

speeding down the track to perfection.

When you feel good about your overall progress in Torah observance and personality improvement, keep in mind that your progress is certainly commendable, but there is still much more to do. Kill that complacency before it grows too large to overcome. This change in attitude will keep you growing until you reach the sky! (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

Wings of Prayer

“Dandelions transform into grey fluff. The grey fluff has seeds in it with wings, like parachutes. When the wind blew, the parachutes floated into the air and one of the seeds landed into a place. From that seed, a beautiful new dandelion plant grew forth through a complicated process with many elaborate details.”

When we pray, our words fly into the air and arrives at a perfect destination. Wings of Prayer can revive any challenging situation that seem impossible to conquer. (Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller’s teachings with permission from Simchas Hachaim Gedola Bais Yisrael)

Departure Delayed

Rav Shneur Kotler, *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Bet Midrash Gavohah* in Lakewood, was in New York for a wedding. He had made the trip from Lakewood even though he was under intense pressure to get back as soon as possible for an important meeting later that night in his yeshivah office. A year earlier, the father of the groom had done the yeshivah a favor, and R’ Shneur felt that it was only right to reciprocate and participate in the gentleman’s family *simhah*.

As R’ Shneur and the young man who had driven him to New York made their way into the wedding hall, R’ Shneur said, “Please be sure to be waiting right at this door immediately after the ceremony. I must get back to Lakewood as soon as possible.” Naturally, the young man agreed to the *Rosh Yeshivah’s* request.

After the ceremony, the young man made his way to the main entrance. Within moments, R’ Shneur was there. “I have to stay a little while longer,” said R’ Shneur to his driver, “but I should be ready in about ten minutes.”

The young man thought that perhaps some important matter had come up that demanded R’ Shneur’s attention, and so he watched to see just where it was that R’ Shneur was going. However, the *Rosh Yeshivah* didn’t seem to be going anywhere specific. He chatted with a few people who came over to him, he made his way to the father of the groom and wished him *Mazal Tob*, and then went to the father of the bride and wished him *Mazal Tob* too.

After a while, R’ Shneur once again met the driver at the door and said, “I’m sorry, but I must stay just a bit longer, and then we will be on our way.”

It was almost twenty minutes later when R’ Shneur returned to the appointed place, and finally the *Rosh Yeshivah* and his student began the trip back to Lakewood.

In the car, R’ Shneur turned to the young man and said, “You are probably wondering why I felt we should stay the extra time. Let me explain. You see, at the ceremony, I was not given an honor (to say one of the blessings). There were many important people there, and I’m sure the families were very careful about whom to honor with the recitation of the seven wedding blessings. However, it occurred to me after the ceremony that if I were to leave right away, someone may think that I left because I was either embarrassed or insulted that I had not been given an honor. Perhaps even the father of the groom might feel that I left early because I was upset. That would have put a damper on his happiness. I therefore felt it my obligation to stay a little bit longer so that it could not possibly seem that anyone had offended me in any way.” (Around the Maggid’s Table)

The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאָה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

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SHABBAT BALAK ☆ שַׁבַּת בַּלַּק

Haftarah: Michah 5:6-6:8

JUNE 25-26, 2021 16 TAMUZ 5781

Early Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 6:30 pm	Shaharit: 4:29, 6:45, 8:25, 9:15 am
Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 7:00 pm	Morning Shema by: 8:15 am
Late Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 7:30 pm	Shabbat Class: 6:50 pm
Candlelighting: 8:11 pm	Shabbat Minhah: 1:30 & 7:50 pm
Evening Shema after: 9:09 pm	Shabbat Ends: 9:09 pm (R"Y 9:41 pm)
These times are applicable <u>only</u> for the Deal area.	Weekday Minhah: 6:45 & 7:30 pm

The fast of the 17th of Tamuz will be on Sunday, June 27.

Fast begins at 3:58 a.m. and ends at 8:59 p.m. Minhah with tefillin 8:00 p.m.

The period of the Three Weeks begins on this day. During this time, no weddings or parties with music are permitted.

Mabrook to Jay and Joyce Weitzman on the marriage of their son, David, to Sarah Sasson.

A Message from our Rabbi

”גַּם-אֶתְכֶּה הַרְגֵתִי וְאוֹתָהּ הִחַיֵּיתִי”

“Also you I would have killed and let her live.” (Bamidbar 22:33)

Rashi brings from the *Midrash* that after Bil’am’s donkey spoke to Bil’am, Hashem killed it in order that people won’t see the donkey and say, “Look at this animal that managed to embarrass Bil’am in front of his friends!”

Rabbi Avraham Leitner says, this is something exceptional to learn – how the Torah is sensitive to the embarrassment of even the wicked Bil’am. Besides for being an extremely low fellow, he wished to use his prophecy to harm Israel. Nevertheless, Hashem was still careful not to embarrass him more than he deserved. How much more do we need to take care with the feelings of another Jew.

Rabbi Shalom Schwadron tells over the following episode about himself: There was a certain Yeshiva where the *Mashgiah* had to be absent for a certain period of time. Without having a figurehead to lead the students, Reb Shalom was asked to step in. He did not agree too quickly. He was scared that his *mussar* classes would be much more accepted and enjoyed by the students and when their present *Mashgiah* would eventually

return, there would be some friction and resentment which would cause bad feelings towards their *Mashgiah*.

Not knowing what to do, Reb Shalom presented his dilemma to Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, the late and revered *Mashgiah* of Ponovetz. The answer he received was clear and precise. “I have a ruling from my Rebbes, that even if the *Bet Hamikdash* was ready to be built, but it would cause embarrassment to a Jew, then Hashem would not allow it to happen.” With that, of course, Reb Shalom declined the offer.

