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## Transforming Evil to Good

Based on the verse “*The name of the wicked shall rot*” (Proverbs 10:7), the Talmud rules that one should not name a child after a wicked person, so that their name will rot and be forgotten.

This raises a question: Why then is a Torah portion named after a wicked man and hater of the Jewish people—Balak—about whom the Sages said that he hated Israel more than all others?

An additional question can be asked: How does the name “Balak” connect to the content of the Torah portion? The majority of the parsha deals with Balaam’s prophecies and the lofty blessings he bestowed upon the Jewish people (including prophecies about the End of Days).

What connection is there between this content and Balak, whose role in the story was relatively minor—limited to summoning Balaam?

## To Emphasize Worthlessness

This can be explained based on a halachic principle: “*Any name of an idolatry mentioned in the Torah may be spoken*,” even though it is normally forbidden to utter the name of an idol. The reason is that the prohibition on mentioning the name of an idol is to negate its significance, but when

the Torah mentions such names, the purpose is to nullify their importance and value.

When the Torah mentions names of idols, it is to demonstrate that idols are nothing, emptiness, and utterly powerless. The Torah stories show that idols do not help people and that their worship often leads to harsh punishment.

Therefore, these mentions don’t give the idols any status, but rather highlight their falsehood and worthlessness.

## Added Disgrace

In a similar manner, we can understand why our Torah portion is named *Balak*: when the Torah tells the story of Balak, its intention is to reveal how his evil plan to curse the Children of Israel was thwarted.

This does not contradict the principle that “the name of the wicked shall rot”—on the contrary, it adds to the disgrace and decay of his name.

When Jews refer to the parsha as “Balak,” they mean Balak as the Torah portrays him: a name that stands not in honor of Balak, but as a remembrance of his disgrace.

This is similar to how the Torah commands us to remember Amalek

(“Remember what Amalek did to you”), which does not contradict the command to “erase the memory of Amalek,” because the purpose of the remembrance is, in fact, to erase.

## Added Blessing

On a deeper level: In Balak’s story we see that not only did his evil plan fail, but it actually resulted in a greater blessing for the Jewish people—through his scheme to summon Balaam, Israel received the loftiest blessings.

Thus, the name “Balak” comes to symbolize how even the hatred and wickedness of enemies of Israel ultimately leads to elevation, help, and added strength for the Jewish people.

This is also one of the explanations as to why Balaam’s prophecy is among the only ones in the Chumash that openly speaks of the End of Days. One of the main features of the Messianic era is that the nations of the world will be refined to the point that they will use their power to assist the Jewish people. This is expressed in the name “Balak,” who forced Balaam to use his power and strength to bless the Jewish people.

*(from the teachings of the Rebbe, Likkutei Sichot, vol. 23, translated from Sichot HaShevua)*

## From Our Sages

### Balaam

#### *The Mouth Is Under Control*

“G-d opened the mouth of the donkey” (Numbers 22:28) — The miracle served to warn Balaam not to follow divination and sorcery, nor to curse Israel. Just as G-d can open the mouths of the mute, so too can He silence those who speak, or put other words in their mouths, so they speak according to His will.

*(Ramban)*

#### *A Miraculous Wonder*

“G-d opened the mouth of the donkey” (Numbers 22:28) — Just as the donkey is not naturally a speaking creature and only spoke by divine decree, so too Balaam, though he uttered lofty prophecies about the end of days, did so not by his own power or merit, but through a miraculous wonder.

*(Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Komarna)*

#### *Ignorance as Sin*

“Balaam said to the angel of G-d: I have sinned, for I did not know...” (Numbers 22:34) — Rabbi Chaim of Sanz once asked a certain Rabbi why he showed no concern for the difficult plight of a fellow townsman. The Rabbi replied that he hadn’t known about it. Rabbi Chaim said: “Regarding Balaam it says, ‘I have sinned for I did not know.’ This teaches that not knowing is itself a sin.”

#### *Returned as Before*

“Balaam arose, went and returned home, and Balak went on his way” (Numbers 24:25) — This verse highlights the depth of their wickedness. Even though Balaam saw in prophecy the greatness of Israel, and Balak heard it all, they still went back to their wicked ways as before, without taking the lesson to heart.

*(Korban HaAni)*

## Every Jew is a Book

Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorka once arrived in Lublin for Shabbat, and that Shabbat a brit milah (circumcision ceremony) was held in the synagogue.

During the meal, a large crowd gathered around the Rebbe, creating a tight press of people. He said to the crowd pushing in:

“Every Jew is like a book, and therefore, one should not lean on him or press against him.”

The righteous Rabbi Getzel, a grandson of the Chacham Tzvi, was present and remarked:

“But isn’t it permitted to place one book on top of another?”

The Rebbe replied:

“Every single Jew must say about himself that he is *not* a book.”





