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The Way of Emunah

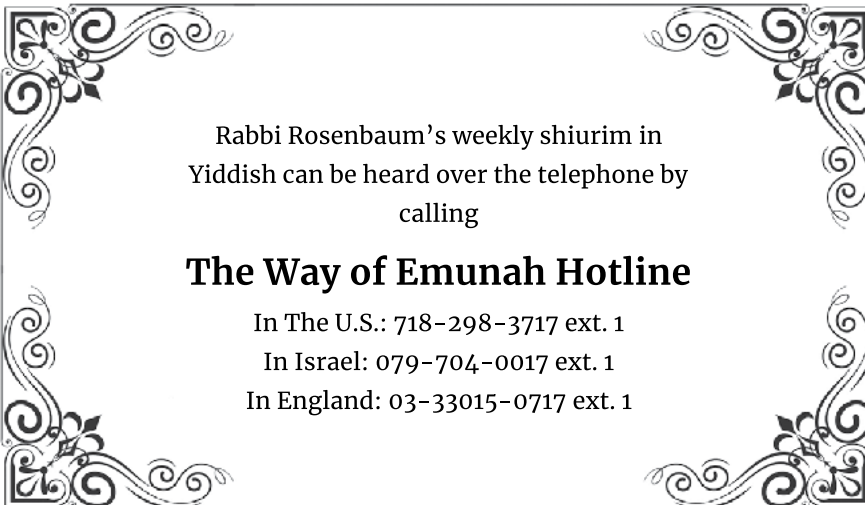
Collected Thoughts
on the Weekly Parshah

From

**Rabbi Meir Isamar
Rosenbaum shlita**

Balak

יחזיק יקר:
מצאת איתו בבורח"ד?
אתה יטול לקחת איתו בורח"ד



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Parshas Balak



Hashem Benefits Us Without Our Knowledge/Kedusha as a Result of Shemiras Halashon/Their Faces Were Illuminated Because They Guarded Their Words/Being Able to Say 'No'/Bilaam Was Like a Thief Who Wanted Ruach Hakodesh/Seeing the Good and Not the Bad/Learning From Hashem, Not From People/If You Are Good, You Can Tolerate Others/Atonement For Wrongly Suspecting Someone/One Who Judges Others Favorably Judges Himself Favorably/A Segulah for Hisorerus/ Seeing No Bad/Yiras Shomayim Even for a Sinner/Connecting With the Shechinah Through Guarding One's Mouth/Words in this World Affect the Upper Worlds/The Way We Pasken in This World is How They Pasken Above/Judging Favorably/Do Not Mention One's Sins While He is Suffering/Defending a Fellow Jew

15 Tamuz – Yahrzeit of the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh

Saving a Student from Taking a Bad Path/The Kedusha of Tefillin

וַיֵּרָא בָלָק בֶּן צִפּוֹר אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגו' (כב, ב)

And Balak son of Tzipor saw all that Yisroel did... (22:2)

Hashem Benefits Us Without Our Knowledge:

Rav Chuna Halberstam zy"l, Rov of Kalashitz (in his Sefer Divrei Chuna) asks what this Parshah is meant to teach us and what we are meant to learn from it.

He answers that we are meant to learn an important lesson about *emunah* in Hashem's guidance of the world. **We are supposed to see that Hashem performs miracles for us every second of every day, even when we are unaware of it and don't**

realize what is happening.

This lesson is clearly seen from this story. The Jews were living peacefully, with each one dwelling serenely in his own tent. They had no idea that Balak and Bilaam were plotting against them and planning to destroy them at that very moment. They didn't see how Hashem ruined their evil plans and turned Bilaam's curses into blessings. All this occurred and **the entire nation was saved without anyone even knowing about any of it.**

This teaches us that Hashem is always watching and protecting us. He saves us from the plans of our enemies, even when we don't know about them.

Kedusha as a Result of Shemiras Halashon:

Rav Avrohom Yissochor of

Radomsk zy" a (Sefer Chesed L'Avrohom) writes that when the verse says that Balak saw "all that Yisroel did to the Emori", it is a reference to their words ("*amirah*"). This indicates that Balak saw how Klal Yisroel was careful with their words, making sure to never use them to malign or speak negatively about others.

