

And All Believe

A Weekly Leaflet from the House of "Bnei Emunim"



Parshas Balak

In the Pathways of Emunim:

Amen and Prayer in this Parsha

Getting up early to Serve Hashem

The People who jump up like Lions

Chazal teach us (Sanhedrin 105b) that from the blessings Bilaam gave to Israel we can deduce which curses he had really intended to give them. This suggests that it wasn't for nothing that Bilaam took great care in choosing what things to bless them over - the merits of their ancestors, their shuls and Batei Midrashim, as well as their tznius and avoiding forbidden relationships - these are only some of the things that distinguish the Jewish people from the other nations, and it was these things that Bilaam wanted to weaken them in through his curses which, with Heaven's help, were transformed into blessings.

One of the main things that stands out among them, a principle which over the centuries was established as the starting point of the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch - the fundamental works which have guided us and shined light on all our ways and which have become fundamental bases in all the literature of halacha - is expressed in the verse (23:24): Behold, a people that springs up like a lion cub, and like a lion arises, which teaches us about a Jew's obligation to put forth sacrifice for serving the Creator even before his eyes are fully opened after his nightly sleep. On this verse Rashi cites a Midrash: "When they get up in the morning, they overcome their sleepiness like lions to seize mitzvos like donning a talis, saying Shema and laying tefillin.

Chazal saw such great importance in this quality that they even considered including Bilaam's blessings as part of the Kriyas Shema that we say several times a day. Thus we learn in Brochos (12b), "R' Abahu ben Zutrasai said in the name of R' Yehuda bar Zevida, "The Sages wanted to include Parshas Balak in Kriyas Shema, and why didn't they do so - because it would be too much trouble for the people [to have to say such a long parsha several times a day]. But the reason they did want to include it was for the sake of the the verse, Behold, a people that springs up like a lion cub, and like a lion arises.

Thus Rabbeinu Yaakov ben Asher, the Baal HaTurim, starts his compilation of halacha, the "Tur", with the Mishna in Avos (5:20): 'Yehuda ben Teima says, "Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift-footed as a hind, and courageous as a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven.' We see from this that a person has to be courageous as a lion to get up in the morning to serve his Creator, and even if his yetzer horo tries to entice him in the winter by telling him, 'How can you get up in the morning, it's so cold?' or in the summer by saying, 'How can you get out of bed, you haven't slept enough yet?' you should overpower him and get up! You should be the one to wake up the dawn rather than let it awaken you."

When we read this opening passage in the Tur a question immediately comes to us: Why did he choose this Mishna - which does not talk so clearly about getting up in the morning - to make his point rather than our verse - Behold, a people that springs up like a lion cub, and like a lion arises - which is the source from which Chazal derived this halacha. The Chidushei HaRim was bothered by this question (Sefer HaZechus, Orach Chaim 1), and explains that the verse is speaking only about tzadkikim who have never sinned and therefore have Hashem's fear so firmly ingrained in their souls that they can overcome their yetzer horo like a lion overcomes its prey. The Tur, however, who was writing his work for the people as a whole, chose to quote the holy Tanna who decided to make this point in the Mishna even though it had already been expressed in our verse, seemingly because he wanted to address himself to the people as a whole and say that even those people who have sinned and who therefore can't muster the strength of a lion in this matter, even those people should gather their strength and get up like a lion to serve their Creator.

A Victory in the Morning Puts the Whole Day on the Right Track

Thus it seems that it wasn't for nothing that Chazal paid special attention to the need for eager alacrity in getting up in the morning since this sets the tone for a person's service of Hashem throughout the whole day. The **Mashgiach R' Yechezkiel Levinstein**, zatzal, said once in a shmuze that it wasn't for nothing that this halacha was selected as the starting point of the Shulchan Aruch since it is such a vital preparation for each and every part of the Jew's daily service, the service which includes the enormous multitude of intricate mitzvos and halachos contained in the Shulchan Aruch. He elaborated that since a person's being is composed of both spiritual and physical components, he has to prepare himself before each mitzva he does so that the mitzva will be performed not by his material component but rather by his spiritual self. Therefore if from the moment he gets up in the morning a person makes a lion's effort to overcome his physical self, which is by nature lazy, and pushes himself get up to serve Hashem with alacrity, this sets a precedent that gives form to everything else he does throughout the day to make it all l'shem Shamayim, and not the simple actions of a monkey.

In a similar vein the **Chida** (Sefer Midbar Kadmus 10:12) relates this halacha to Chazal's advice (Sanhedrin 72b), "If someone comes to kill you, get up and kill him first," as if it were meant to be applied here as well. If your desire is to overcome your yetzer horo - which is after all trying to kill you each and every moment of the day and trying to push you down to the lowest spiritual depths, you should get up in the morning in order to kill it - by overcoming your nature you can get control over the yetzer and prevent it from getting control over you. The Sefer **Avnei Elyahu** says on our verse that when someone gets up like a lion and acts like a lion throughout the day, that will give him the strength and courage of a lion to do Hashem's will and to overcome his yetzer horo.