We see this clearly from Moshe *Rabenu*. He refused to accept the leadership of leading the Jews out of Egypt because he was scared that his older brother Aharon would be hurt. Moshe argued with Hashem for seven days, delaying the redemption of Israel and maybe even not allowing it to take place altogether, if not for Hashem assuring that Aharon would be only too happy. “He will see you and rejoice in his heart.” May we all merit to follow in their footsteps. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

Partial View

Though Bilaam had a notorious reputation, for curses that never failed and the ability to cast spells upon whomever he desired, this time it didn’t work. He tried, for a large fee, to curse the Jewish nation, who were camped opposite of Moab; but each time he opened his mouth blessings and not curses were emitted.

Each time the mission failed, Balak flew into a rage. Bilaam tried to subvert G-d’s intentions and appease Him with sacrifices — all to no avail.

Balak tried another strategy. “Come with me to a different place from there you will see them; however, you will see its edge and not all of it — and you will curse it for me from there.” It didn’t work either.

What’s the difference if Bilaam were to see all of Israel or he would stand in a place that only offers a partial view? Is the G-d of Israel not ever-present, protecting them in part as well as in whole? Why would a curse work when Bilaam only viewed Israel from a partial perspective?

A pious, very talented Jewish scholar was placed on trial in a small Polish town outside of Lvov. The charges were based on some trumped-up complaint. The young scholar was beloved by his townsfolk as he served in the capacity of the town’s *shochet* (slaughterer), *hazzan* (cantor), and *cheder rebbe*. Thus many people in town were worried as he appeared before a notoriously anti-Semitic judge.

As he presented the charges, the judge mockingly referred to him as Mr. Butcher. In fact all through the preliminary portion of the kangaroo court, the judge kept referring to the beloved teacher and cantor as a butcher, meat vendor or slaughterer. Finally, the young scholar asked permission to speak. “Your honor,” he began, “before I begin my defense, I’d like to clarify one point. I serve in many capacities in this shtetl. The people at the synagogue know me as the cantor. The children at the school and all of their parents know me as the teacher. It is only the animals that know me as the butcher!”

The commentaries explain that Bilaam knew that the power of his curses would only take effect by finding a small breach in the beauty of Israel — a breach that he could expand with the power of his evil eye. He looked at all of Israel and could not find any flaw to amplify and use as a curse.

Balak advised him to use another ploy. He made a suggestion that would be followed for generations by all the detractors of Jews. “Only look at them,” he said, “from a partial perspective. Go up to the edge of the mountain; you shall see their edge and not all of them — and you will curse them for me from there.”

Balak told Bilaam to concentrate on some poor aspects of the people. It is always possible to find a few exceptions to a most ethical and moral nation. There are those who

stand on the edge of the mountain and take a partial view. They talk about Jews who may be accused of crimes or improprieties. They dissect individuals and embellish what they perceive as character flaws or personal faults. They point to those flaws as if they represent the entire person, as others point to harmful Jews as if they were the entire nation. And then they shout their curses. But Bilaam could not find the breach that he was looking for. Because Israel as a nation, as well as each individual Jew, cannot be judged by anything less than a total picture — for we are all one. (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)

Before It’s Too Late

What a bizarre episode! Bilaam defies explicit instructions from the Almighty not to go and curse the blessed Nation of Israel. Meeting with continual frustration by his blundering beast of burden, he remains undeterred, and even gets into a fight with his donkey. If at any early point he would have gotten the “hint” and turned back, this chapter might never have been recorded and he may have saved himself from the ugly title “wicked”. Those bumps and bruises on the road should have given him pause to arrest himself and reverse directions. His overpowering desires blinded him to the obvious warning signs, as he drove recklessly into the abyss of human history.

Cogitating on Bilaam’s condition awakens an incident from when I was yet an unmarried Yeshiva student. I pulled into a gas station and rolled up to the second pump politely leaving room for the next customer. When my car was parked and I was about to open my door, I felt a jolt. The car pulling in had bumped my car. I turned around and there was the car that hit mine backing up slowly.

I was about to get out when suddenly I experienced another jolt. He did it again. The first time I was willing to believe was an accident but the second time was certainly intentional. I quickly measured and weighed my response options. I was ready to go back there to confront him!

I thought to myself, “If he’s crazy enough to do this, then maybe he’s crazy enough to do something worse. Perhaps he’s got something concealed in his pocket or under the seat that gives him wild confidence. Maybe he doesn’t have anything and I can readily handle him. Either way I’ll bring a mountain of legal or physical trouble on myself. If I win, I lose and if I lose, I can really lose.” All this thinking happened in a nano-second. I look back with pride years later. I am happy to be alive to tell the tale. I did not step out of the vehicle. I put my car in gear and drove away. “Discretion is the better part of valor.” “Don’t be right! Be smart!” Had I confronted him who knows what the result would have been?! I could have hurt him or been hurt.

It wasn’t easy at the time. My ego was raging but my intellect was advising me to get the message before it’s too late. (Rabbi Label Lam)

No Rest is Best

An important step towards self-improvement is taking spiritual inventory on a regular basis. We must do a certified statement of our spiritual balance sheet, taking credits and debits into account. The great of the *Mussar* movement suggest a daily accounting of our behavior.

There is a danger, however, to be aware of and avoid: complacency. When you evaluate your spiritual level and see that the days and months of study and personality improvement have turned you into someone who is a much better person than you were two or three years ago, you may feel smug satisfaction and perhaps even a touch of *ga’avah* (haughtiness). The feeling that you have done enough is a self-defeating tactic introduced by your *yesser hara*, who cannot tolerate all the progress you have made. He will go so far as to praise your progress in order to derail your spiritual freight train from