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RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

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Victor Braha

PARSHAS BALAK

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PARSHAS BALAK

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

IN THE WAY YOU WISH TO GO

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Part I. The Road of Wanting

Bilaam Wavers

In Mesichta Makkos *daf yud, amud beis*, the Gemara states as follows: מן התורה ומן הנביאים ומן הכתובים – The Sages tell us that there's a certain principle which is written in the Torah and repeated in the books of the Nevi'im and then restated again in the books of the Kesuvim. And the principle is as follows: בדרך שאדם רוצה ללכת מוליכין אותו – *In the way in which a man chooses to go, they lead him.* It means that *min haShamayim* they lead you.

מן התורה – First he cites an instance from the Torah, from this week's *sedrah*, as a proof. It's written that when Bilaam was solicited by Balak to come and prophesy for him a curse against the Bnei Yisroel, so at first Bilaam refused. Hakadosh Baruch Hu spoke to him and He said, “לא תלך עמָהֶם” – *You should not go with them.*”

But afterwards, when they came again, and this time when they importuned him they made big offerings of wealth to him, so Hashem spoke to Bilaam a second time and He said, “קוּם לֶךְ אִתָּם – *Arise and go with them.*” Which means that after Bilaam had weakened – although outwardly Bilaam still maintained his previous position that he wouldn’t go but inwardly he weakened – so Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, “Okay, be my guest. If you wish, go ahead.” And Bilaam saddled his donkey and he went trotting along towards his destruction. The end was that Bilaam was destroyed.

Many Repetitions

And that, Rav Huna says, is a teaching for us. בְּדֶרֶךְ שְׂאֵדָם רוֹצֶה לָלֶכֶת מוֹלִיכִין – *If a person is going to aim in a certain direction, then things will happen to help him get there.* It doesn’t mean a prophecy will come to you at night—you have to be a big person for that—but *something* is going to happen to lead you in the path you choose. Good direction, bad direction, whatever direction you choose to walk on, you have to know that you’ll be helped along.

Now, this is such an important principle that our great teachers weren’t satisfied with merely one example. They took the trouble to show that it’s reiterated; not only is it in the Torah but it’s in the Nevi’im and Kesuvim too.

מִן הַנְּבִיאִים – From the Nevi’im we see this principle from a verse in Yeshaya (48:17): אֲנִי ה' אֵלֶיךָ מְלַמֵּד לְהוֹעִיל – *I, Hashem, teach for your benefit, מְדַרְיֶכָה בְּדֶרֶךְ – I lead you in the way that you walk.* It means in the way that you choose to walk, that’s the way I’m going to lead you. If you seek, you’ll find it.

And from the Kesuvim too (Mishlei 3:34): אִם לְלֹצְיִים הוּא יִלְיָן – *If one wishes to be among the scoffers, so Hakadosh Baruch Hu will help you be a scoffer, וְאִם לְעֹנִיִּים יִתֵּן חֵן – And if you wish to be among the humble ones so Hakadosh Baruch Hu will give you the favor that the humble find in the eyes of people.* If you desire humility, then you’re going to be blessed with that quality. If you’re looking to be a *talmid chochom*, you’ll find places. You’ll find *rebbeim* and *seforim*. And it’s surprising how much success you’ll have in getting where you want to go.

All Types of Synagogues

And on the contrary, if you want to be one of the *kibbitzers*, you like to be a wise-guy, so Hakadosh Baruch Hu is going to give you opportunities. He’ll give you comrades of like-character. You know what’s going to happen? When you look for a synagogue in your neighborhood you’ll choose just the right one – a *moshav leitzim*. There are plenty of synagogues like that, places where if you walk in before they begin praying in the morning, they’re not talking *divrei Torah*. Instead they’re sitting around and *kibbitzing*. All of a

sudden there is a burst of laughter. They're joking and exchanging *rechilus*, plenty of slander, laughing at *tzaddikim*, pious people.

Of course there are good synagogues too – you walk in and you'll find people sitting with *seforim*. Some are saying *Tehillim*. Some are saying *bakashos*. They're using their time wisely. But if you're looking for *leitzim* you'll find them aplenty. And you'll be especially successful because Hashem will help you.

