

לעילו נשמת: אריה ישראל בן מרדכי ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Balak



לזכות רפואה שלמה מלכה בת רחל ומינאל בן שלי

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## Parshas Ballak

The *parashah* begins, וירא בלק בן צפור את כל אשר עשה ישראל לאמרי, "Balak saw everything that Yisrael did to Emori." The Trisker Magid *zt'l* (*Magen Avraham*) explains that אמורי means speech, prayers. Balak saw that the Jewish nation has the power of prayer. את כל אשר עשה ישראל, everything the Jewish nation does, לאמרי, they accomplish with their words, with their prayers, and that frightened him. Moav had a strong army, but they knew that they couldn't compete with the Yidden who daven to Hashem to help them.

The Trisker Magid continues, "[When Bnei Yisrael are called העם it signifies Yidden on lower levels.] ויגר מואב, Moav was afraid מפני העם, also from the "lower" Yidden, since they too, have the power of *tefillah*."

Similarly, the Noam Elimelech

writes, "Balak understood that the Jewish people can accomplish all their desires with words. As Chazal (*Moed Kattan* 16) say, 'A tzaddik decrees and Hashem sustains.' וירא, Balak understood את כל אשר עשה ישראל, that everything the Jewish nation accomplishes, באמורי, is with their words,' and this frightened him."

*Rashi* writes, "Moav and Midyan always hated each other...but because they feared Bnei Yisrael they made peace... When they saw Yisrael winning wars miraculously, they said, 'their leader grew up in Midyan. Let us ask Midyan what is his strength? [Midyan replied] 'His strength is solely in his mouth.' Moav said, 'We will also confront him as someone whose strength is in his mouth,'" and they hired Bilam.

The might of the Jewish nation at that time, and



always, is their *tefillos*. The nations of the world recognized that and were very afraid of the Jewish nation.<sup>1</sup>

One of Bilaam's *brachos* is מִי מִנּוּה עֵפֶר יַעֲקֹב, "Who can count the dirt of Yaakov?!" What praise of the Jewish nation was Bilaam referring to?<sup>2</sup>

The Gemara (*Brachos* 5:) says: Reb Elazar said, "Woe to the beauty that will be buried in dirt."<sup>3</sup> The Be'er Mayim Chaim *zy'a* explains: Woe to the beauty of *tefillah* that is in ruins and buried in dirt, which signifies laziness and sadness. Everything was created with four elements: fire, water,

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1. In last week's *parashah*, Klal Yisrael asked Edom to allow them to pass through their country en route to Eretz Yisrael. Edom didn't grant them permission and warned they will attack if Bnei Yisrael dares to trespass their country.

Edom sent the following message to Bnei Yisrael: אתם מתגאים בקול שהורישכם אביכם, "You are proud of the voice that your forefathers bequeathed you" — the power of *tefillah*... ואני אצא במה שהורישני אבי, "I will come against you with the power my forefather bequeathed me. As it states, על חרבך תחיה, 'you will live by the sword...' (Rashi)

Rebbe Hershel of Ziditchov *zt'l* asks, *tefillah* is definitely more powerful than the sword, so what was Edom saying?

Edom was saying, אתם מתגאים בקול, 'You are proud of your voice...' You are arrogant due to all the wonders you accomplish with your *tefillah*. And when you have *gaavah*, the power of the sword is stronger, since the essence of *tefillah* is humility, acknowledgment that we can't do anything without Hashem.

2. Rashi states two explanations: (1) who can count the children of Yaakov, who were blessed they should be many כעפר הארץ (*Bereishis* 28:14). (2) "The amount of mitzvos they do with earth is infinite. [Such as] לא תחרוש בשור וחמור, לא תזרע כלאים, אפר פרה, עפר סוטה וכיוצא בזה."

3. Literally, Reb Elazar was referring to the beauty of Reb Yochanan. He cried when he thought that this beauty will one day be buried in the earth.

wind, and earth. Also people are comprised of these four elements. As Reb Chaim Vital *zy'a* teaches: Anger and haughtiness comes from fire; desires for pleasure comes from water. ליצנות הוללות התפארות, ודברים במלים, mockery, laughter/gaiety, and idle talk come from wind. Laziness and unhappiness comes from earth.

Earth by nature is heavy and it pulls down, and this is makes people glum. Consequently, the earth element is a great impediment to *tefillah*, for *tefillah* should be joyous, without laziness and without sadness. Reb Elazar said, "Woe to this beauty that is buried in earth." How beautiful *tefillah* is! How enjoyable it is! How precious it is! How much one can accomplish with *tefillah*! But earth — melancholy and laziness — ruins the experience.

We can now explain Bilaam's *brachah*: מי מנה עפר יעקב, "Who can count the earth of

Yaakov." Even those *tefillos* that are tainted with earth, because they are wrapped with unhappiness and laziness, are also very precious, and accomplish much in heaven. Every *tefillah*, even the weakest one, is precious to Hashem.

The Mishnah (*Sanhedrin* 10:) states, "Four *hedyotos* (regular people, e. i. not kings) don't have a portion in Olam HaBa. They are: Bilaam, Doag, Achitofel, and Geichazi."

The question begs, why is Bilaam on this list together with other Yidden?

It seems it's because Bilaam prayed (23:10), תמות נפשי מות ישרים, he should die like a Yid. This earned him the right to be counted among Yidden. We see the power of prayer, even from Bilaam. How much more so is the power of prayer of an erlicher Yid! How much can be accomplished with his words!

Chazal (*Brachos* 30:) say, אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך כבוד ראש,

“One can’t get up to daven unless he is serious.” Therefore, one must prepare himself for *tefillah*.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Magid Taalumah*) writes that this rule applies solely for *Shemonah Esrei*. However, when one desires to pray in his own words, spontaneously, then any moment is an ideal time for *tefillah*.