It is known that the word "*kol*" (all) indicates a lofty level of holiness and purity that one can attain by guarding his mouth from speaking improperly. Thus, the *pasuk* is saying that Balak saw that Klal Yisroel had this trait of "*kol*" because they were careful with their words.

Their Faces Were Illuminated Because They Guarded Their Words:

Rav Osher Yeshaya of Ropshitz

zy" a (Sefer Ohr Yesha) also

explains that this *pasuk* is teaching us the importance of watching one's words. He says that one's words influence one's thoughts. When one keeps his speech sanctified, his thoughts will be holy. Furthermore, **through pure speech and holy thoughts, one merits a holy image of "tzelem Elokim" shining from their face.**

He explains that when Balak saw "all that Yisroel did to the Emori", i.e., that they were careful with their "*amirah*", he was afraid in the face of ("*mipnei*") the nation. He was afraid of their faces because they had a holy, shining countenance that struck fear into their enemies.

Being Able to Say "No":

Rav Meir of Premishlan *zy"ra* explains this *pasuk* as follows: "All that Yisroel did" – what

does a person have to be to be a genuine Jew? "*L'Emori*" – this can be read "*Lo Emor*"; say no. In other words, in order to be a good Jew, one should have the ability to say no.

This is a fundamental difference between a Jew and a non-Jew. A Jew has the ability to overcome desires and to say no to the *yeitzer hara* when it tries to convince him to sin. Non-Jews, however, do not have the ability to say "no". They are beholden to their desires and cannot refuse them.

Similarly, the *pasuk* in Koheles (3:19) states: "The difference between a person and an animal is '*ayin*' (nothing)." Rav Tzvi Hirsh of Ziditchov *zy"ra* explains that a Jew is different than an animal because he can say "*ayin*", no. He can refuse to follow his desires. An animal, however, cannot do this. It cannot refuse its desires.

וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֶת אֲשֶׁר יִשִּׁים ה' בְּפִי אֶתּוֹ אֲשֶׁמֶר לְדָבָר (כג, יב)

And he answered and said, "Whatever Hashem puts in my mouth that I must take care to say." (23:12)

Bilaam Was Like a Thief Who Wanted Ruach Hakodesh:

The famed Magid, Rav Yaakov Galinsky *zt"l* quoted Rav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz *zt"l*, the Alter of Novardhok, as explaining what type of person Bilaam was with a *moshol*:

There once was a *shamash* who would clean the bais medrash at midnight every night. One night, he noticed the town's thief quietly entering the shul, but the thief didn't notice him. The *shamash* hid under a table to try and catch the thief in the act of stealing something. He saw him approach the Aron Kodesh, kiss the *paroches*, and begin to cry.

The *shamash* thought to himself: He must have a sick

family member or perhaps some other big problem and he is asking Hashem to help him.

To his great surprise, he heard the *ganav* say, "Ribono Shel Olam! Please grant me *ruach hakodesh*!"

When the thief started to walk away, the *shamash* couldn't contain himself and he ran after him. He said to him, "My friend, there is no one else here besides for me and you. Please tell me why you are asking Hashem for *ruach hakodesh*?"

The thief replied, "You have no idea how hard my job is. I have to roam the streets during the cold winter nights and break into locked doors. When I am in someone's house, my life is in danger, but I have to silently search through the drawers and

closets to find valuable. When I do this, I am terrified that the homeowner will find me and potentially kill me. I am asking for *ruach hakodesh* so that I will know where the valuables are hidden so I will be able to grab them quickly and get out of the house.”

The Alter explained: This is what Bilaam was like. He merited speaking to Hashem and hearing His voice, but what did

he do with this? He used this power to curse people. He tried to make money from it. Just like that *ganav* wanted to use *ruach hakodesh* to help him steal, Bilaam used his *ruach hakodesh* to do terrible things.

