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Email: info@TorasAvigdor.org | Telephone: 732.844.3670 | Address: 1273a 46th Street Brooklyn NY 11219

PARSHAS BALAK

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

REBUILDING THE TORAH HOME

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Part I. Mourning for Ancient Delights

The Delights of Old

Next week is already the first fast of the season, the period of *aveilus* for the Churban, and so it's only right that we should begin preparing. After all, how can you mourn for something if you don't understand what went lost? Yes, you'll go through the motions of *aveilus* – and that's good too; it's something – but it's not enough.

And so the first step, even before the Days of Mourning begin, we have to train ourselves to feel how great of an opportunity it was when we still had the Beis Hamikdash; when we had the old Yerushalayim, the old Eretz Yisroel. Only then will we understand what it means that we don't have it; then we'll be capable of mourning the loss.

Yirmiyah Hanavi in the Megillas Eichah (1:7) tells us that: זכרה ירושלים – *Yerushalayim remembered*, ימי עניה ומרוריה – *in the days of her affliction and her sadness*, כל מחמדיה שהיו בימי קדם – *all the delights that it possessed in the days of old*. It means after the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash the people who had once been in Yerushalayim looked back now and remembered what had gone lost.

Now מחמדיה, *her delights*, means that there were certain features of Yerushalayim, certain institutions and practices that they had enjoyed. And the nation looked back now at what they had בימי קדם and mourned for all those great joys, those especial delights, that it once possessed. And so זכרה ירושלים means that if we too are going to mourn for the Churban we have to look back along with them; we have to gain an appreciation of those same *machmadeha* that they cried about.

Holy Teens

The truth is that even if we would just describe the children playing on the streets of Yerushalayim, of Tiverya, of Tzipori, that's already enough to mourn for a full three weeks. We have no idea of the purity, the innocence, of those children.

Rabbi Yochanan tells us that when he was still young – this was already long after the *Churban* but some rays of the ancient splendor still lingered after the sun had set – and he said that in his days still there were boys and girls of sixteen, seventeen years old, who used to play sometimes on the streets *and nothing wrong entered their minds*.

Nothing! That's the ancient *kedushah*. We can't even understand such a thing! Such holy children that it didn't even enter their minds. Don't think it's not something to mourn for – that delight of holy children growing up in a holy atmosphere.

But that's only the beginning. I say that off the top of my head just as an example to open the subject. The truth is there are so many delights, too many to enumerate, and by no means am I the one capable of describing fully what all of those *machmadeha* were. But a little bit, just to help us understand, to help us prepare, we must try.

Mourning for the Mikdash

One of the first things – you'll be surprised – is *yiras Hashem*. למען תלמד ליראה את השם אלוקיך כל הימים – *You come to the House of Hashem in order to learn to fear Hashem all your life!* (Devarim 14:23). When the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed a very great opportunity for perfection went lost because when it still stood a person would come there and he would

be a changed person forever; he'd become a *yarei Shomayim* just from being there. Coming to visit left an effect on that person that lasted all his life.

Today it's hard work acquiring *yiras Hashem*. You have to look in *seforim*, you have to study the *briyah*, you have to meditate on Awareness of Hashem, you have to *daven*, other things you have to do. But when we had the Mikdash, merely by coming there and seeing the *kohanim ba'avodosam* and hearing the *shirah* of the *levi'im*, you became so inspired. Much more than you can imagine!

Some people even got *ruach hakodesh* from coming. You know that Yonah Hanavi became a prophet because he was present at the *simchas beis hashoeivah*. He was so inspired that the *ruach hakodesh* came upon him. But at the minimum you acquired *yiras Hashem* when you went there. And that's a great loss.

Mourning for Yerushalayim

But not only the Beis Mikdash we lost. We mourn for the whole city, for *Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh* that was destroyed. Not because we're patriots; we're not chauvinists like the Parisians who are patriots for Paris or the Londoners for London, no! It's because we are patriots of Hakadosh Baruch Hu and *Yerushalayim* was **עיר אלוקינו**, the City of Hashem.