## The Power of Action in the Time of the Redemption

In the Gemara (Kiddushin 40b) we are taught that: “Study is greater, because study leads to action.”

However, Chassidus reveals that this superiority of study over action applies only in the present era. In the time of the redemption, the situation will be reversed — action will be greater than study.

The very rationale that now tips the scales in favor of study will, in the time of the redemption, favor action. Just as today “study leads to action,” so too in the future, action will lead to study. Through the very performance of the mitzvot, a Jew will reach the highest levels of Torah understanding.

### The Fig Will Protest

Today, we need study to know what is permitted and what is forbidden. One who does not study may transgress various prohibitions.

But in the era of redemption, the reality of the world will change to such an extent that it will itself warn us against what is forbidden. Just as today the heat of fire warns us not to put our hand in it, so too in the future, when the world is refined, it will naturally warn us against transgressing the Torah.

As the Midrash teaches, “In this world, a person may pick a fig on Shabbat, and the fig says nothing. But in the World to Come, it will cry out and say, ‘It is Shabbat!’” The physical world itself will alert us to avoid Torah violations.

Therefore, action will gain superiority over study, just as practical knowledge has an advantage over theoretical learning. By

engaging in mitzvah observance, the Jew will learn — through experience — all the details of the Torah’s laws, more deeply and solidly than through study alone.

### The Majority will Rule

Today, spirituality is above physicality, and its role is to refine and elevate the material. But in the future, the inner truth of physical reality will be revealed — namely, that the infinite power of G-d Himself is specifically vested in the physical.

Thus, today, study (the spiritual) is superior to action (the physical). But in the future, when physicality is refined and no longer conceals its inner truth, it is precisely through physical mitzvahs that a Jew will attain the highest levels of connection to G-d — more than through Torah study. At that point, “action will be greater.”

### Action is Greater

But, how can a halachic change take place once the law has already been decided? This is a fundamental issue regarding many changes expected to occur in the era of redemption — for example, the tradition that halachah will then follow the view of Bet Shammai rather than Bet Hillel.

The answer is that even this change will occur according to the rules of Torah: a Sanhedrin (Rabbinic court) will convene that is greater than the previous one “in wisdom and in numbers” — and this will be easy, for Moshe, Aharon, and all the great Sages of the generations will be with us — and they will rule by majority that the halachah is like Bet Shammai and that “action is greater.”

## Moshiach Now

### Concern for Every Jew

Moshe Rabbeinu noticed one day that a lamb had run away from the flock. He ran after it in order to bring it back. From this we can learn how meaningful every Jew is in the eyes of Moshe Rabbeinu, even if he is a Jew who has run away from the flock....

And since “the first redeemer is also the last redeemer,” it is clear that what is true of Moshe Rabbeinu is likewise true of Moshiach — every Jew, wherever he may be, is precious. Moreover, if Moshe Rabbeinu acted in this spirit even before the Giving of the Torah, how much more so should one act in this spirit *after* the Giving of the Torah, for this was the time at which, “You chose us from among all the nations.”

*(the Rebbe, reprinted from Exile to Redemption, with perm. from Sichos in English)*

## Change of Place; Change of Fortune

*continued from page one:*

“I wasn’t speaking about cows. I meant two other kielech: ‘**Ki v’shem** kodsho batachnu’ (For we have trusted in His holy name) and ‘**Ki vo yismach** libeinu’ (For in Him our hearts rejoice). From those two ‘kielech’ I draw my sustenance.”

Rabbi Leib now realized he was standing before a hidden tzaddik, a man of great spiritual stature. He wished to support Rabbi Uri financially, but suspected he would flatly refuse charity. What did he do? He brought his own wife into the plan and asked her to work discreetly with Rabbi Uri’s wife—without Rabbi Uri knowing.

Rabbi Uri’s wife found it hard to reject the outstretched hand. Her heart broke every time she saw her children’s hungry, tormented faces. Suddenly, new foods began appearing on the table. Several weeks passed in this way. Rabbi Uri seemed not to notice and carried on as usual, without questions.

### The Move

But one Shabbat, as he sat at a table laden with fine foods, he turned to his wife and asked: “Tell me, my dear wife, where has all this abundance come from lately?”

His wife was then forced to reveal the secret—that Rabbi Leib had been their benefactor.

Rabbi Uri fell into thought. After a moment, he said: “If so, I see that from Heaven it is no longer desired we live in poverty. But it is also not proper to live off free gifts. It seems we must move to another city—and with that change of place, may our fortune also change for the better, G-d willing.”

Indeed, shortly thereafter, Rabbi Uri moved from Lemberg to Strelisk. There, his spiritual radiance shone brightly, and many began to seek him out. It wasn’t long before all recognized his greatness and holiness, and he became known by the title “The Seraph of Strelisk.”

From that time on, his home never knew want again—and he no longer needed to rely on free gifts.

