

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Balak





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for subscription and comments

Email: **Mail@TorahWellsprings.com**

Phone: 718.484.8136

Fax on Demand: 877.843.3049

Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Balak

The Joy of Mitzvos	4
"How Good are your Tents" - the Mitzvah of being in a Beis Medrash	7
<i>Yishuv HaDaas</i>	11
<i>Emunah</i>	14
Open Your Eyes and See Hashem's Salvation	16
<i>Bitachon and Parnassah</i>	18
<i>Tefillah</i>	22
Or HaChaim HaKadosh	24

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Balak

The Joy of Mitzvos

The donkey said to Bilaam (22:28), מה עשיתי לך כי הכתני זה שלש רגלים, "What did I do to you that you hit me, שלש רגלים, three times?"

שלש רגלים alludes to the three holidays, Pesach, Shavuos, and Succos.¹ As Rashi writes, "You are trying to uproot a nation that celebrates the three *regalim* (Pesach, Shavuos, and Succos)!"

The donkey was implying, "How can you even think of uprooting the Jewish nation? They celebrate the *yomim tovim* in the Beis HaMikdash, three times a year!"

The Jewish nation performs many mitzvos. The donkey could have said something like, "How dare you try to uproot a nation that wears tefillin" and the like. What is unique about the three *regalim*?

The Kotzker Rebbe zt'l explains that during the Yerushalayim שלש רגלים was crowded, and miraculously, no one complained. As the Mishnah (*Avos* 5:5) states, ולא אמר אדם לחברו צר לי המקום שאלין בירושלים, "No one ever said, 'There's no place for me to sleep in Yerushalayim.'"

Generally, this is understood to mean that there was miraculously enough room for everyone in Yerushalayim. However,

1. Because if the pasuk solely means שלש רגלים, "three times," it would say שלשה פעמים, which is a more common way to express it. שלש רגלים alludes to the mitzvah of לרגל, to go to the Beis HaMikdash on Pesach, Shavuos, and on Succos.

the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (vol.2 234) explains that it was in fact crowded in Yerushalayim due to the millions of people who came to be *עולה לרגל*. The miracle was that no one ever complained.

As the Chasam Sofer writes, "The miracle was that no one ever complained about their cramped accommodations. They loved Hashem immensely, and Hashem planted a lot of joy in their hearts when they were in Yerushalayim. Therefore, no one ever said it was crowded. As the saying goes, 'When our love was strong [we were able to sleep on a knife's blade]'"

Now we understand why the *malach* rebuked Bilaam for trying to uproot a nation that celebrates the three *regalim*. As the Kotzker *zt'l* explains, Bilaam complained when he was in a *מקום צר*, narrow place, and felt some discomfort. That discomfort prompted him to hit his

donkey. The *malach* chastised him, "You don't compare to the Jewish nation? They are in far more cramped quarters, but they don't complain. They don't feel the difficulties because of their love for Hashem and their joy when performing the mitzvos. And look at yourself and how you react when you have some discomfort.

A king had a loyal servant who served the king with love and devotion, and the king loved him very much.

After this servant's demise, the king continued to remember his loyal servant, so he summoned the servant's grandson, as he wanted to do a favor for him. The king told him, "Sunday, come to my treasury with two large bags. Fill the bags with the treasures. You can keep whatever you take."

The grandson didn't understand why he

deserves a reward because he didn't do so much for the king. "Probably the king wants to clean out his treasury; it is too cluttered in there, so he hired me to do his work for him."

The grandson saw bars of gold and silver in the treasury, but being from a poor town, he didn't recognize their value. He thought angrily to himself, "The king isn't even paying me for this service; he's just offering me some gold and silver bars that I don't need. I will not be a fool and carry heavy bricks of gold and silver. Instead, I will gather a few golden and silver trinkets that are easy to carry."

He worked lazily, his bags remaining almost empty, when the guard came and said that it is time to leave.

The grandson threw the two lightweight bags over his shoulder and walked

out of the treasury with large strides, glad that he didn't fall for the injustice he felt was being done to him.

This *mashal* was told by Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* (with some variations), and the *nimshal* is self-understood. We are descendants of the holy *avos* Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, who served Hashem with their hearts and souls. Therefore, Hashem loves their descendants, and He granted them the treasure of Torah and mitzvos. But people think that Torah and mitzvos are chores that the King requests and they don't realize that they are treasures. Therefore, they do a few small mitzvos, here and there, but don't take the hard and heavy mitzvos. They work lazily and fail to take advantage of the treasures being offered to them.

