

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Balak*





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Mail@TorahWellsprings.com**  
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**USA OFFICE** Mechon Beer Emunah  
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# Table of Contents

*Torah Wellsprings - Balak*

Minchah .....	4
To Rely on Hashem, Alone .....	6
Machlokes Based on Illusions.....	9
The Bliss of Silence .....	11
Stay in the Jewish Camp.....	12
Gates and Boundaries .....	16

# Torah Wellsprings - Balak

## Minchah

The Tur (232) writes, "One must be very cautious with Minchah because Eliyahu's *tefillos* were answered during Minchah time.... The time for Shacharis is known. When one wakes up in the morning, he davens right away before he becomes busy with other things. The time for Maariv is also known. When he comes home after work, he davens Maariv. But Minchah is in the middle of the day when he is still busy at work. One must pay attention (so that he doesn't miss the time) and has to leave his work to daven. If he does so, his reward is very great."

The Trisker Magid (*Magen Avraham, Balak*) zt'l writes, "I heard from my father (Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl zt'l) in the name of the Baal Shem Tov zt'l that when a person is busy with his work all day long – in the market and on the streets – and he almost forgets that there's a

Creator, and then he remembers that it is time to daven Minchah, and he moans in his heart, thinking how the day passed with foolishness, and he runs to a side street and davens Minchah, although he doesn't know what he is saying, חשוב ויקר מאד לפני הבורא ברוך, הוא, his *tefillah* is very precious before the Creator, והאנחה שלו בוקע רקיעים, and his moan pierces the heavens."<sup>1</sup>

Reb Yonason Eibshitz zt'l (Tiferes Yonason, ד"ה ויחיד) quotes the Gemara (Shabbos 89b) that in the future, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will say to Avraham Avinu, בניך חטאו לי, "Your children sinned against Me." Avraham will reply, ימחו על קדושת שמך, "They should be erased, for the honor of Hashem's name." Then Hashem will go to Yaakov Avinu, to tell him that his children, the Jewish people, sinned. Like Avraham, Yaakov will say, ימחו על קדושת שמך, that they should be erased, for the honor of Hashem's name.

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1. Shacharis and Maariv were named for the time of day they are said. (מערב means when the sun sets in the west, and שחרית means morning.) But why is the afternoon *tefillah* called Minchah? A *korban minchah* is a flour offering. A minchah was indeed brought in the afternoon, together with the afternoon *tamid*, but a *minchah* was also brought every morning, together with the morning *tamid*. So why is the afternoon *tefillah* named for the *Minchah*?

The Sefer HaChaim (written by the brother of the Maharal) explains that Yitzchak was offered on the *mizbeiach*. He was like a *korban olah*. But a *korban olah* needs a *minchah*, and Avraham didn't sacrifice a *minchah*. When Yitzchak davened, he completed the minchah part of his *korban*. Therefore, his *tefillah* is called Minchah.

The Baal HaTanya offers another explanation on why this *tefillah* is called Minchah.

The Gemara (*Menachos* 104:) teaches that a *korban minchah* is a *korban* with *mesirus nefesh*, self-sacrifice. Because who brings a *korban minchah*, which consists of flour and oil? Only the poorest and destitute. The wealthy bring calves, goats, and sheep to the Beis HaMikdash, the middle-class Yidden sacrifice birds, but the poor can't afford those *korbanos*, so they bring flour and oil. It seems inexpensive, but for a poor person, it is expensive, and offering such a *korban* requires self-sacrifice.

This is why the word נפש, soul, is written only in reference to the *korban minchah*. As it states (*Vayikra* 2:1), ונפש כי תקריב מנחה לה', "If a soul brings a *korban minchah* for Hashem." Hashem says, "I consider it like you sacrificed your soul before Me," because it is a *korban* brought with self-sacrifice.

As we explained, the most challenging *tefillah* of the day is Minchah because it is in the middle of the day, in the middle of our business dealings. It is a *tefillah* with *mesirus nefesh*. Therefore, it is named Minchah, the name of the *korban* that is brought with *mesirus nefesh*.

Hashem will then go to Yitzchak and tell him, בניך חטאו לי, "Your children sinned against Me." Yitzchak will reply, "Are they my children and not Your children?"

Yitzchak Avinu will plead for the Jewish nation. He will say that he was moser nefesh and was placed on the mizbeiach. That merit should protect the Jewish nation. About this time, the Navi (Yeshayahu 63:16) said (alluding to Yitzchak), כִּי אָתָּה אָבִינוּ כִּי אֲבֹרָהֶם לֹא יָדָעֵנוּ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִכְיֶרֵנוּ, "For you are our father, for Avraham did not know us, neither did Yisrael recognize us..."

Although the depths of this Gemara are beyond us, we understand that Yitzchak will be the one who will plead for our benefit. His claim is בני ולא בניך, "Are they my children and not Your children?" Behold, every Jew is Hashem's child, as it states (Devarim 14:1) בָּנִים בָּנִים, "You are children of Hashem, your G-d." Chazal (Kiddushin 36a) say, even if they sin, they are still called Hashem's children. When Yitzchak will *keviyachol* remind Heaven of this love, this will save Klal Yisrael.<sup>2</sup>

With this information, we understand the specialness of *tefillas Minchah*. Avraham established Shacharis, Yaakov Avinu established Maariv, but Yitzchak set up *tefillas Minchah*. As it states (Bereishis 24:63) וַיֵּצֵא, "Yitzchak went out to pray in the field towards evening." Chazal praise *tefillas Minchah* and say, "A person should always be cautious with Minchah." Minchah is a special tefillah because everyone's tefillah can be answered. Yitzchak revealed that Yidden of all levels are still Hashem's beloved children. Therefore, with this tefillah, there can come salvations for

Yidden of all levels – including those who fell to low levels.

The Gemara (Brachos 6b) says, "Always be cautious with tefillas Minchah because Eliyahu was answered specifically during Minchah." The Yidden in Eliyahu's generation were at a low level, and they weren't worthy. They even transgressed the aveirah of avodah zarah. They received their salvation with Minchah, the tefillah established by Yitzchak, who revealed that every Yid is Hashem's child.

Yitzchak represents מדת הדין, the attribute of dinim. The attribute of din generally proclaims that there should be punishment. Reb Yonason Eibshitz explains that Yitzchak established Minchah, which means that at this tefillah, even the attribute of din agrees that the person should receive good.

Shu"t Rashba (vol.5, 1) writes, דע כי שעת מנחה, וכמו שאמרו שיש עיתים מרוצים בשנה עת מרוצה בימים, בעשרת ימי תשובה בין ראש השנה ויום הכיפורים, "Know that Minchah is the desired part of the days, just as the ten days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah (between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) are the desired days of the year." We see from this source that tefillos said during Minchah can be compared to tefillos said during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah.