The lesson we can learn from this is to use our talents and abilities that Hashem gave us for good things, and not to waste them on nonsense.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּלֶקְ לָךְ נָא אֶתִּי אֶל מְקוֹם אֲחֵר אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶנּוּ מִשָּׁם אֶפְסֵי קִצְהוֹ
תִּרְאֶה וְכִלּוֹ לֹא תִרְאֶה וְגו' (כג, יג)

Balak said to him, “Come with me to another place from where you will see them; however, you will see only a part of them, not all of them... (23:13)

Seeing the Good and Not the Bad:

Sefer Likutei Yehuda explains this *pasuk* by quoting his grandfather, the Chiddushei Harim zy”a, who explains the Mishnah in Avos (1:10): “Judge every person (“*kol ho’odom*”) favorably.” He says that the

words “*kol h’odom*” can be translated to mean “the entire person.” Thus, the Mishnah is saying that if a person judge’s his friend as an entire person, seeing every aspect, he will see his good parts, and not just his bad parts. In this way, he will be able to see the good in him and judge him favorably.

Bilaam wanted to only see the bad parts of Klal Yisroel. Hashem was telling him that if he looks at “only a part of them”, he will only see the bad. But if he looks at all of them – if he sees the entire person – he will not see the bad anymore **because every Jew always has good parts that can be seen if one looks for them.**

Learning From Hashem, Not From People:

The *pasuk* later says (ibid:21): “He does not look at evil in Yaakov, and has seen no discretion in Yisroel.” It is said in the name of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berdichov *zy”a* (quoted in Peninei Osher) that this *pasuk* is teaching us an important lesson about how people should act towards each other.

Hashem knows all of a person’s *aveiros*. Still and all, He chooses

not to see them. He chooses to look away. Therefore, it is certain that a man, who doesn’t really know everything and may be mistaken when he thinks that his friend has committed a sin, should look away and should not see his friend’s perceived sins.

If You Are Good, You Can Tolerate Others:

Rav Yitzchok of Buhush *zy”a* learns this same lesson from the *pasuk* (Bereishis 4:7): “if you improve, it will be forgiven. If you do not improve, at the entrance, sin is lying.” This can be understood to mean that **if you improve and you are good, you will be able to forgive and tolerate others.** But if you do not improve and you are not good yourself, you will see sin lying “at the entrance”. You will see everyone else’s *aveiros* and you won’t be able to tolerate

anyone else.

Atonement For Wrongly Suspecting Someone:

The following amazing story is related in Sefer Mekor Chaim:

In a small village near Sanz there lived a Jewish man named R' Nochum who welcomed many guests into his home. One day, a poor man came to R' Nochum. R' Nochum welcomed him warmly and gave him a good meal to eat. Afterwards, he took out a nice amount of money from his wallet and gave it to him. However, the poor man refused to accept the money. He said, "You should know that I am really a rich man. I only accepted to go into exile because of a story that happened to me."

He related that he was a wealthy businessman who lived a pleasant life until one day

when a large sum of money went missing in his house. A poor orphaned girl worked in his home as a maid and he suspected that she took the money. He spoke to her gently and asked her to return the money but she burst out in tears and said that she had not taken it. She said that she was unfairly being accused and that she was innocent but the rich man did not believe her. He called the police and they came and arrested her.

The girl was held in jail by the police for a week while they interrogated her. They hit her and tortured her to get her to admit to stealing the money but she still maintained her innocence and said that she wouldn't admit to something she didn't do even if they would kill her!

After a week, they had no choice but to release her. However, she was severely

affected by the beatings she had endured and she became very sick. A few days later, she died.

Two weeks later, the rich man found the money in a hidden place in his home. When he saw the money, he began to tremble in fear. He knew that he had done a terrible thing and Hashem would punish him for it.

He ran to Rav Meir of Premishlan zy"ra and asked him what he could do to do *teshuva*. Rav Meir was very shaken up by the story and he told the man that he had three choices: He could choose to die immediately, he could go through a difficult disease for three years and then die, or he could go into exile and wander from place to place for three years, never remaining in one place for more than one night.

"As you can see," the man said, "I chose to go into exile. As

the Rebbe instructed, I wear the clothing of a poor man and I go to a new place every day. I never ask for food. I simply wait around and if someone gives me something to eat, I eat it. I also only travel by foot, never by carriage. I will do this for three full years in order to find atonement for my sin."

One Who Judges Others Favorably Judges Himself Favorably:

We further see that one should never say anything bad about his friend because this can cause very bad things to happen to oneself.

