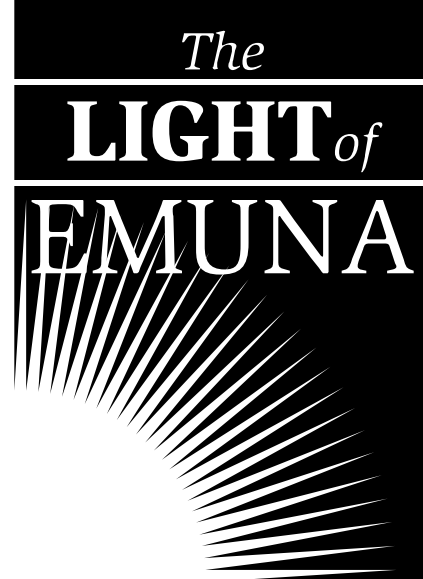


# פרשת בלק



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

This week's adaptation is dedicated in honor of:  
our new baby girl, born Sunday b"h, who we will be naming iy"h this Shabbos;  
the new baby boy born to Yaakov & Leora Shafran; and  
the Shabbos Sheva Brachos of Mr. & Mrs. Yoseph & Tova Jacoby.

"וירא בלק בן צפור את כל אשר עשה ישראל לאמרי"  
**"Balak, the son of Tzippor, saw all that Israel  
had done to the Amorites"** (כב, ב)

The *pasuk* says, "The wicked man watches for the righteous man and seeks to kill him."<sup>1</sup> The "wicked man" refers to Balak, who observed the Jewish people dwelling peacefully – clouds of glory enveloping them, *manna* falling for them, quail prepared for them, water following them, pillars of fire guiding them – and he longed to harm them. But Hashem refused to allow him to, fulfilling the words of the very next *pasuk*, "Hashem will not leave him [the tzaddik] in his [the *rasha's*] hands."<sup>2</sup> (*Midrash Aggada*)

"לא תלך עמהם ... קום לך אתם"  
**"You shall not go with them ... arise and go  
with them"** (כב, יב, כ)

The greatest pleasure that a Jew can experience is clinging to Hashem. Our entire purpose in life is our connection and attachment to Hashem. To earn this connection we must pay attention to what Hashem tells us. If a Jew constantly seeks ways to perform Hashem's will, he earns a deep closeness and tremendous happiness – even when he experiences difficulties. Our problem is that Hashem's bidding is not always clear to us. Hashem conceals his desires – but gives man the power and intellect to understand that he must spend his entire life searching and seeking Hashem's will and nullifying his own desires.

If a person truly wants to know what Hashem wants of him, where to focus at the current time, he must speak to Hashem every day, conduct

<sup>1</sup> (תהילים לז, לב)

צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו

<sup>2</sup> (שם לז, לג)

ד' לא יעזבנו בידו

introspection and do *teshuva* – then Hashem will show him, he will understand. Hashem communicates with us in many ways – a feeling in our hearts, a sentence that we hear or read that perfectly answers a question that we were grappling with. We heard a *shiur* and received inspiration – "Hashem, I also want." We converse with friends and we suddenly understand something about ourselves – something that Hashem wants from us. If we truly want, we will understand. Our problem is that we do not want it badly enough. Breaking our habits and changing our ways are very difficult tasks. It is a lot of work – to rise and fall and rise again without despairing. It is much easier to just continue as we have been. Maybe we want to make a change, we get the hint, but we have no strength to invest in making the change. At times there are opposing forces – Heaven jams the spokes in the wheels of our wagons. Suddenly, things transform completely and we cannot believe that certain events can happen to us. We are like one whose world darkens at noon. It is so difficult, so unexpected, so surreal, so unreal. "Master of the World – WHY?"

"Why - because I love you so much, because I have so much compassion for you. Until now I sent you hints, small and big, but you did not recognize them. Now I have no choice but to stop you by force. It has to hurt. If you remain stubborn and further ignore My whispers and

refuse to awaken no matter what, you may find yourself in grave danger.” At some point, Heaven will allow us to continue along our chosen path. The *Gemara* teaches that in the way a person wishes to proceed, he is assisted.<sup>3</sup> If a person chooses the path of evil, Heaven tries to stop him, but if he persists, They open a clearing for him. That is precisely what happened to the wicked Balaam in this week’s *parsha*. Hashem instructed him not to go with Balak’s men – but, when he persisted, Hashem allowed him to go. His story did not end well.