The Gemara (Brachos 6b) states, "A person should be very cautious with tefillas Minchah because Eliyahu was answered solely at tefillas Minchah. As it states (Malachim 1, 18:36) וַיְהִי בַּעֲלֹת הַמִּנְחָה וַיֵּגַשׁ אֵלָיו הַנָּבִיא... ' It was at the time of Minchah that Eliyahu HaNavi came near and said... עֲנֵנִי ה' עֲנֵנִי, "Answer me Hashem answer me." עֲנֵנִי, answer me that the fire should come down from heaven, and עֲנֵנִי,

2. By the *machlokes* of Korach, Moshe davened (Bamidbar 16:15), אל תפן אל מנחתם, "Hashem shouldn't accept their Minchah sacrifice." It seems strange that Moshe had to say this prayer. Why would Hashem listen to the prayers and accept the sacrifice of *resha'im*? The answer is that it was a minchah sacrifice, and by Minchah, even the *resha'im*'s prayers are answered (Reb Yonason Eibshitz).

We can also explain that Yitzchak loved Eisav, although Eisav was a rasha, because he wanted to show that even a child who is a rasha like Eisav is also a child, and therefore, Hashem should love us, regardless of what we did, and the level we are on. (Reb Yonason Eibshitz zt"l).

answer me, that they shouldn't say that it was witchcraft."

Ben Yehoyada (from the Ben Ish Chai zt'l) asks, why does the Gemara have to add the drashah that he said twice עֲנִי, and that it means that fire should come down from heaven and that people shouldn't say it's witchcraft? It would have been sufficient to write that it states וַיְהִי בְעֵלֹת הַמִּנְחָה וַיִּגַּשׁ אֱלֹהֵיוּ, that Eliyahu davened at Minchah time, and at this time, his tefillos were answered. Why does it have to add the actual tefillah that Eliyahu davened at this time?

Ben Yohayada answers, "Chazal (Taanis 8b, Shulchan Aruch (תקע"ו ט"ו) tell us that a person shouldn't daven for two things at the same time. So, how did Eliyahu ask for two things: that the fire should come down from heaven and that the people shouldn't say it's witchcraft? It must be that the time of Minchah is so *mesugal* for tefillos to be answered; therefore, one may ask at this time for two things, at once. This is the reason Chazal bring this drashah of עֲנִי, that he asked for two things at this time of Minchah. This is another proof of the greatness of tefillah at this time. One can even ask for two things at once.

Another specialty of tefillas Minchah is that the yeshuah comes immediately. Kli Yakar (Bereishis 24:63) on the pasuk וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׂוּחַ, "Yitzchak went out to pray in the field towards evening," writes:

"Chazal (Brachos 26b) learn from this pasuk that Yitzchak established the tefillah of Minchah, which is לַפְנוֹת עֶרֶב, near sunset. This supports what Chazal (Brachos 6b) say, 'A person should always be cautious with Minchah, because Eliyahu was answered, only at Minchah. Avraham and Yaakov also established tefillos – Shacharis and Arvis; nevertheless, we don't find that they were answered immediately after their tefillah. But with the tefillah of Minchah, we find that Yitzchak was answered immediately. Probably Yitzchak was davening for his shidduch when Eliezer was traveling for this purpose. As it states (Tehillim 32:6) עַל יָמָאֵת

וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל כָּל חֲסִיד אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְעֵת מְצָא (Brachos 8a) say that this means one should daven for a wife. Immediately after Yitzchak said this tefillah, it states וַיֵּשֶׁא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה גַמְלִים, '[Yitzchak] raised his eyes and behold camels were coming...' and his shidduch, Rivkah, was coming. This is because when he said the tefillah, his eyes were looking down, and as soon as he finished the tefillah, he raised his eyes, and he saw that his tefillos were answered immediately. His kallah was arriving on the approaching camels. Chazal learned from this that a person's tefillos are answered more when they are said at Minchah time."

In review, we have learned the following benefits that come from davening Minchah:

1. Even the attribute of din agrees to give good to the person at Minchah; thus, nothing is stopping his tefillos from going up.
2. Even resha'im are answered at this time.
3. The tefillos are answered immediately.
4. One can even daven for two things at the same time.

Based on the above, one understands that he should invest his time and energy in davening Minchah.

### To Rely on Hashem, Alone

Rebbe Ber'inyu zy'a of Sadigura would say that the preparation for tefillah is to think about the following four pesukim that have the word מֶה in them:

1. מֶה אֲדִיר שִׁמְךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ, "How mighty is Your name throughout the earth". (Tehillim 8:2)
2. מֶה אָנוּשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ, "What is frail man that You should remember him?" (Tehillim 8:5)
3. מֶה ה' אֵלֶיךָ שׂוֹאֵל מִעֲמֶךָ כִּי אִם לִירָאָה, "What does Hashem Your G-d ask of you? Only to fear..." (Devarim 10:12)



4. מַה רַב טוֹבָךְ אֲשֶׁר צִפַּנְתָּ לְרֹאֵיךְ, "How abundant is Your goodness that You have stored away for those who fear You." (Tehillim 31:20)

To explain, Rebbe Ber'inyu told a *marshal* of a king who went hunting with his servants. The servants brought all the things that the king might need on this outing, including arrows, guns, food, and drink, and a gold pipe – because the king enjoyed relaxing with a pipe when he was outdoors. But he forgot to bring along matches to light the pipe.

The king took a break on the forest floor and wanted to smoke a pipe, but was very upset when he discovered that there weren't any matches. He asked his servants to look for a person passing by, to ask him for a match.

The servants found someone relaxing, smoking his pipe. He had matches with him, but refused to lend one to the king. The servant said, "Think about who is asking for the favor. It is the great king! And think about who you are, a poor, powerless person. Think about what he is asking for. He is only asking for a match that costs a few pennies. And think of the reward the king can give you for giving him a match. How can you say no?"

Similarly, before one davens, he should think about before Whom he will be davening. Before the Mighty Hashem, as it states (Tehillim 8:2) מַה אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ, "How mighty is Your name throughout the earth." Also, one should think about who he is. Behold, it states (Tehillim 8:5) מַה אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנִי, "What is a frail man that You should remember him."

Also, one should think (Devarim 10:12) מַה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שׁוֹאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אַתָּה לִירְאָה, "What does Hashem, Your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem..." The request isn't so large. Furthermore, contemplate (Tehillim 31:20) מַה רַב טוֹבָךְ אֲשֶׁר צִפַּנְתָּ לְרֹאֵיךְ, "How abundant is Your goodness that You have stored away for those who fear You." This final pasuk tells us the strength and the potential of tefillah. It has the potential to turn nature around, and you can receive all the desires of your heart. So, who wouldn't run to have an opportunity to daven with kavanah!

It states (Mishlei 21:30) אֵין חֵקֶמָה וְאֵין תְּבוּנָה וְאֵין עֲצָה לְיָגֵד ה'. Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l said that אֵין in Yiddish means "one." The pasuk is saying that there is only one wisdom and only one solution to the problems of life. And that is לְיָגֵד ה', to pour out the heart before Hashem.<sup>3</sup>

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3. A story happened to a person I know. This man was childless for years. He went to many doctors, without success. Finally, he came to "Professor Moshiach," who is a renowned expert in this area. Professor Moshiach told him that according to the rules of nature, he can't bear children.