Dovid's plan from the beginning was to build an **עיר אלוקינו**, 'A City for Hashem!' That's the only reason he made it. That's why when he spoke about *Yerushalayim*, he said, **גדול ה' ומהולל מאד בעיר אלקינו הר קדשו**. "You know what's great in our city?" said Dovid, **גדול ה' - "Hashem is great! In our city Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the only thing that's important. We don't care for what the other cities of the world get excited about. Tall buildings, fashion, money, nightlife; fech! ומהולל מאד - In this place we're very much excited about Hashem and that's all!"**

That's some city! That was something to see! People came together by the thousands and stood in the streets listening to Torah speakers. In those days you didn't sit down when you learned Torah – it was considered disrespectful; learning was like *Shemoneh Esrei*. They stood for hours in the streets in the tens of thousands and they listened to Torah.

A Holy City

There were also *bnei hanevi'im*, hundreds of *talmidim* who followed the *nevi'im* around and studied from them how to come close to Hashem. There were *nezirim* too. You know there used to be hundreds of *nezirim* on the street. Hundreds of *nezirim* walking the streets. Here's a man, who,

for thirty days, he wanted to think only of Hashem, so he became a *nazir*. For thirty days he belonged only to Hashem – he's *kodesh la'Hashem*. And a little boy growing up, saw hundreds of them on the street. Now in such an environment, it's easy to become a *tzaddik*, absolutely.

Of course there were *talmidei chachomim*, *tzaddikim*, *chassidim*, *kohanim*, everywhere. And so you were breathing the air of *kedushah*. Just by walking the streets you could gain the purpose of your existence – the development of your character, the understanding of our place in the world, the inspiration and understanding that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the *Melech* of the world.

Soul City

In ancient Yerushalayim you found the greatest fulfillment of the yearning of the soul. There's only one thing a person really wants and that is 'ישמח לב מבקשי ה' – *only those who seek Hashem can be happy*. That's what our *neshamah* wants.

So in Exile we try substitutes. You have a yearning, so what do you do? You go to the park and play with a bat and a baseball. Some people go to the movies. All kinds of things you do because you're yearning for something. But you'll never fulfill that yearning; it's like chewing on rubber bands when you're hungry. You're deceiving yourself with substitutes because what we really want in this world is to get as close to Hakadosh Boruch Hu as possible. And בעיר אלוקינו, in the City of our G-d, that was the place where you could fulfill that as much as possible.

It could be that after some time people became accustomed to it and didn't appreciate it. But you can be sure that when they lost it, זכרה ירושלים, they looked back and they remembered the happiness of the true Jewish life that they once had and they mourned over the lost delights of Yerushalayim.

The Nation Adopts a Kollel

Not just the Mikdash and Yerushalayim. The practices of the nation, of Eretz Yisroel, also went lost. You know what a tragedy, what a misfortune it was when the practices of *Shemittah* and *Yovel* were discontinued? You realize that every seventh year the entire nation became a *yeshivah*? There were no factories. They were primarily agriculturists. Everybody had farms. And so, every seventh year the entire Jewish nation stopped working and they went to the *kollel*.

What a beautiful arrangement it was when there was *Shemittah* and *Yovel*! Isn't it a pity that the Jewish children don't know what we once

were? Isn't it a pity that *we* don't know? A whole nation forsakes their fields and orchards and gardens and goes to the *kollel*! Not for a week or a month. For a full year! Everyone! Absolutely that was one of the *מזמריה קרם* *שהיו בימי קרם*, *the delights that we possessed in the days of old*.

Mourning for Ethnocentrism

We lost also our *achdus*. During the *Bayis Rishon* every one of the Am Yisroel lived within the boundaries of Eretz Yisroel. You know what that means? We were an *am echad* and it was considered a disgrace and a disloyalty to move into another country. Even though you wanted to buy a farm someplace, you wanted a vacation, no such thing. Nobody left Eretz Yisroel. We lived together, one nation on the land, separate from the gentiles.

It's a very big impediment to be among gentiles; no matter how much you'll try, the environment has an effect on you. And don't think it's only imagination. It's an actual fact that when you are among *goyim* you are part of them. If you associate with them, you're also distanced from Hashem.

And so the fact that we all lived together in Eretz Yisroel, stewing in our own juices, that was one of the delights in the days of old. And when they went to Exile and they sat *al naharos Bavel*, by the rivers of Babylon, now they looked back and saw what they once had. Ah, the good old days, the delights we had in the days of old when we sat in a land when there were no foreigners at all. Now they're on *admas neichar*! Ach!