Balaam’s story must serve as a warning sign. When Heaven tries to stop us, when everything is upended before our eyes - we must pause. We must realize that we must invest less energy pursuing material goals and more in the worship of Hashem. We must deal with our mouths that too easily spout *loshon hora* and *rechilus*. We must strengthen ourselves in loving others, judging favorably, adopting a positive perspective towards others. Before we get angry and cause injury, we must remember that if roles were reversed, we cannot be so sure that we would have done anything differently. We must begin to invest in the everlasting, not silliness. Luckily, when Heaven sends us suffering, we begin to realize that we have no choice – Hashem is demanding change. Rebbe Nosson taught that when it comes to kosher Jews – the more duress they endure, G-d forbid, the more they run to Hashem. Adversity interrupts our negative behavior, it impedes us. As we quoted above, in the way a person wishes to conduct his life, he is assisted. If a person overcomes and develops strong desires and longings towards Hashem, he will be guided on the path of good and holiness.

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**“לא הביט און ביעקב ולא ראה עמל בישראל”**  
**“He does not look at evil in Jacob and has seen no perversity in Israel.” (נב, כא)**

The *pasuk* then concludes: ד’ אלוֹקֵינוּ עִמּוֹ וְתִרְעוּת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ - “Hashem, his G-d, is with him, and he has the King’s friendship.” What is the connection

between seeing no evil or perversity and gaining Hashem’s companionship? A person who sees no wrong or deficiency in another Jew, but rather judges his fellows favorably and sees only their positive attributes merits having Hashem “with him” – the *Shechina* communes with him and he “has the King’s friendship” – Hashem becomes his “friend.”

This attribute of having a “good eye” is a powerful one. It is the attribute that brings us to good life – one that is pleasant, happy and blissful. A person who performs soul searching so as not to rage against another, so as not to hold a grudge (even if justified), so as to consistently judge favorably (because we never truly know how we’d behave on the other side of a given situation); a person who regularly cleanses his heart and yet finds himself losing his temper – calls out to Hashem and asks and begs for salvation – this person merits tasting *gan eden* in this lifetime.

Years ago, in the middle of *chol hamoed Pesach*, the Rebbe of Mishkoltz was told of a certain baker in Petach Tikvah who was selling *chometz* on *Pesach*, Heaven forbid. Despite the local population’s pleading and threatening in various ways, he refused to close his shop. The Rebbe said that he would speak with the man. When he arrived at the bakery, the Rebbe stood at the entrance and called out to the proprietor with a smile and said lovingly, “*tzaddik*, a kosher and happy *Pesach* to you.” When that Jew, who had a completely secular upbringing, saw the majestic, distinguished image of the Rebbe calling out to him so tenderly, he immediately ran to the doorway submissively. The Rebbe patted his shoulder and said, “Ah, how are you *tzaddik*?” Sheepishly, the man asked the Rebbe, “who, Rebbe? Me? A *tzaddik*? Look at how I look?” The Rebbe responded, “Of course you are a *tzaddik*. We are all children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. With such righteous fathers and grandfathers, we certainly continue their ways...”

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<sup>3</sup> בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך, בה מוליכין אותו (מכות י:)

And so the Rebbe continued to speak with compliments while continuously patting his shoulder. Then, the Rebbe patiently began explaining the *mitzvos* of the *Yom Tov* and their reasons – why it is forbidden to sell or eat *chometz* – basic concepts that are well known. It became apparent that this Jew knew none of this and was amazed by it. He immediately shook the Rebbe's hand and promised to close his store right away, until after *Pesach*. Everyone present was stunned to witness how, with true love of fellow Jews and a few words and approval, the heart of a mistaken mind could be transformed. On the way home, the Rebbe quoted our *pasuk* and commented that when we don't look for the sins or the evil in others and rather speak encouragingly – their heart are immediately reversed and Hashem is instantly with them – for even the farthest ones have a Jewish spark - once that spark is ignited, it can never again be extinguished. That baker slowly drew close to *yiddishkeit*, started to come to *shul* every day and eventually started attending Torah lectures. He is currently one of the pillars of the community.

Primarily, having a “good eye” means viewing one's self in a positive light. If I do not have a good eye towards myself I will constantly be busy searching for the deficiencies in others to pacify myself and feel less inadequate – it is not that bad so long others also seem lacking. A Jew must fortify himself with the idea that, in the service of Hashem, every action is a purpose unto itself. That too is a “good eye.” It would have been worthwhile for Hashem to create all of the worlds for one Jew to say, “ברוך הוא וברוך שמו” just once – which is not even a *halachic* obligation, just a *minhag*.

In your current situation, you may not be able to learn six hours straight in depth, or even superficially – but, can you learn for one minute? So learn for a minute. What's that worth? It's worth everlasting life. The Chofetz Chaim always used to say, “A wise man takes ashes and makes gold, while the fool takes gold and makes ashes.” His intent was to teach us that simple *mitzvos*, are scattered around like ashes (i.e. readily available) – e.g. saying Amen, eating kosher, not wearing *shatnez*, and many others. A wise man creates the gold of empowerment with them. The fool takes gold, i.e. great *mitzvos*, and turns them to ashes – e.g. he belittles the importance of the invigoration and inspiration that he could glean from them.

