



SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

# Flipping the Narrative

Every conversation is a complicated wrestling match between the desire to be seen and the need to self-protect. It is fraught with the possibility of misunderstanding.

Each of us sees the world through our own filters. So sometimes I don't hear what you are saying but rather what I am expecting.

In this week's parsha, Balak, King of Moab, sends messengers to hire the prophet Bilaam to curse Am Yisrael. After the messengers lay out their proposal, Bilaam tells them that he only has prophecy at night and they will have to wait until morning to receive an answer.

In an almost shocking display of his powers of prophecy, Bilaam does, in fact, "meet" with Hashem that night. The Torah tells us:

הָאֱלֹהִים עָמָרָה:

G-d came to Bilaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"

Did Hashem not know?

Rashi tells us that Hashem asked this question to mislead Bilaam. Before this episode, Bilaam was afraid to curse Am Yisrael. He saw the wonders Hashem did for His people and he did not want to anger such a powerful G-d. But when Hashem asked, "Who are these men with you?" it seemed to Bilaam that maybe he had misjudged the situation, perhaps the G-d of Israel was not as all-knowing as he had believed. Perhaps there was a chance to get at Am Yisrael after all? Based on this misconception, Bilaam took the job.

The Maharal, Rabbi Yehudah Loew of Prague, teaches that since the ways of Hashem are straight and true, we must dig deeper in our efforts to more fully understand Rashi's explanation. Hashem doesn't try to trick us. The Maharal brings a teaching from the Gemara (Shabbos 104a) that if a person wants to corrupt or sin, he is provided with an opening to do so and if a person wants to do good, or bring a purification to the world, he is helped from Above. The Maharal explains that, in Bilaam's case, he *wanted* Hashem to be less powerful, and he *wanted* a chance to curse Am Yisrael. He, therefore, heard what he wanted to hear in Hashem's question.

Hashem didn't trick Bilaam; He provided an opening and Bilaam used it to trick

**Moving, Packing, Storage**  
**0547369550**  
 -Free Boxes With Your Move  
 -20% off for Seniors and Soldiers  
 -First-Time Customer? \$150 Off Your Move

himself.

How often do we do that to ourselves?  
How often do I read a text and interpret  
it according to whatever narrative I have  
playing in my head?

Balak is the only parsha told from the point  
of view of an outsider, a different perspective.  
Perhaps this change in perspective can be  
read as a hint to us to open our hearts to see-  
ing an interaction from a different viewpoint?  
That, as much as I see my own hypothesis  
playing out in your words, perhaps that is  
not actually what you meant?

May each and every one of us have the  
strength to remember parshas Balak in  
those moments of deepest confusion, when  
we feel broken by that text or conversation,  
and ask: Am I bringing my own baggage in  
here? Am I coloring this interaction with my  
own mindset and insecurities? I bless us to  
remember that by flipping the perspective  
here, the Torah helps give us the strength  
and the courage to do the same.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

**Shoshana** teaches Chassidus for the Shirat David  
Community in Efrat as well as in Jerusalem for Midreshet  
Rachel v'Chaya and Shiviti Women's Institute. She is a  
guide in Poland with JRoots and co-leads inspirational  
trips to Ukraine and around Eretz Yisroel. Shoshana  
has also been a guide at Yad Vashem since 2014.

## Arthur Samuels, DPM



**PODIATRIST**  
Over 30 years experience  
Licensed in Israel  
& America  
**053-427-6363**

ArthurMSamuels@gmail.com

### HAMOSHAVA, EFRAT



Luxurious residential project of 32 private villas with pools, nestled in biblical landscapes, offering elegance, privacy, and smart modern living.

**FROM : ₪ 4,700,000**

### MORADOT HAZAYIT, EFRAT



Discover Solomon Ridge — Upscale living in the heart of Zayit, Efrat. Spacious apartments, breathtaking views, and limited units remaining!

**ESTIMATED COST: ₪ 1,990,000**  
For a ~ 95 sqm apartment with parking and a balcony.

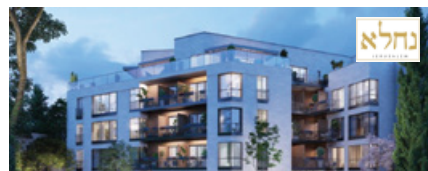
### NACHLAOT, JERUSALEM



For Sale Exclusively— Spectacular Penthouse Opposite Sacher Park!  
Exclusively in a new boutique project,  
with breathtaking views.

**SHELL :₪ 15,300,000**

### NACHLAOT, JERUSALEM



Brand New | Adjoining garden apartments | 109 Sqm | 5 rooms  
Facing Gan Sacher in Jerusalem, featuring modern design, generous  
outdoor space, —sold Exclusively together as one unique opportunity.

**₪ 6,300,000**



**NOAM  
HOMES**  
Real Estate Professionals

+972 52-587-8788

office@noamhomes.com

www.noamhomes.com