How good it was to be only among Bnei Yisroel! Every face you looked at was a *kosher* Jewish face. Every pair of eyes that looked at you were *kosher* Jewish eyes. You have to know that it had an effect on your *neshamah*. They were coming closer and closer to Hashem when they lived in Eretz Yisroel in the days of old. They were living successfully! And so, among many others, that was one of the *מזמריה כל* that they mourned for and that we still mourn for today.

Part II. Mourning for the Ancient Home

A Home Destroyed

Now among the delights of the days of old that went lost – one that very many people overlook – was the Jewish home. As much as we mourn for the Beis Hamikdash, for Yerushalayim, and for all the other delights that we had, one of the greatest of all losses was the Jewish home.

And in order to try and appreciate what it means a Jewish home, it's best to look back to the beginning of our history, to the tents in the Midbar. Because those tents were the first homes of our nation and they were the prototype for all the homes that came afterward in our history.

And so we'll turn to the words of the Chumash in our *sedrah* and listen to the words of Hakadosh Baruch Hu that He spoke through the mouth of Bilam, how he described the Jewish home. וישא בלעם את עיניו – *Bilam lifted up his eyes, וירא את ישראל שוכן לשבטיו* – *and he saw Yisroel dwelling according to his tribes* (Bamidbar 24:2). It means that he saw the Jewish tents, the homes of the Am Yisroel.

The Prophet's X-Ray Eyes

And when he saw, he didn't see only the outside – he saw *inside* the tents; he was a *navi* after all. ותהי עליו רוח אלוקים – *The spirit of Elokim came on him (ibid.)* means he saw the dwellings of the Bnei Yisroel and he understood what was doing *inside* of them. And what he saw inspired him even more and he exclaimed, מזה טובו אוהליך יעקב – “*How beautiful are your tents Yaakov, משכנותיך ישראל* – *your dwellings O' Yisroel*” (*ibid.* 5).

This is in all the gentile bibles too! They can't erase it. It doesn't say ‘How beautiful are your tents O' Ireland,’ or ‘How beautiful are your tents O' Germany.’ Oh no! It's “How beautiful are your tents Yaakov, your dwellings Yisroel!”

Now, there's a statement in Chazal (Sanhedrin 105b) that these words refer to the *batei kenessios* and *batei medrashim*; that's why some people have a custom to say “*mah tov*” when they come into the *beis hakenesses*. But don't think that's the only original meaning. No, that's the secondary meaning. In our *sedrah* when Bilam looked, he didn't see *batei kenessios*. He saw tents. He saw *Yisrael shochen l'shevatah* and he saw what was doing inside too; he saw how people were living in those tents!

Inner Beauty

Outside, the tents maybe were drab looking. What's a tent after all? Some goat hair, animal hides; nothing too romantic looking. You know, the *navi* when he describes the Jewish abode he compares it to the beauty of *ohalei keidar*, like the tents of *Keidar* (Shir Hashirim 1:5). *Keidar* means the Arabs, the nomads who had tents made out of goat's hair. They are so made that the hair is on the outside and the color is unprepossessing.

But when you entered the tent what you saw inside belied its outward appearance; inside, the walls were hung with silks, with precious tapestries of all colors. Travelers remarked about these plain tents that when you

entered inside, they greeted you with a panorama of splendor and color of every kind.

Don't Judge a Home By Its Cover

And therefore the *navi* states on the outside of the Jewish home – let's say a gentile is riding on a bus through Williamsburg, in a car through Williamsburg and he sees drab little stores. He sees people dressed humbly. He doesn't see any grand mansions. There's nothing of the elegance that you can see even in a residential neighborhood like Flatbush. You don't have trees and gardens; everywhere there's plainness. And therefore, the superficial person gains the impression that these are very unimportant people.

But on entering a genuine Jewish home, the picture is entirely different. It doesn't mean that you won't find there chandeliers and carpets and paintings. Could be they have that too but inside that home they have an even more important beauty. They have the beauty of a Torah home!