"How Good are your Tents" - the Mitzvah of being in a Beis Medrash

It states (24:5) מִה טוֹבוֹ אֶהְלִיךְ ויעקב, "How good are your tents, Yaakov." Similarly, it says (*Bereishis* 25:27) ויעקב איש וישוב אהלים, "Yaakov was a righteous person, who sat in the tents." These *pesukim* are referring to the tents of Torah, and as the Rema m'Pano explains, the praise is for יושב אהלים, sitting in the tents. Even if one doesn't daven or learn Torah, he deserves reward just for being in the beis medrash. As the Rema m'Pano writes, גדולה היא ישיבת בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות אפילו [מבל] תורה ובלא תפילה, "It is a great deed to sit in beis haknesses and beis medrash, even without Torah and tefillah."

Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 151:1) states that if someone comes into a beis medrash for his own purpose, such as to call out someone, he shouldn't leave immediately. Rather, ישהה מעט ואחר כך יצא שהישיבה בהם, "He should stay a little and then leave, because the beis medrash is a place of tefillah."

should stay in the beis medrash for a short time and then he can leave because sitting in a beis medrash is a mitzvah. As it states, אשרי יושבי ביתך, fortunate are those who sit in Your house."

The Chareidim (פס"ו אות א) writes, "One should spend most of the day and night in the beis haknesses and beis medrash, and he will find solace and joy. As Chazal say, the batei medrash are like an orchard for tzaddikim and like a prison for *resha'im*."

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Brachos* 3.) quotes the Gemara (*Brachos* 6:), היוצא מבית הכנסת אל, "When one leaves the beis haknesses, he shouldn't take large steps," and explains that this is because by taking large steps it would appear that he is leaving a place where he doesn't want to be to go to a place of relaxation, but the opposite is true, because the beis haknesses, the place of tefillah, is *menuchah*, and

one must be happy that he is there."

Chazal (*Succah* 52:) say, אם פגע בך מנוול זה משכהו לבית המדרש, "If you are confronted with the *menuval*, the *yetzer hara*, draw him into the *beis medrash*." Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach (*Minchas Shlomo, Succah*) asks, the Gemara doesn't say to flee the *yetzer hara*, instead to drag him into the *beis hamedrash*. What is gained by that? You are still with the *yetzer hara*.

The answer is, when the *yetzer hara* is in the *beis medrash* it isn't the same *yetzer hara* as when it was outside the walls of the *beis medrash*. The *yetzer hara* has many names, and it is only called מנוול outside the *beis medrash*. In the *beis medrash*, even the *yetzer hara* is tamer.

This idea can be compared to a person stuck in a traffic jam, and gets out of the car and stands next to it. Someone tells

him, "Why did you leave your car?"

He replies, "We are anyway not going anywhere."

"True, but you can sit inside your car and enjoy the air-conditioning instead of being outside in the burning sun." This is one reason we should prefer to be in the *beis medrash*, even when we aren't accomplishing much. It is better to be there than to be exposed to the intense heat of the *yetzer hara* that is found outside the *beis medrash*.

The Baal HaTurim (*Shemos* 7:12) notes that it states מטות, staffs, twice in the Torah. One is, ויבלע מטה, אהרן את מטותם, Aharon's staff swallowed the staffs of the Egyptian sorcerers.

A second time is in *parashas Korach* (17:21) when there was an argument over who should be the *kohen gadol*. Hashem told Aharon and the *nesi'im* to

place their staffs in the Ohel Moed, "and the one whose staff blossoms is the chosen one to be the kohen gadol." It states, ומטה אהרן, בתוך מטותם, Aharon placed his staff together with the staffs of the *nesi'im* in the Ohel Moed, and only Aharon's staff blossomed. The Baal HaTurim quotes a Midrash that also this time, Aharon's staff swallowed the other staffs, ולכך לא הוציאו, פרה, "Therefore the other staffs didn't blossom."

Why was it necessary for Aharon's staff to swallow the other *nesi'im*'s staffs?

The mashgiach, Reb Meir Chadash *zt'l* answers that the nature of being in a holy place is that you will blossom there. If the staffs were in Ohel Moed, they would grow. Therefore, Aharon's staff needed to swallow their staffs.

A person that is present in the same room as a human corpse becomes *tamei*. When the Torah

discusses this halachah, it hints at the importance of studying Torah, as it states, זאת חקת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל (see *Brachos* 63: which explains that the pasuk is alluding to studying Torah with *mesirus nefesh*). The importance of learning Torah is put together with the halachah of contracting tumah in a tent to teach us that even when we aren't studying Torah, but we are in the tent of Torah, this will have a positive influence on us.

Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 105:) explain that we can learn from Bilaam's *brachos* what he truly wanted to say. He wanted to say precisely the opposite of what he said, only Hashem prevented him and turned his words around to be a blessing for the Jewish nation.

For example, when he said, מזה טובו אדהליך יעקב, he wanted to say that there shouldn't be batei midrash, *chas veshalom*.

The Ben Ish Chai *zt'l* explains that Bilaam's plan

wasn't to curse that Yidden shouldn't learn Torah, or daven, instead, they should do these deeds outside of the beis medrash. This is because Bilaam knew the incredible power of Torah and tefillah in the beis medrash.

It is told that when the Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah was old, it was hard for him to go to the beis medrash to daven, but he would go there with mesirus nefesh. His Rebbetzin asked him why he doesn't bring a minyan to his home. He replied, "When you bake a kugel, you use your old pot because its walls have a taste of all the kugels you made in the past, and you want that taste to enhance the kugels you make. The walls of the beis medrash are also saturated with tefillos, and they improve the tefillos we say there. Therefore, I prefer to daven in the beis medrash, despite the hardships involved.

The *Zohar* writes that one who speaks in the beis medrash, אין לו חלק באלקי ישראל, doesn't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael. Some say (Rav Yeiva) that the *Zohar* discusses when people speak, even when it isn't the time for tefillah. Even then, idle chatter is a great sin.

There is a more lenient opinion, as Reb Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* (*Imrei Pinchas, Seder HaYom* 60) teaches. He says the *Zohar* refers only to those times when the *chazan* is standing at the *amud* (and also on Shabbos morning before *shacharis*, because this holy time is considered part of tefillah). If we feel the need to take the more lenient view, we can, but we certainly should not talk during the tefillah. About that, Bilaam said, מה טובו אהליך יעקב.

Rashi (24:5) writes, על שראה פתחיהן שאינן מכוונים זה מול זה, when Bilaam saw that the tents of the Jewish nation weren't opened to one another, he praised them

and said, מַה טוֹבוֹ אֶהְלִיךְ יַעֲקֹב, "How good are your tents, Yaakov." The Gaon Reb Aharon Tzvi Brisk *zt'l* explains that פִּתְחֵיהֶן hints to the mouth because the mouth is one of the openings of the body. Bilaam praised them that they don't speak during the tefillah, and he said מַה טוֹבוֹ אֶהְלִיךְ יַעֲקֹב.

Yishuv HaDaas

A person was heading to his friend's home to request a loan. As he walked, he thought to himself, "Nah, he won't give me a loan. He'll chase me away, and I will be embarrassed that I even asked him."

Then he told himself, "Why am I thinking such thoughts? Maybe he will lend me money. He's a friend, after all."

But then he told himself that his first assumption was correct. His friend won't lend him the money. "But why not? I did him so

many favors; why doesn't he help me? It isn't right." His mind was full of all these disturbing, angry thoughts and feelings towards his friend, that when he reached his friend's home, he was fuming inside. As soon as his friend opened the door, he immediately blurted out, "I don't want any favors from you. Don't lend me the money. I prefer it that way," and he slammed the door shut.

His bewildered friend stood behind the closed door, completely unaware of why he was so angry and what he was talking about.

This story is just a parable to teach us that one can become angry, lose their tranquility, and can base all his information on untrue facts, a complete misunderstanding.

This is what happened to Moav. They were petrified of the Jewish nation, as it states (22:3) וַיִּירָא

מואב מפני העם מאד. They sought solutions as to how they can save themselves. They made peace with their arch enemy, Midyan, so they can join to protect themselves from the Jewish nation. But it was an illusion based on their imagination because they didn't have anything to fear. Hashem commands us (Devarim 2:9) אל תצר את מואב ואל תתגר בם מלחמה כי לא אתן לך מארצו ירשה, "Don't place an ambush on Moav and don't make a war with them, because you will not inherit his land..." They weren't going to fight against Moav.

This is the nature of imagination; it has the power to cause something unreal to appear very true, and it robs people of their *yishuv hadaas*.

Yishuv hadaas is essential. When one has a calm, rational mind, he can find solutions to his problems, and he can cope. But when one loses his peace of mind, he is liable to become

angry, get into machlokes, and act unwisely. Furthermore, without *yishuv hadaas*, he doesn't have a settled mind to learn or daven. Therefore, *yishuv hadaas* is essential.

The *Zohar* (vol.3 199:) states that the first two letters of בלק and בלעם spell בלב, confusion. The final letters spell עמלק. This is because when one is confused, one falls into the hands of Amalek. Our goal is to strive to attain *yishuv hadaas* at all times. Reb Moshe Kobriner *zt'l* wrote in a letter, "All the wealth of the world doesn't equal one moment of *yishuv hadaas*..."