He was very broken; and what should he tell his wife? He decided that he would first go to Reb Chaim Kanievsky, zt'l, and hopefully his yeshuah will come from there. However, Reb Chaim told him that he couldn't help him. The man left Reb Chaim's house and entered the nearby Lederman Shul, which was empty at that time, and shouted, "Ribono Shel Olam! Oy Ribono Shel Olam! Not Professor Moshiach, and not Reb Chaim. Only You and I are here now, and I don't rely on anyone in the world, only on You. Save me. Help me."

Today he is the father of nine children, ke"h.

I heard an amazing story from a great rav from Yerushalayim. He told me about a young child who had outstanding middos; however, unfortunately, his heart and mind were closed, and he couldn't understand Torah. For example, his melamed told him several times consecutively, "There was a person called Noach. He built a large teivah that had space for people. Noach entered the teivah, and was saved from the mabul." Then the melamed asked the child, "Where did Noach go?" and the child replied, "Under an umbrella." This is an example of how hard it was to teach this child anything, and it began disturbing the dynamics of the classroom. But the melamed didn't have a reason to send the boy out of his class, since

he was always well-behaved. The parents of this boy beseeched tzaddikim and mekubalim, and went to experts in chinuch, but nothing helped. The child's "closed" head wouldn't open, not even a drop.

The cheder sent a painful letter to the parents, telling them that they were running out of options, and since the child was hindering the growth of his classmates, they would have no other choice and have to ask them to keep their child home.

A week or two later, the melamed saw that the child stopped asking foolish questions (which generally disturbed the class) and started studying with hasmadah, and seemed to understand everything he was learning. The child even excelled above the good students of the class, wondrously. The melamed was shocked. This began during parashas Metzora. The melamed told his colleagues in the "rebbe's room" during the break, "Perhaps the child understands the language of birds (which is taught in parashas Metzora). Let's see what will be next week, when we learn Acharei – Kedoshim." The following week, the miracle recurred. The child understood everything, asked clever questions, and became the best student in the class.

The menahel (principal) of the school called up the parents and told them that he wanted to meet them at their home. The parents were worried when they heard that the menahel wants to speak with them. They thought he wanted to tell them to keep their child home. So they begged, "Please, give us another week. A drop more time. Before you lose hope on our son, give him one more chance."

The menahel said, "I have to meet you." When he arrived, he asked them, "Where did you take your son?"

The parents replied, "We went to so many people and many experts. Who didn't we go to?"

The menahel replied, "I am not referring to the past. I am discussing the present. To whom did you go with your son in the past two weeks? To which chinuch expert did you go to?"

The father looked at the mother, and the mother looked at the father, and then they said, "Some weeks ago, when we received your letter that you are about to send our son home, we said, 'We went to so many experts, and no one helped. No one can help our son. Let's stop going to "experts" and let's pray to Hashem. We went to the Kosel HaMaaravi, each of us in our corner, and poured out all the pain in our hearts as we said sefer Tehillim. Rivers of tears poured from our eyes. That is when our son's heart and mind opened to understand Torah. He understood everything he learned, perfectly, clearly, and deeply.' The child continued on in the cheder and then went to a very good yeshiva. He is now a talmid chacham and has the potential to become one of the gedolei hador. How great is the power of tefillah when one relies on Hashem alone!"

Reb Aryeh Shechter zt'l told how his family was saved from the holocaust. "Year תר"צ, some years before the Holocaust, my mother altered her and her husband's birth certificates to say that they were both born in Hungary. She knew that without Hungarian birth certificates, they would be banished from Hungary. Poland wouldn't accept them in, either, and then the thieves of the road would finish the job...

But the Hungarian government caught on that the documents were forged. A long and tiring court case of eight years followed. At times, my parents were imprisoned, and a long jail term hovered over their heads.

At the end of eight years, came the final court case, which would determine their fate. My father asked his lawyer what he thinks the outcome of the case will be. The lawyer said, "If you are sentenced to less than six years in prison, we can consider that a great success."

When my father heard this, he said to the lawyer, "Take the money I owe you, and remain at home. Don't go to the court. I will take care of myself."

The lawyer indeed agreed. He got his money, and he didn't have to work for it in the courtroom.

On the day of the judgment, my father came to the courthouse alone. The judge asked him, "Where is your lawyer?" My father replied, "I don't need a lawyer. I can speak for myself."

The judge said, "If so, let's hear what you have to say that will help your case?"

My father replied with courage and with bitachon, "Hashem leads the world. He is the One who places into the minds of judges what they should think and what they should say. Therefore, I pray to the Creator



## Machlokes Based on Illusions

The donkey said to Bilaam (22:28) מָה עָשִׂיתִי לָךְ, "What have I done to you that you have struck me three times?"

Then the donkey said to Bilaam (22:30) הֲלוֹא אֲנִי אֲתֹנֶךָ אֲשֶׁר רִכַּבְתָּ עָלַי מִעוֹדְךָ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הִהָסְפִן הַסְּבִנְתִּי לָעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ כֹּה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא, "Am I not your donkey that you have ridden all your life until this day? Have I been accustomed to doing such a thing to you?" He said "No."

Chazal (Yalkut Shimoni ch.45, remez 152) say, "Bilaam was the wise man of the nations of the world, but he couldn't stand up to the rebuke of his donkey, as it states, הִהָסְפִן הַסְּבִנְתִּי לָעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ כֹּה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא, "Have I been accustomed to do such a thing to you?" He said, "No."

Notice that the Midrash discusses the donkey's second statement, to call it a rebuke. But what rebuke is mentioned here? It would seem more appropriate to write that the rebuke was the donkey's first statement, when the donkey said, (22:28) מָה עָשִׂיתִי לָךְ בִּי

הַבִּיתִּי זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ הַגָּלִים, "What have I done to you that you have struck me three times?"

Reb Avraham Pam zt'l (rosh yeshiva of Torah v'Daas) explains the donkey's rebuke when it said, הִהָסְפִן הַסְּבִנְתִּי לָעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ כֹּה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא, "Have I been accustomed to do such a thing to you?" is indeed a very reprimanding rebuke, as we explain:

The donkey said to Bilaam, "Why do you hit me? Did it ever occur that I have left the main road and caused you to go the wrong way? Or did I ever before press your leg into the gate? You should have understood that if I did so today, I had a good reason to act that way. So why did you hit me? Why didn't you realize that there must be a good reason for my behavior?"

Bilaam had nothing to respond to this rebuke.

Let us learn from this the following lesson: When someone is generally kind and reasonable towards you, and then he suddenly acts cruelly, and says unkind

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of the world that He should place into the minds of you, the honored judges, that I am innocent, and that you should judge me with truth."