Inside those homes, there's nothing but chastity. There is no breath of scandal and it doesn't even enter their minds that there is such a possibility. Whereas in gentile homes a tremendous amount of immorality goes on, even among married women.

Inside the gentile home, there is wife beating. There is always profanity, always fighting. Fistfights! Many homes are wrecked by divorce and in very many the children are in rebellion. But inside the genuine Jewish home, in these humble houses whose externality makes such a simple impression, they are draped with the tapestries of innocence and purity and Torah idealism.

Under Great Pedagogues

Now, that's the Jewish home of today, *taf shin lamed gimmel*; but the tents that Bilam saw, the tents he looked inside of, were hundreds of times, thousands of times better than that.

After all, we understand immediately that under the tutelage of Moshe Rabbeinu the people of that generation reached the zenith of perfection. Moshe Rabbeinu was teaching the men, guiding them and Miriam was doing her own job; Miriam was teaching the women. And the products were perfect.

And therefore when Bilam saw a house in which there was a *talmid* of Moshe Rabbeinu as the father and a disciple of Miriam as the mother, and he saw how that house was conducted, *b'kedushah* and *b'taharah* and with *middos tovos*, so by the command of Hashem he raised his voice and he

announced for all history; he declared for eternity that there's nothing like a Jewish home.

Most Modest Homes

Now what he saw, we can only imagine. We have to study Bilam's words with all the *mefarshim* of the *Shas* and the *Medrashim* and all the *Rishonim* and *Achronim*; and we still won't know what he saw. But a little bit we can scratch the surface.

One thing he saw was the *tznius* of Jewish homes. The Gemara (Bava Basra 60a) says that when Bilaam looked at Yisroel 'dwelling according to their families', ראה – *he saw*, אין פתחיהן מכוונים זו כנגד זו, *that not a single doorway opened towards another doorway*. The six hundred thousand tents were so positioned, so pitched, that never did one doorway of a tent face another doorway.

Even accidentally, if you opened up the flap of the doorway of your tent and your neighbor did so at the same time, you couldn't look into his tent and he couldn't look into yours. The Am Yisroel lived in decency, in complete purity.

Falling Down in Shock

Everything was done with the utmost precision and *tznius* because they were building something now of the utmost importance – a Jewish home! And when Bilaam saw that, he couldn't believe his eyes. נופל וגלוי – *He fell down from what he saw!* “Such excellence among an entire nation! מה טובו אהליך יעקב משכנתיך ישראל – *How wonderful are these tents!*” (Bamidbar 24:4,5).

Every tent was a little *yeshivah* where the father spoke words of Torah and idealism all the time. That's what it means a Jewish home; a home of Torah. Not only fathers; mothers too. The home was a place where mothers made *tzaddikim* out of children.

I remember once there was a *sefer* I read; it was written about three hundred years ago and the *mechaber* was describing what his mother once told him. 'I cannot forget my mother,' he wrote there. 'She stood before me and said – he said it in Yiddish but I'll say it in English: “My mother told me, ‘If I were a man I would never stop learning Torah. I wouldn't stop learning Torah day and night.’

“My mother is standing before my eyes as if she was alive right now,” he wrote. “Her face is burning with enthusiasm and I hear her words right now in my ears.” And she said it with such a fire that it went into his blood. I saw that inscribed in an old *sefer*.

The Tents of Sinai

And that's only three hundred years ago. In the Midbar it was a thousand times more because they were just fresh from Matan Torah. The flames that they saw at Matan Torah were still burning in the homes of each tent and the chief occupation of every mother and father was the teaching the Torah and Torah ideals to their children.

למען תספר באזני בנך – *You should relate everything in the ears of your children.* So they told them all the history, all the *nissim* that they had seen. They described Matan Torah to their children. In the tents they constantly spoke to their children about their great history and their great future and they inspired them; they inflamed them with idealism.

A Tent of Ruchniyus

They didn't have much *gashmiyus* in the Midbar. They didn't live in settled dwellings with conveniences. It was a tent, and the tent was made in a flimsy way so that you could take it apart one-two-three and put it on the back of your donkey and travel with it to the next place.