In the yeshivas too. You know there are yeshivas or some circles in the yeshiva where everybody means business. They want to learn. They want Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. Ooh, it's a pleasure to see such boys. But there are some circles where it's not so much; they have other less important interests. And if you want to find it you'll be surprised how much success you'll have in discovering even in the best yeshivas, the little pockets of an underworld. Now this underworld, they won't make a holdup on you. They won't hit you on the head with a blackjack but comparatively speaking there's an underworld in yeshivas too! Of course, they're despised by the good boys. And the *rebbe*s look at them with a watchful eye. But it's there – there are boys like that. And if you look for them you'd better be careful because Hashem might give you the bum's rush. He'll push you right through the door.

You Can Run and Hide...

It's a Torah principle that you can't get away from. That's why if you go way out to the towns outside of Greater New York, you'll find a lot of Jews who aren't Jews anymore because of this principle. They ran away from Brownsville to Flatbush and from Flatbush to Las Vegas because it was just too much Judaism for them. So first, Hakadosh Baruch Hu in His mercy tries to rope them in one more time. That's why the Torah pursues them—they opened up now a *mikvah*, in one of these far out places in New Jersey. But what do they do when they see that Flatbush is pursuing them and catching up with them? They're exasperated. "A *mikvah* out here?! What's going on here?! Why are there black hatters here?" they say.

So they sell their home again and move further out where they don't have to be so crowded by the ultra-Orthodox. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu finally gives in and He helps. "If that's what you're looking for," He says to them, "I'm going to help you." That's why Dr. Moon came along and so many Jewish boys and girls yielded to his meaningless propaganda. Because Hashem wants to help. You wanted your family to get lost so He'll find a way for you – even if he has to bring a nobody, a *meshugeneh* from Korea to do it.

And that's Hakadosh Baruch Hu's principle of guiding you in the direction you wish to go. It means that it's a fundamental system of Hakadosh Baruch Hu in dealing with mankind. You are led in the way you wish to go. If you are

looking for what is good, He'll help you find it. And if you are looking for what's not good, He's going to help you find that too.

Prophets and Profits

Now, I want to come back now to our protagonist, to Bilaam, in order study to an important detail in this subject, something we may not have realized on our own. Because I'm convinced that if we were standing there with Bilaam when the emissaries of Balak came back a second time, we wouldn't have thought anything wrong with what Bilaam did. He opened the door for them - so what? He didn't say, "Come in. I'll reconsider my decision and maybe I *will* be willing to curse the Bnei Yisroel." No, no. *Chas v'shalom!* Bilaam would never say such a thing.

You have to know that Bilaam was a great man. A person doesn't become a *navi Hashem* for nothing. No matter what the reasons were - some say Bilaam was made great only as a counterbalance to Moshe Rabbeinu, so that the gentile world shouldn't be able to say, "If we had a big *navi* like the Jews had, we also would have been something." But it's not that simple. Even with this consideration, Bilaam was chosen for that role because he was a great man. He was chosen by Hakadosh Baruch Hu for a special role because he was fit for such a role. And so you can be sure that Bilaam was devoted to Hashem.

When the servants of Balak came back a second time what did Bilaam say? "*Even if you'll give me all the money of the world, I won't say what Hashem wouldn't tell me to say.*" How many American rabbis giving *hespeidim* in the funeral parlors can say the same? For a little bit of money they say orations over dead *oichlei treifos*, over dead *mechalelei Shabbos*. Plenty of rabbis! I don't mean real rabbis, but there are people who call themselves rabbis and they make nice orations over people who didn't keep the Torah. I was at a funeral where the rabbi compared the dead person, someone who lived with a gentile, to *tzaddikim* in the Tanach. Why? Because there was a big fee.

And here is Bilaam who was going to get a very big fee - "A houseful of silver and gold." That's quite a fee! Nobody ever got such a fee for making a eulogy over a dead man. And yet what did Bilaam say? "Even if you give me a houseful of silver and gold, I'm only going to say what Hashem Elokai - Hashem, my G-d, tells me." You hear that? "Hashem, my G-d." And so Bilaam was a loyal man.

Only there was one trouble with him. There was something in Bilaam's attitude that caused his downfall. He was looking for something besides Hashem. He was looking for an opportunity to maybe yes make some money. And maybe some glory too. His eyes were open for opportunities, opportunities for trouble.