At this point in the story, Reb Aryeh Shechter stopped to share his emotions. He said in astonishment, "Is there a greater proclamation of אֵין עוֹד מַלְכוּת than this? After eight years of problems, court cases, and imprisonment, and my father knew that this was the final hearing, which would determine his fate, and nevertheless, he announced before the judge, without any fear, that he relied solely on Hashem, the Creator of the world. He trusts that Hashem will help him receive a good verdict."

The judge was stunned when he heard this and asked for a short recess. He had to calm down. Fifteen minutes later, he returned and he said with feeling, "Mr. Shechter, you are a special young man. I dismiss all charges against you. You are totally innocent and free." Then he read this out loud for all to hear. However, he said that he had a year to wrap up all his business in Hungary and leave the country.

This occurred in תרצ"ח, shortly before the Second World War began. At that time, it was almost impossible to get a visa to Eretz Yisrael or America. My father asked for permission to speak, and permission was granted. He said to the judge, "You are telling me to leave the country, but there isn't a country in the world that will accept me and my family."

The judge said, "I agree with you. Therefore, I will order the Hungarian government to arrange visas to America for you and your family, or certificates to Eretz Yisrael."

My father believed with emunah sheleimah that אֵין עוֹד מַלְכוּת, there is nothing but Hashem. Therefore, he didn't fear anyone. He never left this emunah, which burned within him. With this attitude, he saw many miracles in his life. On the fourth of Nisan, year תרצ"ט, the family came to Eretz Yisrael. Three years afterwards, it became known that most Yidden living in Europe were killed, and that most of his relatives were killed in the Holocaust, r'l. (written in ארצה ישאן ויקהל)

words, and the like, realize that there must be an explanation. This person never acts that way (or hardly ever acts that way), which proves that this person isn't cruel, and he isn't out to harm you. If it happened once, recognize that there is an explanation.

Perhaps he is going through a hard, difficult period in his life, and it is hard for him to control himself. If this isn't the explanation, there is certainly some other explanation. So, be understanding, don't jump to conclusions, and don't become angry. Certainly don't respond with unkind words of your own. Don't embarrass him, and don't hold a grudge against him. Recognize that he might need some chizuk and support at this time in his life.

Many disputes begin from a misunderstanding. The yetzer hara doesn't give up on the opportunity to turn a misinterpretation into full-fledged machlokes, which can last a long time.

Here's an example: Someone didn't receive a wedding invitation, although he is a neighbor or relative. He thinks it is intentional. He becomes angry with him, and a machlokes develops. However, it is very likely that no negative thoughts were intended. Perhaps the invitation got lost in the mail, or he simply forgot to invite him, or perhaps the invitation will come after the chasunah, etc. Mistakes happen. But if you think it was intentional, and your wife and children get involved, it can result in a feud, which can all be for nothing at all.

How much people suffer from misconceptions! We have an example of this from this week's parashah. Balak and his nation were afraid that Bnei Yisrael would wage war against them. Therefore, they called for Bilaam to curse them. Bilaam didn't come the first time, so they called him a second time, with more prestigious officers coming to his door. This was all because they feared (22:4) עָתָה יִלְחֲכוּ הַקְּהָל אֶת כָּל סִבְיֵיתֵינוּ בְּלֶחֶךְ, "Now the congregation will lick up our entire surroundings as an ox licks up the greenery of the field."

But there was nothing to fear. Bnei Yisrael would never fight a war against Moav. Hashem commanded (Devarim 2:9) אַל תִּצְרֶה אֶת מוֹאָב וְאַל תִּתְּגֹר בָּם מִלְחָמָה כִּי לֹא אֶתֶּן לָךְ מֵאֶרְצוֹ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בִּי לְבָנִי, "You shall not distress Moav, and you shall not provoke war with them, for I shall not give you an inheritance from their land, for to the children of Lot have I given Ar [the land of Moav] as an inheritance."

Bnei Yisrael had no plan of fighting a war with them, and they weren't permitted to do so. The Moabites turned over the world to stop the Jewish nation, but the whole matter was a misunderstanding, and they had nothing to fear.<sup>4</sup>

This is what happens to people. They imagine that someone wants to harm them, or other imaginations, and this steals their peace of mind. They aren't able to sleep at night, they pay a lot of money to prevent it, but it is all based on a notion, an imagination, which wasn't even true.<sup>5</sup>

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4. I heard from a talmid chacham that it is possible that Bilaam knew that there was nothing to fear, and that the Jewish nation wasn't permitted to wage war against Moav, but he didn't tell this to Balak because he wanted the money he would receive for his curses.

5. B'derech tzachus, a story is told about a person who needed a large sum of money, and decided to ask his friend for a loan. As he walked to his friend's home, he thought to himself, "He probably won't lend me the money. He will probably send me out without anything at all."

But then he said to himself, "Why do you think this way? How do you know he won't help you?"

But the first thought kept creeping back into his mind. He keeps thinking about how his friend won't help him, until he is certain that this will occur. He is convinced that his friend won't lend him a cent.

So, before jumping to conclusions, give your fellow man the benefit of the doubt. Things are often not as we perceive them.

### The Bliss of Silence

Although we are studying parashas Balak and not parashas Korach, it is still the correct time to discuss the severeness of machlokes, and how cautious we must be. As we mentioned, at the beginning of Korach, Rashi writes, *פרשה זו יפה נדרשת* "This parashah is beautifully taught..." The Pri Megadim (היבתי גומא ד"ה קהלת) writes, *בלשון הלצה* (in a light note) that it is always the correct time to discuss the evils of machlokes. It is *יפה נדרשת*, always the right time to speak about it, because "There isn't a moment when there isn't a machlokes. It is always the right topic to discuss."

An essential solution for machlokes is to remain silent. Silence resolves a lot of problems. As a wise person said, "When I am silent, I rule over my words, but when I speak, the words rule over me." No one

knows what you are thinking. If you can keep your thoughts to yourself, this can avoid a lot of machlokes. But after you speak, a machlokes can ensue.<sup>6</sup>

Reb Noson Gestetner zt'l said in the name of the Chazon Ish zy'a: Two things a person will never regret doing: (1) Learning Torah. (2) Remaining Silent.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 105b) tells the discussion that Bilaam had with the donkey. When the officers of Moav (שרי מואב) saw the hardship the donkey was causing Bilaam, they asked Bilaam why he didn't choose to ride on a horse. He told them that he generally rides on a horse, but now his horse was eating in a pasture, so he had to take the donkey. The donkey immediately spoke up and said (22:30) *הֲלוֹא אֲנִי אֶתֶנְךָ*, "I am your donkey." Implying, "You always take me on your trips. It isn't as you say that you generally take a horse."

Bilaam wanted to seem as someone who tells the truth, so he explained that he uses the donkey to carry the loads, but he rides

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Then he becomes angry. He says to himself, "I always try to help him, why does this 'rasha' refuse to help me? What did I do to him that he acts toward me this way?"

