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Sephardic Shabbaton

The Annual Sephardic Shabbaton will B'ezrat Hashem take place in West Orange July 9-10, Parshat Matot-Masei, and Rav Darmoni will be coming. Space is limited, so please [RSVP](#) as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please contact Mark Nakash at 917-754-2217 or MarkNakash@gmail.com.

Rav Korn in Teaneck

You are invited to an evening honoring the memory of Rabbanit Taube Korn a'h, to be held at Congregation Bnai Yeshurun, 641 West Englewood Ave, Teaneck NJ, Monday June 28 (16 Tamuz). Mincha at 7:30 pm to be followed by a shiur delivered by her husband, Rav Yitzchak Korn: "A LOOK AT PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL MOURNING AS THE THREE WEEKS COMMENCE".

Chug in Camp Morasha

There will be a weekly Tuesday night chug, at Camp Morasha, with R' Chanan Bina at 10:30 PM (9:30 camp time), starting June 29. For more details call 917-514-5438 or email cbina.yna@gmail.com.

Five Towns Melava Malkas for the Summer!

Starting this week - Bring friends from any Yeshivah.
9:45-11:00 Basketball/Swimming
11:00 BBQ/Dvar Torah
It's going to be at 11 Manor Lane, in Lawrence
The Melava Malka will not be every week, and will be weather permitting. Call 516-318-1207 to check.

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HaRav Nebenzahl on Parshat Balak

HaRav Nebenzahl asks that his Divrei Torah are not read during Tefillah or the Rabbi's sermon



Printer Friendly Sicha

"BILAAM'S TRUE CHARACTER"

On a number of occasions we have discussed how we cannot begin to comprehend the greatness of the various personalities that appear in Tanach. Even those who may appear to us as evil, possessed a certain degree of greatness. Chazal tell us that when speaking of those who have forfeited their share in the World to Come, we are not permitted to extend beyond what has already been said of them, when it comes to Bilaam, however, we are permitted to say as many negative things about him as we please. Certainly what we say must be rooted in the words of Chazal, yet when speaking of Bilaam we need not worry that we are speaking negatively of a good person.

Bilaam certainly was a great man, for Chazal (Sifri) deduce from the pasuk: "Never again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moshe" (Devarim 34:10), that in Israel there has never been anyone like Moshe, but among the nations there was. The prophet of the other nations who was on the level of Moshe was Bilaam. It would be ludicrous to even think that Bilaam was really equivalent to Moshe in all aspects. Moshe was the holy of holies and Bilaam was the total opposite, yet from a certain perspective Bilaam had a degree of greatness that was equivalent to that of Moshe Rabeinu.

My Rebbe, the Avi HaEzri Shlit"a explained the above-mentioned Sifri as follows: Hashem told Miriam and Aharon that they were incorrect in thinking that they were on Moshe's level: "If there shall be prophets among you, in a vision shall I, Hashem, make Myself known to him; in a dream shall I speak with him. Not so is My servant Moshe; in My entire house he is the trusted one. Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles" (Bamidbar 12:6-8). Other prophets receive their prophecy in a vision, with riddles. The Rambam explains that Hashem comes to the prophet in a dream and the prophet relays to us his own interpretation of this dream. It is possible for two prophets to have the same dream and describe it differently, similar to two

people looking at the same picture or the same view and describing it in different terms.

The same ray of light when shining on green pane of glass will appear green on the other side and when shining on a blue pane of glass will appear blue. The prophecies are described based on each prophet's capabilities and viewpoint. Moshe Rabeinu is an exception to this rule. Hashem spoke to Moshe Rabeinu in a very clear and precise manner, it was "in a clear vision and not in riddles". Moshe Rabeinu recorded the word "Bereishit" because that is what Hashem instructed him to do, the same is true for every word in the Torah. Moshe not only was told precisely what to write in the Torah, but was instructed verbatim what to say to the Jewish people: "So shall you say to the house of Jacob, and relate to the children of Israel" (Shmot 19:3).