No fancy floors. No cupboards with sets of dishes. They didn't have any air conditioning. They didn't have refrigerators. No telephones. They didn't have any real stoves. They had nothing but they had *everything* because to them the accomplishments of the spirit was the only purpose for which they lived. The Jewish family in the Midbar grew up in the shadow of Har Sinai. They saw Moshe Rabbeinu's face; they lived with the Torah idealism, with *emunah* and dedication and *daas Hashem* in their bones. It was in their blood.

A Sweet Smelling Nation

Not only did they teach them Torah but they taught them beautiful *middos*; the fragrance of good character and good qualities and proper behavior. כאהלים נטעו ה' – *Like the aloes trees, עלי מים* – *and cedar trees.* Did you ever pass a cedar forest and breathe in the fragrance of the pine forest? So sweet, so redolent. That's what Bilam saw; a nation beautiful in knowledge of Torah and also in *middos tovos* and in character. A people perfumed with all good things.

And that's how it existed down until the end of the *Bayis Rishon*. Our forefathers in the Midbar were so great that the push they gave lasted for generations. Before the Churban the Jewish home was, to a certain extent, like the homes in the Midbar. And therefore absolutely the Jewish home was one of the delights we possessed in the days of old, one of the *machmadeha* that we mourn for even today.

Part III. Rebuilding the Ancient Home

The Prophet's Prophecy

Now Bilam didn't only describe – he prophesied too; and he foretold that the effects of that great and original Jewish home would be forever. כְּנַחֲלִים נְטִיּוּ – *These tents are like streams that stretch out, that keep flowing* (*ibid.* 6). “When fathers and mothers inspire their children like they're doing now in the Midbar,” Bilam said, “so there's going to be an eternal river of greatness, of nobility, that will flow into all the generations.

וְזָרְעוֹ יִזְלֵם מֵמַיִם מְרִלִיּוֹ – *Waters will flow from that spring of the Jewish home, and his seed will be nourished by the mighty waters that come out of these homes* (*ibid.* 7). It means from these tents will come forth rivers of pure water of inspiration and idealism in all the generations; it will continue in many waters for a long, long time.

The River's Flow

The truth is it's forever. I always quote a certain historian who was speaking about the ancient Jewish home. Cracow, he wrote, was a town where children in the street babbled *divrei Torah*. He was a *sonei haTorah*, that historian. But a fact, a verifiable truth like that, even an enemy of Torah couldn't dispute. He said that children, when they played in the street, were babbling *divrei Torah* because it poured out of the home when they opened the doors. Along with the children, the spirit of the Torah home poured into the street.

And it remained that way for many years. I was fortunate as a boy, a little boy, I prayed in those synagogues where old-time Jews *davened*. I was perhaps the only child in the whole synagogue, me and a friend of mine. And these elderly Jews who were fresh from old Russia, they told me about their homes. I heard stories about how people lived in the 1800's. Every home had a tremendous fire of enthusiasm; families who with all their hearts were devoted to this great ideal of Torah living.

You know, nowadays when people talk about 'home sweet home' so they long to come back home again; but really it's nothing but a nostalgia for a place of *gashmiyus*. What is the home anyhow? Of course it's something; there's a certain affection in the home maybe, a certain ease, comfort, in the home. But in the days of old when they looked back and thought back to the homes that they once had in Russia they were thinking only of one thing – the flame of *kedushah* that burned in those homes.

Rebuilding the Home

Now today we don't have that spirit with us as was in the days even of one hundred years ago. Certainly not two thousand years ago, in the days of the Mikdash. And three thousand years ago in the Midbar, the tents that Bilam saw, surely not.

That's why we mourn for those days, for that delight, the ancient home that went lost. And not just for the sake of *aveilus*, just to fulfill the *minhagei Yisroel* of 'The Three Weeks'. We mourn for those days because we want to recapture this ideal, so that we should try, to whatever degree we can, to do our part in fulfilling that prophecy of Bilam, **וְזָרְעוּ בַמַּיִם רַבִּים** – *and his seed will be nourished by these mighty waters that come out of these homes.*

Now, it will be fulfilled; absolutely the holy Jewish home will always continue. And it'll continue until Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes us back to Eretz Yisroel and we can build those homes again. But the question is what will be our part, our contribution to the fulfillment of the prophecy? That's our concern right now; what can we do to rebuild the *churvos Yerushalyim* here in Brooklyn or Monsey or wherever we are.