He continues stewing in these angry thoughts as he arrives at his friend's home (or his friend of the past). He knocks on the door. As soon as the door opens, he pours out his anger, and says, "I don't want your favors. Don't lend me any money. From today on, I don't want to know you anymore," and he slams the door shut, so loudly, that the neighbors down the street heard it. The friend, in his home, stands there in shock, not knowing what just happened, and which loan he was talking about.

This is the way of people; they imagine something that isn't true, and become angry about it, but it is all a misunderstanding or a wrong assumption and not based on reality.

6. One of the gedolei hador asked a question: Together with Korach were 250 leaders of the Sanhedrin, all great talmidei chachamim and tzaddikim. How could a regular person know which side to join, Korach or Moshe? This is a test that one doesn't know what to do!

But there is an easy solution: Look out and see which side is silent during the machlokes. That is a clear sign that they are right. With every machlokes, the silent one is correct. This is such a simple and certain rule that even regular people should be able to discern that *משה אמת ותרותו אמת*, because he was silent... The source for this concept is the Gemara (Kiddushin 71b) *שתיקותא דבבל היינו יחוסא*, "those who are quiet in Bavel (that is a sign that they have good yichus)."

With this concept, it states (Avos 1:16-17) *שמעון בנו אומר כל ימי גדלתי בין החכמים ולא מצאתי לגוף טוב יותר משתיקה*, "Shimon the son of Raban Gamliel said, 'My entire life I was raised among chachamim and I didn't find anything good for the body more than silence.' This means I was raised among chachamim, and I noticed that the silent one is the correct one.



on a horse. The donkey spoke up again, אָפֶּס, רִכְבָּתְּ עָלַי, you use me for riding. Bilaam said that it is only for rare situations. So, the donkey said מִעוֹדָךְ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, that he always uses the donkey to ride on for his trips.

The donkey then revealed more information that was very embarrassing for Bilaam. If Bilaam had remained silent at the beginning when the donkey said that he rode it, he would have saved himself a lot of shame and disgrace. But he felt that he must "have the last word", and this resulted in immense public shame. This tells us that when one is מַעֲבִיר עַל מַדּוּתוֹ, and he doesn't answer back to those who embarrass them, in addition to the reward he will receive from heaven for this, he saves himself from a lot of shame and disgrace and heartache.

Someone came to Reb Naftali Amsterdam zt'l. He said that he doesn't have shalom bayis, but he wasn't able to divorce his wife. Therefore, he requested a הֵיטֵר מֵאַחַד רַבָּנִים<sup>7</sup>.

As they were speaking, this man said terrible lashon harah about his wife. Reb Naftali said, "How confused people are. They seek a heter from 100 rabbanim (not one

less) to marry a second wife, which isn't a torah prohibition. But to speak lashon hara, they speak freely, and they don't seek a heter from not even one Rav!

### Stay in the Jewish Camp

At the end of the *parashah*, we read about the tragic plague that befell the Jewish nation, due to an aveirah that was planned and instigated by Bilaam HaRasha. He told the Moabites, אֱלֹקֵיהֶם שֶׁל אֱלֹהֵי שׁוֹנֵא זִמָּה, "The G-d of these hates adultery..." and he advised Moav to cause the Jewish people to sin with adultery.

It states (25:1), וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשִׁטִּים וַיַּחֲלֵה הָעָם לְזִנוּת אֵל, "Yisrael settled in Shittim, and the nation began to sin with the daughters of Moav." Shittim/שִׁיטִּים is the name of the location, but it also means to stroll (as in *Bamidbar* 11:8, וַשְׁטוּ הָעָם). The Or HaChaim writes, "The *pasuk* reveals the cause of the sin. It was because the nation strolled outside *Machaneh Yisrael* and went to where the daughters of Moav were, because שִׁיטִּים means to stroll, as in the *pasuk* וַשְׁטוּ הָעָם (*Bamidbar* 11:8). This resulted in adultery."<sup>8</sup>

7. A הֵיטֵר מֵאַחַד רַבָּנִים is when one hundred rabbanim give a man permission to marry a second wife, even without divorcing his first wife. From a Torah standpoint, it is permitted to marry two wives, but there is a חֹרֵם דְּרַבֵּינוּ גְּרָשׁוּם, forbidding the marriage to two women. Nevertheless, if specific criteria are met, and one hundred rabbanim permit it, one can marry another wife.

8. The Or HaChaim Hakadosh's *yahrtzeit* is on the 15th of Tamuz, so we will discuss some stories of this holy tzaddik and some praises of his holy *sefarim*.

The Or HaChaim moved to Eretz Yisrael from Morocco, and he settled in Tiveria. Once, he was invited to a meal with Reb Chaim Abulafia zt'l. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh declined to partake, saying, "I feel that there's *tumah* in this house."

Soon afterwards, it was discovered that the maid had died. (People first thought she had fallen asleep in the kitchen.) People began murmuring that the Or HaChaim was greater than Reb Chaim Abulafia because he sensed the *tumah* while Reb Chaim Abulafia apparently didn't.

After this story, to protect the honor of Reb Chaim Abulafia, the Or HaChaim left Tiveria and settled in Yerushalayim. He didn't want people to say that he was greater than Reb Chaim Abulafia.

There are different versions of the following story, and we will tell it as Reb Mottel Slonimer zt'l used to say it:

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh arrived at a city and needed a place to stay for Shabbos, but he didn't know in which home the kashrus was reliable. When he heard someone say *l'kavod Shabbos kodesh* as he was preparing for Shabbos, the Or HaChaim felt confident he could eat in that home.

That city had a very special Rav, and at each of the three Shabbos meals, the Rav would repeat *divrei Torah* he had heard from heaven.

On Friday night after the *seudah*, the Or HaChaim HaKadosh's host brought the Or HaChaim to the Rav's home. At one point in the middle of the Rav's speech, the Or HaChaim corrected him.

The Rav said, "I swear you are Reb Chaim ben Atar (the Or HaChaim HaKadosh) because I heard this *dvar Torah* in heaven in the name of Reb Chaim ben Atar, and you said it exactly as I heard it."

After the morning meal and again at *shalosh seudos*, the Or HaChaim came with his host to the Rav's home to listen to his holy *drashos*.

During *shalosh seudos*, the Satan appeared to the Rav and said, "Finish *shalosh seudos* quickly. It's late."

"What is the hurry?" the Rav asked the Satan. The Satan explained that every Shabbos, the *neshamos* in Gehinom have permission to leave Gehinom and go to Gan Eden. "When Shabbos is over, I must return the *neshamos* to Gehinom. But I have to wait until the Or HaChaim HaKadosh recites *havdalah*, as that marks the end of Shabbos. After the Or HaChaim's *havdalah*, I return the *neshamos* to Gehinom. But you are conducting a long *shalosh seudos* with your *divrei Torah*, preventing the Or HaChaim from saying *havdalah*. So, please finish *shalosh seudos* quickly, and I will send the souls back to Gehinom."

When the Rav heard the Satan's explanation, he decided to conduct *shalosh seudos* even longer to help the *neshamos* stay in Gan Eden a little longer.

The Satan kept returning to the Rav, urging him to finish *shalosh seudos*, but the Rav ignored him.

