

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Balak 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Balak

From the discourses of Moreinu v'Rabeinu
the Gaon and Tzaddik Shlit'a

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Shalosh Seudos of Parshas Balak 5766

”כִּי מֵרֶאֶשׁ צְרִים אֶרְאֶנּוּ וּמִגְּבְעוֹת אֲשׁוּרָנוּ, הֵן עַם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֵּן וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשְּׁב.”

“For from the top of the rocks I see him and from the hills I behold him; Verily, it is a people that shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations.”¹

Rashi explains: “‘For from the top of the rocks I see him’—I look toward their ‘top,’ to the beginning of their roots, and I see them well-founded and strong like these stones and hills because of the *Avos* and the *Imahos*. ‘Verily, it is a people that shall dwell alone’—This is what their forefathers merited, to dwell alone, as the *Targum* explains. ‘And shall not be reckoned among the nations’—The interpretation follows the approach of the *Targum*, that they [the Jewish people] will not be destroyed together with the idolatrous nations. As the verse says, ‘For when I make destruction among all the nations...they will not be counted among the rest.’² An alternate interpretation is that when they rejoice, no other nation rejoices with them. As the verse says, ‘Hashem leads [this people] alone.’³ Yet when the idolatrous nations rejoice, they eat with anyone and everyone, and do not make a reckoning [of who has attended the celebration]. This is the meaning of, ‘And shall not be reckoned among the nations.’”

“Verily, It Is a People That Shall Dwell Alone”

The verse says, “Come, my people, enter you into your chambers, and shut your doors about you; hide yourself for a little moment, until the indignation passes over.”⁴ Whenever a person confronts obstacles in his *avodas Hashem*, when all of his good desires and longing to act in accordance with Hashem’s will seem to come to naught no

¹ *Bamidbar* 23:9

² *Zechariah* 30:11

³ *Devarim* 32:12

⁴ *Yeshayah* 26:20

matter how many times he tries, it is because the *sitra achra* has set many internal and external pitfalls so that he should give up in despair.

This is the “indignation” of which the verse speaks—this feeling of distance from Hashem and failure. The solution is to, “enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you,” to seek out a private place and sit there with Hashem alone. There, one can speak all of his heart out to Hashem and tell Him of all his desires for holiness. This is what mitigates the judgment, “the indignation passes over.”

[Note: Reb Nosson of Breslov explained that even Bilaam acknowledged and praised this practice of the Jewish people. “This is the meaning of the blessing, ‘Verily it is a nation that shall dwell alone.’ They are such a holy people that they dwell alone and fulfill the command, ‘Come, my people, enter you into your chambers, and shut your doors about you; hide yourself for a little moment, until the indignation passes over.’ They seclude themselves with Hashem and pour their hearts out before Him at all times, and every day consider their final destination and purpose in life. Their taking refuge under the shadow of His wings is what ensures them security from all their enemies...for who would be so bold as to advance against Hashem? ...For they place their dwelling and secure themselves with Him through the practice of *hisbodedus*, with which they remove their minds from the vanities of this world and nullify their wills to His. This is the deeper meaning of the interpretation of the *Targum Yonasan* on the verse, ‘And are not reckoned among the nations’—they are not involved in the customs of the non-Jewish nations who spend their lives acquiring ever more furnishings, silver vessels, jewelry, and all of the other commodities that keep a person tied to the vanities of this world. Instead, the Jewish people remove their minds from this and do *hisbodedus*; they pour their hearts out expressing their good desires, longing, and yearning from Hashem. This is the deeper meaning of the verse, ‘Who has counted the dust of Yaakov?’ Who can possibly put a measure on the preciousness of every single step over the dust of the earth that the Jewish people take when they go to pursue holy goals? Who can estimate the value of the journey toward the synagogue, or to the *beis midrash* to receive Torah from their teacher,

or toward their place of *hisbodedus* where they pour out their hearts to Hashem? Every single step that they take over the dust of the earth creates great rectifications and delight above, so great that they cannot be estimated or measured.”⁵]

In this world, the obstacles to holiness are considerable, and throughout the lower three worlds of *Beriyah-Yetzirah-Asiyah*, the evils of jealousy, lust, and the pursuit of honor prevail and keep a person from serving Hashem. To counteract their pull, we need to be a people that “dwells alone”—that rises to the world of *Atzilus* which is known as the “World of Solitude” where one nullifies himself completely before the Creator. Sitting in solitude with Hashem and pouring one’s heart out before Him as with a good friend, openly speaking of all that one goes through in this world, nullifies all of the vanities of this world. One must speak to Hashem literally as he would to his best friend, about absolutely everything, and this makes him a part of the people that, “verily, dwells alone.” At this level of aloneness with Hashem, one becomes bound to Him in every possible way—through the *mochin* of *CHaBaD*, the emotive powers of *CHaGaT*, and the lower drives of *N-H-Y*. All that we go through in this world is only a means through which we can develop a relationship with Hashem. When a person falls into exile in this world, he is a wanderer “to and fro upon the earth” like Kayin—he wanders back and forth among a field of obstacles that disturb his soul. The only real solution is to “dwell alone”—to rise to the World of Solitude—and “shut your doors about you” and bide a while until the anger passes. By speaking all of his heart out to Hashem, we will merit all of the good in all of the worlds.