A Jew must be ecstatic over the performance of every *mitzvah*. If he guarded his eyes for one minute – what did he do that was so impressive? He did not lift a mountain, he did not pave roads in the desert or the forest – all he did was lower his eyes for a minute. He gazed before that minute and again afterwards – it was merely a minute. Yet, in that one minute he merited being embraced by Hashem – he bought everlasting life for himself. That is not to say that it is permissible to look at forbidden things afterwards - of course not. But, even with this tiny act, he produces – then he will guard a bit more – and he will continue to try.

A certain Jew from Bnei Brak told that he had been struggling with strengthening himself for a long time. One morning, after *davening*, one of

A good eye does not glance sideways; it is satisfied within its own four *amos*. For when we look to the side we notice inadequacies and are quick to disqualify all who we encounter. We are experts at this. There was a time when things were different. Balaam lifted his eyes, saw the Jewish people encamped according to their *shevatim* and declared, “How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel.”<sup>4</sup>

What decency did Balaam observe? Rashi explains that Balaam noticed that the openings of their [our] tents did not face each other.<sup>5</sup> Each tent's opening faced a different direction – every opening faced its own way – live and let live – so that no one lives within another's realm – not to breach the private domain or to poke one's eyes into another's jurisdiction.

<sup>4</sup> [Apparently, he thought we were Irish.]

<sup>5</sup> (כד, ה) מה טובו אוהליך יעקב, משכנותיך ישראל שפתיהם אינם מכוונים זה מול זה

the *kollel* men announced that at 5pm he would be driving his van to Yerushalayim to pay a *shiva* call to one of the other *kollel* men and would take whoever wanted to go. Our young man wished to pay a visit and arrived at the meeting location at 5pm for the ride. He looked around but could not find the van driver. Realizing that because of the trip he was going to miss his *daf yomi shiur*, he sat down to learn while he waited. In the half an hour that the van driver was delayed, he finished the *daf*. He told that when he went to take out the *gemara*, the *yetzer hora* tried to convince him not to bother because the driver would be there any minute, it would be a waste of time to even walk to his locker. "I though in response," said the young man, "that even for the reward for taking a few steps towards the locker, it would be worthwhile. I reached into my jacket for the keys to my locker even though the van driver was expected any minute. I opened the locker thinking that I will likely close it right away because the driver would arrive, I opened the *gemara* to possibly close it right back. At any time, my actions made no sense – yet I managed

to finish the *daf*, with Rashi." Why – how die he merit this? Because he understood that every action is a complete world. If he had not known this, what would he have done? He would have paced the halls, become anxious, worry about where the driver was. Then he would have met a friend and started to speak *loshon hora*, become angry at the driver – taken a cup of coffee and a cookie to help calm down – neither of which he needed. Overcoming the *yetzer hora* saved him and he accomplished. (*Sod Hahischazkus*)

Be happy for every good point of holiness that you have procured – because our entire vitality and sustainability derives from the fact that every motion and every point draws us from evil towards good. Take joy in how every Jew, no matter where he is, draws his vitality and existence from this – and at the end, we will all return to Hashem through this. (*Eilim L'trufa*)

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## תפילה

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**Master of the World!** The greatest thing that can happen to me is that I merit learning to live with You. Teach me, Father. Teach me how to live with you at every moment.

Teach me to wake up and say "מוֹדֵה אֲנִי" with maximum feeling – that would be such a great gift – to awaken to serve You, healthy and pure, with renewed strength, with fresh vitality – not like today, when I said "מוֹדֵה אֲנִי" out of obligation.

Help me, father, to make *brachos* with joy, with feeling, to set aside a few additional seconds for each *bracha* – to think about what I am saying to feel how I truly am impressed by everything that You give to me and do for me.

Reward me, Father, with the ability to talk to You all day – to lift up my head, and when no one sees me, to also lift up my hands, to feel as if they are two wings that raise me higher, so much closer to You.

Grant me, father, to say thank You for the corrections, for the failures, for the disruptions in my plans. To, at the very least, acknowledge that everything is from You, everything is for the best, even if my heart doesn't feel it. If possible, make my heart feel it and to remain continuously happy and good-hearted, regardless of what happens, because everything is from You.

Help me Father, to chase after kindness, to seek ways to brighten someone else's day – because that brings me so much closer to You and I am still so far away, so bound up in my own plans, my schemes.

**Master of the World!** Teach me to be moved by the very thought that I have You – that I am never alone – no matter what happens to me – You supervise, You work at every moment to arrange everything for me, that You love me like a father who loves his only son.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

דוד

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai Shlita and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material and is not even aware of its existence. Any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*.

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