Once, the Rav got angry with the Satan and said, "What's the big rush?! Take it easy!"

Immediately after saying this, the Rav asked for *mayim achronim*. They *benched* and finished the meal.

The Rav explained that after he became angry, his anger lit the fire of Gehinom. This is because anger is Gehinom, as it states, as *Chazal* (*Nedarim* 21) say, "Whoever becomes angry, all forms of Gehinom rule over him." After becoming angry, the Rav knew that it wouldn't help to prolong *shalosh seudos*. So, they might as well *bench*, daven *Maariv*, and say *havdalah*.

When Reb Mottel Slonimer told this story, he stressed the severity of anger as it turns on the fire of Gehinom.

In addition to being a wonderful, holy *sefer*, the *sefer Or HaChaim* contains many *segulos*. One *segulah* is for bearing children. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* said that since the Or HaChaim didn't have children, he placed his entire power of bearing children into the *sefer Or HaChaim*. Therefore, studying this *sefer* is *mesugal* for having children.

The son of Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz became ill, and his father accepted on himself to study a *daf* of *Or HaChaim* (as printed in the *Chumash* of Shklov) each day (*Imrei Pinchas, Shaar HaTorah*, 133).

Reb Shpraver of Brashov (author of אפרקסתא דעניא) *zt'l* didn't have any children, and his Rebbe, the Imrei Yosef of Spinka *zt'l*, advised him to learn a certain *vort* from the Or HaChaim, as a *segulah* to have children. He studied that piece every day until he had a child.

Towards the end of his life, Reb Shpraver expressed regret that he forgot which piece of the *Or HaChaim* is *mesugal* for bearing children.

The Lev Simchah of Gur *zt'l* heard this story and said, "The truth is, every piece of *Or HaChaim* is *mesugal* for children. The Or HaChaim didn't have children, so he placed his power of bearing children into his *sefer*."

It was medically impossible for Reb Hillel Shlesinger *zt'l* to bear children. A doctor said, "When hair grows on my palm, you will have children."

But Reb Hillel refused to lose hope. He went to the *kever* of the Or HaChaim and made a kabbalah that he would study Or HaChayim HaKadosh each week as a *segulah* to have children. He was blessed with three daughters. One married Reb Moshe Halberstam *zt'l*, another married Reb Sender Freund *zt'l*, and the third married Reb Nochum Shapiro *zt'l*—three great scholars of Yerushalayim.

When one of the daughters was nine, she went to the doctor complaining of a cold. The doctor diagnosed her with diphtheria and immediately rushed her into the operating room to save her life.

Reb Hillel Shlesinger made a *neder* that if his daughter recovered, he would bring her to the Or HaChaim's beis medresh in the Old City of Yerushalayim so that she could light a candle there. (In Yerushalayim of those years, this was a renowned *segulah* for *yeshuos*.) He also promised that if she recovered, he would light a candle *liluy nishmas* the Or HaChaim every week before Shabbos.

His daughter recovered, and obviously, he kept his promises. (This daughter later married Reb Moshe Halberstam *zt'l*.)

About a hundred years ago, there was a rabbinic convention in Vilna for the Vaad HaYeshivos in the home of the Greineman family. Many *gedolim* were present, including the Chofetz Chaim, Reb Chaim Ozer, and the Chazon Ish *zt'l*.

After the meeting, before leaving, the Chofetz Chaim entered the kitchen, and he saw the host's daughter, S. Greineman, sitting near the window, checking rice for bugs.

"How many times do you check the rice?" the Chofetz Chaim asked her.

She replied that she checks the rice twelve times. The Chofetz Chaim expressed his surprise that she checks the rice so many times. She explained that her relative, the Chazon Ish, would be eating with them, and she wanted to be certain that the food would be at the highest standard of kashrus in honor of the Chazon Ish.

The Chofetz Chaim was impressed by her desire to honor *talmidei chachamim*, and he blessed her with (1) a long life, (2) always to have a clear mind, and (3) never to need eyeglasses. (The Chofetz Chaim understood that her eyes must be weak since she checked the rice near the window to catch the sunlight.)

All of the Chofetz Chaim's *brachos* materialized. She never needed eyeglasses and lived in good health until she was niftar at ninety-eight years old. She was always healthy, but on the last day of her life, she wasn't feeling good. She went to the hospital, and before they could examine her, her *neshamah* had already gone up to heaven.

This girl was an orphan, and when she came of age, the Chazon Ish was her *shadchan*, and she married the *gaon*, Reb Mordechai Shraga Feivel Eidelman *zt'l*. The Chazon Ish moved to Eretz Yisrael, and so did the Eidelman couple, who settled in Petach Tikvah.

Sixteen years had passed since her wedding, and they were still childless. She went to the Chazon Ish, together with the Chazon Ish's Rebbetzin, and expressed her distress that she still didn't have children.

The Chazon Ish gave her a *brachah*.

She said, "I don't want a *brachah*; I want a promise that I will have children."

The Chazon Ish lowered his head into his hands, and when he raised his head, he said, "I can't promise you that."

She said, "I was an orphan, and you were my *shadchan*. Now you must take responsibility for the *shidduch*."

The Chazon Ish put his head down again, and when he raised it, he said, "For this, you need the strength of a *gadol*. Go to the *kever* of the Or HaChaim HaKadosh, and there you will have your *yeshuah*."

It was in 5704, and she told the Chazon Ish that it wasn't safe to go to Har HaZeisim. The Chazon Ish replied, "I have no other solution."

On the fifteenth of Tamuz, the Or HaChaim's *yahrtzeit*, she went to the Or HaChaim's *kever* at two in the morning together with her relative, the Rebbetzin of Reb Beinisch Finkel *zt'l*. They poured out their hearts and prayed for a child. Precisely nine months later, on the 25th of Nissan, she had a son.

In 5773, a great rosh yeshivah lost his eyesight, and doctors told him he would never see again *r"l*. He asked his students to bring him to the *kever* of the Or HaChaim. At the *kever*, he vowed to learn *Or HaChaim*, as this is a renowned *segulah* for *yeshuos*. Some days later, he went to the hospital again, and this time, the doctors discovered that the part of his brain connected to his eyesight began functioning again, which meant it was possible to restore his eyesight, and they succeeded in doing so.



Therefore, this is a reminder of the importance of remaining among good Yidden and of avoiding going outside of the Jewish camp. During vacation, people are encouraged to stroll solely within ישראל. Make sure you have a minyan where you are, and even better, try to go somewhere with a beis medresh, as well. Be among good influences because wandering outside the Jewish camp leads to sin.<sup>9</sup> Surroundings have a significant influence on people.

The Gaon of Lisa (the author of Nesivos HaMishpat) in his sefer Nachlas Yaakov (Korach) writes that it states (Bereishis 12:11) וַיְהִי בְּאֶשֶׁר הִקְרִיב לְבֹאֵם מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל שָׂרִי אִשְׁתּוֹ הִנֵּה נָא יֵדְעָתִי כִּי אִשָּׁה יִפְתַּח מִרְיָאָהּ אֵת, "It happened, as [Avram] was about to enter Mitzrayim, he said to his wife Sarai, 'See now I have known that you are a beautiful woman.'"