Holy Books, Holy Homes

It's a lifetime project but some things we must mention. First of all, every Jewish home should have a library of *seforim*; not just a *chumash* or a *siddur*. Every Jewish home should have an ideal having shelves and shelves of *seforim*. That's the easiest way of giving a Torah flavor to your house. It's very important and I'm sure there are very many people who haven't done it yet.

Why not a *Shas* in every Jewish home? It lends a flavor to the home. You should have more than *Shas Bavli*. A *Shas Yerushalmi*! It doesn't cost too much. Buy a big *Shulchan Aruch*. It's a good idea you're hearing now. Today when you go home smash the television screen, hollow it out and put there a new *Shulchan Aruch*. It's impressive to see that. That's the beginning of a Torah home.

Home Decor

Don't say there's a *Shulchan Aruch* in the shul. There's an air conditioner there too but you're not satisfied with that. You installed an air conditioner in your house too, didn't you? There's a chandelier in the shul and still your wife says she needs a chandelier in the home.

And today there are beautiful *seforim*, nicer than chandeliers. *Seforim* are an ornament for the home. And even if they're just for show, to demonstrate that you're proud of your heritage, very good.

Of course, you should open them up once in a while and take a look inside. And you can do it even without understanding what's inside; try that once in a while. The children are running around, they're playing, and you pull out a big *sefer* and sit down at the table to learn. And you're thinking, "I'm doing a little bit, a little gesture, to make my home a Torah home." If your family sees you opening up a very big *Magen Avraham*, the big size, they're impressed by what they see. It has a good effect on them.

Holy Propaganda

I remember when I was about nine years old, a woman told me that her father always was looking in *seforim* in the house. That's her memory of her father. He always had a *sefer* open in the house; always looking in *seforim*.

I always quote the *sefer* called *Toras Habayis* by the Chofetz Chaim, and he urges us that we should learn in the house. First of all you're *mekadesh* your house. Your house becomes a holy place, a little bit more similar to the tents in the Midbar. But secondly the propaganda effect it has. Make an impressive show of it; you take out a big Gemara and sit down at the dining room table and start *zugging*. Let the children see that that's what a Torah home looks like. What, the only thing they should see their father do at the table is *fress*?

The Idealistic Home

Now, Torah means not only *dinim*. A Torah home means a home of Torah idealism. There's so much idealism to teach in the home. When you're with your family, whenever you have an opportunity to talk, try to find ways and means of praising the service of Hashem, praising those who learn *Toras Hashem*.

Just think; you're a mother of a family. You're not *always* talking about eating, about obeying. You're not *always* talking about picking up the toys, about cleaning up. So you should have in mind that you want to put in, whenever you can, a word in praise of *avodas Hashem*. That's how you make a Torah home, by being a propagandist for the Torah. I remember when my mother put in words here and there. She didn't even think of being a propagandist but these words remain in my mind until this day. I was only a little boy but it had its effect.

Torah Table Talk

The father too. Let's say one day you decide, "I'm going to talk today about the *roshei yeshivas*. That's how I'll do it today." So you sit down at the table with your children. They don't know you planned it out. "Children, you know the *roshei yeshivas* are our leaders. What they say, that's what we do."

The children are busy eating – they're hardly listening to you. Say it anyhow. "They're holy people. They're devoted to the study of the Torah and they're raising up the youth of the nation in the ways of the Torah. We have to appreciate them."

Don't talk about baseball heroes, about singers, about politicians, other names that mean nothing. Speak only about Torah people, Torah ideals, places where Torah is studied. Speak about *tzaddikim* and children get the idea – or even adults get the idea; even *you'll* get the idea – "That's how I have to become. If that's what we praise as a model, that's what I'm aiming for."

Firing Up the Children

Speak even about the old-time *tzaddikim*, the great days when Hillel lived. Talk about Hillel's life, how Hillel was a poor young man just married and he had to support his family and he had to learn Torah too, so every morning he went out in the forest and picked wood. He picked branches and he sold them to support his family, and he sat and learned all the time. And his wife was an idealist; she encouraged him to live that way and he became great. Tell these stories to your children and fire their imaginations.