The *Nesivos Shalom zt'l* (of Slonim) teaches that Haman also understood that he could only harm the Jewish nation if they lose their *yishuv hadaas*. Therefore, he sought to confuse them and to put them into a mode of panic.

As it states (*Esther* 9:24) כי המן... חשב על היהודים לאבדם והפיל

הגורל להומם ולאבדם, "Haman... thought to annihilate the Yidden, so he drew lots to confuse them and to destroy them." He first wanted להומם, to confuse them. As we explained, he wanted to create a panic and cause people to lose their *yishuv hadaas*, because he knew that then he could לאבדם, destroy them.

About Bilaam, it states (22:21), ויקם בלעם בבקר, and about Avraham it states (*Bereishis* 22:3), וישכם אברהם בבקר. Both mean that they woke up early in the morning, but there is a difference between ויקם and וישכם.

As the Lev Simchah *zt'l* (of Gur) explains; when it states וישכם it means that he *woke up*, and ויקם means he *stood up*.

About Avraham it states וישכם, "he woke up early," which means Avraham slept that night. About Bilaam it states ויקם בלעם, "Bilaam stood up," but he didn't wake up, because he was awake all night.

Avraham always maintained his *yishuv hadaas*, while Bilaam couldn't control his emotions.

Therefore, when Hashem told Avraham to make the *akeidah*, Avraham didn't lose his peace of mind, and he was able to sleep at night.

As opposed to Bilaam, who was so happy to have the opportunity to curse the Yidden, he lost his tranquil mind, and he couldn't fall asleep. Therefore, it states ויקם. He got up in the morning, but he didn't wake up because he was awake all night long.

The Lev Simchah *zt'l* (of Gur) explains that Avraham had the attribute of השתוות, which means he believed everything was for the good, and therefore, he remained calm and relaxed when good things happened to him and also when going through hardships. The knowledge

that he must slaughter his son didn't disrupt his life.

L'havdil, when Bilaam conspired to curse the Jewish nation, he was so excited with the *aveirah*, he couldn't sleep that night.

Emunah

How do we maintain our yishuv hadaas at all times? With Emunah. When we believe that Hashem is leading us in the best way, we will always be calm and collective. There is nothing to fear because Hashem is with us.

Machlokes can also cause people to lose their yishuv hadaas, but when one has emunah, it is less likely that he will fall into the web of machlokes.

The Reishis Chachmah (*Shaar Ahavah*) gives a *mashal* of a man who speaks to a king, and during his conversation, someone comes in and smacks him across the face. He didn't

respond; he remained silent. He wouldn't get involved in machlokes. He thinks: If the king sent him to hit me, what can I do? And if the king didn't send him, the king will undoubtedly punish this person for hitting me during my talk with the king. There is no reason for me to get involved.

Similarly, with the awareness that everything is from Hashem, we won't involve ourselves in disputes.

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef (*Tzafnas Paneiach, Mishpatim* ד"ה עוד י"ל ונבאר ענין (תענית אסתר) quotes this lesson from the Reishis Chachmah, and adds that this is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 16:8) שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד, "I place Hashem before me, always, because He is at my right side. I shall never falter." When I believe that Hashem is before me (as if I am in the palace, speaking to Hashem) בל אמוט, I will never falter and get involved in a machlokes.

Because ממה נפשך: If the people harming me were sent by Hashem, why should I protest? And if they came on their own, Hashem will punish them. I don't need to get involved. I can maintain my yishuv hadaas, and steer away from *machlokes*.

A *bachur* asked the Tzemech Tzedek *zt'l* of Lubavitz, "We don't see Hashem, so how do we know that He's here?"

The Tzemech Tzedek *zt'l* wrapped his hand in a towel and waved his hand all around. Then, he asked the boy, "Who is moving the towel?"

"The Rebbe's hand."

"Do you see my hand? How do you know for sure that my hand is moving the towel?"

"I don't see your hands, but I know that your hand is moving the towel."

The Rebbe replied, "Similarly, we don't see

Hashem, but we see the entire world functioning, the grass growing, animals living, people surviving, and we know that Hashem is behind it all. The life of the world testifies to Hashem who is running it."

It states (*Bamidbar* 23:23), כעת יאמר ליעקב ולישראל מה פעל א"ל. The *Divrei Yisrael zt'l* (*Modzitz*) explains that יעקב represents Yidden at a lower level, and ישראל represents when Yidden are on a higher plane (see *Or HaChaim, Bereishis* 47:28). The *pasuk* says, כעת יאמר ליעקב, Yidden at a lower level say כעת that everything happens according to the times, by chance. ולישראל, but the *tzaddikim* who are at a higher level say, מה פעל א"ל, that everything happens through Hashem's decree.