In this area, Bilaam was on the level of Moshe Rabeinu. The prophecy Bilaam received was also clear and precise "Hashem put an utterance in Bilaam's mouth, and said 'Go back to Balak, and thus shall you say'" (Bamidbar 23:5). The reasons for Bilaam meriting such prophecy, however, are the polar opposite of why Moshe Rabeinu did. Using our example of the light shining through the pane of glass, Moshe can be compared to a clear glass. Whatever Hashem tells him will be precisely what the Jewish people will be told. There is not a thread of any personal bias "in My entire house he is the trusted one" (Bamidbar 12:7). Perhaps Moshe is not told anything in riddles in order that the Jewish people not accuse him of misinterpreting the riddle. The people must realize that if Moshe says "you shall not cook a kid in the milk of its mother" (Shmot 23:19), then that is what the Torah means - and Moshe Rabeinu is not mistakenly transmitting "chalav" rather than "chelev" (also spelled "chet", "lamed", "bet" - meaning non-kosher fat). The Torah as we have it, is precisely as Hashem dictated to Moshe.

The Avi HaEzri Shlit"א explained that Bilaam also received his prophecy word for word. The difference between Moshe and Bilaam is that whereas Moshe can be compared to a totally clear pane of glass, Bilaam can be compared to a pane of glass that is completely black. If Bilaam were spoken to in riddles, no blessings would have emanated from him, for he would not have interpreted any vision for the good of the Jewish people. One on the level of Bilaam must be told in no uncertain terms what to say such as: "How goodly are your tents o Jacob, your dwelling places, o Israel" (Bamidbar 24:5). Chazal tell us regarding Bilaam's blessings: "All of Bilaam's blessing were eventually transformed into the curse, except for synagogues and study houses as it is stated: 'And Hashem your G-d transformed Bilaam's curse into a blessing for you, because Hashem your G-d loved you' (Devarim 23:6), the verse says 'curse', not 'curses'(Sanhedrin 105b). With the exception of Bilaam's blessings became curses. The reason the blessings eventually became curses was that even when instructed word for word how to bless the Jewish people, his thoughts were interwoven with curses and the curses took effect. The blessing of "ma tovu ohalecha", blessing the synagogues and study houses, was so strong that his thoughts could not ruin it. Bilaam is a pane of glass that is completely black that no light can emanate from, therefore for any good to shine through, he must be instructed word for word what to say.

We should not for a moment think that Bilaam was really on par with Moshe Rabeinu, yet some degree of greatness he did possess. Bilaam describes himself as "who knows the knowledge of the Supreme One" (Bamidbar 24:16). Chazal ask: "'The one who knows the knowledge of the Supreme One!, now Bilaam did not know what was on his animal's mind, could he possibly know the mind of the Supreme One!?" (Sanhedrin 105b). Chazal (Sanhedrin 105b) describe in great detail the dispute he had with the donkey and how the donkey was victorious every step of the way - yet he claimed to have "daat elyon"! Despite Bilaam's shortcomings, Chazal tell us that Bilaam did have "daat elyon" - he knew the precise moment when Hashem was angry and he planned to curse the Jewish people at precisely that moment.

Bilaam had tremendous secrets revealed to him, nothing short of our upcoming redemption, may it come speedily in our day. He prophesies: "A star has issued from Jacob and a scepter-bearer has risen from Israel, and he shall pierce the nobles of Moav and undermine the children of Shet" (Bamidbar 24:17). His tremendous knowledge and vision, however, did not play any role in his personality. He knew of all these great secrets, yet in the end he was killed in the war against Midian and has no share in the world to come. In the book of Yehoshua, Bilaam is referred to as a "kosem", a sorcerer, the Gemara says: "A sorcerer?, why he was a prophet!, R' Yochanan said: at the beginning he was a prophet, but at the end a sorcerer" (Sanhedrin 106a). He lost all his prophetic powers, for they were only external clothing, they had no influence on him.

The Midrash states "if one were to tell you there is wisdom amongst the nations then believe them; if, however, one were to tell you there is Torah among the nations do not believe them" (Midrash Eicha). There are many non-Jews who are well versed in Tanach ("Bible"), but the Bible is not their Torah. The wisdom of their Torah is just that - simply wisdom, it is not their guiding force in life. We are forbidden to simply view the Torah as a source of wisdom, it is our guide ("moreh", from the same root as Torah)!