The Gemara (brachos 20a) tells that Reb Yochanan said that he isn't afraid of the yetzer hara, because women appear to him like white ducks. So if that is how it was for Reb Yochanan, it was certainly so with Avraham Avinu, who was "probably a thousand madreigos higher." Nevertheless, when he went down to Mitzrayim, ערוות הארץ, he said הִנֵּה נָא יֵדְעָתִי כִּי אִשָּׁה יִפְתַּח מִרְיָאָהּ אֵת, he recognized Sarah's beauty.

How did this happen to him? The answer is that the place was ערוות הארץ, a very *tamei*

place, and this was mashpiah even on Avraham Avinu.

A similar lesson is written by the Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Vayigash), to explain the pasuk (Bereishis 47:4) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל פַּרְעֹה לָגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ בְּאֵנוּ כִּי אֵין מִרְעָה לְצֹאֵן אֲשֶׁר לַעֲבָדֶיךָ כִּי כָבֵד הָרָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְעַתָּה יָשְׁבוּ נָא לְצֹאֵן אֲשֶׁר לַעֲבָדֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן, "The [brothers of Yosef] said to Pharaoh, 'We have come to sojourn in the land, since there is no grazing for your servant's flocks for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, if you please, allow your servants to dwell in the region of Goshen.'"

Notice that in this pasuk, they begin with לָגוּר, which means a sojourn, to be in a land for a short time, and then they said וְעַתָּה יָשְׁבוּ נָא, which means to dwell permanently in Goshen.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "First, their intention was לָגוּר, to live there for a short time. After they came to the impure air, they began to think לִישָׁב, to live there permanently."

Obviously, we don't have any perception into the greatness and holiness of the שבטי ש"ה, but we learn how much a person should be cautious not to go to a place that is outside the machaneh Yisrael, the Jewish camp.

In contrast, we can learn from this week's parashah the immense kedushah that comes to those who are in holy places, as it states

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One year, a day after the Or HaChaim's yahrtzeit, someone I know called to tell me about the salvation he had after accepting on himself to study the Or HaChaim's commentary. For parnassah, he sells sefarim and had a stock of 250 sets of *Or HaChaim*, plus other *sefarim*, and was having a hard time selling them. This was causing him a financial loss. On the *yahrtzeit*, he traveled with some friends to the Or HaChaim's *kever*, and they were talking about how studying *Or HaChaim* is *mesugal* for *yeshuos*. He immediately made a kabbalah to study *Or HaChaim*, and the salvation came very soon afterwards. The next morning, someone called him and said that he needed a large quantity of *sefarim*. His first order was 250 sets of *Or HaChaim*!

Studying *Or HaChaim* is also *mesugal* for *teshuvah*. Whenever Reb Yaakov Yosef of Skver zt'l heard about a *bachur* who needed *chizuk* and was beginning to fall off the *derech*, he would advise that people learn with him *Or HaChaim*. He added that the section of *Or HaChaim* doesn't necessarily need to discuss mussar or chassidus. Any piece of *Or HaChaim* can bring people to *teshuvah* and improvement.

The gaon, Reb Meir Arik zt'l, would study the entire commentary of the *Or HaChaim* each week. He said that the first time he finished the entire *sefer*, he felt he had become a new person.

9. We'll add that one should make sure that his home is a *machaneh Yisrael*. Today, one can be in his own home and not be at all within *machaneh Yisrael*, *r"l*, as this is known.

מה טבו אהליך יַעֲקֹב (24:5-6) "How good are your tents, Yaakov, your dwelling places, Yisrael. Stretching out like rivers..." The pasuk refers to the batei midrashim of the Jewish nation, and the pasuk is compared to נָהָר, to a river.

Chazal say, "What is the connection between a river and batei midrashim? Just as a river raises people from tumah to taharah, so too are the batei midrashim. People come in, full of aveiros, and they come out pure.

The Rema m'Pano (מאמר צבאות ה' כ"ח) shows the holiness of a beis medresh from the pasuk (Bereishis 25:27) וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יָשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים. He writes, "From all of Yaakov's merits – his Torah, his good deeds, which were so many – the Torah only mentions יָשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים, that Yaakov sat in the tents of Torah and tefillah. This is because sitting in a beis medrash or a beis kneses, even when he doesn't daven or learn there, the mitzvah is very great. As it states (Tehillim 84:5) אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ, 'Praiseworthy are those who sit in Your house.' עוֹד יִהְיֶה לָוֶה פְּלָה, even greater will be their reward when they sit in Your house and praise Your name."

### Gates and Boundaries

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 19:2) states, "They asked the snake why it is always found around gates. It replied, 'It is because I broke the gate of the world.'"

The Shevet Mussar (in his sefer חוקת חסד, חוט של חסד) explains this midrash following the path of drush. "The snake is the Satan. When he entices a person to an aveirah, he doesn't begin with the aveirah itself, because he knows that the person will not listen to him, because a person is afraid to perform the aveirah. Instead, the Satan begins with the gedarim, the gates that are around the mitzvah. He says, 'Transgress this boundary because Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't forbid it. It is just a gate. You fear Hashem, and you will be cautious to keep Hashem's command even without this gate.'

"The midrash says that people ask the snake, the Satan, 'Why are you always found near a gate?' Why do you always seek to cause people to transgress the gates, the boundaries?' The Satan replies, 'I broke the gate of the world.' He convinced Chavah to eat from the Tree of Knowledge because he told her to transgress a boundary. This is because Chavah made a geder, to distance herself from the aveirah, so that she wouldn't touch the Tree of Knowledge, and the snake convinced her to transgress that geder and to touch the tree. When she saw that she didn't die after she touched the tree, she ate from the fruit. So, we see that the snake 'broke the gate of the world,' which means he convinced Chavah to break the boundary. This is the response the snake gives when it is asked why it stands by the gate and seeks to cause people to transgress the gedarim that are around the mitzvos. It is because if he succeeds in causing someone to transgress the geder, the person will automatically transgress the aveirah, too."

Bilaam led the donkey to a pathway in a vineyard, as it states (22:24) בְּמִשְׁעוֹל הַקְּרָמִים. The sefer חומת אריאל writes that בְּמִשְׁעוֹל is roshei teivos for שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא (Kiddushin 39b), "There isn't reward for mitzvos in this world." He explains that Bilaam wanted to curse the Jewish nation. He knew that he couldn't stop them from receiving Olam HaBa, so he tried to stop them from receiving Olam HaZeh. He therefore went to בְּמִשְׁעוֹל הַקְּרָמִים to hint that the Jewish nation shouldn't receive reward because שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא, "There isn't reward for mitzvos in this world."