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## Human Interest

### Real Human Rights

Eleven years ago, Shammai Glick was serving in the reserves during Operation Protective Edge when he encountered an exhibition against IDF soldiers—organized by a group funded by foreign foundations. Shockingly, it was held in a building intended to support bereaved families in Petach Tikvah. Glick emailed every municipal council member expressing outrage. The next day, the exhibit was removed.

That was the spark that created the organization *B'Tzalmo*. Amid NGOs defending terrorists or criticizing IDF soldiers, Glick's group offers a different perspective: "B'Tzalmo



works to protect human rights for all Israeli citizens, in a Jewish spirit."

Glick, a 32-year-old charedi father of four from Beit Shemesh, works in high-tech. Raised in a Lithuanian-Orthodox family, he is inspired from the Chabad Chassidic world.

In the past year, Glick and his team have been working in Israel and around the world to stop inciters and anti-Semites — to get them fired and prevent them from holding events that glorify terror and hatred.

B'Tzalmo refuses to accept theaters receiving public funds while glorifying terrorists or inciting against soldiers—or broadcasters who attack religious Jews. When public figures challenge Chabad's efforts, Glick is quick to defend Chabad.

"When someone says a word about Arabs, many groups react. But when it's incitement against Jews—who speaks up? We decided to change that conversation."

To learn more, visit: [btsalmo.org.il](http://btsalmo.org.il)

## Farbrengen



**Question:** My wife and I got married with shared values—building a Torah home together. But after our third child, things changed. I became overwhelmed with work; she felt alone with the kids. She started snapping, and I withdrew. We're fulfilling our obligations, but the warmth is gone. She once said, "I feel invisible." How does a couple lose their connection and how do we rebuild the connection we've lost?

**Answer:** This is similar to a question that was presented a few weeks ago, and is a question many couples ask, especially after years of marriage, children, and growing responsibilities. You're not alone. You're both trying—working hard, keeping mitzvot, supporting the family. But even with all of that, the connection can fade. Why?

How does a person lose anything? Usually, by not paying attention. Marriage is no different. When we stop noticing our spouse—when we become absorbed in our own stress and responsibilities—we slowly stop seeing each other. We may be living in the same home, but no longer emotionally present. The love and care hasn't disappeared; it's simply been buried under layers of exhaustion and distraction.

This can be understood through the Chassidic concept of "*itaruta dile'eila*"—an arousal from Above. At times, we're given a burst of spiritual inspiration: during davening, a class, or even a quiet moment. But unless we hold onto the inspiration, i.e., through committing to a practical resolution, it quickly fades.

Similarly, marriage begins with *meshichat halev*—a natural emotional pull to our soul-mate. It's a Divine gift, meant to guide us to each other. But, if it isn't nurtured, it fades.

Chassidus teaches that our hearts follow our thoughts, speech and actions. When you ask your wife how she's doing—and truly listen—when you thank her, speak gently, and make time for one another, you are forming a vessel for your connection to reawaken.

Notice and show appreciation to your spouse. Focus on their good qualities. Be generous with your time and words. Don't wait for big breakthroughs. It's the small, consistent efforts that restore the bond—and with Hashem's help, your connection can be even stronger than before.

Aharon Schmidt, marriage & individual counseling: [www.aharonschmidt.com](http://www.aharonschmidt.com).

\*To receive periodic ideas on navigating marriage and personal growth, reach out to [aharonschmidt@gmail.com](mailto:aharonschmidt@gmail.com)

### Cooking Tip of the Week

#### Zesty Black Bean Dip:

This creamy, zesty dip totally changed my aversion to black beans! In a stick blender container, combine 1 can of rinsed black beans, ½ cup salsa, 2 tablespoons lime (or lemon) juice, 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, and ¼ teaspoon cumin. Blend until smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste *after* blending to fine-tune the flavor.

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### Halacha Corner – Geniza for Torah Pamphlets

As a general rule, every Torah pamphlet should be labeled with a note such as "Please preserve the sanctity of this publication." Once a person finishes reading a Torah pamphlet, it should be placed in genizah. Many synagogues have designated genizah bins, and these are regularly transferred to the care of the chevra kadisha (burial society), which handles them appropriately.

If one cannot bring the pamphlets to genizah and knows they will end up in the trash, they must shred or burn them. However, in such a case, one must first check whether the pamphlet includes any of the divine names (A-dnai, Kel, Elokah, Elokim, Havay-ah, Tzevakot, Ekeyeh, Shakai), as many pamphlets do contain these in full spelling. According to Torah law, these names may not be erased, burned, or shredded. (Therefore, it is better to invest the time and effort in placing the pamphlets in genizah rather than performing this inspection.) Our Sages said: "*Whoever honors the Torah (including the paper upon which it is written), his body is honored by others.*"

Adapted and translated from *Sichat HaShevua*

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