The Mishnah (Avos 2:4) says: "Do not judge your friend until you reach his place." The Baal Shem Tov zy"ra (Besht Parshas Kedoshim) explains this concept by quoting the Gemara (Sanhedrin 91B) that says that in

the future “the lame man will ride on the deaf man”, meaning that the soul and body will be judged together. This is because the *neshama* cannot be judged by itself since it is a “portion of Hashem from Above” and certainly would never have done an *aveiros* without the body. The body also cannot be judged by itself because it has no power without the *neshama* and is basically an inanimate object on its own. This is why they both have to be together for a person to be judged after he dies.

However, we may ask how a person can be judged while he is alive. It is stated that the *neshama* goes up to Shomayim every night while a person is sleeping and it is judged there. How can it be judged without the body being present?

The Besht explains that when Nosson Hanavi came to rebuke Dovid Hamelech, he began with

a *moshol*:

There were two people in a city. One of them was rich and one was poor. The rich man had a lot of sheep and cattle, while the poor man had nothing except for one small lamb. The poor man once was a guest in the home of the rich man, and the rich man stole his lamb and served it as a meal. When Dovid heard this, he became very upset and he declared that the rich man should be given the death penalty!

Nosson then revealed to Dovid that he was the rich man in the story. Thus, he had sealed his own fate and given his own judgment.

The Besht states that this how all people are treated by Hashem. When a person commits an *aveirah*, the Heavenly Court does not judge him. Instead, they allow him to

see another person doing the same *aveirah*. If he gets angry and says that person is deserving of a specific punishment, he is given that punishment. Thus, he creates his own judgment.

Chazal say to judge everyone favorably, meaning that one shouldn't be quick to judge anyone else because "one does not judge his friend until he reaches his place." One should know that if he is put in a situation where he can judge his friend, it is because he is already in that place. He has already done the same *aveirah* he now sees that his friend is doing, and however he judges his friend is how he will be judged. If he judges his friend favorably, he too will be judged favorably.

A Segulah for Hisorerus:

A person naturally desires to

improve and rise to higher levels. Some people think the way to lift oneself up is to put down others; however, that is incorrect. It is said in Lubavitch: **If you want to be bigger than your friend, do not knock him down into a pit so that you can be higher than him. Rather, you should go stand on a high mountain.** In other words, the way to become higher than others is to work on improving oneself, rather than by knocking down others.

Another way to do this is to defend other Jews and speak well of them. If one does this, Hashem will raise him up to higher levels. This is stated by Chazal (Pesikta D'Rav Kahana, V'Zos Habracha): **"Anyone who defends Yisroel will be uplifted in this world by Hashem."**

לֹא הִבִּיט אֶנָּן בְּיַעֲקֹב וְלֹא רָאָה עֲמָל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹקָיו עִמּוֹ וְגו' (כג, כא)

He does not look at evil in Yaakov, and has seen no discretion in Yisroel; Hashem, his G-d, is with him, and he has the King's friendship. (23:21)

Seeing No Bad:

Several *chasidim* once came to Rav Itzikel of Neshchiz zy”a and told him a certain individual had committed a sin. They asked the Rebbe to rebuke him and to sever ties with him. The Rebbe told them, “I prefer to follow the ways of Hashem. It says that He ‘does not look at evil in Yaakov and sees no discretion in Yisroel.’ He doesn’t look at our sins because if He did, none of us would be deemed worthy of being connected to Him.”

With these words, the Rebbe hinted that these *chasidim* were not perfect either and also could be considered unworthy of having a relationship with him. Since he tolerated them, they should not try to convince him not to tolerate someone else.

Yiras Shomayim Even for a Sinner:

The Chidushei Harim zy”a (quoted in Sefer Likutei Harim) states that this *pasuk* is a source of encouragement for all Jews, no matter what spiritual level they are on. Everyone should know that he is valuable to Hashem, even if he sometimes acts improperly. One should know that if he could be even worse than he is, but he holds himself back because he fears Hashem, he is called a “*yarei Shomayim*.”