We say in the Shabbos *zemiros*, שכרו הרבה מאוד על פי פעלו, "His reward [for keeping Shabbos] is very great, according to what he does." Is the reward very great (שכרו הרבה מאוד), or is

the reward according to what he does? These two phrases seem contradictory.

The Divrei Yisrael explains that the song is discussing the reward for *emunah*. שכרו הרבה מאוד, he will receive a great reward because he believes, על פי פעלו, that everything happens על פי, by Hashem's decree.

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 67:) relates that a witch tried to take earth from under Reb Chanina's feet, because she wanted to do witchcraft (כישוף) on Reb Chanina, to harm him. Reb Chanina told her, "If you succeed in doing sorcery on me, go ahead and do so. Because it states, אין עוד מלבדו, there is no strength in the world other than Hashem's strength."

Rashi explains that he told her, "If Hashem favors me, you won't be able to harm me. And if you succeed to harm me, then that means that it came

from Hashem, and I accept it."

The Gemara asks, the word כשפים is *roshei teivos* for, כחש פמליא של מעלה, magic denies and overrides the rules of Above. So how was Reb Chanina sure that he wouldn't be harmed, even against Hashem's will?

The Gemara answers that Reb Chanina had many merits, and therefore, he had nothing to fear. Rashi explains, "Heaven will be *moser nefesh* to save him."

The Nefesh Chaim (3:12) explains that witchcraft can override the rules of nature, but it can't act contrary to Hashem's will. Reb Chanina knew that witchcraft wouldn't harm him if it isn't Hashem's decree.

Open Your Eyes and See Hashem's Salvation

It states (22:31), ויגלה את עיניו, בלעם וירא את המלאך, "Hashem opened Bilaam's eyes and

he saw the *malach*." The *malach* was there beforehand, but Bilaam didn't see it until Hashem opened his eyes.

Similarly, the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 53:14) states, הכל בחזקת סומין עד שהקב"ה מאיר את עיניהם, "Everyone is blind, until Hakadosh Baruch Hu enlightens his eyes. As it states (*Bereishis* 21:19), ויפקח אלוקים את עיניה ותרא באר מים, 'Hashem opened [Hagar's] eyes, and she saw the water-well,'" and she gave water to her ill son, Yishmael.²

The well was there beforehand, but she didn't see it until Hashem opened her eyes. We can't even see what is directly in front of our eyes if Hashem doesn't want us to see it.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* (quoted in *Sfas Emes* חקת תרנ"ט) explains that "all one's needs are always available for him, only the human eye doesn't see it. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu opens his eyes, he sees."

Yishmael needed water, and Hashem prepared it for him, only it took some time until Hagar recognized that the water was there in front of her.

The *Sfas Emes* explains that (in last week's *parashah*) Hashem instructed Moshe to speak to the stone, so that nation should see that the salvation was already there; the well and the water were already prepared. All that was necessary was for them to recognize it. This applies to all our needs.

2. Many people say this Midrash as a *segulah* to find something they lost.

It isn't just a *segulah*. The awareness that you can't see anything without Hashem's help increases your merits, and due to this awareness, Hashem will show you what you need to find.

Therefore, for the people waiting for Hashem's salvation, believe that salvation is in front of your eyes. Daven and trust in Hashem, and He will open your eyes, and Hashem's salvation will materialize.

Bitachon and Parnassah

The Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* said, "One can earn *parnassah* from dealing with sawdust and from splinters. The only condition is that he shouldn't be disgusted with this field of work because then it won't have a *brachah*."

Reb Yehudah Dinner *shlita* from Bnei Brak tells a story of someone who owned a large stock of facial masks; five years passed, and he wasn't able to sell them. Instead of making money, he was losing money on storage. He decided that he would be better off just throwing them all out. Just before he did so, the coronavirus

broke out, and everyone was searching for masks. He sold all of his masks in a short time.

Hashem is behind everything that occurs in the world, and therefore, *parnassah* can come from so many different ways.

Someone told his family, "I'm stopping to work, and I'm going to invest all my strength in Torah study and tefillah. Tomorrow, I will go to the forest with my Gemara and with my Tehillim, and I will spend a week there. I will be home in time for Shabbos. You don't have to prepare food for me, because Hashem will sustain me. I am following the path of *bitachon*."

A neighbor heard about this and scoffed at the notion. "How does he expect to get food in the forest? How does he expect to survive without work?"