For Bilaam, the Torah is a tremendous source of knowledge. He knows what already happened, and what will happen in this world and the next. Bilaam actually desires a share in the next world: "May my soul die the death of the upright, and may my end be like this" (Bamidbar 23:10). Bilaam wanted to die the deaths of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, but to live like Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov? That did not interest him! To use the Torah as his life's guide? That he had no desire for!

Observing the dictates of the Torah should not only bring about an improvement in our actions, but in our character traits as well. If learning and observing the Torah does not accomplish, this then there is something amiss with the way in which we are learning. We are perhaps viewing the Torah as knowledge and wisdom rather than as Torah, a guide to life. The Torah must bring about an improvement in our character.

I recently saw a sign posted stating that one should be careful in a particular situation

not to take what is someone else's for it is forbidden to steal. What a terrible state we are in that someone has to hang up a sign that it is forbidden to steal! We have already been told at Har Sinai that we cannot steal. The Rav (HaRav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach) zt"l once told me that even in situations where the precise halacha permits stealing from a non-Jew, one should not do so. Stealing, even if permissible, is an action that corrupts one's soul. One should not only weigh whether or not this is halachically permitted, but whether it is good for one's character. Stealing from a non-Jew, even in cases when permitted, can eventually lead to stealing from Jews.

In addition to stealing being a corrupting influence, the Sma"g offers an additional reason why one should not steal from a non-Jew. The ultimate redemption will be a source of Kiddush Hashem, as it says "I will sanctify My great Name that is desecrated among the nations, that you have desecrated among them" (Yechezkel 36:23). The redemption will take place in any event, but if the Jewish people are perceived as people who steal from non-Jews, the other nations will claim that Hashem redeemed a nation of thieves. The redemption, rather than being a Kiddush Hashem, will G-d forbid be a source of chilul Hashem. The same can apply to deceiving a non-Jew, which the Rambam says can destroy one's soul. It does not take much to see how corrupt one can get, when it begins with stealing from non-Jews, from the state, or anything else.

A few days ago someone called me up, I do not know who she is. She told me that she was nineteen years old but had the appearance of being younger. The question she asked me was whether she was permitted to use a youth card (a discounted price for those under the age of eighteen) when riding the bus. What did she actually think? Does it say anywhere on the card that the price is based on one's physical appearance? If the bus cards were given out based on one's appearance then she would be permitted to ride as one under eighteen, although I cannot say this for sure, perhaps it is only she and no one else who views herself as looking younger. Is the fact that one appears young sufficient reason for using a youth ticket? She proceeded to argue the point with me and claimed that a "chareidi" woman told her it was fine. I do not know what defines the woman as "chareidi" (G-d fearing) she certainly is not "chared", fearing, of Egged (the bus company). She did not accept my ruling, claiming that I was too "machmir". These "chareidim" are terrible!

The Chafetz Chaim came along and stated that it was forbidden to speak "loshon hara", another Rav rules that it is forbidden to steal, what will they think of next? The religious people will come with more and more "chumrot", stringencies. The current situation is intolerable! This same young woman proceeded to ask me another question. Her mother had a monthly bus pass, is she permitted to use her mother's card? I asked her if Egged would approve of this to which she answered they would not, but perhaps they would not find out. In our generation the situation is even worse than that. I am of the opinion that we must write as one of the conditions in the Ketubah that a man must not murder his wife - another "chumra" of the religious! This is not only a question of one's character traits, but transgressing actual Torah prohibitions. The violence, stealing, and other things that go on today are intolerable.

In this week's haftarah Micha says "My people, hear, now what Balak, king of Moav, schemed, and what Bilaam son of Beor answered him, and all the events from Shittim to Gilgal - in order to recognize the righteous acts of Hashem".

"You ask with what shall I approach Hashem, humble myself before G-d on high? Shall I approach Him with burnt-offerings, or with calves in their first year? Will Hashem be appeased by thousands of rams or with tens of thousands of streams of oil? Shall I give over my firstborn to atone for my transgression, or the fruit of my belly for the sin of my soul?". "He has told you, o man, what is good! what does Hashem require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your G-d" (Micha 6:5-8).