A Certain Hankering

So at first Hashem had pity on him. And so when the emissaries of Balak came to him the first time, Hashem said, “Don’t go.” And that should have quenched, that should have extinguished in Bilaam’s heart any thought of money and glory. Hashem said no, finished. And when they came to him a second time, he shouldn’t even have opened the door to them. He should have yelled through the peephole, “Get off my property! Scat! And on the double! And I don’t want to see your faces again!”

Instead Bilaam opened the door. He entertained them. Only he said, “I cannot do it unless Hashem tells me.” But he was looking for that little opportunity, that little crack in the wall to take advantage of - “Maybe if you’ll stay overnight, Hashem will tell me something different and I’ll be able to go with you” (*ibid.* 19).

“Oh!” Hashem said, “I see what you’re hankering after. I see what you’re looking for. And My principle is that if you’re looking for it—if your mind’s eyes is scouring for opportunities—then I’m going to give you some encouragement. I’m going to lead you.” And that’s why Hashem said, “Go with them.”

Now if Hashem hadn’t said that, Bilaam would have stuck by the first *psak*, the first decision. Bilaam wouldn’t have changed his mind. “Hashem told me not to go, I’m not going.” Even if they had offered him all the compensation and honor in the world!

But now Hashem saw that he desired it, that he entertained the idea. “Oh,” Hashem said, “That’s enough for Me to apply My principle. בְּרַדְךָ שְׂאָרָם רוֹצֶה לָלֶכֶת – Because you want to go on that way, I’m going to let you go.” And He spoke to him again, a vision of a prophecy and He said, “קוּם לִךְ אִתָּם – Get up and go with them.” And that was the beginning of the end of Bilaam’s career. That little bit of looking for an opportunity was everything.

Part II. The Road of Seeing

Policing the Peripheral

We’re learning now a very important detail in this Torah principle of “*In the way in which a man chooses to go, they lead him.*” Because we see now it doesn’t have to be something so overt. It’s an attitude of wanting, *rotzeh*; of hankering for something. And if you *want* so you’ll be attuned to opportunities – you’ll see things that you would have missed altogether if you hadn’t been looking for them.

There are ways of perception, of perceiving facts and objects that we are not always making use of. For example, there's such a thing as side vision. Healthy people have side vision, peripheral vision – they see out of the side of their eyes. The eye doctors say that if your side vision is blocked, then it's necessary to go to a physician to have your eyes examined because it could be *chalilah* a bad sign. Normal healthy people have side vision.

But just because you have it doesn't mean it's being used. You won't see the things on the side unless you're looking for them. A policeman, let's say, who's traveling a lonely beat at night, so not only is he using his eyes but he's using his side vision too. He was trained to do that and he's always practicing because he wants to know who's in the corners and the alleyways. It doesn't mean that he's looking to the side but even without turning his head he already has that awareness. He's attuned to his surroundings and he sees things that the ordinary person wouldn't notice.

Police Academy

Somebody once described to me a detective's course. The students were sitting in the room and the instructor was teaching them and suddenly the door pushed open and a lunatic rushed in and he attacked the teacher. In front of the class! The students were taken by surprise. They were aghast! The whole thing was over in a second. There was a short scuffle and then the man got up and ran out.

Then the teacher turned around to the students and said, "Describe what you saw." The whole thing was a put-up scene. "Describe the assailant," the teacher said. And as many students as were there, that's how many different descriptions of the assailant there were. It's because they hadn't been prepared to see. They weren't looking for that.

And so, the instructor taught them that their job is to always be on the lookout for details. What kind of suit did he wear? Or did he have a jacket at all? What kind of trousers did he have? What kind of shoes? What kind of a necktie? Could you catch the color of his eyes? How tall was he? Compared to the mark on the wall or the window, how tall was he? All these details would be noticed by a professional because the things he's looking for he's going to see.

Opportunities for Improvement

So even before any teaching of the Gemara it's a truism that a man is led to those subjects – that type of knowledge – that he's interested in. There are a lot of things that we would notice if we were interested in seeing them. And so it's common sense that people find what they are looking for. It's an axiom of nature – if you're looking for something, then you're going to discover it. It

doesn't mean if you look for gold that you're going to discover gold but you'll discover things.