This is the practice of the true *tzaddikim*. Even when they sit with people and speak to them, their hearts are not there at all. Instead, they are deep in *dveikus* in *hisbodedus* above.

Binding all the Worlds Together

Hashem’s purpose in the creation of the universe and the souls of the Jewish people was that He should have a dwelling place among the lower worlds.⁶ He wants to

⁵ *Likutei Halachos, Birchas HaShachar* 5:87

be revealed in the lower world, that it should be refined and ascend again to the highest level of *Atzilus*, and this is the main task of the *tzaddikim*. We can also fulfill this higher purpose through rising up to the World of Solitude in our own *hisbodedus*. The *tzaddikim* really reach the root of the matter, however, because they completely “shut their doors about them” and detach from the apparently independent existence of the world. They descend to the lower worlds of *BY”A* and return back up to the world of *Atzilus*.

They do this not only during *hisbodedus*, but also during *Shemonah Esrei*. It is really no simple matter when a Jew prays *Shemonah Esrei*, because it is one of the times when one’s soul rises to the world of *Atzilus* to taste of Hashem’s supernal light. There are other such times—during specific parts of the daily prayers and during Shabbos and so on—and one can receive this light only by “shutting one’s doors” of perception and focusing only on Hashem’s absolute reality. One can merit to feel one’s bond with Hashem, how in comparison to it all of the other bonds in this world are like nothing at all, because it is only our bond with the Divine that is truly real. All of the obstacles we encounter are only a result of not living and feeling this bond sufficiently, and so to overcome them we have to “shut our doors”—shut out all of the experience of the outside world—and renew our bond with Hashem. We should not only do this during *Shemonah Esrei*, but at all times. As the Baal HaTanya taught, one must achieve the *dveikus* of *Shemonah Esrei* even when one is not praying. During the prayer itself, the *mochin* are revealed, but one must carry this renewed focus back into his daily life. This will protect one from all harm.

All of the obstacles that are generated by the *sitra achra* are only a function of the lower worlds of *BY”A*, the worlds of separation. But the Jewish people have a means of connecting with the highest level of *Atzilus* because of the “rocks and the hills” at the very peak and beginning—the *Avos* and the *Imahos*. We begin *Shemonah Esrei* with the blessing of *Avos* to reconnect with their merit, to re-bind ourselves to our source. This

⁶ *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Naso*

gives us the power to bind all of the apparent division and separation of the lower three worlds with the higher World of Solitude of *Atzilus*.

The Power of Prayer

The way to bind oneself to the holiness of the *Avos* is through the breath that emerges from the mouth during prayer. The *Zohar* teaches that there are three parts of speech: the voice, the words, and the breath which comprises water [vapor], fire [body heat], and air. These three elements parallel the three *Avos* who are associated with the *sefiros* of *CHaGaT*. Even though these matters are far beyond us and we do not understand what they mean practically, nevertheless the Jewish soul rises in prayer to the higher worlds together with those of the *Avos*.

Chazal taught that in the ultimate future [the angels] will ask, “What made these people worthy of learning with the holy *Avos*? They did not learn Torah properly [during their lives in this world]!” Hashem will answer, “They are fit because they [יה] are Mine.” Those who merit to be of the people who “verily [יה] are a nation that shall dwell alone,” who abandon all of the confusing illusions of the lower worlds of *BY”A* and anything that distracts them from their bond with Hashem, and who rise to the level of *dveikus* of the “air and breath” of the *Avos*, it is as if they actual speak with the *Avos* and walk with them. The heavenly chambers of the *Avos* are then opened to them even if they did not reach perfection in their *avodah* when they were alive. Hashem attests, “they are Mine,” even if they were not perfect in every matter. For this reason, a person should never say that since he is flawed he will not be able to rise during prayer. Quite the contrary, the ascending during prayer will help to save him from evil afterward. One must therefore make the greatest effort to arouse himself to transcend the confusions of this world when he prays.