At first glance it is hard to find a connection between these psukim, why the juxtaposition between a description of what Balak and Bilaam did, instructions for how to bring sacrifices, and the command to have good character? Perhaps we can offer the following explanation. The prophet starts off by telling us that we should hear what Balak schemed, what did he wish to do? To, G-d forbid, destroy and curse the Jewish people. We must also remember what Bilaam answered which was that Balak must "Build for me here seven altars and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams" (Bamidbar 23:1) - this is the way for Balak to succeed in attaining his goal.

In fact, Balak did not succeed, simply building altars was not the way "to recognize the righteous acts of Hashem". Perhaps Balak did not succeed because Bilaam advised him to bring burnt-offerings or calves in their first year. Perhaps one or seven cows and rams were insufficient for "Will Hashem be appeased by thousands of rams or with tens of thousands of streams of oil?". Bilaam attempted seven more cows and rams, seven more, and more all to no avail. Perhaps "I shall give over my firstborn to atone for my transgression". According to one opinion, even though Balak did not do so, Misha, a subsequent king of Moav, actually sacrificed his firstborn (Taanit 4a).

Hashem is not looking for any of this! What does Hashem wish from you? To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your G-d". Bilaam's character is the antithesis of what is written in the pasuk. The Mishna tells us: "an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a proud soul, mark the disciples of Bilaam the wicked" (Pirkei Avot 5:19). We see Bilaam's "nefesh rechava" in his quest for more money "If Balak will give me his houseful of silver and gold" (Bamidbar 22:18) - he feels that he deserves this. One whose character is filled with "asot mishpat" "doing justice" does not demand more than what is the accepted payment, he does not want one penny more than he deserves. For Bilaam, who had a "nefesh rechava", there is no limit.

Does Bilaam really need all this money? Presumably Balak was not one of the more modest people in the world, had he only filled half his house with gold and silver it would have met Bilaam's needs. Let us assume for a moment that Bilaam does deserve all this money, what does he need it for? This is the "nefesh rechava", unlimited desires.

We were all given desires for a purpose. Hashem gave us the desire to eat, to enable us

to strengthen our body. Hashem implanted in us the desire to sleep when we are tired in order that we gather more strength. Desires are what sustains the world. In addition, it would be difficult to fulfill Mitzvot such as enjoying the Shabbat, rejoicing on the Yom Tov, and partaking in a Seudat Mitzvah if one did not have natural desires.

It is difficult for us to measure exactly how much use of these desires and instincts is necessary for us to survive. The Beit Yoseph claimed that he had a "magid meisharim", an angel who would chastise him when he even ate a single cucumber that was unnecessary. We are not on this level, we do not have an angel appear to us every time we eat an extra cucumber. In addition, I feel that we are not on the level to lead lives of "You shall eat bread and salt; you shall drink water by measure" (Pirkei Avot 6:4), we lack the strength required for this. If we were to follow the dictate of, we would not only end up fulfilling the continuation of the Mishna: "you shall sleep on the ground", but we would also sleep on our "shtender". We cannot measure exactly how much food we should eat, but in my opinion a student in the Yeshiva should eat what is healthy and satisfying. Our body needs what it needs, perhaps because we cannot be exact one should eat more than what he needs but within reason.

The Rashbam explains that the reason the Torah prohibited eating a kid with its mother's milk is to insure that one will not desire everything this world has to offer in one shot. We actually see that this prohibition of eating milk and meat together helps us exercise restraint. If we recently partook of meat, we must wait a few hours prior to having milk. We also must always check that we are using the proper dishes. The same may be said of other Mitzvot relating to eating and drinking. Before a Jew eats he must first ask himself whether or not this food is permitted, has he davened yet, is today a fast day or not, is he now outside the Sukkah, or is this item kosher for Pesach. These prohibitions help restrain ourselves from trying to grab everything this world has to offer with no limit.

There is plenty of food one can eat within the confines of Glatt Kosher. I underscore to eat not to grab without end. There was once a store in Yerushalayim with a sign posted "Mizlala kasher" "kosher glutton house". The expression does not ring well with me. A kosher restaurant ("misada") is one thing, Kosher leMehadrin is even better, but a "Mizlala"! This is what the Ramban refers to as "naval birshut haTorah" "an obscene person within what is permitted by the Torah". The Rambam says that when one eats, one must eat until one is satisfied, not be a glutton.