We quote his holy words, “The obligation to pray with *כוּבֵר ראש* and preparation is solely for *Shemonah Esrei*. But when a person wants to pray at any hour of the day, asking Hashem for his needs—such *tefillos* don’t need preparation. On the contrary, about such *tefillos* it states, מִי בָה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכֹל קְרִיאָנוּ אֵלָיו 'Who is like Hashem our G-d whenever we call out to Him.'

"When one prays spontaneously for everything that happens to him, it expresses our high level of *emunah*. It shows we believe nothing happens by chance,

and everything happens by Hashem's wondrous *hashgachah*. These *teifllos* turn everything around and the *gezeiros* becomes salvations.”

### **Ohr HaGanuz**

It states (*Tehillim* 27), קוּה אֵל ה'... וְקוּה אֵל ה'. The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 2:12) explains from this *pasuk* that one should pray again and again to Hashem, “even a hundred times.” Perhaps his next *tefillah* will be answered.

The Imrei Pinchas (*Bo*) *zt'l* explains that this is because every day the *ohr haganuz* (concealed spiritual light) becomes revealed in the world, and all *tefillos* said at that moment are answered. That is why you should pray often. Perhaps you will say a *tefillah* when the *ohr haganuz* comes forth, and then your *tefillos* will be answered.

The Imrei Pinchas writes, “Everything in the world is dependent on this *ohr haganuz*. Without the *ohr haganuz*, the world wouldn't

exist. As the *Zohar* (*Terumah* p.149.) states, 'If the light isn't hidden entirely, the world couldn't exist even for a moment...' There isn't a day that this hidden light doesn't come forth to the world, and from it comes existence to the world. Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings *parnassah* to the world with it.'

"We see that even *parnassah* comes from the *ohr haganuz*. Therefore, a person should act with his *parnassah* with concealment, as the wealthy people in the past would do. They would conceal their wealth. Not as people do today. This is as Chazal (*Taanis* 8:) teach, 'The blessings comes solely in matters that are concealed from the eye.' The reason is, since *parnassah* comes from the *ohr haganuz*, the concealed light, it must be concealed. As the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 175.) teaches, that there is an ideal not to show others that you are wealthy.

"Therefore, the Midrash

(*Devarim Rabba* 2:12) states, 'קוה אל ה' ... וקוה אל ה', pray to Him, even a hundred times.'

Even if a person prayed a lot for something, and his *tefillos* weren't answered, he should pray some more. He shouldn't give up, because everything is dependent on the *ohr haganuz*, and every day the *ohr haganuz* comes forth. If he will pray a hundred times, perhaps he will say one *tefillah* exactly when the *ohr haganuz* comes forth to the world, and then his requests will immediately be answered. Because when something is *ganuz*, concealed, one doesn't know when it will be revealed..."

The nature of a concealed light (*ohr haganuz*) is that we don't know when it is revealed. Nevertheless, there are ways to determine when the *ohr haganuz* comes, and these are ideal times for *tefillah*.

### 1] Neitz HaChamah

The Imrei Pinchas writes that we don't know for certain when the *ohr haganuz* shines,

however, “משמע קצת, there is a slight indication that the *ohr haganuz* shines in the morning before the *neitz hachamah*. That moment is an *eis ratzon* to ask for all your needs.” (A note on the *Imrei Pinchas* states “It seems that he said this lesson in the name of the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l.*)”

This is one of the many benefits earned from davening at *netz hachamah*. The *ohr haganuz* shines a moment prior to the *netz hachamah*,

and as the *ohr haganuz* is emanating, all *tefillos* said then are answered.<sup>4</sup>

## 2] Silence

Before setting out to travel to Eretz Yisrael, the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* wrote a letter to his wife, which contains many wondrous *mussar* lessons. He writes (quoting a Midrash), “For each moment one controls his speech, he merits the *ohr haganuz*, which no angel or creation can fathom...”<sup>5</sup>

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4. Rebbe Hershel Zidichover *zt'l* said that *tefillos* said in the winter before *alos hashachar* (daybreak) are very powerful *tefillos*, and can accomplish as much as one accomplishes with his *tefillos* during *Ne'illah*.

5. A major emphasis of this letter is to be cautious with speech. For example, the Gr'a writes, “The primary way to merit Olam HaBa is to be cautious with speech. This is greater than all Torah and all deeds... because the mouth is *kodesh kadoshim.*”

“Read this letter every week, and especially on Shabbos before the meal and during the meal. That way you won't speak idly, *chas veshalom*, or *chas veshalom*, commit severe sins of *lashon hara* and the like...”

“Why do I have to speak at length about this severe sin [of *lashon hara*] which is worse than all *aveiros*...”

“Throughout one's life one must undergo afflictions. Not fasting and self-afflictions, rather by muzzling one's mouth and by controlling one's *taavos*... That is greater than all fasts and *sigufim* of the world. All one's sins will be forgiven and he will be saved from Gehinom.”



Thus, we have discovered another time when the *ohr haganuz* shines. That is when one withholds from forbidden speech.

It is often discussed that when one is disgraced and he doesn't answer back, he receives the power of *tefillah*. Whatever he asks for at this time, and all of the *brachos* he says, are answered. This Midrash (stated above) supports this principle. When one is silent, he merits the *ohr haganuz*, and therefore it is an auspicious time for *tefillah* and

for giving *brachos*. Whatever he will ask for at this time will be answered.<sup>6</sup>

### 3] Tzaros

It states (*Shemos* 2:23), ויאנהו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויזעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלקים מן העבודה, "Bnei Yisrael moaned from their slavery, and they shouted, and their calls went up to Hashem from their work." Rabbeinu b'Chaya states that the *pasuk* emphasizes that their *tefillos* went up *from their slavery and from their work*, because a *tefillah* said in duress is most likely to be answered.

