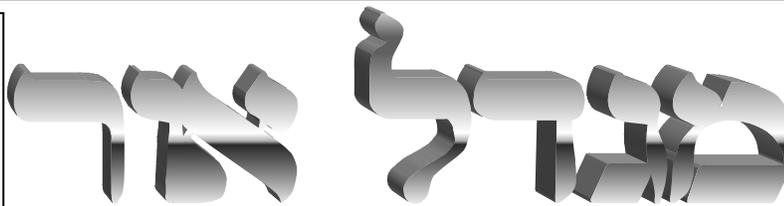


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IN STORES NOW! By Jonathan Gewirtz

Torah perspectives on everyday occurrences and a positive, optimistic outlook on life will touch the heart & soul. Be prepared to become a more "observant" Jew.

A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 8:14 - הדלקת נרות
- 8:32 - שקיעה
- 8:20 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:15 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:30 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 8:32 - שקיעה
- 9:23* - צאת הכוכבים
- 9:44 - צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars
Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com

Did You Know?

Bilaam tried to view the Jewish people from different vantage points and perspectives. He wanted to curse them so he orchestrated the circumstances to cast them in a negative light.

When it didn't work in one location, he tried again. This teaches us that there are many ways to view the same thing if you have a goal in mind. Just because it doesn't work out the first way you try doesn't mean it won't work if you look at the problem from a fresh perspective.

When Bilaam realized that HaShem would not let him curse the Jews, he looked at them differently, and saw the good in them. This teaches us that if you try, you can find the good in people and situations even if you previously thought they were bad.

Finally, despite all the attempts to curse them, Bilaam failed. Nothing he did worked, but his suggestion did.

He told the Moabites to send their daughters to attract the Jews with promiscuity. They did and the Jews were ensnared, even bowing to idols.

The ensuing plague killed more people who were simply looking for "some harmless fun" than Bilaam's malicious intent could.

The lesson here is that we must also put our actions into perspective. When it comes to danger to our people - more than anyone who hates us and wants to harm us - we, through sin and apathy, are our own worst enemies,

Thought of the week:

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.
If you want to be happy yourself, practice compassion.

“...לינו פה הלילה והשבת אתכם דבר כאשר ידבר ה' אלי...” (במדבר כב:ח)

“...sleep here tonight and I will respond to you, as G-d will speak to me...” (Num. 22-8)
It would seem almost arrogant of Bilaam to say that he knew G-d would speak to him in response to this matter, if not for the fact that we often find Moshe doing the same thing.

Whether it was in the matter of Pesach Sheini, the man who collected wood on Shabbos, or the daughters of Tzelofchad who had a claim for their father's portion in the land, Moshe repeatedly said, “Let us see what G-d says about this.” We know he was extremely humble, so how could he have stated matter-of-factly that G-d would appear to him?

The answer is that it was a fact that HaShem spoke to Moshe and to Bilaam. Assuming He would speak to them was not arrogance because it was a common, frequent occurrence.

Rashi (Bamidbar 22:5) tells us that G-d wanted to give the nations of the world a prophet equal to Moshe so they could not argue that had they had such a person they would have followed G-d. The two men were very different, but HaShem gave them a prophet on par with Moshe in that the communication between them was so regular that if Moshe or Bilaam had a question, HaShem would appear to them to provide the answer. How they responded and utilized this communication is what separated them.

When HaShem spoke to Moshe, it was for the benefit of the Jewish nation. For his part, Moshe felt merely like a messenger, conveying instructions between two parties. The prophecy he received was not his own, but that of the Jews as a whole.

Not so, Bilaam. When he received communication, he felt it was for his own purposes. He had a great power in understanding G-d and taking advantage of that knowledge for personal gain. Therefore, he was sure HaShem would speak to him because HE needed an answer on something that would benefit him.

If that is the case, then why could the nations not argue that they should have had a prophet who was selfless and concerned more with their benefit than his own?

The answer is that people cannot expect more from a leader than they are willing to do themselves. The Jewish People can be selfless, empathetic, and caring. They can put the needs of another before their own, praying for someone else even when they themselves have things to pray for. We recently saw millions of people adopt three boys, OUR BOYS, and spend weeks thinking, focusing, searching and praying for them. That's why our leader, Moshe, used his prophecy for us.

The selfish people, who think of their own needs alone, ignoring the suffering of another and even urging restraint by the pained, are just as likely to act as Bilaam did, thereby wasting the Divine countenance. The lesson was that knowledge alone is not power, unless it is coupled with a deep love and concern for another. That's why Moshe contended with angels while Bilaam merely consorted with a mule.

R' Eliyahu Dessler z"l is known as a giant in mussar, self-improvement through the study of traditional Jewish ethics. His esteemed wife was no less involved in proper self-guidance and looked at the world through the prism of Torah and midos tovos, good character traits.

Once, she saw someone admiring something in the window of a pawn shop. When she asked what the person was doing, the woman replied that she did not intend to buy any of the luxury items she saw, but simply enjoyed looking at the beautiful merchandise in the store window.

Rebbetzin Dessler replied, “I simply cannot take any joy from looking at the items in a pawn shop window. It is there because someone came upon difficult times and had to part with a dear possession. How can we possibly be happy to see something which is the symbol of someone else's unhappiness?”