Accordingly, the *pasuk* is saying that Hashem “does not look at evil”. Of course, this does not mean that no sinners will be judged for his sins. However, the *pasuk* says that “Hashem his G-d is with him”,

meaning that if one has *yiras Hashem* and senses Hashem's presence, He is with him and protects him even if he sins.

וַיִּשָּׂא בִלְעָם אֶת עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל שֹׁכֵן לְשִׁבְטָיו וְהָהִי עָלָיו רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים (ב, כד)

And Bilaam lifted his eyes and he saw Yisroel dwelling with their tribes and the spirit of Hashem was upon him. (24:2)

Connecting With the Shechinah Through Guarding One's Mouth:

My father *shlita* (Gliyon Divrei Torah 5778) asks how a *rasha* like Bilaam merited having the Shechinah rest upon him. The Zohar Hakadosh (Chelek 3, 202B) says that the Shechinah rests only on Yisroel. How could it also rest on a wicked man like Bilaam?

He explains that the answer is found in the ensuing *pasuk* (ibid:5): "How good are your tents, Yaakov, your dwelling places, Yisroel!" Rashi explains that he saw that the doors of the tents did not face each other. The Sefarim Hakedoshim add that a

person's body has numerous "doors". One of them is the mouth. Thus, when it says that their doors did not face each other, it can be understood to mean that their mouths did not speak badly about each other. **They were careful not to say *lashon hara* about their fellow Jews.**

When the *pasuk* says that Bilaam saw the Jews dwelling according to their Shevatim, the word "Shevet" can mean "a ruler". They ruled over their mouths and made sure not to say anything bad about others. **Because of this, the spirit of Hashem rested on them. The *pasuk* is actually saying that**

the Jewish people merited the Shechinah resting on them because of this.

Words in this World Affect the Upper Worlds:

Sefer Divrei Yisroel explains this concept with a wonderful *moshol* that he relates in the name of his grandfather, Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir zy"l:

This world is similar to the battery in a watch. Even if the watch is a Rolex that is worth thousands of dollars, it only works with the power of an inexpensive battery. The gold and silver are merely decorations. The true power of the watch that allows it to tell time is the cheap battery.

So too, whatever we can accomplish in this world cannot be accomplished in Olam Haba. Everything that occurs in

Shomayim is "powered" by the actions of people in this world.

When someone defends his fellow Jew and says that he serves Hashem as best as he can **he is silencing the prosecuting angels in a way that only a man can do. No *malach* has this power. Even the *neshamos* of thousands of *tzadikim* in Gan Eden are not as powerful as this human defender.** The opposite is also true. If, *chas v'shalom*, a living person speaks badly about his fellow Jew, he creates a terrible prosecution Above. This is what Bilaam wanted to do to Klal Yisroel.

The way one can avoid speaking like this is to see his own shortcomings. If he does so, he will be able to understand his friend and recognize that he is doing the best he can and should not be criticized so harshly.

For this reason, there were

tzadikim who would be overjoyed when they would go out in the street and see simply Jews wearing *tzitzis*. They would be so happy that they would run over to kiss them for doing *mitzvos*.

In this vein, Rav Boruch of Mezhibozh *zy"ta* would say, **"When I look at the world, I am unimpressed by anyone. But when I look at myself, everyone is impressive in comparison."**

The Way We Pasken in This World is How They Pasken Above:

Regarding this concept that a person's words in this world have an effect in the Upper Worlds, it is related that the Bach promised his son-in-law, the Taz, that he would support him and provide him with meals after his wedding. He promised that

he would give him meat to eat every day.

One day, the Taz was served liver instead of proper meat. The Taz was learning with extreme *hasmadah*. He used every ounce of energy he had to learn. On the day he was given liver instead of real meat, he did not have as much energy, and he learned a few minutes less than usual.

Because of this, he called his father-in-law to a *Din Torah*. He told the Bais Din that the Bach had promised to give him meat every day, and liver is not real meat. The Bais Din listened to his complaint but still ruled that the liver is a type of meat and the Bach fulfilled his obligation by serving it to him.

The Taz was not upset at all about that fact that he had lost the *Din Torah*. In fact, he was very happy. He explained that he saw that in Shomayim there was

a complaint against the Bach for causing him to learn a few minutes less than usual. Therefore, he called him to a *Din Torah*, knowing that Bais Din would side with the Bach. Now that it had been ruled like this in a Bais Din on earth, that ruling was accepted in Shomayim, and there was no more complaint against the Bach.