The neighbor followed him into the forest, and

from afar, he heard the *baal bitachon* shout to Hashem, "Please, Hashem! I'm hungry. Send me something to eat!"

On cue, the neighbor threw him a food package. The man danced joyously and said, "Thank you, Hashem for answering my tefillos!"

This happened every day for a week. The neighbor supplied the food, and the *baal bitachon* thought that he got it directly from Hashem.

At the end of the week, the neighbor came to his home and said, "It wasn't Hashem who answered your tefillos. I was in the forest, watching you from a distance, and I threw you food packages whenever you prayed for it."

The Yid replied, "I am just as thankful to Hashem as I was before because it wasn't you who sent me the food packages; it was Hashem. Hashem gave you

the idea to follow me into the forest and throw food packages to me, so I could be sustained. That is how Hashem arranged *parnassah* for me this week. But it was from Him, and not from you."

It states (*Avos* 4:12), הו"י מומעט בעסק ועסוק בתורה, "Work less and study Torah." If you trust in Hashem, you can work less, and Hashem will support you.

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* relates that when the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh was rav in Morroco, he told his community that they don't have to work six days a week. It is sufficient to work the first three days of the week (Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday). The end of the week (Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday), they can devote themselves to Torah. The Ohr HaChaim promised them that they wouldn't lose money because of this.

They followed his counsel, and it was very successful. They did not

have less money than before because of it.

Obviously, when one devotes three days a week to study Torah, he will become a different person, enriched with *yiras Shamayim* and good *middos*, and that's what happened to this community in Morocco.

A few years later, the Ohr HaChaim moved to Eretz Yisrael, and the people in Morocco gradually returned to their old customs of working six days a week. They thought this would increase their income, but they discovered that they had the same as in the past when they spent

three days a week studying Torah.

They saw that their rebbe's counsel was correct: Studying Torah didn't reduce their *parnassah*.³

The Meshech Chachmah (*Devarim* 10:20) describes different kinds of trusts, *bitachon*: One is someone who trusts that the government will help him.

Another kind of *bitachon* is a wife who trusts that her husband will support her.

The third kind of *bitachon* is the trust children have in their parents.

All these forms of *bitachon* exist by Hashem

3. The Radak (*Tehillim* 145:17) writes, "Hashem gives all animals *parnassah* in a צדק וישר, correct and proper way. Although animals prey on other animals— such as cats, lions, bears, leopards, and other animals that eat other animals [for their *parnassah*], as well as certain birds that eat other birds – nevertheless, this is all צדק, right and correct, because when these animals were alive, Hashem supplied for them, too, the foods that they needed. And when they were destined to die, it was decreed that they should die in a way that will grant pleasure [and *parnassah*] for other animals."

because Hashem is our father, our king, and we can trust that He will help us.

Hashem wants to help us more than we want to be helped because Hashem feels our pain more than we do. And Hashem has the ability to save us. When a person thinks about these matters, he will attach his heart to Hashem, as we have the mitzvah *וּבו תִּדְבֹק*, and he won't have any worries "because he is attached to the One who knows everything that he lacks."

The son of Reb Refael Bliner, a Lubavitzer chassid, took ill. He came to the Tzemech Tzedek and asked the Tzemech Tzedek to pray for his child.

The Rebbe replied, *טראכט גוט וועט זיין גוט*, "Think positive, and things will turn out well."

The chassid replied, "So the Rebbe should think positive thoughts about

my son, that he will live, that he will recover, etc. The Rebbe's positive thoughts will certainly help my son, but what can my positive thoughts accomplish?"

The Tzemech Tzedek replied that a positive thought helps, and one doesn't have to be a Rebbe to accomplish that.

This counsel is part of the concept of *bitachon*. Think positively, trust that Hashem will help you, and it will be so.

If we were to praise our holy *avos*, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, we wouldn't know where to begin and where to finish. There is so much to say, and there is even more that we don't even know. Nevertheless, in the *brachah* *וְלֹא אָרְבָּה עוֹלָם* we request that Hashem answer our tefillos, *וּבְעֶבֶר אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁבָטְחוּ בְךָ*, in the merit that our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov had *bitachon* in Hashem. The Shem

MiShmuel (תרע"ה Miketz) learns from this the great merit of having *bitachon*. It is an extremely special service before Hashem.

Tefillah

The *parashah* begins by describing the immense fear that befell the nations as Klal Yisrael approached the outskirts of Eretz Yisrael, as it states, ויגר מואב מפני העם, "Moav was afraid of the nation."

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

The strength of the Jewish nation at that time, and in all generations, is their *tefillos*. The countries of the world recognized that and therefore were very afraid of the Jewish nation.

On the *passuk*, וירא בלק בן צפור את כל אשר עשה ישראל לאמרי, "Balak saw everything that Yisrael did to Emori" the Trisker Magid *zt'l* explains that אמורי means prayer. Balak saw that everything the Jewish nation does is because of אמורי, their speech, their prayers to Hashem. The *passuk* continues, ויגר מואב מפני העם. ויגר refers to the Yidden who are on a lower level. Moav was afraid of them, too, because Moav knew that even they have the power of *tefillah*.

Similarly, the Noam Elimelech *zt'l* writes, "Balak understood that the Jewish people could accomplish whatever they desire with words. As *Chazal* say, 'A tzaddik decrees and Hashem complies' (*Moed*

Kattan 16). This is the explanation of the words, וירא את כל, Balak understood, אשר עשה ישראל, what Yisrael accomplishes, באמורי, is through their prayers."⁴

One of Bilam's *brachos* was, "מי מנה עפר יעקב, "who can count the earth of Yaakov?!" The Be'er Maim Chaim *zt'l* explains that every person is comprised of four

elements: fire, water, wind, and earth. The earth element (עפר) in man draws a person towards feeling down, depressed, and lazy. A happy person can pray with *kavanah*, but it's very hard for him to concentrate on his prayers when one is sad or lazy. The earth (עפר) element in mankind is, therefore, one of the primary detriments to

4. In last week's *parashah*, Klal Yisrael requested from Edom to let them pass through their country to reach Eretz Yisrael. Edom didn't grant them permission and also issued a warning that they will attack if Bnei Yisrael dares to trespass on their country.

At that time, Edom sent the following message to Bnei Yisrael, "אתם מתגאים בקול שהורישכם אביכם, "You are proud of the voice your forefathers bequeathed you"... ואני אצא במה שהורישני אבי, "I will come against you with the power that 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? How will his sword combat the power of *tefillah*?

Rebbe Hershel of Zidichov explains, Edom said, 'אתם מתגאים בקול, 'you are proud of your voice...' You have *gaavah* because of the miracles you accomplish with *tefillah*. And when you have *gaavah* then the power of the sword might be greater. For the essence of *tefillah* is humility; the acknowledgment that we can't do anything without Hashem. However, if you have *gaavah*, your *tefillos* aren't perfect. Therefore, Edom thought that he could combat them with his sword.

tefillah. The Gemara says, "Woe to the beauty that is buried in earth" (*Brachos* 5:). The Be'er Mayim Chaim *zy'a* explains, Woe to the beautiful *tefillah* that is ruined and buried due to the earth element, which is laziness and sadness.

Nevertheless, Bilam blessed the nation, *מי מונה עפר*, "Who can count the earth of Yaakov." This means that even those *tefillos* said with depression and laziness, who can count them! Who recognizes just how precious they are to Hashem? Even those weak *tefillos* accomplish so much!

Bilam also prayed, *תמות נפשי מות ישרים*, "Let me die the death of the righteous [Jews]" (23:10). It seems that this *tefillah* was also answered (to an extent) because the Mishnah (*Sanhedrin* 10:2) lists four people who don't have a portion in Olam HaBa: Bilam, Doeg, Achitofel, and Geichazi. Bilam is the only goy on this list; the other

three were Yidden. What merit did Bilam have that he should be counted together with Yidden? It was because of this prayer. We learn a *kal vechomer* from this that if Bilam's prayers had an effect, certainly our *tefillos* are very powerful, and we should appreciate the power of our *tefillos*.

Or HaChaim HaKadosh

The Or HaChaim Hakadosh's *yahrtzeit* is (this Friday) the 15th of Tamuz. Here we will discuss some stories of this holy tzaddik and praises of his holy *sefarim*.

As we wrote before, the Or HaChaim lived in Morocco and Eretz Yisrael. He settled in Teveria. He was once invited to a meal together with Reb Chaim Abulefiya *zt'l*. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh didn't want to eat anything, saying, "I feel that there's *tumah* in this house."

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

After this happened, the Or HaChaim left for Yerushalayim and settled there, in honor of Reb Chaim Abulefia.

There are different versions to the following story, and we will tell it as Reb Mottele Slonimer *zt'l* would say it:

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh came to a particular city, and he needed a place to stay for Shabbos, but he didn't know where the kashrus was reliable. He heard someone say *lekavod Shabbos kodesh* when he was preparing for Shabbos, and the Or HaChaim felt

confident that he could eat in that home.