I often notice advertisements in the newspapers about religious trips overseas. What is a religious trip overseas? Are they going to visit the graves of the Rama or HaRav Abuchatzera? Do we not have enough graves in Israel that we need to travel to Chutz la'Aretz. Is the desire to see the world sufficient reason to leave Israel? This is not a religious tour!

Bilaam's "nefesh rechava" dictated that he should try to get as much out of this world as possible. Bilaam, the Mishna tells us, also possessed a trait of "ayin raa", an evil eye.

This trait is the antithesis of "ahavat chesed", to love kindness. One who is truly a lover of kindness will desire that things be good for the other, to try to help the other better his lot as much as possible. One who has the evil eye is stingy, he wishes good for himself and not for others. Rather than rejoice, he is angry when others succeed.

Chazal tell us "a person does not touch what is prepared for another" (Yoma 38b). The good that happens to another, is not missing from one's own life, whatever good will happen to another will not be at someone else's expense. A person must believe that he will get what he deserves whether it be money, honor, or anything else. One who has an "ayin raa" cannot tolerate the success of another person. It is said of a person that was obsessed with jealousy that an angel appeared to him and told him that he could have anything he desires on the condition that the other person receive a double portion. This person responded that the angel should remove one of his eyes!

If we would only learn to rejoice at the success of others, the world would be a much happier place. Let us take for example, one who is waiting at the bus stop near Shaar HaAshpot for the number one bus. After waiting for a while, the number two bus comes. The natural tendency is to be annoyed at this. One can, however, take the opposite approach by saying thank G-d that there are now so many happy Jews who have waited a long time for the number two bus. In addition, there will be many happy people who are waiting at the subsequent stops on the number two's route. If we could only learn to rejoice at others' happiness, our life would be better as well. The number one bus will come whenever it comes, it will not come any faster if I am annoyed at the arrival of the number two, why should I not be happy that in the meantime the bus others waited for arrived?

It is said that even a person who has tremendous "ahavat habriot", love for his fellow man, has an easier time commiserating with someone else in their sorrow than rejoicing with them in their times of joy. The Torah, desires that we rejoice with others as well as share in their sorrow, this is part of "ve-ahavta lere-acha kamocho" "love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:8). If you would be happy if your bus were to come, why should you not be happy for the others that their bus came. The Torah commands us "vehalachta bidrachav" "you shall go in His ways" (Devarim 28:9). Hashem, we know, is happy to do good for us "Just as Hashem rejoiced over you to benefit you" (Devarim 28:63), should we not follow the ways of Hashem and also be happy when something is good for the other?

We must also rejoice at someone else's spiritual growth. This also, if one can speak in such terms, makes Hashem happy. Each extra minute of Torah learned and each additional Mitzvah that is observed in the Jewish nation is cause for joy. The converse must also be true, that we are sad when this does not happen. Bilaam lacked this trait, his "ayin raa" was such that he not only did not wish further Mitzvah observance for the Jewish people, he desired more transgressions.

The Mishna also lists that Bilaam possessed a "ruach gevoah", a haughty spirit. This

trait is the polar opposite of "to walk humbly with your G-d". Bilaam's sacrifices were not accepted, as Micha tells us, because Hashem wishes us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly, while Bilaam was the exact opposite: a proud soul, a haughty spirit, and an evil eye. Is there any wonder that his sacrifices were not accepted? Bilaam asks: "with what shall I approach Hashem", he has nothing to approach Hashem with. He thinks bulls and rams are the answer! - this is not the way to approach Hashem, we must approach Him with "asot mishpat ve-ahavat chesed vehatznea lechet im Elokecha".

R' Shimshon Raphael Hirsh makes an interesting observation. When Avraham Avinu was about to make the ultimate sacrifice, he said "venishtachave vanashuva aleichem" "we shall bow down and we will return to you" (Bereishit 22:5), Avraham lowers himself before Hashem. Bilaam the wicked, bent on destroying Israel, tells Balak that when he brings his sacrifice he must "vehityatzev al olatecha" "stand by your burnt-offering" (Bamidbar 23:3), do not humble yourself! stand erect when bringing a sacrifice! This is his "ruach gevoha", haughty spirit, there is no need to humble himself before anyone else, or even Hashem for that matter.