Praise *chassidim*. Praise *yeshivah bachurim*. Instead of knocking *frum* girls and criticizing *frum* boys, *chas veshalom*, praise the *frum* Jew. Your children want to say a complaint against them? Say, "No. In this home we don't say such things. He's a beautiful man! A sweet man." Praise any *frum* Jew who goes *l'fnim mishuras hadin*. Don't say he's extreme. No; the more pious he is, the more you should elevate him.

And so little by little a propagandist finally wins out. It has its effect. There's no question. Like one *rebbeh* said: *Kol propaganda eino chozeres reikam* – no propaganda is ever for nothing. And so every word is another brick in rebuilding the Torah home, the home that we're mourning for.

Mourning and Rebuilding

And so we're talking now not only about mourning. The subject is rebuilding the *churvos* of Yerushalayim because that's what we're doing in our homes. A father and mother, the children too, if they're devoted to the

rebuilding of the Jewish home according to the ancient model, that's the very best expression of their mourning.

And even though you're married a long time already, it's an old home already, try from now to start climbing up again and try to build your house with the glory that once dwelled in the Jewish homes. It's never too late. Even old people can start rebuilding their homes in the spirit of the tents that Bilam saw, the *kedushah* of the Jewish family that flowed even to the days of the Beis Hamikdash. Whatever you can do is worth doing because you're building a house of *kedushah* where the *Shechinah* will dwell among us.

Nobody is an angel, nobody is perfect, but every attempt will be rewarded. And the time will come that *asid Hakadosh Baruch Hu lehachziro lanu*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will bring all our Homes back again with all the glory that we put into it; and it will be glorified even more because of the *Shechinah* that Hashem will reveal when He comes back to Tzion. And once again, under the shadow of the Beis Hamikdash, we'll have the opportunity to rebuild and live in the perfect Jewish home!

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Investing In Your Home

As we lament the loss of Yerushalayim and its treasures, we recall one of those treasures - the magnificent Torah Home, as foretold by Bilam. A true Torah home is one where parents continually inspire and promote a love for Hakadosh Baruch Hu, sharing words of praise about Torah living and the righteous. This week, I commit *bli neder* to dedicating time each day to preparing thoughtful discussions for my children, selecting topics that will transform my home into a true Torah haven, a modern-day Ohalecha Yaakov.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

25 – Shir Hashirim II | **178** – To Be What We Could Be | **603** – Rebuilding the Sanctuary of the Jewish Home | **967** – The Home – Fountain of Torah
E-102 – How Goodly Are Your Tents, O Jacob

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QUESTION

Is it wrong to take one's family on summer vacation?

ANSWER

It depends where and for what reason. If you're taking them to a place like a *frum* bungalow colony where your older children will be able to learn all the time, the younger ones will be in a good environment and you'll be able to be *oisek* in *avodas Hashem* – then why not? But if it's just going away to stop learning – no!

I want to tell you something. This whole business of vacations is not a Jewish business. In Europe the yeshivas didn't have any vacations in the summertime. They continued summer and winter exactly the same. And that's how it should be. How can you take a vacation from *shleimus*, from perfection, from learning Torah? If the yeshivas close down for the summer then all the yeshiva men should make it their business to sit and learn all day long. Review. And review more. Otherwise, whatever you learned you forget and the next time you look at the *masichta* it's like a new *masichta*. It's a pity. Spend the summertime learning and learning and learning. That's our life – “*Ki heim chayeinu*.”

Of course you should always get fresh air. Even in the winter time. Every day you should take a walk – a brisk walk for a half hour or so. Always, always do what you can for your health. And I don't say that you can't go to the country. Go – but only if it's going to help you in *ruchniyus*. If it's only in *gashmiyus*, but in *ruchniyus* there's going to be a loss, then it doesn't pay to sacrifice so much.

Some people have achieved so much in the summer time – so much. They sit and they learn all the time. School teachers have vacation all summer long – so they sit in the country for two months and learn. Ok. Why not? Nothing wrong with the country.

But otherwise our main criteria should always be – what's the best for my *neshamah*? And what's the best for the *neshamah* of my children.

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This week's Q&A sponsored by:

The Sneider Family

As a zechus for our children for beracha, parnassah, and zivugim