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6. A prestigious, rabbinic family had an embarrassing secret, which they tried to conceal, but at times, it became known.

Their son was in yeshiva, and at lunch time, one of the bachurim revealed the secret in front of all the other bachurim. The son was very embarrassed, but he didn't answer back. Instead, he said, "I forgive you," and left the lunchroom. He knew that he now has the power of giving *brachos*, and he sought where he could use it. His first thought was to bless an older cousin, who learned in a yeshiva nearby, and needed a shidduch. He went to the cousin's yeshiva, but the cousin wasn't there.

The *bachur* quickly went home and he said to his sister, "Within a month, you will be a *kalah*."

Shocked, she asked, "How do you know?"

"I have the power of *brachos* now and I'm telling you that within a month, you will be engaged."

Within a week, she was engaged.

They are special *tefillos* before Hashem.

In part, this is because Hashem concealed the *ohr haganuz* within *tzaros* and darkness. When one prays from such situations, he is praying with the *ohr haganuz*, which is *mesugal* for the *tefillos* to be answered.

The Imrei Pinchas writes, "The Or HaChaim (*Shemos* 10:22-23) explains that the light [that shone for the Yidden by *makas choshech*] was the *ohr haganuz*.... The reason this light shone in Mitzrayim is because this concealed light is concealed in all *tzaros*, and within the greatest darkness. For that reason, when Yidden were near the forty-ninth gate of *tumah*, the light shone..."

Since the *ohr haganuz* is there, it is an ideal time for *tefillah*.

In review: One should pray often, even a hundred times, because perhaps he will say a *tefillah* when the *ohr haganuz*

is shining. There is an indication that the *ohr haganuz* shines forth a moment before *neitz hachamah*. We also know that the *ohr haganuz* shines when one is silent and doesn't speak forbidden speech, and it shines from the midst of darkness and strife. All of the above are ideal times for *tefillah*.

### *Chesed*

There's a *sefer* that is much beloved in the yeshiva world, called *Imrei Moshe*, written by Reb Moshe Sokolovsky of Brisk *zt'l*. Before the war, in Europe, the Steipler Gaon *zt'l* asked Reb Moshe Sokolovsky to give him a *sefer* for free, because he couldn't afford to buy one. Reb Moshe Sokolovsky agreed. Reb Moshe Sokolovsky thought he was doing a favor for the Steipler Gaon (who was then still a *bachur*), however, he was really doing a great favor for himself. The war broke out, and all of copies of his *sefer*, *Imrei Moshe*, were burned or stolen during

the Holocaust. Only the Steipler Gaon's copy survived. He brought his copy to Eretz Yisrael and had the *sefer* reprinted. That is how Reb Moshe Sokolovsky's *chiddushim* are studied until today.

We learn from this story that when you do *chesed* for others, you are ultimately doing *chesed* for yourself.

As the Gemara (*Shabbos* 151:) teaches, כל המרחם על הבריות מרחמן עליו מן השמים, “Whoever has compassion on others, Heaven has compassion on him.”

The Degel Machaneh Efraim *zt'l* (*Beshalach*) teaches that this is hinted at in the words (*Bamidbar* 11:7) והמן כורע גר. This means והמן, one's *parnassah*; כורע גר is according to the amount he ג"ד — גומל דלים — helps the poor.

### Shame and Humiliation

In this week's *parashah*, Bilaam blesses the Jewish nation, and apparently his *brachos* did take effect and are

for our benefit. We wonder, how could Bilaam HaRasha's *brachos* mean anything?

We are also surprised that Bilaam actually saw a *malach*. How did he reach that level?

The Bas Ayin answers that it was because Bilaam had immense embarrassment in front of Moav's top officials. His humiliation purified him somewhat, and this enabled him to see a *malach* and to give effective *brachos*.

Rashi (22:29) discusses the immense shame Bilaam had. Bilaam's donkey wasn't obeying Bilaam. Bilaam said to the donkey (22:29), “If I had a sword, I would kill you.” Rashi writes, גנות גדולה היה לו דבר זה בעיני השרים, זהו הולך להרוג אומה שלימה בפיו ולא נתן זו צריך לכלי זיין, “Bilaam was immensely humiliated before the officials. Bilaam was traveling to kill an entire nation with his mouth, but for his donkey, he needed a weapon.”

The officials present weren't low ranking policemen. They

were very important ministers in Moav's government. As it states (22:15), ויסף עוד בלק שלח, שרים רבים ונכבדים מאלה, "Once again, Balak sent...officials, more respectable than the first group..." Bilaam's disgrace before these high ranking officials purified him, at least somewhat, and then he could see a *malach* and his *brachos* would be effective.

The Bas Ayin (Balak) writes, "At first, Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Bilaam (22:12) לא תלך עמהם, that he shouldn't go with שרי, Balak's emissaries. But afterwards, when Balak sent (22:15) שרים רבים ונכבדים מאלה, more dignified and higher ranking officers, Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him (22:20) אם אתם לקרא לך באו האנשים קום לך אתם, 'If these people are calling you...go with them.' How is it possible, *chas veshalom*, that Hashem changed His mind?

"However, the explanation is as follows: Hakadosh Baruch Hu also wanted Bilaam to [go with them, to] bless Bnei

Yisrael (as happened later on in the *parashah*). The problem was, his *brachos* wouldn't take an effect since he was very steeped in the *Sitra Achara* and he had the following three bad *middos*: עין רעה, נפש רחבה, רוח גבוהה, a bad eye, a broad soul [he wanted a lot of money], and conceit. Therefore, [initially] it was impossible for Bilaam to bless the Jewish nation. Only afterwards, when Bilaam suffered immense shame in front of Balak's officials, as it states, לו יש חרב בידי כי עתה הרגתיך, 'If I had a sword with me, I would kill you now.' And Rashi explains [that Bilaam had immense shame at this time]. This humiliation cleansed him from some of his bad *middos*, and now his *brachos* could take effect.