The Harm in Staying in Bed in the Morning

The Mishna in Avos (3:10) lists a number of things that remove a person from the world (and Rabbeinu Yona explains that through these things a person doesn't get any benefit out of his life), one of them being "sleep in the morning". The **Rashbatz** writes in **Magen Avos** that the Mishna is talking about someone who remains asleep in bed in the morning and thereby misses the time for saying Shema and thus loses his standing in the world, as the Midrash (B.R. 17:5) says on the verse (Bereishis 2:21), "And Hashem Elokim caused sleep to descend upon the man and he slept," teaching us that sleeping too much is the beginning of a person's descent.

It is told that the Lakewood Mashgiach **R' Nosson Wachtfogel**, zatzal, said one time after Shacharis to the people standing around him, "This morning I saw two tormented captives and even though I tried with all my might to help them, I wasn't able to. It's a rachmanus!" he said in pain. The listeners were deeply puzzled. What captives was he talking about? But the Mashgiach sensed their dismay and answered them simply: They're two bochorim who didn't get up for davening and so they were being held captive by that "old and foolish king" (a reference to the yetzer horo, cf. Koheles 4:13). (From Leket Reshumos on Tefilla, p. 77)

R' Naftali Ropshitzer, zatzal, once in his last years tried to describe to his followers how in his youth he used to fight against the tricks of the yetzer horo, who had tried with cunning to exclude him from this world and the World to Come. "Every morning at dawn I would get up for my avodas Hashem, but even while my eyes were still closed I could hear the yetzer horo's voice telling me in a gentle, compassionate voice: 'Naftali, my dear, why are you in such a rush? Look out the window, it's still dark and thousands of stars are glittering, and it's freezing cold, unbearably so, so why don't you just wait a while more until the Sun

risers and makes everything bright and warm. Then you can get up and be fresh and strong.'

"And that sounded very reasonable," R' Naftali continued, "but I got my head clear and right away I gathered up my strength and pushed back at him, at the yetzer horo: 'Get out of here! Aren't you ashamed to be so impudent? Didn't you just push yourself to get up bright and early to do your work, but me - me you want to stay in bed.' With that I got the yetzer horo to go away, so I didn't have anything left to do but to wash negel vasser and hurry to the Beis Medrash." (Otzar Pismagim v'Sichos, v.1, p. 56)

How to Overcome the Yetzer Horo?

After we've come to understand how important it is to get up early in the morning, all we have to do is work out how to actually do it - after all, it's not such an easy battle.

So let's look towards the great Baalei Mussar of earlier times who saw fit to record in their sefarim practical ideas for people who have difficulty fighting the yetzer. The **Shevet Mussar** writes (sect. 27) a lot of different strategies for people who have trouble fighting their yetzer horo, of which we'll mention just two. In the morning, right away when you wake up and open your eyes, throw the bedcovers off and stand up on your feet. Don't give any thought about whether or not to get up, not even for a moment, just **do it**, since just thinking about it gives the yetzer an opening to try to persuade you not to get up and go daven. The Shevet Mussar also says to tell yourself that if you heard that there was a fire burning, Heaven forbid, you'd get up and run away without giving it any thought - however cold it was or however much rain or snow there was - you wouldn't hesitate for a second to jump up and run away from the fire. How much more so should you push aside your laziness to get up and serve Hashem and save your body and soul from the fires of Gehinnom, Heaven forbid.

Another Trick of the Yetzer Horo

The Gemara (Brochos 26a) tells us that someone who davens after the fourth hour of the day will receive reward for his Tefilla but will

not receive reward for Tefilla b'zman, for davening during the time designated for it. A lot of people tell themselves that they won't mind not receiving that extra reward, since at least they'll be receiving some reward for their tefillas.

This, however, is a nothing other than a trick of the yetzer horo, since how are these people going to feel when they get to the World of Truth and find themselves standing outside the Palace reserved for those who receive reward for Tefilla b'zman and observing enviously the great reward being enjoyed by those inside. Then they will realize that had they put in a little more effort in lower world they could now be inside receiving that same reward, but then it will be too late for them to do anything about it and they will be left standing outside watching. And even if they have all kinds of excuses why they couldn't daven on time, will those excuses stand up there in the World of Truth to help them get admitted into the Palace?

Amen in the Parshah

The Midrash says (Bamidbar Rabba 20:21): "Once Bilaam saw how the Jews keep even minor mitzvos he said, 'Who could curse those people who keep Hashem's mitzvos and His Name is affiliated with them?'" In this vein, the great Italian Chacham Rebbe Yaakov di Alba discovered an amazing allusion in our verse from the last letters of the words **הוּ עִם כְּלָבִיא יְקוּם** which spell out the word **אָמֵן** which we answer after all the brochos. Also the letters of the word **יְקוּם**, he shall rise, can be rearranged to spell **קִי יום**, a reference to the hundred brochos we're required to answer "Amen" to every day and which enable the Jews to stand up to Me [Hashem speaking] and to prevent Me from cursing them. (Toldos Yaakov, Parshas Balak)

Perhaps we can say also that from the fact that Bilaam chose to allude to Amen in these words he said that speak of the Jews' alacrity in getting up in the morning we might also be able to understand the great value of answering Amen after the Birchos HaShachar which we get up early in the morning to say.

Tales of Emunim:

A story about Amen and Prayer

What did the Yid HaKadosh Learn from a Blacksmith?

The "Yid HaKadosh", Rebbe Yaakov Yitzchak of Peshischa, was known for his intense holiness and for keeping himself totally removed from all the foibles of the world. These qualities gave him such enormous perceptions in Torah and Tefilla that Rebbe Uri of Strelisk, who was called "the Holy Fire", said that the Yid HaKadosh made a whole new path in Avodas Hashem that was beyond the ability of people's hearts to conceive, a path that had not existed until then, whose essence was Avodas Hashem in Tefilla with the power of Torah. Some people gave him the name "Rav Zeira" (the name of one of the Amoraim), since his prayer was with ze'i'a (perspiration), with yira (fear), with reses (trembling), and with eima (trepidation), which together spell "Zeira".

Once near the end of his life he said to those close to him, "All my avoda in my life, up until my old age, I owe to a blacksmith whom I lived near in my youth." He then explained himself. "In my young years when I was supported by my father-in-law in the town of Opta and my home was next to a blacksmith shop, every morning I woke up to the sound of his hammering, since he started his work long before the break of dawn. At first I didn't pay any attention to it, but in the course of time my heart started to be bothered by it. 'If that blacksmith gets up so early to start working just so he can make a few more prutas, I told myself, how much more should I - whose work is in the world of eternity and whose earnings can't be measured in earthly terms at all - why should I get up for my Tefilla and my avodas Hashem any later than that blacksmith?'"

So the next morning the Yid HaKadosh got up earlier than usual and it was the sweet sound of his Torah learning that disturbed the night's stillness in the town and filled the air with holiness and purity. A few minutes later, when the blacksmith's footsteps drew close to his workplace, he was surprised to find that there was someone else who had gotten there before him. When the blacksmith looked around and saw that it was the sound of his young neighbor's Torah that was filling the air, his first thought was the this was

a one time thing and for sure the next day things would go back to their normal routine.

But when the same thing happened the next morning, the blacksmith decided he wasn't willing to allow this to go on! How could it be that this young man, who was being supported by his father-in-law and who had no worries about making a living at all, how can he get up before me when I have the burden of earning enough to feed a number of young mouths? So the next morning it was the blacksmith who got up earlier than usual and filled the early morning air with his hammering. "I've won!" thought the blacksmith with satisfaction. But if he thought that R' Yaakov Yitzchak was going to give in so easily, he was wrong. That day R' Yaakov Yitzchak made another soul reckoning and decided that the next morning he would be the one to get up earlier. It was unthinkable that the blacksmith, whose concern was only with the business of this world, would outdo someone all of whose sights were focused on the business of Heaven.

And so their "competition" kept on for a number of days until R' Yaakov Yitzchak's victory was finally firmly established and from that day onward his holy avoda proceeded without any slackening. In

the course of time he rose to great heights, to the upper ranks of Torah and avodas Hashem, and all of it was the result of the lesson he'd learned from that blacksmith, to whom he expressed his appreciation until the end of his life. (Sefer Nafla'os HaYehudi, p. 77)

"הוּ עִם כְּלָבִיא יְקוּם"

Here is a short vort that was said

by the Zanz-Kloizenberger Rebbe, **zatzal** - the "Shefa Chaim" - on Shabbos Parashas Balak 5739 (1979)

Someone who has yiras Shamayim will make an effort to hear Birchos HaShachar from several other people in order to answer Boruch Hu u'voruch Shemo and Amen after them. With my holy grandfather the Zanz Rav, zatzal, it was a fixed rule each and every day to have at least one - and possibly two - children say Birchos HaShachar to him, sometimes his holy children and sometimes his grandchildren, or some other child.

Halichos Olam,
Seder HaYom p. 162

The Shefa Chaim's
20th yahrzeit is Monday,
9 Tammuz.