We see from this story how much of an effect the actions of this world have in Olam Haba.

The Peleh Yoetz (Erech Sanigoriah) writes that it is known that Hashem wants Jews to defend everyone in Klal Yisroel. Eliyahu Hanavi was punished for speaking badly and saying that the idol worshipers had abandoned Hashem. Yeshaya Hanavi was also punished for speaking badly about Jewish people. Even Moshe Rabenu was punished for saying that the people would not

believe him. And **Gidon was chosen to be the leader of the nation because he defended them.**

The reason for this is because the words we say in this world have an impact Above. If we speak negatively, we create negative forces. If we speak positively, we create positive forces. Our words bear fruit.

Judging Favorably:

The Shlah writes similarly that when one judges his friend favorably it has a great effect in Shomayim. **If someone defends other Jews, even if he has done many *aveiros*, the *malachim* will defend him in Shomayim and the damaging angels will not be able to harm him.**

Do Not Mention One's Sins While He is

Suffering:

One must be especially careful only to say good things about a person who is going through a difficulty. One should definitely not be like the foolish people who say, "That person must be suffering because he did a lot of bad things." These people think they know exactly why their fellow Jew is suffering and what *aveiros* he did to cause his pain. One should definitely not be like them because the Satan becomes more powerful in times of danger and speaking badly about people makes him even stronger and gives him the ability to cause much harm.

If one speaks good about his friend, however, he shuts the mouths of the prosecuting angels and stops harm from occurring.

Defending a Fellow Jew:

The *pasuk* in Yechezkel (1:14) states: "And the *chayos* would run and return." The Noam Elimelech (Parshas Bamidbor) explains that when a *malach* has a job to do in this world, it runs to do it and immediately returns to its place so that it doesn't get sunk into this world. He says that this also can be applied to Klal Yisroel. For many years, we have not had a Bais Hamikdosh. We have nowhere to run and hide to make sure that we don't get sunk into the *gashmius* of this world.

Rav Itzikel of Pshevorsk zy"ta said that this is a defense and advocacy for Klal Yisroel. If the *chayos*, the Heavenly angels, need to run away so as not to become affected by this world, how can we be punished for being affected by it?

This is the meaning of the piyyut that we recite: "*V'yosher yalitzu ba'adeinu chayos aish.*"

The fiery angels are an advocacy expected not to be influenced for us. If they have to run away badly? from this world, how can we be

15 Tamuz 5503

Yahrzeit of Rav Chaim ben Rav Moshe Zy" a, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh

Saving a Student from Taking a Bad Path:

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh was once traveling a long distance by ship. Amongst the other passengers were several merchants who were traveling for business. When the ship was out at sea, a tremendous storm struck and it began to shake. One huge wave struck the ship and broke it in half. Everyone plunged into the ocean and urgently attempted to find something to grab onto.

The Ohr Hachaim managed to grab ahold of a beam from the ship that was floating in the water. For three full days, he held onto the beam as it was

rocked back and forth by the powerful waves. Finally, he was swept to dry land. When he walked ashore, he saw that he was on an uninhabited piece of land. He was exhausted from his ordeal and looked for a place to rest and regain his strength before plotting his next course of action.

He hadn't eaten in days and he was starving. He also could hear the roars of wild beasts searching for prey, which terrified him. He sat down on the beach and cried but, knowing he could not remain there, he walked into the forest in search of sustenance. He found some fruit hanging from a tree and ate it. It was now nighttime, so he climbed a tree

to be safe from the wild animals and he stayed there until the morning.

When it got light out and the animals returned to their dens, he descended the tree and walked around until evening. That night, he again climbed a tree and stayed there for the night. This went on for a number of days. He couldn't find anywhere safe to be, and he was very scared and perturbed.

He decided to climb the tallest tree he could find so that he could look out as far as possible to determine if he was near any habituated place. As he looked around from the top of the tall tree, he saw smoke rising from the distance. He realized that this meant that someone was living nearby.

