our hostages come home and our brave IDF soldiers are successful and safe. May we continue hearing *besorot tovo* for *Klal Yisrael*, and may all those that bless us be blessed and all their blessings come to fruition.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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לעילוי נשמות

בילא בת בנימין ע"ה

Bayla Gold a"h
on her 6th yahrzeit ט"ו תמוז

and

הרב אברהם שלום גולד זצ"ל

Rabbi Sholom Gold zt"l

On his 2nd yahrtzeit - י"ט תמוז

*The Gold, Koenigsberg,
Nadav & Goldrieck Families*




THE STRONGEST... THE MOST GENTLE

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