You know, you could practice that for five minutes. Let's say when you walk out in the street tonight, right after you heard these humble words that were said here, so if you'll be wide-eyed you'll see opportunities. You have here a lot of people who live in Boro Park, far away. It's cold tonight and it's hard to get transportation. You have a car. Look around. Whom can you take home tonight? You came here for a good purpose and they did too. It's all good people here so ask around. That's a glorious opportunity, to take people home. You save them sometimes an hour traveling, waiting for two buses on cold street corners, and they're lonely corners too; and because of you they can be home in fifteen minutes. And so if you'd want enough, if you'd want to be an *ish chessed*, a Jew who loves his fellow Jews, so you'd see the opportunity. And once you start on that path Hashem will help you even further. But you have to start looking.

The opportunities are unlimited but Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not going to force them down our throats. It's up to us to use our free will to use them. You have to look.

Because what do you think? That every opportunity is going to be labeled with a big label "THIS IS YOUR CHANCE! FIRST AID TO BECOME BETTER!" or whatever it is? No! It'll come in some inconspicuous manner and it's up to you to be on guard, to be on your toes and to seize it as soon as it comes.

Opportunity for Shalom

Now that's the great lesson we learn here, that we have to keep our eyes open for things; it might come in from the side, but if you're a *rotzeh* you'll see it with your peripheral vision. You'll see opportunities and you'll seize them. And think that over because opportunities come all the time.

Let's say that you came to a wedding and you find yourself seated next to the man you like the least. He happens to be your landlord from the old neighborhood where you lived and you suffered a great deal from him. What he suffered from you, you're not so aware of. And so you're thinking, "How crazy are these people who arranged the seating cards! Don't they know that I can't stand this person?!"

Now on any other day you would never even come close to this fellow – you cross the street when you see him. But now that you're there anyhow, you're thinking, "Maybe this is what Rabbi Miller was talking about, to look for opportunities. Don't I always tell my wife that I want to make *shalom* with him? I'm always saying that I'm the good guy, that I want peace. So maybe I should keep my eyes open now and grab the opportunity."

But because you're not really a *rotzeh*, a 'wanter,' so you're too embarrassed to say something and so you make believe you didn't see him and you find another seat. Oh, what a tragedy! What a missed opportunity.

But if you learned tonight's lesson, you'll say, "Yes, I'm going to do it. Hashem is sending me an opportunity to become friendly with him again. And even though it's silly that just because of a mixup with the seating I should give up all of my sober calculations that I had against him, I'm going to seize the opportunity."

The Cold War

Which means that as silly as the opportunity might be, we shouldn't disdain it. We should run through every opening that's being offered to us in order to become better. Here's a man who has practically not spoken to his wife for a year-and-a-half. A tragedy. A cold war in the house. And both of them realize that they are ruining their lives. They both know it; they want *shalom*. Otherwise every day is *Gehenom*. But how do you break the ice? It doesn't even occur to them that they should. They know it's wrong, but they don't see any way out of the impasse.

And now her mother died. Ooh! That's a glorious opportunity. If he would break down and shed some hypocritical tears, that'd be a glorious opportunity. He'd make himself busy at the funeral. He'd offer her consolation. He'd go out and buy things for her, flowers—although it's not necessary, it's not right, but who cares? It's an emergency! He's going to utilize that opportunity.

Or even if it's something much less. Let's say she broke a vase. It happens sometimes in the house. She was hanging curtains and she fell down and broke the vase on the dining room table. There's a glorious opportunity to make peace if he'll say the right words.

Discovering Opportunities

Or if he lost his job. So if the cold war continues, so she pours some more ice on him and says, "Look, it's your fault. I told you for years and years you weren't acting right with the boss. You don't act right with anybody! It's a wonder they kept you so long."

But if she would rise to the occasion – it's a gift from Heaven this occasion, this misfortune – if she would hurry to his side and say, "Joe, don't worry. We'll stand by you. You always were a good husband, a good provider. Hard luck everybody has but you'll be restored. Sooner or later you'll get back again to a better job," then everything could be mended. There could be a reconciliation and if they had sense they could live happily forever. They could live happily anyhow, but they have to utilize the opportunities. And

once opportunities are seized, Hakadosh Baruch Hu helps. He fulfills His side of the deal and He'll lead you even more.