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

Friday night after the *seudah*, the Or HaChaim HaKadosh's host brought the Or HaChaim to the rav's home to hear his *divrei Torah*. At one point in the middle of the rav's speech, the Or HaChaim corrected him.

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

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

During *shalosh seudos*, the Satan appeared to the

rav and said, "Finish *shalosh seudos* quickly. It's late."

Every Shabbos *neshamos* in Gehinom leave Gehinom and go to Gan Eden. When Shabbos is over, I must return these *neshamos* to Gehinom. But I have to wait until the Or HaChaim HaKadosh says *havdalah*, as that marks the end of Shabbos. Until then, the *neshamos* can remain in Gan Eden. You're prolonging the *shalosh seudos* with your *divrei Torah*, and the Or HaChaim isn't saying *havdalah*. This is preventing me from carrying out my mission. So, please finish *shalosh seudos* so I can do my job."

After hearing the Satan's explanation, the rav wanted to stretch out *shalosh seudos* even longer, so he could help the *neshamos* stay in gan Eden a bit longer.

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

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

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

Why did the rav change his mind? The rav explained that his anger lit the fire of Gehinom,⁵ so he knew that it wouldn't help to prolong *shalosh seudos*. So, they might as well *bench*, *daven Maariv* and say *havdalah*.

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

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

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* said that since the Or HaChaim didn't have his own children, he placed his entire power of bearing children into the *sefer Or HaChaim*. Therefore, studying this *sefer* is *mesugal* for bearing children.

The son of Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz took ill, and his father accepted upon 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 דעניא) *zt'l* didn't have any children, and his Rebbe, the Imrei Yosef of Spinka *zt'l*, advised him to learn a certain *vort* from the Or HaChaim, as a *segulah* to have children. He studied that piece every day until he had a child.

Towards the end of Reb Shpraver's life, he lamented the fact that he 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*."

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

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

When one of the daughters was nine years old, she went to the doctor complaining of a cold. The doctor diagnosed her with diphtheria and immediately brought her into the operating room to save her life. (At that time, there was a diphtheria epidemic in Yerushalayim, and three girls from her class were already *niftara* from this disease.) Reb Hillel ran to the yeshiva of Harav Dushinsky and told the *rosh yeshiva* of his daughter's situation. Rav Dushinsky interrupted his *shiur* and the entire yeshiva said *Tehillim* for Reb Hillel's daughter.

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

nishmas the Or HaChaim every week before Shabbos.

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

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

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

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

She replied that she checks the rice twelve times. The Chofetz Chaim expressed his surprise that she checks the rice so many

times, so she explained that her relative, the Chazon Ish, will be eating with them, so she wants to be sure that the food will be at the highest standard of kashrus, in honor of the Chazon Ish.

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

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

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

Sixteen years passed since her wedding, and they were still childless. She came to the Chazon Ish, together with the Chazon Ish's Rebbetzin, and expressed her distress 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 lowered his head into his hands, and when he raised his head, he said, "I can't promise you that."

She said, "I was an orphan, and you were my *shadchan*. Now you must

take responsibility for the *shidduch*."

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

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

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

The hospital staff was shocked by the miracle. In those days, if a woman didn't have a child for

sixteen years, it was impossible for her ever to bear children. Because of their excitement, a nurse accidentally dropped the child, and the child's life was in danger for several months. In the end, the child recovered and lived a long life.

In 5773 a great *rosh yeshivah* lost his eyesight, and doctors told him it was impossible for him ever to 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. This time, the doctors discovered that the part of his brain connected to eyesight began to work again, which meant it was possible to restore his eyesight, and they succeeded in doing so.

One year, a day after the Or HaChaim's *yahrtzeit*, someone I know called me to tell me the salvation he

had after accepting on himself to study the Or HaChaim's commentary. For *parnassaah*, he sells *sefarim*, and he had 250 sets of *Or HaChaim*, plus several other *sefarim*, and he was having a hard time selling them. This was causing him a financial loss. On the *yahrtzeit*, he traveled with some friends to the Or HaChaim's *kever*, and they were discussing how studying *Or HaChaim* is *mesugal* for *yeshuos*. He immediately made a kabbalah that he will study *Or HaChaim*, and the salvation came early the next morning. Someone called him and said that he needs to buy many *sefarim*. His first order was 250 sets of *Or HaChaim*!

Studying *Or HaChaim* is also *mesugal* for *teshuvah*.

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

And who is greater than the gaon, Reb Meir Arik *zt'l*, who would study the entire commentary of the Or HaChaim, each week? He related that the first time he finished the whole *sefer*, he felt like a new person.

Zechuso yagein aleinu!