The Mishna tells us: "The disciples of Avraham Avinu partake of this world and inherit the world to come" (Pirkei Avot 5:19). Their positive character traits are certainly a necessary prerequisite for entering and enjoying the next world. Without these traits there is not a way to receive any of the good in the next world, there will be no vessel that can receive any of the G-dly light available in abundance in the next world. One with Bilaam's character has no way of absorbing and enjoying the good of the next world, and even if he was physically present in the next world, it would feel to him like Gehinom.

Gehinom and Gan Eden need not necessarily be in different locations. Chazal in Massechet Shabbat describe how the righteous and the wicked are in the same place, some enjoying the Divine Presence available in the next world and some not. Bilaam cannot enjoy this world or the next, whereas Avraham's disciples enjoy this world and the next.

Positive character has an effect on one's enjoyment of this world as well. One who has genuine love for his fellow man and is satisfied with little feels good about himself. Such a person is not upset when things go well for another. One with an "ayin raa" is unhappy when things go well for the others and one with a "nefesh rechava" is never satisfied with his lot.

The pasuk says "A righteous person eats to satisfy his soul, but the stomach of the wicked will always lack" (Mishle 13:25). I once heard from my Rebbe HaRav Yechezkel Levinstein zt"l based on the commentaries that does not mean that the evil person lacks food, rather he lacks a stomach. He can eat until he is satisfied and then wishes he had another stomach to enable him to eat more - it is not food that he is missing rather it is a stomach. The wicked have even found a solution to this problem, they remove the

food that was eaten in order to enable one to eat more - in effect giving this person another stomach. Even this method has its limitations.

No matter how many times a wicked person employs this method, he would still feel "beten reshaim techsar". A wicked person does not have it good in this world for he is never satisfied. How much more difficult will it be for him in the next world where he has no vessel with which to even receive Hashem's light, a tremendous "chesed" he does for us. The aforementioned Mishna that compared and contrasted the disciples of Bilaam and Avraham Avinu did not even mention the advantage Avraham's disciples have by the virtue of their learning Torah and observing Mitzvot. Bilaam's disciples do not observe the Torah for they lack even the basic character required to receive the Torah.

We have spoken many times about the necessity of good character as a prerequisite for receiving the Torah. On the other hand, the Torah must bring about a refinement of our character. Our character is shaped by learning Torah and observing Mitzvot. The Mishna does not emphasize Avraham's disciples learning Torah and observing Mitzvot as opposed to Bilaam's disciples, because it is possible to be a disciple of Bilaam - to have bad character, while donning a shtreimel, growing a beard, and having long "payos". The external trappings are to no avail when one does not possess the appropriate character.

Certainly we must do our utmost to observe the Mitzvot, without which we have nothing in this world or the next world. To gain entry into the next world, and receive Hashem's light, it is necessary to bring a vessel, this vessel must be made up of character traits. In order to receive the Torah one must be of upstanding character, for without which the Torah is pure wisdom "chachma bagoyim taamin", it is not Torah. If one learns Torah and does not humble himself before Hashem and the Torah, if he does not love "chesed" and act with a "ruach nemucha", a humble spirit, then his Torah is not a true Torah it is pure lip service.

With Hashem's help, we must attempt to be of the disciples of Avraham Avinu. Avraham loved chesed, this was the main point Eliezer used in his search for the proper "shidduch" for Yitzchak. Rivka's love of chesed knew no bounds. She brought water for ten camels, and it is known that camels drink tremendous amounts. She had to bring the water back and forth from the well all while witnessing ten people standing around without lifting a finger to assist her. Despite all this, she was tremendously happy at being able to perform these acts of chesed.

I am not advocating that everyone in the Yeshiva spend his time giving water to camels! We need to stay in the Yeshiva and to learn. However, within our four walls there is plenty of chesed that can be done. We must feel joy at the success of another. We must also hope that the nation observes the Torah and thus it will be good for the nation as a whole and for Hashem.

We recite everyday "for we hope everyday for Your salvation". The word "lishuatcha"

can be interpreted in two ways. One way is that Hashem will redeem us, the other way is that Hashem Himself be redeemed. In today's world the Divine Presence is in exile. We must daven that it not remain in exile and we must rejoice when the Jewish people observe the Torah and Mitzvot, this can serve as the first step towards the restoration of the Divine Presence. We pray that Hashem returns His presence to Zion, that we merit having love for others, and being happy with little. As mentioned we need not have too little, we must, however, make sure that we do not grab everything in sight.