Now that's the process that applies to any kind of mental attitude. So when a person tries to be an *oived Hashem*, as I mentioned before, opportunities will come up that will give him a push in the right direction. But he has to be wide-eyed, looking for it. Maybe he'll find a good *chavrusa* or a friend to study *mussar* with. That's a big find by the way, a partner who will help you become better. He might even find some *tzaddik* or a big *talmid chochom* who will guide him with advice and encouragement in the right direction. It happens.

Discovering the Tzaddik

You know the story, how Rav Yisroel Salanter became who he was. When Rav Yisroel was a boy there was an elderly man in his town, Rav Yosef Zundel. He was considered a plain *balabus*. Reb Yisroel writes that he once saw there was a case in the town when one of the neighbors in the town stopped Reb Zundel, "Reb Yosef, I'm thinking of buying this horse from the *goy*. You know anything about horses maybe? Maybe check it out for me?" What did Rav Yosef Zundel do? He opened the horse's mouth and looked at the jaw; he inspected all the teeth to see if it's a good young healthy horse, and he gave his opinion. He was considered a plain man.

Now, Rav Yosef Zundel had a queer habit of taking walks outside the town by himself in the fields. And the townspeople thought it was an idiosyncrasy; that's his way. But Rav Yisroel Salanter as a *bachur* was a *mevakesh* and he was looking; and he saw something different about this man. Rav Yisroel noticed that Rav Yosef Zundel was talking to himself. So he started following him and trying to get close to listen to what he's saying.

One day Rav Yosef Zundel noticed that this young man was following him. "Young man," he said, "You want to be a *yorei Shamayim*? Learn *mussar*!" Rav Yisroel said that it entered his heart like an arrow. And he became one of the greatest men in the world as a result of his *ratzon* – his eyes that were open to opportunities.

That's the great secret of 'in the way that a man wants to go, he'll be helped.' It means that you have to utilize the stimuli that come along. If you are genuinely interested, then you're going to find various opportunities along the path of your life, things which you'll be able to utilize. If you didn't have that interest, that desire, then you would have passed them by but because you're interested, so you'll see them. You'll discover those things that you're looking for and you'll discover them in wonderful ways.

Part III. The Road of Loving

A World of Bechinah

And we come now to one of the most important and yet most ignored opportunities in life. I'm talking about the opportunity to become fortified with *emunah* and *ahavas Hashem* by means of seeing Hashem in nature.

Now, I know that some might disagree with me – they don't think it's as important as I claim; but I'm only saying what the *kadmonim* say. You know, the Chovos Halevovos, near the end of his great *sefer*, he speaks about *ahavas Hashem*, about how to love Hashem. Now that's a big subject that we won't study tonight but he says there that before we can come to *ahavas Hashem*, we need to engage in what he calls *bechinah*. You newcomers should mark that word down – it's an important vocabulary word if you come to this place.

Bechinah means to analyze, to study carefully. And the Chovos Halevovos wants us to know that there's a certain analysis that a person must engage in. And he says there that we have to engage in it *not* a little. You must spend a great deal of time in *bechinah*.

Bombarded by Bechinah

What *bechinah* is he talking about? What are we analyzing? So he explains that the primary *bechinah* is analyzing creation, the phenomena of nature. If you wish one day to arrive at the top of the ladder, to the highest of all degrees of perfection, so one of the prerequisites is to study and analyze the things that you see in the world and to become aware of Hashem in nature.

Now I understand that this is a *chiddush* to a lot of people. Most people wouldn't even say such a thing, but he not only says it – he *means* it. And therefore who cares if so many people will contradict us and will perhaps ridicule this? The Chovos Halvovos is an authority on the subject of *avodas Hashem*. There are not many others who are authorities on this subject and he states, that number one is to see Hashem in the world around you.

Actually it's not difficult. The Chovos Halevovos tells us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is showing Himself to us always. Constantly, from all sides, we are being bombarded by opportunities to see His Presence. Only that we have to react to the opportunities in the right way by wanting to see, by looking.