"Therefore it states (22:31), ויגל ה' את עיני בלעם וירא מלאך ה', 'Hashem opened up Bilaam's eyes and he saw the *malach*...' This is wondrous, because how could this tamei person see a *malach*? The

answer is, after his humiliation, he lost some of his bad *middos* and could look at the *malach*. This is the intention of the *pasuk*, ויגל ה' את עיני בלעם. The translation of ויגל is removed (such as ויגל יעקב את (האבן)). This means his bad *middos* were somewhat removed. [In particular] his attribute of עין רעה, bad eye [was removed. As it states, ויגל ה' את עיני בלעם (רעה)] and therefore he was able to look at the face of the *malach*, and he was able to give effective *brachos* ...

“Initially, Balak sent officers who weren't too important. Hakadosh Baruch Hu knew that the shame wouldn't be so great [when he will reveal that he isn't able to kill the donkey without a sword in front of those officials] and that the degree of humiliation wouldn't suffice to remove his bad *middos*, and Bilaam's *brachos* still wouldn't take effect. Therefore Hashem didn't permit Bilaam to go

with them. But after Balak sent שרים רבים ונכבדים מאלה, more honorable dignitaries, and Hashem, who knows the future, knew that Bilaam would be very humiliated before them, Hashem said, אם לקרוא לך באו האנשים קום לך אתם, אך הדבר אשר אדבר אליך אותו תעשה, ‘If the people called for you...go with them. However, you will say solely what I tell you.’ ...Because now his *brachos* can take effect on the Jewish people.”

We learn from the above the great purifying nature of shame. And so, whenever someone disgraces you or says something mean to you, be wise and remain silent. You earn so much *taharah* from this.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* said, "If a person knew that he will be receiving shame and humiliation during the day, he should go to *mikvah* beforehand, in preparation for the great *taharah* that comes from shame and humiliation.

Once, Reb Mordechai Elimelech Wosner *shlita* was together with his father, Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l*, when someone came by and humiliated Reb Mordechai Elimelech in a very cruel way.

Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* calmed his son, and explained that the humiliation will be for his benefit. He explained:

The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 15:4) states, "When the Jewish nation heard the *parashah* of *tzaraas*, they were afraid. Moshe told them, don't be afraid. *Tzaraas* is for the goyim. אבל אתם לאכול ולשתות ולשמח, but your portion is to eat, drink, and to be happy."

Why doesn't the Jewish nation get *tzaraas*? Don't they also need atonement?

Reb Wosner explained, the Gemara says that one of the primary traits of the Jewish nation is *ביישנים*, that they are bashful; they have the attribute of being ashamed. Non-Jews don't fully have this trait.

Therefore goyim need afflictions to attain atonement. But the Jewish nation feels their shame and humiliation so intensely, and that is sufficient for their atonement. They can eat and drink and be happy, because they earn their atonement with shame alone.

Consider this scenario:

Reuven comes to shul on Friday evening, and he begins davening with immense *kavanah*. With each passing minute, he feels himself growing to higher and higher *madreigos*. Then someone sits down next to him. This person doesn't appreciate Reuven's immense *hislahavus*, and he insults Reuven for praying so fervently. Now Reuven feels down and humiliated and he isn't able to daven anymore. He's convinced that he fell from the highest level to the lowest point.

Actually, the peak of his spiritual experience was when he was humiliated. The embarrassment purified him,



even more than all of his fiery *tefillos*.

Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl taught that when one endures humiliation, Hashem becomes our *meilitz*, advocate.

Once, an official was standing behind the window of Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl's *zt'l* home, and he was mocking the Rebbe and his *avodah*. Rebbe Mordechai Chernobyler said, "Behold it states (*Mishlei* 3:34), אַם לִלְצִים הוּא יִלְיץ. This can mean, if people laugh and mock you, הוא יִלְיץ, Hashem will be *meilitz* goodness for you" (*Likutei Torah, Tanach*).

The *malachim* in heaven are *meilitz yosher* for us. (They are our lawyers, who sing our virtues before the heavenly court). When one doesn't have enough merits, Hashem will sometimes bring humiliation onto him, and then Hashem Himself will speak for his benefit, and will be *meilitz yosher* for him.

The Or HaChaim (*Devarim* 21:15) teaches, that there is a pattern that Hashem set into the world: The most humiliated one earns the most. Therefore it states (*Devarim* 21:15), when one has two wives, one he loves and one he hates, והיה הבן הבכור לשנייה, the hated wife will bear the first-born. It will generally be that way, the Or HaChaim explains, because Hashem helps the humiliated and the shamed.

Similarly, the Navi (*I Shmuel* 1:1) states, כי את חנה אהב ויה' סגר רחמה, "Elkanah loved Chanah and Hashem closed her womb." The Ralbag (*I Shmuel* end of ch.7) explains that Peninah had children, while Chanah didn't because "Hashem looks out for the lowly ones. Hashem saw that Elkanah loves Chanah, therefore He had Peninah have children and not Chanah..."

Similarly, the Or HaChaim (*Devarim* 21:15) writes, that Leah gave birth before Rachel,

because Leah had more shame. As it states (*Bereishis* 29:31), וירא ה' כי שנואה לאה, "Hashem saw that Leah was hated."

### The Pursued

It states (*Koheles* 3:15), והאלקים יבקש את הנרדף, "Hashem seeks to help the pursued." The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 27:5) on this *pasuk* writes, "Even when a tzaddik chases a *rasha*, Hashem helps the נרדף."

By Korach's *machlokes*, Moshe Rabbeinu said (*Bamidbar* 16), "If they die a natural death, Hashem didn't send me. But if a new death is created, and the earth swallows them, that signifies that Hashem sent me." Moshe was saying that it was certain they will die; the only issue was whether it will be a natural death or an

unnatural death. But death was inevitable.

This is because even if *challilah* Hashem didn't send Moshe, but since they were fighting with Moshe, Moshe was the נרדף, and Hashem would help him.

Thus, the only way to verify משה אמת ותורתו אמת was when Korach's followers died an unprecedented death.

It states (*Tehillim* 23:6), אך טוב, וחסד ירדפוני, "Only goodness and kindness should chase after me..." The Imrei Emes (Eiger) *zt'l* and other tzaddikim explain that we should read the *pasuk* from the end to its beginning. ירדפוני, when people are chasing after me, אך טוב, I earn Hashem's goodness and kindness.<sup>7</sup>

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7. Reb Avraham Ginochovsky *zt'l* would often repeat this *vort*. He would say, "When you think someone is harming you, look closer and you will see that everything is for your benefit."

Once a father and son came to Reb Avraham Ginochovsky (just two weeks before Reb Avraham was *niftar*) and the father said his son is suffering from phobias. "He thinks people are chasing him."

Reb Avraham told him, "We are obligated to have *maror* (bitterness) one

**Various Modes of Communication** lives there to support you..."  
 Hashem told Eliyahu HaNavi, (I Malachim 17:9).  
 "Go and live in Tzarfata  
 Tzidon. Behold, I The Chofetz Chaim asks, this  
 commanded a widow who widow wasn't a prophetsess,

night a year — at the Seder. The rest of the year, see that everything should be sweet and good."

The following story was told by Reb Tzvi Elimelech Kornreich *zt'l*, who knew firsthand the details of the story:

Rebbe Shlomo of Bobov *zt'l* was sitting *shivah* for his sister, and the Lubavicher Rebbe *zt'l* came to be *menachem avel*. At the same time another *posek* came in. That *posek* said something derogatory and disrespectful to the Lubavicher Rebbe.

Sometime later, the Lubavicher yeshiva needed a *magid shiur* and the Lubavicher Rebbe invited that *posek* to take the position. It didn't work out — the *posek* wasn't able to accept the position. Nevertheless, from then on, the Lubavicher Rebbe would send a weekly paycheck to this *posek*, as if he was working in the yeshiva. He sent this paycheck for as long as this *posek* lived. All of this was so the *posek* shouldn't think the Rebbe was angry with him.

A similar story took place with the Belzer Rebbes. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* had a list of people he would support financially. When Rebbe Yehoshua was *niftar*, the *gaba'im* brought the list to his son and successor, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l*, and requested that he review the list, to confirm whom they should continue to support.

The *gaba'im* assumed Rebbe Yissacher Dov would continue doing as his father had (since Rebbe Yissachar Dov followed his father's ways regarding all aspects of the chassidus). Surprisingly, Rebbe Yissachar Dov crossed out one of the names, implying they shouldn't give him money anymore. The *gaba'im* asked for an explanation, and he replied, "He isn't poor. He doesn't need *zedakah*. My father knew that too. This man once made a *machlokes* with my father, and my father wanted to uproot any negative feelings towards him, so he would send him a monthly stipend. But he never harmed me; I have no negative feelings towards him. There is no reason for me to continue supporting him."

how did she receive the message? How did Hashem command her to support Eliyahu?

The Chofetz Chaim answers that a human being communicates his will through letters or through speech, but Hashem uses various methods of communications. One is by planting a thought and desire into a person's heart. He thinks it's his own idea, but it is Hashem speaking to him, telling him what he should do.

As Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* taught on the *pasuk*, רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום (Mishlei 19:21). 'עצת ה', Hashem's plan, היא תקום, will always emerge, רבות מחשבות בלב איש, through the many thoughts in man's heart.

The Chofetz Chaim explains that Hashem gave the widow a desire to support Eliyahu, and in this way, הנה צייתי שם, "I commanded a widow woman to support you."

### World Events

Another way Hashem speaks with us is through current events.

There was a Yid who moved to China for business. Once, when he was visiting Europe, he made a stop at the Chofetz Chaim's *zt'l*.

"How are our brothers in China faring?" the Chofetz Chaim asked.

"There are almost no Yidden there," the merchant replied. "There are millions of goyim, but only a handful of Yidden, and they are all very weak in their Yiddishkeit."

The Chofetz Chaim gave him his *sefer Nidchei Yisrael* and said, "I wrote this *sefer* specifically for the Yidden who live in such places, distant from Torah centers. When you go back to China, bring this *sefer* to them. It will be good for them."

The Chofetz Chaim asked, "And what else is new in China?"

"There was a tsunami," the man replied. "Thousands of people died."

"Oy, we must do *teshuvah*," the Chofetz Chaim exclaimed.

"Why must we do *teshuvah*?" the merchant asked. "As I told you, there are almost no Yidden in China. Only goyim died. The catastrophe was for them, not for us."

The Chofetz Chaim replied with a *mashal*,

"Many people gathered in a hall to listen to speeches. Most of the audience was goyim, and there were just a few Yidden. The speaker at the podium was talking in Yiddish. Who was he speaking to?"

"Obviously he was speaking to the Yidden," the merchant

replied.

"Why do you say so? I told you that most of the audience were goyim, and there were only a few Yidden there."

"Yes, but goyim don't understand Yiddish. If he spoke in Yiddish, he was speaking to the Yidden."

"Exactly," the Chofetz Chaim agreed. "Similarly, when Hashem does something in the world, who is Hashem speaking to? Do you think He was speaking to the gentiles who don't pay attention to Hashem's messages? He's speaking in a language that Yidden understand, because they believe that everything is from Hashem, for a purpose, and contains a message. Hashem was speaking to the Yidden!"<sup>8</sup>

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8. When a person is tested, he should realize that this is also a means of communication. Hashem is telling him, "I'm testing you, please pass this test."

A person said to his rebbe, "Rebbe, I have an anger issue."

The rebbe gave him some advice to help him control his anger. Among the counsels, the rebbe told him to always speak serenely, as the Ramban writes in his famous letter, "You should always speak serenely (בנחת) to everyone at all times, and this will save you from anger..." And he advised

**Bilaam Didn't Heed the Messages**

When a person tries to do an *aveirah* and he fails, this

is also Hashem calling to him, telling him to refrain. As the Meor Einayin (*Likutim* כי ב"ה ה' צור עולמים)

him to be *mevater*, and let the other person have his way. Then, the rebbe said, "I want to speak with you some more about this, only there is an urgent issue I must speak with my *gabai* about. It will only take a few moments, and then we can continue our conversation. Please wait outside, and when I finish come in. The *gabai* may tell you that visiting hours are over, and the door is closed for the day, but don't pay attention to him. Just tell him that I said you can come in."

The *gabai* came in to the rebbe's room, and the rebbe told him, "The man who just left the room is trying to overcome his anger. I want you to get him angry... Let's see if he can control himself."

The rebbe said these words loud. From outside the room, the man heard it, and he knew that the *gabai* is going to test him.

The *gabai* left the rebbe's room and locked it. The man said, "The rebbe said I should return to speak with him as soon as you finish speaking with the rebbe."

"I'm sorry. The door is closed. You can speak with the rebbe tomorrow night at eight. Come early, so you will be first in line."

The man was tempted to get angry, but he knew that this was a test. He knew that the *gabai* was purposely trying to anger him, to test him. So he spoke serenely, "Please, ask the rebbe. I know that he wants me to return." "Sorry. I can't do that. Even I'm not going back today."

The man was tempted to push the large *gabai* aside and knock on the rebbe's door, but then he remembered the rebbe's counsel to be *mevater*. "O. K." the man said. "You win. I'll come back tomorrow."

Just then the rebbe opened the door, and said, "You told me that you have a problem with anger, but I see you handle matters very well."

The man replied, "Perhaps the Rebbe doesn't know it, but the walls of the rebbe's room aren't insulated, and when the rebbe speaks loudly, his voice can be heard in the outer room. I heard you tell the *gabai* to test me. I knew it was a test, so it was easy to control my anger."



writes, “Sometimes a *rasha* wants to commit a sin, and there are several matters that prevent him. This is also Hashem. He conceals Himself in those hindrances, hoping the person will do *teshuvah*... Nevertheless, man has free will...”<sup>9</sup>

When Bilaam was on his way to curse the Jewish nation he was prevented time and again. First, his donkey walked off the road, then it crushed Bilaam's foot into the wall, and then it sat down on the road, refusing to go further.

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* notes that the words "*malach Hashem*" are written ten times in these *pesukim*, because the angel tried to stop Bilaam ten times. Bilaam should have thought

about these matters and realized that Hashem was stalling him.

The Kedushas Levi writes, "Why was the *malach* angry with Bilam for hitting the donkey...? Wasn't Bilam correct for hitting the donkey, to steer it on the right path...?"

"[The answer is]: When something surprising happens to the G-d fearing, they understand that Hashem is telling them how to proceed. If they're in the middle of doing something, and suddenly something unusual occurs, they realize that Hashem is telling them to stop. So when Bilaam encountered something unusual —his donkey sitting down on the road, which is something it never did

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The rebbe said, "For now on, whenever you are tempted to become angry, remember you are being tested. Heaven is watching to see whether you will pass the test. If you remember this, you will be able to pass all tests."

9. The Meor Einayim (*Pinchas*) writes in the name of the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*, "When a *rasha* goes to do an *aveirah* in a private room, he becomes afraid, and he thinks that someone is watching him. This is the divine fear coming to him, to bring fear into his heart, so he should fear Hashem and leave the foolishness."

before...he should have thought about it and realize that Hashem wants him to return."

When Bilaam saw the *malach*, he said, חטאתי כי לא ידעתי, "I sinned [when I hit the donkey] because I didn't know [that you were standing before me]." <sup>10</sup>

The *Sefer Chassidim* (153) asks, "There is nothing wrong

with hitting a donkey. It wasn't *tzaar baalei chaim* since the donkey hadn't collapsed under its load. When Bilaam's foot was crushed against the wall, should he have refrained from hitting the donkey then, too? [The answer is] he should have understood [by the donkey's unusual behavior] that Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't want him to curse the Yidden..."<sup>11</sup>

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10. Saying חטאתי was helpful for Bilaam. The Midrash says, "Bilaam was a wise *rasha* (רשע ערום). He knew that *teshuvah* protects from punishment. Whoever sins and says, חטאתי, no *malach* can harm him" (*Yalkut Shimoni*).

The Sifsei Tzaddik writes that Bilaam wasn't repenting *leshem shamayim*; he didn't regret his bad intentions. But he admitted that he sinned, and that saved him from being punished.

The Beis Yisrael *zy'a* said that it's a mitzvah to repeat this *vort*, as it could give many *bachurim* a lot of *chizuk*.

11. The Ramosaim Tzofim (*Eliyahu Rabba* 3:8) writes that on Shabbos parashas Balak Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zy'a* explained Bilaam's sin for hitting the donkey exactly as the *Sefer Chasidim* expressed it (without knowing this explanation was already written in *Sefer Chassidim*). "After Rebbe Bunim's Shabbos afternoon nap, the Rebbe asked me to read *Sefer Chassidim* to him. I took the *Sefer Chassidim* and asked him where I should begin. He said, 'Open the *sefer*, and read wherever it opens.' I did so, and I read to him (*siman* 153). It was exactly the same lesson as he had said in the morning. He told me to stop reading, and he explained, 'The author of *Sefer Chassidim* came to me this afternoon in my sleep, and told me that I should read his *sefer*. I didn't know why. Now I understand.'

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (22:29) writes, "Bilam should have been shocked when he heard the donkey speaking.... He should have realized that it was from Hashem, to stop him from carrying out his plans. But because of his cruel and evil nature he passionately desired to go, and he didn't think about what occurred. Bilam spoke with the donkey like someone talks with a friend..."

**Or HaChaim *HaKadosh***

In honor of the Or HaChaim's *yahrtzeit*, Thursday, the 15th of Tamuz, we share the following stories:

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh's *zy'a* first residence in Eretz Yisrael was in Teveria. Once, he was at a celebration together with Reb Chaim Abulefiya *zt'l*, and the Or

HaChaim HaKadosh didn't want to eat the meat, because, "I sense an impurity in the food."

Soon afterwards it was discovered that the maid had died in the kitchen. (Initially, people thought she had fallen asleep, and they didn't realize she was dead.)

People started saying that the Or HaChaim is apparently even greater than Reb Chaim Abulefiya, because he sensed the impurity and Reb Chaim Abulefiya didn't. After this episode, the Or HaChaim left for Yerushalayim, as he was concerned for Reb Chaim Abulefiya's honor.

There are different versions to the following story. This is how Reb Mottele Slonimer *zt'l* said it:

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The Shlah writes, "If Bilaam didn't know [that a *malach* stood before him, preventing him from traveling] what was his sin [for beating his donkey]? The answer is, when a person should know or understand something, he is guilty if he doesn't know and understand. Hashem gave intelligence to mankind for this purpose; so he should know and understand. Bilaam should have understood that his donkey wasn't acting that way for nothing."

The *Or HaChaim HaKadosh* came to a certain city and he needed a place to stay for Shabbos, but he didn't know where the kashrus was reliable. He heard someone say *likavod Shabbos Kodesh* as he was preparing for Shabbos and the *Or HaChaim* was confident he could eat in that home.

That city had a very special rav, who would tell over *divrei Torah* he heard in heaven. When the townspeople finished their meal, they would hurry over to the rav's home to listen to his beautiful *divrei Torah*, which he heard in *shamayim*. Friday night, 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 *drashah*, 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."

Again, after the morning meal and after *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's the rush?" the rav asked.

The Satan explained, "Every Shabbos, the *neshamos* in Gehinom go to Gan Eden. When Shabbos is over, I bring them back to Gehinom. But I can't do that until the *Or HaChaim HaKadosh* says *Havdalah*, marking the end of Shabbos. You are prolonging *shalash seudos* with your *divrei Torah*, and that is preventing me from carrying out my mission. Please, finish the *shalash seudos* so I can send the *neshamos* back to Gehinom."

The rav didn't pay attention to him. He purposely prolonged the *shalash seudos* to help those *neshamos*.

The Satan kept returning to the rav, urging him to finish but the rav just kept ignoring him.

At one point, 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.

Why did the rav change his mind? The rav explained that anger is Gehinom itself. He knew that it wouldn't help to prolong the *shalash seudos* after he got angry. The moment was ruined, so they

may as well *bench*, daven *Maariv* and say *Havdalah*.<sup>12</sup>

Studying the holy *sefer Or HaChaim* is *mesugal* for *brachos* and *yeshuos*. It's particularly *mesugal* for bearing children. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* said that since the Or HaChaim didn't have children of his own, he placed his entire power of bearing children into the *sefer*.

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

Reb Hillel Shlesinger sought a salvation from a higher source. He took on himself to give a *shiur* once a week on *Or*

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12. Anger is Gehinom, as Chazal (*Nedarim* 21) say, "Whoever becomes angry, all forms of Gehinom rule over him."

We'll add that *machlokes* is also in Gehinom. As the Maharal (*Gur Aryeh* 16) teaches, "Why is *machlokes* more severe than all other grave sins...? *Gehinom* and *machlokes* were both created on the second day of Creation... They are bound together... Wherever there is *machlokes*, there is *Gehinom*."

*HaChayim HaKaodsh*. He bore three daughters. One daughter 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.

At a rabbinic convention, the Chofetz Chaim passed the kitchen and saw the host's daughter standing near the window, checking rice for bugs. Sometime later, the Chofetz Chaim passed the kitchen again, and saw the girl was still there, checking the rice.

"How many times do you check the rice?"

She replied, "Our relative, Reb Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz (the Chazon Ish) came to the convention, and he will be eating with us this evening. In his honor, I'm being extra careful, and I'm checking the rice twelve times."

The Chofetz Chaim was

impressed by her desire to honor Torah, and he blessed her that she should live long, always have a clear mind, and never need eyeglasses (the Chofetz Chaim realized that her eyes were weak, since she was standing near the window to catch the sunlight).

All of the Chofetz Chaim's *brachos* materialized. She never needed eyeglasses, and she lived in good health until she was *niftar* at ninety-eight years old.

She moved to Eretz Yisrael and lived in Petach Tikvah. The Chazon Ish was her *shadchan*, and she married Reb Mordchai Shraga Eiselman, but for seventeen years they were childless.

She went to her relative, the Chazon Ish, and told him that she still doesn'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 put his head down, raised it, and said, "I can't promise 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 another time, raised it, and said, "Go to the *kever* of the Or HaChaim HaKadosh."

That was in the year 5704, and it wasn't safe to go to Har HaZeisim. She told this to the Chazon Ish. He replied, "There's no other solution."

She went to the Or HaChaim's *kever* on his *yahrtzeit*, the fifteenth of Tamuz. Exactly nine months later, on the 25th of Nissan, she had a son.

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

Reb Shpraver of Brashov (author of אפרקסתא דענייא) *zt'l* was childless. His Rebbe, the Imrei Yosef of Spinka *zt'l*, told 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 Reb Shpraver's life, he bemoaned that he unfortunately forgot which piece of the *Or HaChaim* the Imrei Yosef advised him to learn.

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

In 5773 a great *rosh yeshivah* lost his eyesight. The doctors told him it was impossible for him to ever see again. 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 they discovered that the part of his brain related to eyesight began to work again. It was possible to restore his eyesight, which they did successfully.<sup>13</sup>

Reb Elyah Roth *zt'l* told the following story: The Or HaChaim HaKadosh was once a guest in the home of simple people, who excelled in the mitzvah *hachnasas orchim*. The Or HaChaim felt an aura of *kedushah* in their home, and he wanted to know the origin. "Could it be that they're hidden tzaddikim?" he

thought, but after paying closer attention, he saw they were just regular, good people.

As the Or HaChaim was contemplating on the origin of the holiness that prevailed in that home, he heard the family reminiscing about one of the guests that used to visit their home.

The Or HaChaim heard them tell the following:

From time to time, an old, wealthy man would come to their home. The family honored him immensely — as they honored all their guests — and the old person used to give precious gifts to each family member.

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13. There are many stories of people who had *yeshuos* when they made a *kabalah* to study the *sefer Or HaChaim*. The following is a story I personally am familiar with:

On their way to the Or Hachaim's gravesite a group of *yungerleit* spoke about the *segulah* of studying *Or HaChaim*. The following day I got a phone call from one of them. He said that he sells *sefarim*, and he has many *sefarim* that didn't sell — including 250 sets of *Or HaChaim* — and that caused him a financial loss. Just yesterday, he vowed to learn *Or HaChaim*, and later that day he received a call from another *sefarim* store that needs 250 sets of *Or HaChaim*...

However there was a dissention between the family and the old man. The family would serve Hashem with fervor, with hislahavus, and the old man couldn't handle it. On one of his visits, the old man said, "Why do you say *birchas hamazon* so loud? Hashem hears quiet *brachos* too. In addition, your extra zealous ways make your guests feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. They feel that they aren't as *frum* as you. In my opinion, it is wrong to say *birchas hamazon* loudly..."

The family accepted his *mussar* and they benched in silence. The old man was pleased that they listened to him, and he gave each of them another gift.

Sometime later, the old man returned, and as usual, he gave out gifts to each family member. On Friday night the family began to sing *Shalom Aleichem*, joyously and loudly...and the old man became anxious and edgy once again. "There's no reason

for all this fervor!" he said nervously. "Say it silently!" and the family obeyed. The old man gave them some more presents.

The old man showed up once again on *erev Pesach*, and distributed presents to the family members. The *baal habayis* greeted him joyfully, and invited him to the Seder. The old man replied, "I can't be at your Seder if you're going to shout and act inhumanely. I will only join you if you agree to be silent at the Seder. Do as I teach you: Keep the fervor in your heart. Don't show it on the outside."

The *baal habayis* said he'd have to ask his wife. She said, "When he stole from our children the *birchas hamazon*, I kept quiet. Then he took away our *Shalom Aleichem*, and I also forgave him. But I refuse to give away the Seder night."

The old man became angry and said, "I shouldn't have given you all those presents,

since I see that you don't listen to me."

The *baal habayis* was worried the old man would ask them to give back all the precious presents, but his wife saw things differently. She said to her husband, "Gather all the presents and give them back to him. I don't want them, and I don't want his false rebukes."

The Or HaChaim listened in astonishment, and said, "Now I understand why there's a holy aura in your house. That man was the *yetzer hara*, trying to uproot your *temimus*. The *חכמת נשים*, the wife's wisdom, *בנתה ביתה*, saved your home."

When the Or HaChaim HaKadosh *zy'a* lived in Morocco, he taught his community, "The week has six workdays. It's sufficient to work on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Leave Wednesday,

Thursday, and Friday for Torah. I guarantee that your *parnassah* won't be less because of it."

His community followed his advice, and indeed, they had *parnassah* just like before. They saw that they could spend a substantial amount of time learning Torah each week, and Hashem would support them. This went on for many years.

Then the Or HaChaim moved to Eretz Yisrael. The community in Morocco gradually began to work more, and eventually, they were back to a six day workweek.

But they admitted that that weren't earning more money. They were just as well off during the years they followed the Or HaChaim's (and the Mishnah's) counsel to *דו"י מממעט* *בעסק ועסק בתורה*, "work less and to study Torah."<sup>14</sup>

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14. Reb Shmuel Heller *zt'l* writes, "I testify that when I was a child, I heard from elder Sephardic rabbis who heard from their fathers who

saw the Or HaChaim HaKadosh when he arrive in Miron for Lag b'Omer. When he reached the bottom of the mountain that leads up to the holy *tzion*, he went off his donkey and climbed up the mountain on his hands and feet. The entire way he was moaning like an animal. He was shouting, 'How can the lowly me go to the awesome place, where Hakadosh Baruch Hu, all angels, and all souls of tzaddikim are there?!' And by the *hilulah*, he was very happy."

The Chida tells a story that happened with his Rebbe, the Or HaChaim HaKadosh: A wealthy, *rosh hakahol* (who was also friendly with government officials) once disgraced and embarrassed one of the rabbanim in his city. The Or HaChaim spoke with that rav, and advised him, for the sake of peace, to forgive the *rosh hakahol* for his unkind words. The rav replied, "You don't have to advise me about this, because the moment he spoke out against me, I already forgave him. The *Zohar* says that the sins of the Jewish people weigh heavily on the *Shechinah* and cause the *Shechinah* pain. Therefore, to save the *Shechinah* from distress, I immediately forgive those who sin against me."

The Or HaChaim praised the rav immensely for this.

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