He came down from the tree and walked in the direction of the smoke. After walking for

hours, he saw a lone house in the distance. The house was palatial in size and beautiful in appearance. It looked like a castle. The Ohr Hachaim was overjoyed to have found it and he thanked Hashem for allowing him to find civilization.

As he approached the house, he did not see anyone around. The door was closed but unlocked. He went inside and saw that the house was in good order. It definitely looked like someone was living there. The pots and dishes were stored nicely. The table, chairs and beds were clean and set up properly.

Still and all, he couldn't find anyone there. He went from room to room but no one was to be found.

The table was set and there was plenty of delicious-looking hot food waiting to be eaten. He was starving, as he had only

eaten a few fruits since he had arrived on shore but he didn't want to eat any of the food because he didn't know if it was kosher and he also didn't want to take anything without permission. He was worried that the owner of the house might find him eating his food and kill him.

A few hours passed. He was now so hungry that he began to think that perhaps the owner of the house wouldn't care if he ate a little. He thought that Hashem certainly would have mercy on him and not allow him to be killed for eating some food when he was in danger of starving to death. He trusted in Hashem to help him and he ate some of the food that was clearly not treif. He ate enough to still his hunger.

He was now very tired. He lay down on one of the beds and fell asleep.

This house was actually belonged to four armed highwaymen who made their living by robbing and murdering travelers. They used it as their hideaway, where they would store all the money and possessions they stole.

They had been out all day robbing and killing and they returned late at night with their plunder. When they got to the house, they were surprised to find the door open. They walked inside and saw that someone had eaten some of their food. They were outraged that someone dared to enter their lair and they searched for the intruder until they found the Ohr Hachaim fast asleep on one of the beds.

They wanted to rip him to pieces as he slept but their leader said, "Don't do anything right now. We are all hungry. Let's first eat and then we will deal with him."

They sat down by the table and they ate and drank their fill. After they finished eating, one of them woke up the Ohr Hachaim and brought him to the main room. When he saw the armed robbers, he was petrified and his legs began to tremble. They asked him, “Why did you enter this house? Why did you eat our food and go to sleep in our bed like you own the place?”

The Ohr Hachaim was unable to utter a word. He stood before them like a mute. They immediately issued a death sentence, saying that they would tear him limb by limb and feed him to the dogs. When he heard this, the Ohr Hachaim fell to the floor and begged for his life. He told them everything that happened to him and how he ended up in their house but they didn't believe a word he said.

They led him out of the house with their swords drawn, waiting

for their leader to give the word to kill him. The head robber approached them and said, “No one will lay a hand on this man until I speak to him privately for a minute.”

The other robbers moved off to the side, leaving the Ohr Hachaim alone with their leader. The leader of the thieves then said to him, “Don't you remember me?”

The Ohr Hachaim replied, “No. I don't know who you are.”

The head robber said, “Look closely at my face.”

The Ohr Hachaim gazed at him but still could not place him. Finally, the robber said, “My name is such-and-such. I am your student. I studied under your guidance for a long time in your bais medrash. I was a young beardless man then and now I probably look different. That's why you don't recognize me.”

The Ohr Hachaim was happy to hear this but he asked, “How did you end up here? How did you fall so far?”

The man said, “Rebbe, I will tell you everything. It’s not for nothing that our sages say that one who gets angry is akin to one who worships idols. I once got so angry at my parents that I began to beat them. By the time I returned to my senses, I realized that I had killed them. I saw what I had done and felt that there was no possible way for me to do *teshuva*. I had lost my share in Olam Haba. All hope was lost for me. I ran away and joined a group of thieves and eventually became their leader.

“When I saw you, I was reminded of who I used to be and I desired to do *teshuva*. Please teach me how to repent and fix my soul. I will do whatever you say as long as you can promise me that I will have a

share in Olam Haba. If you can’t do that, I will remain a thief and murderer and I won’t even stop my friends for killing you.”

The Ohr Hachaim told him, “It will be very difficult for you to do *teshuva*. I don’t know if you can do it. However, if you obey everything I tell you to do, I promise that your portion in Olam Haba will be returned to you. This is what you must do:

“Firstly, you must leave this gang of thieves forever. You must return to a frum life with your entire heart and soul and commit to never engage in criminal activity again. In addition to this, you must fast three times a week, daven three times every day with a *tzibur*, and do every mitzvah that comes your way immediately. To put it simply, you must avoid bad and do good.