That's **בְּדֶרֶךְ שְׂאֵדָם רֹצֵה לָלֶכֶת** – *in the way you want to go*. You have to *want*! And once you want to look – like the students in the detective course – if you're willing to use your peripheral vision and your intuition and your curiosity, so you'll see more and more and you'll become more and more impressed, and more and more aware of Him. But you have to want; you have to be willing to see all of the millions of things around you.

Impressed in Flatbush

I'll bring you an illustration. A man once told me that he went to visit the Grand Canyon. He was telling me about the *niflaos haBorei* and he claimed that he was very much impressed. Now it could be that he *was* impressed; I have no reason to disbelieve him. But when a person is a *rotzeh*, when he wants to be impressed by Hakadosh Baruch Hu he doesn't need such tremendous phenomena. His eyes are wide open for it here in Brooklyn too. If he's willing to look, so his admiration for Hakadosh Baruch Hu grows exceedingly every day. And when he wants to see, Hashem helps him see.

Now, I'm not going to make a big protest against people who go to see the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls but I'm telling you that it's superfluous. Because the more a person makes sure to see things, the more Hakadosh Baruch Hu will help him be impressed by all of the little things.

That's why my advice to you is to train yourself to be a *rotzeh* right here in Flatbush. If you want, you can walk outside right now in the street and look at the trees. It's an exhibition that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is showing you. Only that what happens? A person walks past the tree like a horse walks past it; not noticing, not thinking, nothing. But a *rotzeh* looks! He wants to see! And once he looks, so *molichin oso*, he notices things.

What's the Purpose?

He looks and he sees that every leaf of the millions of leaves on Ocean Parkway, every leaf has two sides; a dark green side where there's a lot of chlorophyll and a light green side where there's not much chlorophyll. And in every case the light green side is turned away from the sun and the dark green side faces the sun! Millions and millions of leaves! How did that 'accident' happen? Because chlorophyll needs the sun and that's why the dark green side faces the sun. So it's an exhibition of Hakadosh Baruch Hu right here on Ocean Parkway.

I'm not telling you now *drashos*, imaginary things. I'm talking plain fundamental principles. And so number one is we must divest ourselves of our habitual attitudes and ask ourselves a fundamental question. What's the purpose of all the objects in creation? Or to put the question in a different way: why does the world need so many things? Why is nature so complicated? So many different trees with so many different leaves. So many different seeds and plants and flowers. What's the purpose in general of all these things, of all this variety?

And for this, we turn to Koheles (3:14) and he tells us a key statement: **וַהֲאֵלֹקִים עָשָׂה** – *Why did Elokim make everything?* **וְשִׂירָאוּ מִלִּפְנֵי** – *In order to demonstrate that there is a Borei; in order to make us Aware of Him.* And even

more, to demonstrate what kind of a Borei He is; to show how infinite is His wisdom and how endless is His kindness.

But what's the use if we don't notice? The whole purpose is lost. And so what did Hashem do for us in His kindness? He doesn't want you to waste your life. He wants you to notice things. So He made variety! In case you don't notice the wonders of the red roses, so when you pass by a different garden and you see pink roses, so then what you didn't notice the first time, you might notice the second time.

Dinner Variety

It's like a man whose wife is making him the same supper every night and soon he forgets about the one making the supper. So his wife makes a variety: One night she'll put this type of dressing on the chicken, the next night a different covering. She's not so interested in the chicken – she's hoping he'll notice the one *preparing* the chicken!

And so if you're eating a red apple and you don't appreciate it – and you should; the glory of a red apple! What a beauty! What a miracle it is! What a wonderful design of packaging it is! Still, if you're stupid enough not to notice that, if you're obtuse and thickheaded and you lose the opportunity, so maybe someday you'll be eating a Golden Delicious and it'll hit you between the eyes – what a beautiful tint that is! And it will wake you up to the One Who made it for you!

And therefore variety stirs your mind to think about things that otherwise you might ignore. That's the purpose of variety; to wake up people to notice things they didn't notice before. That's what Rashi says in Mesichta Rosh Hashana (31a). He says that the purpose of variety is that we should be attracted to see it and our attention therefore is concentrated on it.

