



Torah U'Tefilah

A Collection of Inspiring Insights

בס"ד

ט"ז תמוז

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Besamei HaTorah ... Beneath the Surface

By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

מה טובו אהליך יעקב משכנותיך ישראל (כד:ה)

How goodly are your tents O Yaakov, your dwelling places O Israel. (24:5)

The *Baal HaTurim* comments that the word אהליך, *your tents*, is in plural. This is because Yaakov dwells in an earthly tent, (according to the *Gemara, Taanis 5b*, יעקב, כסא הכבוד — Yaakov our father did not die), and in a heavenly tent on the Throne of Glory. (*Rabbeinu Ephraim* explains that the Chariot in Yechezkal's vision had the face of a man on one side. This face was that of Yaakov Avinu.) Additionally, the *Baal HaTurim* explains that there are six words in the *Posuk* (verse) alluding to the six אהלים, Sanctuaries — Nov, Givon, Gilgal, Shiloh, and the First and Second *Batei Mikdash* in *Yerushalayim*.

Parshah Thoughts — Ideas and Reflections — Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

In this week's *Parshah*, Bilam attempts to curse the *Bnei Yisroel*. Rav Yisroel Simcha Schor explains that if we look at the first letters of the *Pesukim* of Bilam's three attempts to curse the Jewish People, they are *Kaf*, *Lamed*, and *Mem*. When read, it spells *Kaleim*, which means: *destroy them*. However, when read backwards it spells *Melech*, *King*. Rav Schor explains that depending on how we look at things and focus our lives, we can either be heading for destruction or towards Kingship. It's our choice!

Working on our Middos

Rebbetzin Ruchama Shain, z"l, arrived at her apartment building in *Eretz Yisroel*, after undergoing knee surgery. She and her husband, who would get very claustrophobic, entered the tiny elevator, together with another person and a cart. Instead of going upward, the elevator sank downward and got stuck. People outside the elevator tried helping, yet it took over an hour for them to solve the problem. Meanwhile, Rebbetzin Shain, who had just had knee surgery, and her husband, were standing in the elevator and just waited. When the elevator finally released its captives, they were greeted with a beautiful array of fruits and drinks from their kind and relieved neighbors. As they were taking something to eat, Rebbetzin Shain's husband turned to her and asked, "How did you manage standing for so long just after knee surgery?" Rebbetzin Shain responded, "I don't know. The whole time I was just so nervous for you since I know you are claustrophobic. I was worried about how you would manage, and I didn't notice about my legs." She then said, "But how did you manage with being in a closed, small, and hot elevator with your claustrophobia?" Her husband replied, "You're right. I don't know. The entire time I was just thinking about you, and how much pain your feet must be in, that I didn't even think about it." Someone standing nearby heard this and commented that if more couples would be like this, there would be more *Shalom Bayis* and peace in the world!

Pearls of Wisdom... A Word for the Ages

The *Tzadik* of *Yerushalayim*, Rav Aryeh Levin, z"l, used to visit various jails to spend some time with the prisoners, offering them *Chizuk* and encouragement, and brightening their bleak lives. One *Shabbos*, Rav Aryeh arrived at the gates of a certain jail, only to find that the British guard on duty would not allow him to enter. The guard told Rav Aryeh, "There's a curfew on today. You are not allowed to be out on the streets now. Make your way home immediately!" A Jewish policeman standing nearby pleaded with the British guard to make an exception for Rav Aryeh, and said, "Why prevent an elderly man from performing an act of kindness? It must be very difficult for a man his age to walk all the way over here, but Rav Aryeh does it every week, on a purely voluntary basis, to gladden the hearts of the prisoners." The guard could not believe this. The old Rabbi volunteered to visit prisoners? How could that be? The guard shook his head and said, "No, that is impossible." He was sure Rav Aryeh received some type of compensation for his work. And if that was the case, he thought, he had better find himself a different line of work! While the British guard and the Jewish policeman were arguing, Rav Aryeh made his way around the building, checking for an opening of some sort in the wall surrounding the jail. Maybe he could find a foothold that he could use to help him climb in. Finally, he found what he was looking for. There was a small protruding rock that was sticking out of the smooth wall, and like a young man, Rav Aryeh used it to help him climb to the top of the gate. He then jumped inside to the prison grounds. The British guard saw what had happened and he said to the Jewish policeman, "You are right. This Rabbi must be a volunteer. A man who did this job for pay would never go to such lengths to get inside the jail. This man is determined to visit the prisoners no matter what!"