“After doing this for one year,

you must go out and search for a python's den. Look around until you find a mother snake that has born several babies. Take one of the newborn snakes and put it in a metal jar. Seal the jar, hang it on a chain, and hang the chain from your neck for seven weeks. Feed the snake three times every day. At the end of the seven weeks, let the now fully grown snake out of the jar. It will bite you and you will die. Your death will be your measure-for-measure atonement.

"If you do all this, I promise that you will be forgiven and you will have a share in Olam Haba."

The head robber agreed to the terms, saying, "Hashem sent you here, to this desolate place, to help me do *teshuva*. You certainly didn't do anything to deserve the suffering you endured. Rather, my sins led you here. It must be that in the merit

of the Torah that I learned in my youth, He has given me this opportunity to save my soul."

He then called over the other thieves and said, "Don't kill him today. From speaking to him, I see that he is a simple man who didn't mean any harm. He stumbled upon our house after being lost in the forest for a long time. It wasn't his fault. Therefore, I think we should give him another day to live. We'll decide tomorrow what to do with him."

They took him back into the house and gave him a room for the night. In the middle of the night, the chief robber came into the Ohr Hachaim's room and said, "Get up now and run out the door. I will escort you to the closest city and from there you'll be able to make your way home."

The former thief became a new man. He settled in a Jewish

community and lived a frum life for a year. He then did as he had been instructed and seven weeks later, the python he had raised bit him and he died.

After his death, he appeared to the Ohr Hachaim in a dream and said, “I did everything you said and I have been given a place in Gan Eden. I now am sitting in peace under the wings of the Shechinah. Hashem will repay you for helping me do *teshuva*.”

The Kedushah of Tefillin:

When the Ohr Hachaim was gravely ill and it was clear that his death was imminent, his Rebbitzen was sitting next to his bed with tears rolling down her cheeks. He cried to him, “You know that you are leaving me bereft and penniless. How will I manage?”

He told her, “Don’t worry.

After I die, a rich man will come from Constantinople and he will give you 300 golden liras in exchange for my *tefillin*. Sell them to him and you will be able to live off that money. Just tell him in my name that he must be very careful to maintain the sanctity of the *tefillin* and he may never utter even one mundane word while wearing them.”

These words comforted his wife.

A few days later, Klal Yisroel mourned the *petirah* of the holy Ohr Hachaim. For 30 days, many eulogies were delivered for this great man. After the end of the *Shloshim*, a wealthy man from Constantinople came to the Rebbitzen and offered to pay 300 golden liras for his *tefillin*. Of course, she remembered what her husband had told her and she agreed to the deal. She also remembered to tell him that he must be very careful to maintain

the sanctity of *tefillin* and to never speak mundane words while wearing them.

The purchaser kept his end of the deal. He wore the *tefillin* every day and made such to never speak while wearing them. He found that his *tefillos* were greatly uplifted when he wore them and became more exalted every day.

One day, the rich man was sitting the *bais medrash*, wrapped in his *talis* and *tefillin*, when one of his young workers approached him and started to discuss business matters. At first, he tried to ignore him but the boy would not let up. For one second, he was distracted from his lofty thoughts and he said something about the business. Immediately, he realized that he no longer felt as uplifted as he usually did when he wore the Ohr Hachaim's *tefillin*.

The man got very scared when he realized that the spirit of holiness had left him. He thought that he may have somehow invalidated the *tefillin*, so he took them to a *sofer* to be checked.

And when the *sofer* opened the *tefillin*, he was amazed to see that the parchment was blank! The letter were no longer there!

This story was related by Rav Itzikel of Pshevorsk zy"va. He concluded by saying, "The moment the wealthy man was *maseach da'as* and spoke mundane words, the letters flew off the parchment and ascended to Shomayim."

May the memory of the *tzadik* be a blessing for all of Klal Yisroel.

The Rambam Writes About Those Who
Bring Joy to Widdows and Orphans

**“Anyone Who Provides
Joy to These Unfortunate
Souls Is Comparable to
the Holy Shechinah!”**

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