To a certain extent, haughtiness is also something positive for if a modest person feels he is not cut out for learning he will not remain in the Yeshiva and will end up on the street. A bit of "gaava" is necessary on the condition that it be used to serve Hashem, and not to belittle others, G-d forbid. We must attempt to be as best we can disciples of Avraham Avinu and thus we will be able to benefit both from this world and the next.

Kollel Rennert Dvar Torah by HaRav Rachamim Chouri



The Mishna in Pirke Avot (5:22) teaches us:
 "Whoever has the following three traits is among the disciples of our forefather Avraham; and whoever has three different traits is among the disciples of the wicked Bilaam. Those who have a good eye, a humble spirit, and a meek soul are among the disciples of our forefather Avraham. Those who have an evil eye, an arrogant spirit, and a greedy soul are among the disciples of the wicked Bilaam.

HaRav Ovadia MiBartenura explains as follows:

A good eye - being satisfied with what he has, not coveting the possessions of others.

A humble spirit - great modesty.

A meek soul - being careful not to lust after all of your desires.

Bilaam was the precise opposite - he lusted after money, he was haughty, and he gave in to all his earthly desires.

On the surface it appears that a person's character is determined by whose Beit Midrash he emanates from. A disciple of Avraham Avinu will in all likelihood have a good eye, humble spirit, and a meek soul, while one who G-d forbid is a disciple of Bilaam will turn out to be the total opposite.

However, a careful look at our parsha shows that this is not necessarily so. The parsha speaks of Balak the king of Moav. The father of the dynasty of Moav was Lot - a close disciple of Avraham. Lot, with great self-sacrifice, left his father's house in Charan and joined Avraham Avinu on a journey to an unknown destination - he left his extended family even though he was never commanded to do so.

In spite of this great closeness, he was unable to pass the test of being a true disciple of Avraham Avinu. The Torah writes: "And there was strife between the herdsmen of Avram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle" (Bereishit 13:7), and the resulting suggestion by Avraham Avinu: "Let there be no strife, between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me, if you take the left path, I will go to the right, and if you take the right path I will go to the left" (ibid. 8-9)

Lot looks out and chooses Sodom and Amora as his new residence in spite of the knowledge that: "the people of Sodom were evil and sinners against Hashem, exceedingly" (ibid. 13)

Rashi cites the Gemara in Horayot (10b) that Lot chose that area because he was attracted to their licentious behavior.

Here we see that Lot was a disciple of Avraham Avinu yet he possessed the three traits which Chazal attribute to the disciples of Bilaam: he had an evil eye as is evident by his lust for money - this was not only evident by his choice of Sodom as his residence, but when Sodom was about to be overturned - "vayitmahma" - he tarried before leaving. Rashi comments that he remained behind in order to protect his possessions.

His arrogant spirit is evident from his parting from Avraham: "Vayisa Lot miKedem" (Bereishit 13:11) which literally means that Lot traveled from the east. The difficulty is that he actually traveled from the west. Chazal, aware of this difficulty explain that Lot did not travel from the east as the word "mikedem" implies, but rather "hisea atzmo mikadmono shel olam"

"He made himself travel away from the Forerunner of the world" (Rashi Bereishit 13:1) - he left Hashem. (Rashi Bereishit 13:11). Lot declared: "I want neither Avram nor his G-d" (ibid.).

His greedy soul is evident from the fact that he followed his desires and chose Sodom, the most decadent of all places, as his place of residence and in the end he sinned with their women.

These corrupt character traits which Lot acquired for himself are clearly visible in his offspring, in Balak king of Moav and in the women of Moav who made themselves available for purposes of immorality (see end of Parshat Balak). Even the little which Lot did learn from Avraham Avinu, such as hachnassat orchim, his descendants threw away over the generations - this reached such a proportion that in the end they were forbidden from marrying into the Jewish nation: "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem, even their tenth generation shall not enter the congregation of Hashem, to eternity. Because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt" (Devarim 23:4-5).