פרשת בלק תשפ"ה

Parashas Balak 5785 Pirkei Avos 6

Compiled by: Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg
Staten Island Z'manim

Erev Shabbos:

Plag HaMinchah: 6:56

Candle Lighting: 8:10

Sh'kiah: 8:28 זמן ונו Tzeis: 9:18

Shabbos Kodesh:

Sof Z'man Krias Shema:

Mogen Avraham: 8:43 Gra: 9:19

Sof Z'man Tefillah (Shacharis): 10:33

Chatzos: 1:02 Sh'kiah: 8:27

Havdalah: Tzeis HaKochavim: 9:17

Rabbeinu Tam (72 minutes): 9:40

(some say 10:13)

Next Week: Pinchas

Candle Lighting: 8:06

The Siddur Speaks

Rav Avigdor Miller, z"l, spoke about *Davening* with a *Minyan*. He said, "When you *Daven* with a *Minyan*, you're identifying with the *Klal Yisroel*. You know, our *Tefilos* are all plural. We don't say, רפאני ה', heal me, *Hashem*. We say, רפאנו ה', heal us. And we say, רופא חולי, ברוך אתה ה' רופא חולי. That's such an important element, it must be emphasized. It's a form of identifying — we are together, we're all one. Even when you put on your hat in the morning and you make a *Brachah*, עוטר ישראל בתפארה, You crown *Yisroel* with glory. *Yisroel!* You put on a belt, אזור ישראל, You crown *Yisroel* with power; a belt gives you power. So you see that we're all together. And therefore, when it comes to *Tefilah*, not only the words should be together, but *physically* you should be together. The least you can do is go to a *Minyan*. The *Minyan* represents the *Klal Yisroel*, and to a certain extent, the *Shechinah* is there too. But when you *Daven* in your home, that's a demonstration that you're not interested in identifying. Now, in case you're not able to, in case you have to go to work at a certain time, there are extenuating circumstances; but there's no question that *Davening* with a *Minyan* ought to be a regular part of a loyal Jew's routine, because that's the form of showing he belongs to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* through his people that are serving *Hashem!*"

Chazal have taught us (*Avos* 4:28) that jealousy, lustful desires, and seeking honor, will remove one from the world, and one must distance himself from these bad traits. (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 29:6)

Chasing Honor, for Others

Rav Shalom Smith writes about these three *Aveiros* in the name of his *Rebbe*, Rav Avraham Pam, *zt"l*. The *Meforshim* explain that even though a person can suffer from these three very serious character flaws at any point in life, they commonly appear in a consecutive order. Jealousy is a trait that is found even in the youngest child, lust usually develops as a person reaches physical maturity, and the desire for *Kavod* becomes stronger as a person ages. In addition, jealousy and lust will generally fade as one gets older, but the desire for honor and glory usually increases. A possible reason for this is that as a person gets older and realizes that he will not be in this world forever, he develops a powerful need to leave his mark on the world, and this fuels a burning desire for honor and recognition.

Rav Pam says that although the pursuit of honor can remove a person from the world, this refers to chasing after one's own honor. It does not include the honor that one must give to others. That type of honor is not only permitted, but in most cases, it is a requirement.

Rav Itzele Peterberger, *zt"l*, the *Talmid* of Rav Yisroel Salanter, *zt"l*, was the editor of his *Rebbe's* collected writings, the *Sefer Or Yisroel*. In *Nesivos Or*, the section of the *Sefer* that has biographical stories about Rav Yisroel and descriptions of his exemplary *Middos*, it states the following (p. 118): "Our master, Rav Yisroel, was totally removed from the desire to seek honor. However, that was only for himself. When it came to giving *Kavod* to others, he was an expert in the most basic desires of people, their need for honor and recognition, and he was meticulous in the proper way to act in all situations as they related to others."

Rav Yisroel Salanter was very careful in upholding the honor and respect due to others, but as for himself, honor was the furthest thing from his mind, and it meant absolutely nothing to him.

Rav Pam taught that the ability to make nothing of one's own *Kavod* while at the same time meticulously upholding the *Kavod* that is due to others is not always easy to accomplish. Nevertheless, knowing how and when to use the *Middah* of *Kavod* will be an essential key to a life of true happiness and success in this world and in *Olam Haba*.

The following story was related a few years ago, and it shows the great effects having honor for others can have, specifically with how a *Gadol B'Yisroel* dismissed his own honor, and instead bestowed respect on another individual.

Elishai is a teacher in *Eretz Yisroel* who works with immigrant youth. He was once traveling on a bus when he met an older man, who was wearing clothing that clearly identified him as a religious *Rav*, including a long coat and black hat, and this *Rav* began to engage with Elishai in *Divrei Torah* during the bus ride. As the bus approached their destination, the older *Rav* asked Elishai about his work. Elishai told him about his young students, and he noted that many of them feel far from *Torah* and *Yiddishkeit*. The *Rav* was silent. After a few minutes, he began to tell Elishai a story: Next month, I'm going to take early retirement from the *Bais Din* where I have worked as a *Dayan* for the past twenty-five years. But you should know that I didn't always look like this. These clothes, the beard, the religion, it's not something I learned from at home. My parents were older Holocaust survivors, and they didn't have the emotional ability to give me the attention that I needed. I spent my time in the streets, and before my *Bar Mitzvah* I was already practically a criminal. By age 15, this is how I was known among my local community, as a criminal. My friends and I often spent *Shabbos Kodesh* playing soccer near a local *Shul*, and the ball would often fly into the *Shul* courtyard. One week, I kicked the ball very hard. It flew out of the field and toward the *Shul*, just as the Rabbi came out. The ball went so far and hard, that it hit the Rabbi's black hat and knocked it to the ground. My friends and I fell down laughing. The Rabbi came over to me, and I said mockingly, "*Shabbat Shalom*. Would his honor the Rabbi like to make *Kiddush* or join the game?" The Rabbi was not upset, he looked at me and asked, "Where are your parents?" I answered, still mocking, "My parents are dead." The Rabbi said, "Come with me." It amused me, so I decided to go with him. We reached his house and went inside. He made *Kiddush* and gave me some to drink, and he asked me, "Are you hungry?" I answered that I was starving. The Rabbi gestured to his *Rebbetzin*, and they set the table and gave me food. I ate like someone who hadn't eaten in a week. The Rabbi ate just a little, and mostly looked at me and talked. I later realized that I had eaten his share, too. When I finished eating, he asked, "Are you tired?" "I'm exhausted," I told him. The Rabbi offered me a bed. I went to sleep, and slept there the whole day. When I woke up it was Saturday night. The Rabbi asked me, "What would you like to do?" I told him I wanted to go to the cinema and see a movie. He asked, "How much does the cinema cost?" I told him one and a half *shekels*. He gave me the money and sent me on my way, and before I left, he told me, "Please come again tomorrow," so I listened, and I came to his house again the next day. I ate, slept, and got more money for the cinema. This happened again another day, and many more days to follow. Over time, I discovered that there were twelve other kids like me, from off the street, who came to this Rabbi's house. I couldn't be ungrateful, and I also began to really love him. With time, he started to teach me about the *Mitzvos*. He bought me a pair of *Tefilin*, and he would sit and teach me *Torah*. All thanks to him, I eventually went to *Yeshivah*, and ended up learning to be a Rabbi, and ultimately, a *Dayan* on a *Bais Din*. He married me off, came to my children's weddings, and was *Sandek* at my grandsons' *Bris Milahs*. I am telling you all of this, to please don't despair of your students," the older *Rav* told Elishai. "You see me as I am today, a *Dayan* in a *Bais Din*, but at one time in my life, I was just like them. All you need to do is just love them and respect them. Love them like they were your own children, just as my Rabbi did with me." As the two began to descend from the bus, Elishai asked the *Dayan*, "What was your Rabbi's name?" The *Rav* responded, "What do you mean, was? He still is. He's getting older now, he is ninety-two years old, but *Baruch Hashem*, he is still alive." "And what is his name?" Elishai asked again. The *Rav* replied, "He is Rav Ovadia Yosef!"

Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz shared a story that someone submitted to *Tiv HaHashgachah*: *Emunah* is not acquired except through daily hard work. Just as food sustains the body, so too does *Emunah* sustain the *Neshamah*. Since I did not worry about my spiritual sustenance, slowly, questions piled up regarding faith, until I was in total denial. I was convinced that I was right, and no one was able to change my mind. One day a friend urged me to accompany him to a weekly *Torah* class, and at the end of the class, I would be able to ask all my questions. Since I was not able to refuse, I entered and sat in a corner of the room. In the middle of the class, my ears heard the following sentence: "A person has many questions and frustrations! If one would only observe what is around him, he would see how *Hashem* speaks to him about everything! Sometimes by way of an animal or a bird, and sometimes another person will throw a word his way. If one would only constantly listen, he would receive directions and answers for everything!" I said to myself, "That's easy for him to say. If he is right, why doesn't *Hashem* speak to me clearly? After all, I don't know sign language!" While I was thinking, the *Rav* asked three questions, one after the other, and the answers he gave crushed the questions. What was amazing was that these were the same questions that I had wanted to ask! I was left speechless, and I realized that the Creator did not leave me a choice, and was speaking in a clear language directly to me. Immediately after the class, my friend urged me to present my questions to the *Rav*. I responded with a smile, "The *Rav* has already answered all of my questions!" On the way home, I struggled with a real estate decision that I was in the middle of, and I hoped that I would have the opportunity to meet an expert for advice and *Brachah*. But I did not need to wait. As I entered my building, I spotted a pamphlet with *Divrei Torah* on it laying on a step, and I picked it up so that it would not be disgraced. On the front page was a list of topics, and one of the topics was the exact question that I was struggling with! I excitedly opened the pamphlet to that page, and I found three different answers from the writings of *Tzadikim*, which explained the topic in great detail, until I was left with not even one question. Everything was clearly explained, as if the author was writing directly to me. I then understood that there are many paths to *Hashem*, the One Who gives clear messages to everyone, if we just open our eyes to see them!

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