Maple Seeds

The same is seeds. How many various seeds a person sees! You know that there are different ways that seeds are distributed. Some trees drop their seeds. Some seeds have wings that fly away. Some seeds spring out when you touch the plant. Some seeds are stored up in a container that builds up gas pressure and after a while it bursts and it explodes and the seeds scatter. There are many ways that seeds are spread. So the question is: Why are there so many ways? Why don't all seeds scatter in the same way?

The answer is because Hakadosh Baruch Hu is trying to get you to notice them. So you've been stepping on maple seeds all your life – they are scattered across the sidewalk – and you never once noticed that each seed has a remarkable wing attached to it. It's only if somebody bends over and picks it

up and throws it into the wind and you see it whirling around like a helicopter that you finally think that there is something here.

I was walking with a yeshivah man last week and I was showing him the maple seed. "Oh I know all about this," he said to me. "It's the mustaches that children play with." That's all he knows, that it's children's mustaches. He thinks it's nothing. It's a seed and it's a wing; a seed with a wing! A glorious contrivance! A flying machine!

Angels in the Sukkah

I was sitting in my *sukkah* a few years ago having supper when a few of these seeds flew in through the *schach*. So I said "I have to take these in. They are little angels that came from the Heaven." They flew in and they said, "Look at us! You are neglecting us; you're trampling on us. Pick us up and think about us; think about the One Who made us."

That's why I have one of them in my pocket. Look; there's a seed here. When you see it it's easier to speak about. And here is a backbone; because this material is very thin. When it dries it is taut and so it catches the wind and it conveys the seeds. And once it is in the wind, it starts twisting like this – it's able to overcome gravity to some extent and it doesn't fall straight down. You see the ridges here? When this was green these were all little pipes conveying liquid and materials to all parts of the leaf. But they serve a double purpose because when it dries they become staves to stiffen the flimsy material. It has to be lightweight to fly but now it has a backbone – all these staves that branch out are anchored in the back bone. It's exciting to look at!

This little *ailanthus* seed leaf is masterfully formed. It is twisted like a propeller, both ends are twisted, so when the wind blows, it gains levitation and it travels outside of the shade of the parent tree – if it fell under the shade it wouldn't grow well – and the passenger is just exactly in the middle, the seed is just exactly in the middle so it should have equilibrium. You hear that? It is a remarkable thing. It's a pity you aren't up here to see it.

Open Your Eyes!

That's the purpose of life – to notice these things! That's why they're there. הָאֱלֹהִים עִשָּׂה, He made everything, שִׁירָאוּ מִלְכִּינִי, so that people should become more and more aware of Him. And it's right in front of your eyes. You don't need any books. You don't need to go to the libraries. Once you are willing to open your eyes and use your mind, you'll be able to write your own books.

All the good achievements of life are like that. Good *middos*, good attitudes, good ideals, Torah and *mitzvos*, everything – the more you want

and the more you look, the more you'll find. You want to do *chessed*? Keep your eyes open. You want to learn Torah or make *shalom* or do *mitzvos*? Keep looking for opportunities. You want to see the Creator in the creation around you? So open your eyes! And once you start on the road towards greatness, He'll help you. It's a Torah guarantee. בְּדֶרֶךְ שְׁאֵלָה רֹצֵה לָלֶכֶת מוֹלִיכִין אוֹתוֹ – *In the way you wish to go, He'll lead you.*

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Let's Get Practical

Setting Out On the Road

Every person has to journey through life. There are many paths he can choose, and Hashem will lead him through the one he sets out on. When Bilaam set out on the wrong path, he was led to his downfall. This week I will *bli neder* take a half minute each day to consider my choices and my path in life to ensure I am not making the wrong choice, like Bilaam did. I will spend another half minute thinking about the best path in life and desiring to pursue it.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

90 – Your Works Praise You | **152** – Utilizing the Moods
384 – Career of Aspirations | **449** – Hashem's Two Testimonials
499 – In The Way You Wish To Go | **511** – All Things Declare His Glory

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The Power of Bitachon

"Then our mouths will be filled with laughter." (Tehillim 126:2) We'll look back at all the problems we had and say, "Baruch Attah Hashem...HaTov v'HaMeitiv." Really, everything was wonderful, just fine. When will we do this? "Then." In the future, in Olam HaBa. Chazal tell us that Shabbos is like Olam HaBa. This day enables us to view the world as it truly is. Shabbos Kodesh is completely good – here, in our world. Shabbos is the day on which we can appreciate what kind of a world we live in. And its primary halacha is *shevisah*, "cessation from work." **When we reach a state of "all your work is done," all problems are solved.**

It is important to know that Shabbos is not just another day of the week. On the contrary – all our success in this world on any day of the week depends on our closeness to Hashem. And this depends on Shabbos, as we shall explain. The Rambam writes, "The power of thought that Hashem granted us is what connects us to Him." (Moreh Nevuchim 3:56) When we think about Hashem we are actually with Him. And when we think about something else, we simply disconnect from Hashem. In other words, **if a person has Bitachon in Hashem, he's connected to Him and lacks nothing.** As it says, "even a wicked person who repents and trusts in Hashem will be surrounded by *chesed*." (Vayikra Rabbah 15:3) Shabbos is a flowing fountain of *bitachon*. If we utilize this fountain and draw from it a generous supply of *bitachon* for the coming week, then the whole week will be like Shabbos, and we'll lack nothing.

Nearly everyone worries about financial problems of some sort. But imagine someone whose father comes to him with a bank statement from his account that shows an enormous credit, with seven zeros. His father says to him, "Whenever you need, you should know there is plenty here. Just take!" This person now feels quite different. If his father has placed 10 million dollars at his disposal, he no longer has financial problems.

This is what Shabbos Kodesh is. It's a day when the phone is disconnected, banks are closed, and it's forbidden to think about problems. "All your work is done." Hashem tells us, so to speak, **"You should know the whole world belongs to Me."** Suddenly, the truth is revealed before our eyes, and we realize that our Heavenly Father has a tremendous fortune – the world, and all it contains – and it's all designated for us!

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ליבה בת אסתר

By Gayle and Brian Krost

Adapted by R' Y. Levy from Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim

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QUESTION

How can I mourn for the Beis Hamikdash properly?

ANSWER

How can you mourn for the Churban Beis Hamikdash? First of all you have to think about the Beis Hamikdash. Most people don't even think about what the Beis Hamikdash meant for Klal Yisroel.

So when you come to the last few words in Shemona Esrei, **יהי רצון מלפניך שׁיבנה בית** – *Please Hashem! Let it be Your will that the Beis Hamikdash should be rebuilt quickly in our days*, say it with kavanah. At least these words say with feeling. So even if you were sleeping through the davening at least these last few words say with feeling. Show that you understand that it's a loss. If you don't even recognize the loss then there's no use even talking. So every day, when you finish Shemona Esrei, say these words and think about them.

Also, spend some time thinking about how great of an opportunity we had when the Beis Hamikdash existed. You would come to the Beis Hamikdash and you would learn yiras Hashem just from being there. **למען תלמד ליראה את השם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כָּל הַיָּמִים** – *Come to the Mikdash in order to learn how to fear Hashem*. Merely by coming there and seeing the **כהנים** you'd become so inspired. You know that Yonah Ha'Navi became a navi because he was present at the simchas beis hashoeivah in the Beis Hamikdash. He was so inspired that the ruach hakodesh came upon him and he became a navi. Think about that when you say **וְשֵׁם נְעֻכְךָ בִּירְאָה**

And therefore you must speak to the Ribono Shel Olam. "Ribono Shel Olam, please restore the Beis Hamikdash." I'm not even talking about Moshiach. The Beis Hamikdash even without Moshiach is such an opportunity. You can gain so much yiras Hashem from seeing the Beis Hamikdash. Of course, it won't come without Moshiach as well. But we want Hashem to build the Beis Hamikdash once again so that we can all come together and be zoicheh to ruach hakodesh and to see Hashem. That's why we are looking forward to the binyan Beis Hamikdash.

Little by little, you must work on thinking these thoughts and that's the way to mourn for the Beis Hamikdash. You'll never mourn for the Beis Hamikdash if you don't feel the loss – if you don't know what you're missing. So first you must train yourself to feel how great of an opportunity it was to have the Beis Hamikdash – and then you'll know what it means that we don't have it. And then you'll be able to mourn the loss.

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