Hashem sent a malach to stop Bilaam. The malach appeared in the vineyard, when Bilaam was between two gates. As it states (22:24) וַיַּעֲמֹד מַלְאָךְ ה' בְּמִשְׁעוֹל הַקְּרָמִים גֶּדֶר מִזָּה וְגֶדֶר מִזָּה, "The angel of Hashem stood in the path of the vineyards, a fence on this side and a fence on that side." The Arugas HaBosem (ו"ה) writes that this was to hint that although there isn't a reward for mitzvos in this world, they will receive reward for the gedarim, fences, they set up, to protect themselves

from aveiros, and to ensure that they will keep the mitzvos.

Yesod Yosef (ch.63) writes, "Fortunate is the person who makes gates for himself with matters related to fear of heaven and to serve Hashem. The gates and safeguards are like malachim, which protect him. They will go with his neshamah when he leaves this world after his petirah, and they protect him from the Sitra Achara.

"When Hakadosh Baruch Hu sees a person making plans and gedarim to guard himself from an aveirah that he often transgresses, and he prays with a broken heart, and he requests that he should succeed to keep this geder, this creates a great nachas ruach for Hashem yisbarach. This is more precious to Hakadosh Baruch Hu than all *korbanos* of the world. Hashem opens up windows to send out malachim to weaken the strength of the Sitra Achara that they shouldn't harm this person or draw him to sin, as they had done until now."

It states in this week's parashah (23:10) מִי מִנֵּה עֵפֶר יַעֲקֹב, "Who has counted the dust of Yaakov." It states in the Midrash (Tana d'Bei Eliyahu, Yalkut Shimoni, and Baal HaTurim) that עֵפֶר represents bachurim, young Jewish men, as it states (Shir HaShirim 8:14) לְעֵפֶר הָאֵילִים, which means a young deer. The Aruch (ערך עפר) adds, quoting a midrash, that מִי מִנֵּה עֵפֶר יַעֲקֹב is telling the praises of bachurim who are young, and the yetzer hara is burning within them. Yet, they guard themselves from aveiros and they have yiras Shamayim, and they act with kedushah and taharah. מִי מִנֵּה, who can measure the greatness עֵפֶר יַעֲקֹב of the young bachurim in klal Yisrael, who control their yetzer hara.

The Gemara (Megillah 16a) tells that Haman came to lead Mordechai through the streets of Shushan with great honor, and at that time, Haman heard that the students were learning hilchos kemitzah. Haman said,

"Your kemitzah (handful of flour for a korban) pushed away my ten thousand kikars of silver (that he wanted to give to Achashveirosh, to have the right to kill the Jewish nation). The Yismach Yisrael (מִוֹדֵעַ מִדִּיּוּרֵי שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל Purim 1) explains that at this time, Mordechai thought that Haman would kill him; therefore, he wanted to quickly teach his students the secret and the foundation of Yiddishkeit. He taught them the halachos of kemitzah. This is when the kohen puts his hand into a utensil filled with oil, and he pulls out a kemitzah, a handful. This becomes a korban for Hashem. This tells us that what a person is קוֹמֵץ, and it is concealed from others, this creates a nachas ruach for Hashem. This is a great rule in avodas Hashem. When a person is קוֹמֵץ his eyes and he holds back from looking where he shouldn't, and no one knows but Hakadosh Baruch Hu, alone, or when he is קוֹמֵץ אֶת פִּי, closes his mouth from speaking something he shouldn't say, and only Hashem knows how much mesirus nefesh he had and how hard he worked to overcome his yetzer hara, at this time, the kometz becomes a nachas ruach for Hashem, because he is doing Hashem's will. Therefore, Haman said, "Your handful of kometz pushed away my ten thousand silver kikars. It is because when a person overcomes the yetzer hara for something that he desires, this pushes away all kitrugim of the yetzer hara.

It states that the people of Moav said to the elders of Midyan (22:4) עֲתֵה יִלְחֲכוּ הַקְּהָל אֶת כָּל סָבִיבֵינוּ בְּלֶחֶךְ הַשּׁוֹר אֶת יֶרֶק הַשָּׂדֶה, "Now the congregation will lick up our entire surroundings as an ox licks up the greenery of the field." The Trisker Magid zt'l (Magan Avraham וְהָיָה וְקִין מִוֹדֵעַ ד"ה) writes that this alludes to Yosef, who is called שׁוֹר, ox, as it states (Devarim 33:17) בְּכוֹר שׁוֹרוֹ, about Yosef HaTzaddik. Yosef represents kedushah, and caution from aveiros related to not guarding the eyes, etc. Thus, the pasuk is implying that in the merit of Klal Yisrael's kedushah, they will be able to consume all *kelipos*.<sup>10</sup>

10. It states (Bereishis 28:12) וְהִנֵּה סֹלֶם מְצֹב אֶרְצָה וְרָאִשׁוּ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה, "Behold, he dreamed that the ladder stood on the



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earth and its head reached the heaven." The Shefa Chaim of Klausenberg zt'l said that סלם is gematria עי"ן. This tells us that the eyes are the ladder to climb up to the heavens. If one guards his eyes, even if he is down on earth, he will reach the heavens. However, if he doesn't guard his eyes, וְהִנֵּה מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בוֹ, "Behold malachim of Hashem were ascending and descending on it." This means that even if he is like a malach, if he doesn't guard his eyes, he will fall to low levels.

Reb Dovid Baharan zt'l was from the tzaddikim in Yerushalayim. He lived in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood, and among his many chumros was that he ate matzos that were baked in the תנור ראשון, first oven (the first batch of matzah of the day). To do so, he would daven at vasikin, take the first bus to Givat Shaul, Yerushalayim, where there was a matzah bakery so that he could be by the first baking of the day. He was also cautious to sit directly behind the bus driver. This way, he wouldn't sit behind someone it was forbidden to sit behind, and he could guard his eyes.

One year, he was about to board the bus, but he saw that someone had already taken his seat. He immediately stepped down. His son asked him, "What will be with the matzos this year? The next bus is in an hour, and by then, they will begin baking matzos..."

Reb Dovid Baharan replied, "I will take the next bus. Every year, I have a hidur with the matzos; this year, I will have a hidur with shemiras einayim."

He took the next bus, and surprisingly, for some reason, they hadn't begun baking yet. So, he was able to keep both chumros. (This last point is not related to the story. The point of the story was that he was ready to forgo the chumrah of matzah to be machmir with his eyes. But we tell as an "aside" that Hashem helped him keep both chumros. He had the matzos from the first baking, and he guarded his eyes.)

Reb Yitzchak Dovid Gutfarb zt'l was walking in the old city of Yerushalayim to go to the Kosel, and there were Arabs there, throwing large stones, large enough to kill a person. Reb Shayah Cheshin zt'l was walking behind Reb Yitzchak Dovid, and he understood Arabic. He heard the Arabs say to one another, "Don't throw stones on Reb Yitzchak Dovid, because he guards his eyes." It is a wondrous story. Even goyim understand that it isn't worthwhile to start up with someone who guards his eye. Hashem protects him.