On the other hand, we find in Targum Yonatan ben Uziel that the wicked Bilaam is in fact Lavan HaArami - just as we saw that being a disciple of Avraham Avinu does not necessarily guarantee inheriting his character traits, being educated by Bilaam does not necessarily mean inheriting his negative traits.

Our holy matriarchs, Rachel and Leah, grew up in the house of Lavan and yet they merited having characters of disciples of Avraham Avinu. Ruth as well, descended from Moav yet merited having the kingdom of David HaMelech descend from her.

We can conclude from here that the intent of the Mishna we quoted at the outset regarding the characteristics of a disciple of Avraham versus a disciple of Bilaam does not mean that the person actually spent time in close proximity to Avraham or Bilaam. It is possible for a person to have studied in the Beit Midrash of Avraham Avinu and yet have the character of a disciple of the wicked Bilaam, such as Lot. Without working towards improving your character, a person is not worthy of being counted among the disciples of Avraham. The opposite is true as well - a person can emanate from the Beit Midrash of the wicked Bilaam and yet merit being considered a disciple of Avraham Avinu.

The Mishna concludes: "How are the disciples of Avraham Avinu different from the disciples of the wicked Bilaam? The disciples of Avraham Avinu enjoy the fruits of their good deeds in this world and inherit the World to Come, as it is said: 'to cause those who love Me to inherit an everlasting possession (the World to Come), and I will fill their storehouses (in this world)' (Mishle 8:21). But the disciples of the wicked Bilaam inherit Gehinom and descend into the well of destruction, as it is said: 'and You, O G-d, shall lower them into the well of destruction, men of bloodshed and deceit shall not live out half their days; but as for me, I will trust in You.' (Tehillim 55:24)".

Visitor Log, Mazal Tov's, Tehillim List

Visitor Log

The following people visited/learned in the Yeshiva:

- Elie Lowenstein (5763)
- Rabbi Shane Hopkovitz (5758-59)
- Avi Silver (5765-66)
- Daniel Lowenstein (5764-65)

Mazal Tov

Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh wishes a Mazal Tov to:

- [Harry](#) (5765-66) Portman on his [engagement](#) to Elana Ungar.
- [Benjamin](#) (5754) and Rafaela Merzel on the birth of a baby boy.
- [Matthew](#) (5754) and Ilana Bornstein on the birth of a baby girl.

The following members of our extended YNA family need our tefilot:

Printer Friendly Tehillim List

- Ditza bat Vardit
- Zev Eliezer ben Chaya Shaindel
- Chaya bat Grunia
- Yitzchok ben Shayna Ita
- Moshe Zanvel ben Brindel
- Gershon Yitzchok ben Mottel Tzerel
- Rueven ben Tova Chaya
- Rivka Margalit bat Etta
- Chaya Meira Mindel bas Chava Golda
- Sarah Nechama bas Russ Malka
- Chaya Sarah bat Fanya Luna
- Elazar ben Nouber
- Na'ava Bat Ami bat Sara Leah
- Gilad ben Aviva
- Edmund ben Nazira
- Devorah Leah bat Hindel
- Avram Gershon ben Tzippah
- Sarah Nechama bas Russ Malka
- Dovid ben Miriam
- Avraham David ben Miriam Goldeh
- Ephraim Yitzchak ben Golda
- Margalit bat Rachel
- Yaacov ben Baila
- Leah bat Eidel
- Ester Bas Lea
- Miriam Rivka bat Adina Leah
- Chaya Esther bat Golda Rachel
- Shayna bas Chava
- Eliezer ben Sorah
- Fruma bat Rochel
- Yonatan Moshe ben Devorah Tova
- Naomi Sara bas Henna Miriam
- Fruma bas Ita
- Tinok ben Esther Sharon
- Leah Bat Rivkah
- Zacharia Kalman ben Yael Margolit
- Eliezer ben Sorah



And of course we are always davening for the safe return of Gilad Shalit (Gilad ben Aviva)

[Submit Names](#) to the list.

[Send Us Your Announcements](#)

Please, if you have any smachot or chas v'shalom, less happy occasions, [let our office know](#) so we can keep everybody updated. **Are you visiting Israel?- [let us know!](#)** We'd love to host you for a shabbat meal, davening, a shiur and would love for you to stop by.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Bina, Netiv Aryeh
Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh