

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 167

Balak | The Shema Prayer in its Time - Unity with The Divine



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Publisher and Distributer of the Teachings of
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l

 500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47
Teaneck, NJ 07666

 en@h-l.org.il

 www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en

 HaKatzir 666, Netivot, Israel

 (954) 800-6526

 HameirLaaretsEN

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 054-870-8737

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Parshat Balak

The World's Terror and Dread

The people of Israel had left Egypt.

Like a firestorm, the news spread across the ancient world:

‘The mighty superpower - Egypt the great - had been subdued.

A group of untrained and powerless slaves had shattered Egypt and not a trace was left of the entire Egyptian camp.’

But from where did their powers come ?

The rumor spread and aroused deep dread in the hearts of the surrounding nations -

"Nations heard and trembled, terror gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.

Then the chiefs of Edom panicked, the mighty men of Moab were seized with trembling; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away." (Exodus 15:14-15).

A month passed, and Amalek decided that he would prove to the whole world that they have nothing to fear, since he is stronger than Israel.

Amalek armed himself with an assortment of weapons, ammunition, horses, camels, mechanical equipment, and supplies, and prepared to wage war against Israel.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai revealed that this war was of historical proportions, such that was never repeated ever since (Zohar, Beshalach 65b):

“From the day the world was created until that time, and from then until the arrival of the Messiah, and even in the days of Gog and Magog, there will not be found [a battle] of its kind.”

The reason for this is that this war was waged in the higher worlds, just as it was down below.

Parshat Balak - Og Vanished From The Map

Moses understood this and divided the responsibilities in two, taking the spiritual battle upon himself, and handing over the physical battle to Joshua son of Nun: "And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the

staff of G-d in my hand" (Exodus 17:9).

The results were astounding, of course. The few Amalekites who managed to escape the battle returned to their land beaten and wounded, and the Jewish nation's victory resounded throughout the land.

Og Vanished From The Map

Following the war against Amalek and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Jewish people sent spies to scout the promised land of Canaan.

The results of the unfaithful scouts and their slander about the holy land brought bitter and harsh repercussions, and the People of Israel were decreed to remain in the wilderness for an additional 39 years.

The 40th year of the sojourn in the desert had arrived, and finally, a significant headway had been made towards the land of Israel.

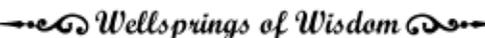
In the month of Elul, they reached the border of Sihon, and Moses sent

messengers to King Sihon, requesting passage through his land.

Sihon refused and waged war against Israel. The Israelites retaliated forcefully, conquered his land, and by the beginning of the following month of Tishrei, were encamped at the border of Bashan, under the rule of Og the giant.

Once again, the ancient world was shaken and full of dread. Sihon was destroyed, and now, Og, the king of Bashan, faced total extinction.

Our sages tell us,¹ that Og was a giant of immense proportions, and loomed as tall as a skyscraper.



1. 'Maayan Hashavua' - Bamidbar, page 402.

Parshat Balak - Og Vanished From The Map

When the People of Israel encamped near his land, he went out and uprooted a mountain 4 kilometers long,² intending to throw it upon the Jewish camp and crush them beneath it.

Moses' height was ten cubits. He took a spear ten cubits long, jumped ten cubits high - and struck him in the ankle, killing him.

His ankle was about 15 meters high, like the height of a five-story building, yet G-d caused the relatively small spear, like the prick of a needle, to fell this invincible giant.

Parenthetically, if we consider it, our situation today in the land of Israel isn't very different.

We are surrounded by many hostile countries and enemies from within and beyond.

Yet, despite the odds that may not be stacked in our favor, we live and prosper in the holy land in a wondrous way.

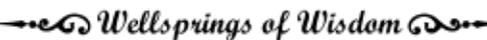
Our military and diplomatic actions may amount to merely a needle's prick, yet we do our part and leave the rest to the Creator, as the verse states: "The horse is prepared for the day of battle: but the salvation is the L-rd's" (Proverbs 21:31).

He who granted us victory over Pharaoh and the mighty Og, stands by our side now as well and grants us miraculous victories.

Our eternal Torah states this explicitly:

"When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots, and a nation greater than you, be not afraid of them: for the L-rd your G-d is with you, He who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 20:1).

This is also indicated by the statement of the prophet: "For I the L-rd, have not changed; and you, the sons of Jacob have not been consumed" (Malachi 3:6).



2. The mountain was three 'parsa' by three 'parsa', and each such 'parsa' is approximately 4 kilometers.

Parshat Balak - Balak's Plan to Unite and Conquer

This is true regarding the realm of security, as well as it is true in the realms of the economy and the fields of health as well, where we succeed and prosper beyond expectations and the natural course of events.

Thus, in every matter: we must do our part, and G-d does the rest. As the verse states: "I will call upon the L-rd, the Most High; to G-d that performs all things for me" (Psalms 57:3).

Balak's Plan to Unite and Conquer

The Jewish conquest of the lands of Sihon and Og was successfully completed, and the People of Israel continued their journey, reaching the borders of the land of Moab.

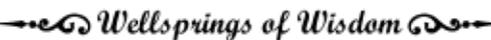
Balak, king of Moab, was petrified and his thoughts were stormy, waves of terror and fear crashed upon him, and he was sure that he was going insane.

'The People of Israel are encamped opposite my land and threaten my very existence,' what am I to do with them?'

He decided to consult with a winged creature that was in his possession, as the divine mystic Rabbi Naftali Hertz Bachrach wrote:³

'Balak was a great sorcerer, and he created a bird through magic. This bird was made of silver and gold and various metals, and through incantations and oaths (swearing by the moon at night and by the sun during the day) and burning incense, this bird would ascend to the place of 'Uzza and Azael' where great secrets and mysteries about what was happening all over the world would be informed to him, as well as what would happen in the future, and then would reveal him these prophecies. Therefore, he was called 'Balak son of Zippor,' literally the son of a bird.

Balak approached the bird, who revealed to him,⁴ that to win this war, he would need to



3. 'Emek HaMelech' (part 2, Kiryat Arba - chapter 111).

4. Zohar (Balak, page 192b).

Parshat Balak - Disunity and Hatred - A Sign of Evil

have the help of Balaam, son of Beor.

The bird further revealed to him that Balaam's immense and awesome stature was comparable to Moses.

As the Vilna Gaon wrote:⁵ When Balak consulted the bird, it explained to him that the Jewish People's strengths are expressed, in the two faculties of speech and action, and correspondingly, the People of Israel received two leaders: Moses and Aaron.

Moses corresponded to speech, and Aaron to action.

In the forces of evil as well, these two strengths of speech and action exist, and the leaders who represent them were Balaam and Balak.

Balaam - speech, and Balak - action.

The bird continued: "If you unite the faculties of speech and action against the Jewish people, you will be able to prevail over them.

And before we continue, let's preface.

Disunity and Hatred - A Sign of Evil

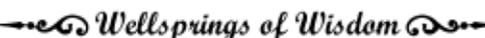
There are many names and titles for the Creator of the World, and each name or title indicates a specific way of His manifestation in the world.

The central name of G-d, the tetragrammaton, the main manner in which G-d wishes to reveal Himself in His world, is characterized by unity and inclusion, and from its light and vitality the entire creation

is sustained, including rebels and sinners.

This name and divine force, influences life, health, and everything that all creations need at every moment.

Moreover, if only this name were to shine in the world and in all beings, love, unity, and inclusion would be manifest.



5. 'Biurei HaGra' (Berachot 14:).

However, G-d desired that human beings have the power of choice and choose whether to love and tolerate the other, or to hate and pursue him.

Therefore, for the sake of choice and trial, He created the forces of impurity, whose essence is division and separation among people, and whose mission is to cause

baseless hatred and division of hearts.

When a Jew succumbs to these forces of impurity, and does not tolerate the other, a grievance is born within him towards the other, and this eventually leads him to wage war against him. This causes the Divine name to be concealed from him, and that he remains distant from any divine perception.⁶

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

6. Rabbi Simon Jacobson wrote (The Path to a Meaningful Life - page 72):

Through true love - love for every creature, one merits the revelation of the divine light, the light that unites and connects everything.

As Hillel the Elder declared (Avot 1:12), 'Love the creatures and bring them closer to the Torah.'

Why are they termed here 'creatures'? Because even if they are merely creatures, they were created by G-d and that is enough of a reason to love them.

True love means true respect. Everything on the face of the earth deserves our attention and respect, and every person is like a diamond. A diamond may appear dirty, but beneath the dust and mud lies unparalleled beauty and charm.

The diamond is precious, regardless of its external appearance, and regardless of

what surrounds it. This is how we should treat every person we meet. We must honor their inner value and dedicate ourselves to helping them with all necessary means. If their external layer seems dirty, we should encourage them to clean themselves. If they have sharp edges, we should help, educate, and empower them to polish themselves through access to their inner resources.

This is the true idea of love - to appreciate every person no matter who they are or where they are and to help them become the best they can be.

As our sages said (Berachot 10.): 'Let sins be consumed, not sinners.' It is not a great wisdom to love someone because they did something good for you, one must love unconditionally

You do not have to accept another person's choices, and you do not have to teach your children those choices, but

Parshat Balak - Disunity and Hatred - A Sign of Evil

To expand on this point:

There are three 'garments' of the soul: thought, speech, and action, and through these three garments, a person's character is revealed.

Therefore, when a person wages war against another, he uses these 'garments':

Action - physical altercations.

Speech - slander and defamation, gossip and evil speech.⁷

Thought - by thinking bad thoughts about another person, one actually harms them and brings them down to the lowest depths.

—*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*—

you must, nevertheless, accept the person themselves.

Even if you reject the philosophy of a certain group of people, you should not reject the people themselves. Love does not mean suffocating someone with what you think is good for them. Love means appreciating the soul of the one standing before you. Love requires the highest sensitivity towards every person, whether it be your family or the entire world.

It means rising above our narrow field of vision and learning to love everyone regardless of their background, education, personality, or temperament. Hillel the Elder continued and said: 'Bring them closer to the Torah,' - love alone is not enough. Truly, we must bring them closer to the Torah. But without love, we will never succeed.

7. **Rabbi** Yair Weinstock recounted ('Sippur L'Shabbat', part 7 - page 82):

The appearance of the city of Tiberias 230 years ago, as the holy Rabbi

Yaakov Shimshon of Shpitovka first saw it upon his ascent from the diaspora, was far from its appearance today, as far as the east is from the west. Barren mountains and exposed expanses as far as the eye could see, and ruined and scattered houses without order. In the valley beyond lay the blue Sea of Galilee, with small and flimsy fishing boats gently rocking on its shore.

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Shpitovka, was a great figure in the Chassidic movement, and was considered one of the sharpest disciples of the Maggid, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch. As such, he was one of those chosen to explain and spread the idea of Chassidism to the greats of the generation.

In the year 5537 (1777), Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon ascended to the land of Israel, and the entire land was full of excitement upon hearing the news. 'A lion has risen from Poland,' they said.

The sages of the Land of Israel entered his presence and found him to be full

Parshat Balak - Disunity and Hatred - A Sign of Evil

and overflowing with wisdom. He had broad knowledge and proficiency in all areas of revealed and hidden Torah.

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon wished to settle in peace and serve his Creator, but was struck by the rage of hunger.

Those years were years of drought in the Land of Israel. The grain was depleted and the inhabitants of the land starved for bread.

This was especially so for those from Poland who were not yet organized under a 'Kolel' like some of the other communities. The Jews of Reisin (Lithuania), for example were sustained and taken care of by 'Kolel Reisin' who provided them with monthly support that helped them somewhat navigate the stormy times. In contrast, the Polish expatriates in the cities of Tiberias and Safed were swollen with hunger.

The community leaders pleaded with Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon to go abroad and travel to foreign lands to seek generous donors among our Jewish brethren.

Rabbi Ephraim Fischel of Zaslav, who was also considered one of the prominent community leaders, traveled abroad to Poland, while Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon traveled to North Africa, Egypt, and Turkey.

Wherever he arrived, he was treated with royal honor, and was given many generous donations for the poor of the Holy Land.

During one of his travels, Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon arrived in the capital of Turkey

- 'Kushta', as Istanbul was called, and stayed at the house of the city's chief rabbi.

The city's chief rabbi treated him with great respect, and honored him according to his stature. He assisted him in every way possible, and organized meetings with great benefactors and held gatherings at the homes of wealthy individuals.

After a few days, the guest noticed that a dark cloud hovered over his host's face.

Dismay entered the guest's heart, thinking that perhaps his stay in the rabbi's house was a burden and a nuisance for him, but out of politeness the host said nothing. An unpleasant feeling enveloped him, and he thought to move his accommodations to another place, but for the time being, refrained from this act, lest his suspicion end up entirely unfounded. He decided to wait a little until the matter became clearer.

One evening, as he sat in his room studying Torah, there was a gentle knock on the door. The chief rabbi, the host, opened the door and bowed politely. 'May I come in?'

'Certainly.'

The rabbi entered and sat on the wide armchair not far from his guest.

'I have a private matter to discuss with you, wise man of Israel,' he began with a serious face.

'I came to consult with you about a difficult problem that has been troubling

Parshat Balak - Disunity and Hatred - A Sign of Evil

my peace of mind for several days and for which I cannot find any solution.'

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon, in addition to his great genius and immense piety, was very humble.

He murmured softly: 'Who am I and what is my life that you should take advice from me. However the scripture says: "Two are better than one" (Ecclesiastes 4:9), maybe through our discussion, the matter will become clearer to you.'

The chief rabbi of Istanbul began:

'There is a parnas (community leader) in our city, a wicked man, a bad and harsh person. He is a great merchant and connected in trade with the royal palace.

He visits the sultan's palace as one visits a friend. If only he would use his high position to benefit his Jewish brothers. Instead, he uses his friendship with the sultan to inform upon his Jewish brothers. Whenever he has a deal with a competing merchant, an enemy, or an adversary, he whispers in the ear of the sultan and speaks ill of his friend. This way, he pushes all his competitors off track, sending them to prison or imposing heavy fines on them for violations no one knew about or false accusations that never happened. No wonder everyone fears him greatly.

Behold - continued the rabbi - recently a respected community member's luck took a turn for the worse, and a

monetary dispute broke out between him and the parnas. After realizing they could not reach a compromise, they decided to bring their case before the rabbinical court.'

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon's face wore an expression of wonder. 'If so, everything is fine' - he asked in amazement, 'they did not go to the secular courts or to the Muslim judge, but rather to a proper Jewish court.'

The rabbi smiled sadly.

'True. But when the parnas arrived before the members of the rabbinical court, he held in his hand a rolled-up letter wrapped in a golden thread, and handed the letter to the head of the rabbinical court - which is me' - he cleared his throat.

I was astonished to find a "firman" (royal decree) from the sultan himself, the king of Turkey.

Thus wrote the sultan: My Jewish friend so-and-so has a dispute with one of fellow Jews. I request from the rabbinical court to acquit my friend in his case because he is a good man.'

The rabbi nearly wept - 'Has your honor ever heard of such a thing? No less than a royal decree from the sultan, ordering the rabbinical court to rule in favor of the wicked informer, regardless of the facts.

I, as the head of the rabbinical court, and my fellow judges found ourselves in dire straits, afraid to deal with this case.

Parshat Balak - Disunity and Hatred - A Sign of Evil

Upon a preliminary brief examination, it became clear to us that the parnas, the informer, is wrong in his claims against his fellow. However, if we dare to rule against him, it would be considered rebellion against the kingdom.

For a week now, I have been in great distress, and I cannot eat or sleep out of worry.'

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon heard the words and shuddered. Then he stood up and said to the rabbi firmly: 'Do not worry. Remove this burden from your heart, and I will involve myself with this matter.'

'**What** can you do?' The rabbi was surprised. He expected advice, but did not anticipate that the distinguished guest from the Land of Israel would take the matter upon himself.

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon unfolded his plan.

'**You** will go to bed and instruct your servant to inform everyone that you have taken ill. I will fill your role for a few days and I will know what to do with the man and his case.'

And so it was. The rabbi went to bed, and the servant announced everywhere that the rabbi was unwell. When the litigants, the informer and his friend the merchant, came to request the rabbinical court to resume the judgment of their case, the servant handed them a letter from the rabbi:

'I am ill and cannot judge your case, but in my house is an important guest, a great rabbi

from the Land of Israel, a Torah giant and an expert in monetary laws. If you agree, he is willing to sit and weigh the matter, listen to your claims, and judge between you.'

The litigants agreed to the sage from the Land of Israel judging them alone, as they had heard that he was a unique expert.

The members of the rabbinical court of Istanbul breathed a sigh of relief when the fear of the informer was lifted from them.

On the appointed day, the two litigants arrived. The informer waved before Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon a letter made of rolled parchment tied with a golden thread.

'**The** sultan sent you a letter.'

The judge read the letter and did not blink. As expected, the sultan commanded, just as he had heard, to rule one-sidedly in favor of his friend because 'he is a good man and deserves to win his case'.

'**Very** well,' he muttered quietly and returned the 'firman' to the hands of the corrupt informer.

The latter expected to see signs of fear on his face and was bitterly disappointed. Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon's eyes sparkled with courage and his face expressed determination.

The two men stood before him and presented their claims one after the other.

He listened to the words, investigated, and inquired until he fully understood the matter and the case became clear to him.

Parshat Balak - Disunity and Hatred - A Sign of Evil

Then he delved into the depths of the halacha, and after much deliberation, it became clear to him beyond doubt that indeed the wicked informer was liable, and the merchant was innocent.

He immediately wrote up a clear, detailed, and well-reasoned verdict and handed it to the litigant.

When the informer saw that he was found liable, he was crestfallen and his face turned ashen.

He could not believe his eyes. He was sure that the sultan's letter would frighten the rabbi and force him to issue a crooked verdict in his favor. He could not believe such audacity of a rabbi against an explicit order of the mighty emperor.

Immediately he ran to the royal palace and told the sultan everything that had transpired.

The sultan's anger burned and seethed. 'Who is this rabbi who dared to defy the command of the mighty sultan?' - he roared. Turkey in those days was an empire that ruled over most of the middle east.

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon did not fear the king's emissaries who came to take him to the palace.

Dressed in their glittering uniforms with swords hanging at their sides, they did not cause the guest's heart to soften.

Without fear or dread, he rose to go with them, taking with him a volume of the Five Books of Moses from the table as if foreseeing the future.

A king in those days was all-powerful. The mere sight of him sitting on his throne among his ministers and servants instilled great fear in all hearts.

However, Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon, whose heart only feared his Father in Heaven, was not impressed at all by the royal pomp, and stood upright as the sultan showered him with fire and brimstone and poured out all his wrath upon him. 'How did you not fear to defy the order of the king?' - the sultan raged.

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon calmly opened the Book of Deuteronomy and read slowly and clearly the words of the verse: "You shall not show favoritism in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be afraid of any man, for the judgment is G-d's" (Deuteronomy 1:17).

He continued to read in front of the king and his ministers other explicit verses, in which the judges are warned against perverting justice.

The king's anger subsided. He and his ministers sat and listened intently, with full concentration and respect, and the words seemed new to them as if they had just been uttered by G-d.

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon did not say even a word beyond the text of the scripture, but it was evident that the words he read made a tremendous impression on his listeners and found favor in their eyes. They were captivated by his wonderful diction, his clear

Parshat Balak - Disunity and Hatred - A Sign of Evil

language, and his courage, standing before them without any fear.

He was sent home at once in peace. The sultan himself rose to escort him and parted from him as one of his good friends.

As the Jewish sage left the palace and the emperor returned to his place, the ministers began to speak in astonishment.

Turkey, as aforementioned, was a vast empire that ruled over many lands and tongues.

The ministers who reached their high offices, each originated from many different nations, and could not contain their great wonder.

The first to speak was the sultan himself, 'Did you all hear how fluent his Turkish was?' His astonishment knew no bounds. 'Only a few among us, born and bred Turks, speak such clear Turkish.'

The chief vizier took the floor next, 'His Majesty will forgive me if I say that he did not speak Turkish. I have lived in Rome, and he spoke in splendid Latin like a true Roman.'

'Nonsense' - the interior minister interrupted - 'I grew up in France, and I must tell you that only a few Frenchmen speak such rich French.'

'You are talking nonsense' - the defense minister cut in - 'I spent many years in Prussia and have never heard such beautiful German!'

It turned out to everyone's amazement that each minister, who had grown up in a different country, heard the Jewish sage speak in their own language, the one closest to their heart. One heard superb Spanish, and another literary Arabic.

The phenomenon was beyond their comprehension. How could it be that each of them could swear that they heard the Jewish rabbi speaking in their own language?

Immediately, they summoned Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon to the palace. This time they received him with royal honor, seating him at their head, next to the sultan's throne, and asked:

'Perhaps you can tell us in which language you spoke? We are all divided in our opinions, each of us heard you speak in a different language, is that possible?'

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Shpitovka looked at the king and the ministers who were eagerly awaiting his answer and replied with great humility.

'Know that these words I spoke to you, I did not speak from my own heart. They are the words of the living G-d.

I read them from G-d's Torah in its original language, in Hebrew.

When reading these verses, I focused on the intentions with which they were said at the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Since the Torah was given then in

The Vilna Gaon⁸ taught that every negative thought damages the person who is thought poorly about, even if they are unaware of it. Just the fact that someone else thinks badly about them, creates harm in their body and soul.

Therefore, the Talmud (Berakhot 31a) teaches:

‘If one suspects his friend of something of which he is found

innocent, he needs to bless him’ - because by thinking poorly about his friend, even without saying anything, he damages him and makes an impression, so he needs to bless him to fill the void and the impression.⁹

All of the above applies specifically to the Jewish people.

However, the nations of the world are entirely different - they

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

seventy languages, each of you heard the words in their own native language.’

The Jewish sage's answer amazed the king and the ministers even more.

Moreover, they were struck by fear of G-d, and the rabbi's honor grew and was sanctified in their eyes.

They recognized him as a holy and exalted sage, whose holiness precedes his wisdom, and the spirit of G-d speaks from his throat.

The informer, who lost his case, waited all this time with bated breath to hear how the Jewish sage would be forced to rule in his favor, and lurked near the palace among the shadows of the trees.

To his utter amazement, he saw a distinguished retinue leaving the palace.

The Sultan and his ministers, his advisers, and servants, all escorted the Jewish sage with great honor and respect, parting from him with a bow and a curtsy, their eyes looking up to him with admiration, and the face of the wicked informer fell.

8. ‘Biur HaGra’ on the Talmudic legends (Berachot 31b) together with the commentary of his son, Rabbi Avraham.

9. Rabbi Yeshaya Cheshin related that the Gra bequeathed to his disciples a ‘good eye’ and the ability to see good in their fellow Jews. They in turn bequeathed it to their disciples, up to and including the Maharil Diskin. The effect of this good eye was so clear and strong that it could heal a person just by looking at them. (Igeret Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin - page 115).

Parshat Balak - Balak and Balaam - A Coveting Pair

cannot achieve true unity at all, and are therefore always scattered and divided.

This is also one of the reasons why the nations of the world seek to destroy the Jewish people at every opportunity, and have such a profound hatred -

it is a hatred that stems from jealousy of the Jews' unity and cohesion.

“However,” the bird revealed to Balak, “if you unite with Balaam, you will have all the weapons of war necessary: thought, speech, and action as well.

Balak and Balaam - A Coveting Pair

Balak son of Zippor assembled a distinguished delegation, and sent them to the 'sorcerer', Balaam son of Beor.

They brought with them a letter, that read:

“To Balaam the great sorcerer, I beseech you to come and help me fight against the People of Israel.

When we unite together, we will have all three faculties at our disposal:

Both of us will think evilly of the People of Israel - the power of thought.

You, Balaam, have the power of speech, and I have the power of action. (As we see, Balaam asked Balak to build him seven altars, for he had the unique power of action, as it is said: "And Balaam said unto Balak, build me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven oxen and seven rams" (Numbers 23:1)).

Balaam received the letter warmly and set out on this mission.¹⁰

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

10. One who has never encountered Balaam son of Beor might imagine him as a one-eyed cowboy, with a cigarette in the side of his mouth, riding a horse through the expanses of Texas.

This however, was not the case.

His character was described well by Rabbi Yehuda Scheinfeld (Osri Lagefen, 11 - page 526):

Balaam son of Beor was a great philosopher, with immense perception, and lofty spiritual levels. As the Torah testifies about him: "The utterance of Balaam son of

Parshat Balak - The Battle Begins

The Battle Begins

Balak and Balaam united, and together they endeavored to arouse accusations against the

People of Israel, and thereby activate the Divine attribute of judgment.¹¹

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

Beor, the utterance of the man whose eye is opened, who hears the words of G-d and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Al-mighty, and falls with his eyes open"

(Numbers 24:15-16).

Balaam was born circumcised, and he was the last of the prophets of the nations, and there was nothing in the world that G-d did not reveal to Balaam.

He was most superior in his wisdom, and the keys to knowledge were entrusted to him, and he spoke with divine inspiration. So much so, that even the secrets that were hidden from the prophets were revealed to him.

At the time when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt and G-d sought a redeemer, Balaam thought that G-d would choose him to redeem the people of Israel, and through him, the Torah would be given to Israel.

When they were redeemed instead by Moses who also brought them the Torah, he became very envious.

When the angel of the L-rd stopped him on his way to curse the Jewish people, he said to Balaam: How can

you destroy this nation that observes 613 commandments?

Balaam answered that he was ready to observe all 613 commandments in their place.

The angel told him: "You seek to destroy a nation that makes a pilgrimage three times a year," meaning that he would not be able to observe the mitzvah of pilgrimage to the Temple because he was lame and blind.

This Midrash is quite astonishing, to think that Balaam was confident that all of the Torah would pass through him.

11. In the discourses of the Mittlerer Rebbe of Lubavitch (Devarim - part 2, page 642), it says:

"The root of the impurity of Balaam is the source of every harsh and evil accusation against Israel.

It is characterized by his evil eye, which greatly sought to find something to accuse Israel of, because his hatred for Israel was inherent and internal.

He therefore greatly exerted effort to concentrate with the most profound scrutiny upon them with his evil eye.

Parshat Balak - The Battle Begins

Then, he would wait for that moment when G-d would be angry, and would just say just one word: 'KaLeM' - 'Destroy them,' and the People of Israel, G-d forbid, would become history.

What did G-d do?¹²

He prevented Balaam from seeing their evil, and granted him instead, for a few moments, the ability to see the true reality of the People of Israel, both the visible and the hidden good within them.

As a result, Balaam inadvertently defended the People of Israel, turning the curses into blessings.

Three times Balaam attempted to find evil, yet each time G-d allowed him to only see the good, and thus, all the curses were all sweetened and turned into blessings.

In his first attempt to curse, the letter 'Kof' (of 'KaLeM'), was sweetened and turned into the blessing: "Ki Mrosh" - "From the top of the mountains I see

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

Even though Israel at that time were at the height of their stature in closeness to G-d and in the revelation of the Divine Presence in their journeys with the Ark and Moses - "And the cloud of the L-rd was over them by day." (Numbers 10:34), nonetheless he strived to scrutinize deeply to find within their goodness some hidden aspect of evil to find an accusation to curse them.

This aspect of the impurity of Balaam extends in every generation, and it hates the Jewish people inherently and deeply, to the extent that it seeks and scrutinizes them deeply to find the means to accuse

them, which is to find the evil hidden within their goodness.

We see that Balaam sought out all the places where the people of Israel were destined to sin, hoping to find such a place from which he could accuse them. As our sages said about the places he searched, such as the plateaus of Baal and the head of Pisgah, as well as the top of Peor overlooking the wasteland, that in each of these Balaam hoped to find an accusation, until ultimately - "He set his face toward the wilderness" (Numbers 24:1)."

12. See 'Sefer Haparshiyot' (Bamidbar 2 - page 213), by Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov

Parshat Balak - The Nation Shall Rise Up Like a Lion

them, and from the hills I behold them" (Numbers 23:9).

In the second attempt, the letter 'Lamed' was sweetened and turned into the blessing: "Lo Ish" - "G-d is not human, that he would lie; neither the son of man, that he would renege" (ibid, verse 19).

In the third attempt, the letter 'Mem' was sweetened and turned into the blessing: "Ma Tov" - "How good are your tents, Jacob, and your dwellings, Israel" (ibid, 24:5).

Thus, the mere act of seeing the good of the People of Israel (even if involuntarily), sweetened the judgments and transformed them into great and immense blessings.

Of all the many blessings Balaam uttered, we wish expand upon one of the verses:

"Behold, the nation shall rise up like a lion, and lift up as a cub lion: they shall not lie down until they eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain" (ibid, 23:24).

The Nation Shall Rise Up Like a Lion

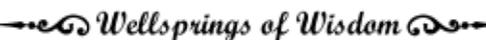
The Midrash Tanchuma (Balak 14), interprets the verse as follows:

"Behold, the nation shall rise up like a lion, and lift up as a cub lion," (Numbers 23:24) - No nation in the world is like them, for they sleep surrounded by Torah and commandments. They rise from their sleep, and stand up like lions to snatch up the recitation

of Shema and proclaim the sovereignty of the Holy One.

Then they are lions, and venture out into the world with trade and business.

If one of them encounters any misfortune or attackers come to harm them, they proclaim the sovereignty of the Holy One, blessed be He.¹³



13. Rabbi Chaim Gerlitz, recounts ("Baal Matok Midvash," page 231):

The revered Rabbi Daniel Frish, of blessed memory, author of "Matok

Parshat Balak - The Nation Shall Rise Up Like a Lion

Midvash" (on the Zohar), suffered throughout his life from illnesses and pains.

One day, his arthritis became very severe, and on the advice of the Rebbe of Tosh, he sought medical consultation in hopes of finding a cure for his ailments.

He first went to London, and met a world-renowned doctor.

However, he quickly realized that the English doctor had nothing new to offer, and he packed his belongings.

While considering his next steps, he received a letter from one of his disciples, who excitedly wrote about a mysterious doctor who lived in a remote village not far from Manila, the capital of the Philippines, who purportedly had a cure for the incurable disease.

Even though the idea mentioned in the letter seemed like a pipe dream, considering that eminent doctors had been unable to help, nevertheless, the disciple insisted there was truth to the claims. This he verified with a significant number of patients who traveled to Manila bedridden and returned healthy.

After consulting with his friends, great sages of Israel, Rabbi Daniel Frish set out for Manila, accompanied by his son Rabbi Zvi Aryeh.

Together with this new hope, his heart was filled with fear - who knows what kind of mysterious doctors were in the Philippines?

After settling into the lodging prepared by a local community member, Rabbi

Frish began to inquire about the location of the remote village.

It turned out to be a four-hour drive from Manila, in the heart of a backward and remote area whose inhabitants hadn't ever seen cars before.

Reaching the doctor involved significant hardships, but having come this far, he wouldn't turn back now.

Miracles and wonders were attributed to this doctor. Many arthritis patients who arrived at his clinic in wheelchairs later returned to thank him, walking on their own two feet, as healthy as any other person.

Upon entering the house, Rabbi Frish's heart began to pound with fear. The aura of mystery that filled the air did not appeal to him at all; Who knew if he had not wandered into a den of sorcery?

A scholarly-looking man emerged from the doctor's room, and Rabbi Frish approached him, asking, "Could you explain to me this doctor's method of treatment?"

The man's eyes lit up, and he explained: "The doctor specializes in channeling spiritual forces to repair the spiritual aura surrounding one's body, thereby addressing the root cause of the disease."

Rabbi Frish listened and shuddered. He had invested decades of effort in refining and purifying his body and pouring out his soul before G-d. All this could be lost in a single moment, in just one second, it could all be robbed from him by a person wielding forces of impurity

Parshat Balak - The Nation Shall Rise Up Like a Lion

He closed his eyes, mustering all of his strength—'If he wants to heal me with forces of impurity, I will fight against him,' he said to himself with conviction.

The door opened, and Rabbi Frish entered the room, fixing his fiery gaze on the strange doctor, and sat down without a word.

Rabbi Frish's turbulent thoughts had cast fear and terror around him, and the doctor recoiled for a moment, looking at him with dull eyes.

Then the doctor approached and with eyes closed in deep concentration, began waving his hands around Rabbi Frish's head. His forehead was etched with furrows, and his hands moved up and down like wings, and muttered unintelligible statements.

Rabbi Frish's holy thoughts surged, and his frail body trembled with fear.

Rabbi Frish later described those moments:

"**I** envisioned before me, the statement: 'I have set the L-rd always before me,' and repeated many times: 'I believe with complete faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, His glory fills the whole earth, and there is no place devoid of Him. He fills all worlds, transcends all worlds, and exists beneath all worlds.'

He sustains and creates all the worlds and all the creatures and beings within them, with His holy and pure abundance. If His abundance would cease for but a moment, Heaven forbid, all would be null and void.'

I repeated several times the verse:

'**You** are the L-rd alone; You have made the heaven, the heaven above the heavens, and all their hosts, the Earth and all things upon it, the seas and all that is in them, and You sustain them all, and the hosts of heaven worship You' (Nehemiah 9:6)."

Suddenly the doctor's eyes began to roll, and he turned pale as a sheet. His assistant, standing not far away, looked at him in fear and concern.

The doctor paused for a moment, staring at Rabbi Frish.

Rabbi Frish did not stop his holy thoughts, and an aura of radiant light was on his face.

The doctor resumed his movements with increased intensity. His body began to shake, and his tongue launched into a series of incantations. His hands moved suddenly upward, as if gathering wind from an unknown source, and then he slowly lowered them upon Rabbi Frish's head, as if bestowing the gathered spirit upon him.

Then the doctor's body twisted and turned like a drowning man clutching at a straw until he collapsed onto a nearby chair with a loud moan. He looked at Rabbi Frish with an angry and accusing gaze. 'Can you tell me what you are thinking about?'

Rabbi Frish calmly replied, 'I am thinking: "There is none besides Him." The Creator of the world, the infinite light, is one, unique, and there is nothing else besides Him.'

'**Not** good, not good at all!' grumbled the doctor, straightening his back slightly.

Parshat Balak - The Nation Shall Rise Up Like a Lion

"They shall not lie down until they eat of the prey," - when they say 'the L-rd is One,' their attackers are consumed before them.

When he goes to sleep, he entrusts his soul to G-d, saying, "Into Your hand, I commit my spirit" (Psalms 31:6).

And when he awakens, he proclaims the sovereignty of the Holy One.

It is therefore that Balaam says that there is no such nation."

In summary:

Balaam, by nature, had a powerful evil eye, and he searched - and found, in every person, their points of weakness.

He therefore thought that he could fight against the People of Israel as well.

~~~~~ *Wellsprings of Wisdom* ~~~~~

**If** you want me to help you, you must stop these thoughts and surrender to me. Submit yourself to me. Do you understand?'

**Rabbi** Frish understood all too well.

**He** leapt from the chair and burst out of the clinic in a dance.

**The** doctor and his assistant stared after him with widened eyes, realizing that there was a Supreme power above all that they had known.

**The** sun, starting to set in the west, reminded Rabbi Frish that the time for the Mincha prayer had come.

**He** hurried out of the backward village and stood to pray among the trees of the field.

**He** lifted his eyes to the heavens, and the holy words of 'Ashrei' burst from his lips with immense fervor:

**'Fortunate** are those who dwell in Your house; they will yet praise You, Selah. Great is the L-rd and greatly praised, and His greatness is unfathomable.'

**The** words of prayer mingled with emotional phrases and expressions, and tears streamed down his face uncontrollably.

**"How** can I thank You, my Father in Heaven, for granting me the merit to discover the truth of Your unity here in the depths of the abyss?"

**Rabbi** Frish later testified about himself:

**"I** prayed the Mincha prayer then with such a great awakening of the soul that I did not merit even on Yom Kippur during the Ne'ilah prayer!

**If** only that I may merit to feel this uplifting of the soul again in my lifetime."

**Parshat Balak - The Unbreakable Chain of the Soul**

However, G-d had mercy on us, and turned around his vision from evil to good.

G-d showed him, against his will, the goodness within every Jew; not the entire lofty essence of a Jew, but rather a few isolated points.

One such illuminating point that G-d allowed him to see, was the virtue of the Jewish People who recite the Shema in its time.

We will now discuss at greater length the great power of the recital of Shema.

**The Unbreakable Chain of the Soul**

**Rabbi** Yoram Abargel of blessed memory, in his work "Imrei Noam," (Haazinu, 2) explained:

The verse says, "The L-rd's portion is His people; Jacob is the chain of His inheritance" (Deuteronomy 32:9).

This verse speaks about the soul of each and every Jew, which is composed of two aspects: external and internal.

Regarding the internal aspect of the soul, it is said: 'G-d's portion is His people,' and regarding the external aspect of the soul, it says: 'Jacob is the chain of His inheritance.'

Meaning: every Jew's soul is "a portion of G-d above" (Job 31:2), and its main and internal

part is above in the higher worlds, close to His glorious throne, while only a small and external part is down here in this world within a person's body.

Connecting between them, is a spiritual 'chain', referred to as "the silver cord" (Ecclesiastes 12:6).

It is through this chain, which connects the part of the soul in the body to its root in the higher worlds, that all of the person's vitality and energy descend, and through it ascend all the person's prayers to Heaven, and through it, Torah insights also descend to him.

One must carefully maintain the strength of this chain and not cause it any weakness, G-d forbid.

**Parshat Balak - The Light of Shema**

There are several commandments that have the special power to strengthen the connection between

the soul's part in the body and its root above, and one of them is the timely recitation of the Shema.

**The Light of Shema**

**Rabbi** Eliezer Shlomo Shick wrote the following (Siddur Eit Ratzon, page 204):

“You must understand that the mind cannot fully grasp the intentions, secrets, and unifications that are meant to be contemplated during the recitation of the Shema.

The mitzvah of reciting the Shema is a revelation of G-dliness, the unification of the Creator, blessed be His name, and the drawing down of higher consciousness.

The intentions and unifications printed in Shaar HaKavanot and other prayer books, are but a drop in the ocean; the mind cannot comprehend the full extent of the intentions.

Therefore, fortunate is the one who casts aside his intellect and wisdom, and recites it with simplicity, attaching himself to the meaning of the words, and reciting

them word by word slowly, without rushing or swallowing the words.

Our holy sages have said (Midrash Rabba, Kedoshim 6):

"Do not consider the Shema lightly, for it contains 248 words corresponding to the 248 limbs of a person. The Holy One, blessed be He, says, 'If you keep Mine (the Shema) and recite them properly, I will keep yours.'"

The holy Zohar states (Zohar Chadash, Acharei Mot 59a): "One who recites the Shema properly, each word that is recited, brings light and healing to the corresponding limb."

Additionally, it is important to be very careful not to miss the time of the Shema, for it is a positive Torah commandment to recite the Shema in the morning and evening at their proper times.

Our holy sages said (Kohelet Rabba 4:18): "Reciting the Shema

**Parshat Balak - Reciting Shema in The Summertime**

on time is more beloved than a thousand burnt offerings of a fool."

One who is careful to recite the Shema on time, is blessed from the source of all blessings, and draws

upon himself light, radiance, vitality, and attachment to the Creator, blessed be His name.

Fortunate is he in this world, and fortunate is he in the next!"

**Reciting Shema in The Summertime**

**In** conclusion, we quote from our book "Chelev Ha'aretz" (Vol. 1, page 95):

"Our holy sages explain that when a person sleeps, his soul departs from his body, and in place of the soul's sanctity, 248 parts of impurity reside in his 248 limbs.

When a person wakes up, the impurity does not leave his 248 limbs, even if he engages in Torah and mitzvot, until he recites the Shema, which has 248 words. The Shema has the special ability to remove impurity from each of the limbs with each word recited.

From this, a person can understand the great care needed, to ensure that the time for the Shema is not missed. Aside from neglecting the positive commandment of the morning Shema, the impurity that

rests upon him does not depart, causing a foul odor of impurity to emanate from his limbs and sinews.

Our holy sages were very strict about this and said that neglecting the mitzvah of the Shema causes an irreparable loss, that drives a person out of this world, delays the redemption of Israel, and prevents their prayers from being heard.

Our sages said in the Gemara (Berachot 10b): "Reciting the Shema on time is greater than engaging in Torah study." If the world was created only for the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven's kingship (Shema), morning and evening, it would be sufficient.

As such, it is incumbent upon parents to explain to their children, pleasantly, the great

importance of this holy mitzvah of reciting the Shema on time, and to emphasize how serious it is to neglect this mitzvah.

Experience shows that when children are explained in sweet and pleasant ways, in language they can understand, the words penetrate deeply and have a profound effect, as the saying goes, "Words that come from the heart enter the heart."

Parents and educators must realize the great responsibility and holy duty upon their shoulders, concerning this matter of reciting the Shema on time.

This applies throughout the year, but especially in the summer, when the time for the Shema ends significantly earlier than in the winter (on some days, according to the 'Magen Avraham,' the latest time is around eight o'clock in the morning).

This applies to all age groups, to those of school age, and even more so to those who have reached the age of adulthood.

As Rabbi Chanina declared in the Talmud (Chullin 24b): "The hot water and oil that my mother used to bathe me in during my childhood, are what sustained me in my old age" - meaning that the habits and good traits instilled by parents and educators during childhood and youth remain with a person throughout their life, and become firmly established in their hearts.

Indeed, how fortunate and praiseworthy is the diligent person, who reads the Shema in its proper time according to all opinions. From Heaven, they are bestowed with great capabilities that allow them to shine in the study of Torah and holiness throughout the day. Therefore, it is no wonder that they are more drawn to holiness, fear of Heaven, prayer, and Torah study than their peers.

Thus, it is appropriate to recommend to parents and educators to set the time for prayer early in the morning, enabling the fulfillment of the mitzvah of Shema properly within the order of prayer.

**Parshat Balak - Reciting Shema in The Summertime**

If pressed for time, the Shema can be recited before the prayer.

recited in its proper place according to halacha.

Nevertheless, when constructing the daily schedule, it is preferable that the Shema be

This ensures that all opinions are satisfied in the fulfillment of this great mitzvah.



### Summary and Practical Applications

**1.** The soul of every Jew is composed of two aspects: external and internal.

The essential and internal aspects of the soul are located above in the higher worlds, below the throne of Glory, while the external aspects of the soul are found down here in this world within a person's body.

Between these two elements of the soul, connects a spiritual chain, called 'the silver cord.'

Through this chain, all of a person's vitality, life force, and Torah study descend, and through it, all of a person's prayers ascend to Heaven.

One must vigilantly maintain the strength of this chain and not cause it any weakness, G-d forbid.

**2.** There are several commandments that have the special power to strengthen the connection between the soul in the body and its source above, one of these being the timely recitation of the Shema.

It must be recited properly, word by word, with great care to pronounce each and every word.

**3.** The mind cannot possibly comprehend the great secrets and Divine unifications that can be intended in the recitation of the Shema, since the commandment of reciting the Shema is a true revelation of G-dliness, and unity of the Creator, blessed be He.

**4.** When saying, 'Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever,' one should intend that G-d is the Creator, Life-giver, and Sustainer of all existence. In truth, there is no existence without Him at all, and everything is essentially G-dliness alone.

**5.** Our sages explain that when a person sleeps, his soul departs his body, and in their stead, 248 limbs of impurity enclothe themselves within his 248 limbs.

Upon waking up from his sleep, the impurity does not leave his 248 limbs - even if he engages in Torah and commandments - until he recites the Shema. It contains 248 words, and each word recited, expels the impurity from one of his 248 limbs.

**Parshat Balak - Summary and Practical Applications**

**6.** Our sages have already stated that one who recites the Shema in its proper time, is greater than one who engages in Torah study.

Reciting the Shema in its time, is more beloved than a thousand sacrifices offered by a fool on the altar, and if the world were created only for the purpose of accepting the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven in the morning and evening, it would be sufficient.

**7.** As such, it is incumbent upon parents to explain to their children the great importance of this commandment of reciting the Shema in its time, and conversely, how severe the nullification of this holy commandment is.

Experience has shown that when explained pleasantly in a language that children's hearts can accept, the words penetrate deeply and have a powerful effect on them. As we are told, "words that come from the heart enter the heart."

**8.** Parents and educators must take to heart the great responsibility and holy duty regarding recital of the Shema in its time. This is true all year, but especially so in the summer months when the time for the Shema ends much earlier than in the winter days, and attention should be paid not to let the students miss this commandment.

**9.** Therefore, it is fitting that educators, and principals set the time of prayer in the school for an earlier hour in the morning, so that they can recite the Shema in its time, within the order of prayer.

When time is short, it is certainly possible to recite it before the start of the prayer, as this fulfills all opinions.

In the merit of fulfilling this great and lofty mitzvah, may we all be blessed with abundance of blessings and goodness.

**Shabbat Shalom!**

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” A person must rejoice when the time for  
**prayer**

as the author of the Tanya says that:

every Jew, wherever he is, receives from G-d at the time of prayer a gift called **"Mochin D'Gadlut,"** meaning that the understanding of everything is expansive before him, as is written  
**"Open wide your mouth and I will fill it"** ”



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14<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, 5784



| City        | Candle Lighting | Shabbat Ends | Rabbeinu Tam |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| New York    | 8:05 pm         | 9:10 pm      | 9:34 pm      |
| Miami       | 7:55 pm         | 8:50 pm      | 9:25 pm      |
| Los Angeles | 7:45 pm         | 8:45 pm      | 9:15 pm      |
| Montreal    | 8:18 pm         | 9:29 pm      | 9:47 pm      |
| Toronto     | 8:35 pm         | 9:44 pm      | 10:04 pm     |
| London      | 8:48 pm         | 10:12 pm     | 10:17 pm     |
| Jerusalem   | 7:29 pm         | 8:18 pm      | 9:13 pm      |
| Tel Aviv    | 7:26 pm         | 8:15 pm      | 9:09 pm      |
| Haifa       | 7:27 pm         | 8:16 pm      | 9:10 pm      |
| Be'er Sheva | 7:24 pm         | 8:13 pm      | 9:07 pm      |

**Pathways to the Heart**

*From the Words of*

**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*The essence of a Jew is holiness, no Jew is essentially evil, as the verse states "And your people are all righteous" (Isaiah 60).*

*If you believe someone else to be evil, first check your own misdeeds, as our sages say "Your own blemish do not declare upon your fellow" (Bava Metzia 59b).*

*The Baal Shem Tov explains: if you find a blemish in your fellow, know that it is merely your blemish that you discovered, it is firstly your own, and make every effort not to find and declare it upon the other.*



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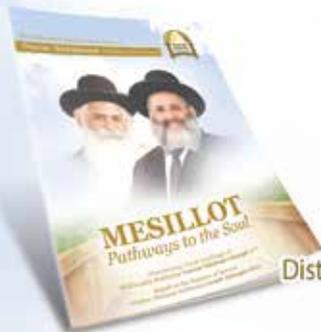
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