The disciples of the Baal Shem Tov said that one can rise on a single prayer even if one has fallen into sin. Even so, he must bind himself on high when he prays, and his prayer will repair everything. In truth, he can achieve this bond at any time by focusing on Hashem’s absolute existence; he will be filled with such spiritual vitality that it makes

all other forms of vital energy seem like nothing at all. All of the pleasures of this world are only a pale shadow of the light of Hashem's truth, and when they are compared with the light of His presence they are completely nullified. The illusory pleasures of acquisition, desire, and honor [קנאה, תאוה, וכבוד] cannot compare to the genuine honor and pleasure of connecting with Hashem's Infinite Light. One receives all of the levels that he seeks, because he is bound up with the heavenly chambers. This was the great level that Pinchas reached when he, "was jealous for My jealousy."⁷ When a person is bound to the "supernal jealousy"—of not being jealous of anyone and seeking only Hashem and wanting to cleave to Him—he receives the power to banish all of the *klippas* like Pinchas.⁸

Bilaam and Balak, a Partnership of Evil

The Arizal taught that Bilaam embodied the evil within Hevel, while Balak embodied the evil within Kayin, and the latter is worse than the former.⁹ The Vilna Gaon taught that the aspect of Hevel can be repaired, while the *klippah* of Kayin is very difficult to rectify. Balak brought forty-two offerings, to parallel Kayin who is rooted in *Binah* and the 42-Name that is associated with it. Yet the real danger was from the partnership of the two, because Balak knew that without Bilaam he had no real power. *Binah* without *Chochmah* has nothing; Yishmael is rooted in *Chochmah* and Eisav in *Binah*. When the two of them join forces, this is the partnership of Bilaam and Balak—the combined negative force of idolatry and immodesty. When they are together, a very deep *klippah* is revealed. This is the force of the *erev rav*, as the verse says, "And the people [העם] began (profaned itself) to act immodestly..." The Arizal taught that when the verse uses the term *עם*, it is referring to the *erev rav*.

⁷ *Bamidbar* 25:11

⁸ *Likutei Moharan* I:278

⁹ *Sha'ar Hapesukim, Parshas Balak*

The Good within Kayin and Hevel

The main *tikkun* during the last period before the arrival of Moshiach is to join the “head” and the “body”—the [concepts of the] 72-Name and the 42-Name. The *sitra achra* only has the power to ensnare Jewish souls when they join together, and so the way that we counteract this force is by uniting the influences of these two holy Names [with their different permutations of the *Shem HaVaYaH* and all that they represent]. One must unite the “head” and all that it knows and the breath of speech that emerges from the mouth, with the “body” so that this knowledge is brought into action. This is called the “*yichud* of the *Kesser*”—the uniting of *yesh* and *ayin*—of existence and nothingness [sense of self and *bitul* before Hashem]—into a single entity. This is what will repair the souls of the *erev rav* [that have been intermingled with the Jewish people and have caused so much trouble¹⁰].

“From the top of the rocks I see him...” Even if the *klippah* takes hold down below, nevertheless the Jewish people rise to the top and unite at the very root and source of existence, the point of *Reisha D'lo Isyada'ah*, the point of faith itself. They are bound to the “top of the rocks” and this gives them strength to draw the abundance embodied in the “seven breaths from the Mouth” to the seven lower *sefiros* within *Atik*. This repairs the three “legs” [lower aspects] within *CHaGaT*, and this binds the good that exists within Kayin to that which is within Hevel.

This, in turn, reveals the unity among all of the souls of the Jewish people [because all souls are rooted in either Kayin or Hevel], and even if there is some dispute among them it is shown to exist only superficially and not at all inside. [We see this even now, since even different communities may diverge in their *hashkafah* and customs, nevertheless when a Jew is in pain or suffering, everyone comes to his aid no matter what his community origin may be.] This is because, in truth, the Jewish people on the inside are completely united. “Who is like Your people Yisrael, one nation upon the earth.” In

¹⁰ *Tikkunei Zohar* 91,97 and commentary of the Vilna Gaon there.

the merit of this unity, the *klippos* of Bilaam and Balak are destroyed and the Jewish people do a complete *teshuvah*.

Avodah during Prayer, and Avodah after Prayer

To return to the subject of *hisbodedus*, we must understand that it is not so difficult to “shut your doors” and close out the world. Hevel [which means the ability to recognize the vanity of this world—הבל הבלים] is associated with *Malchus*, because “*Chochmah* founded the daughter”—*Chochmah* [also related to Hevel] and *Malchus* are closely bound. *Malchus* can easily reconnect with *Chochmah*; the experience of the life of this world which is *Malchus* is easily shed so that the inner light of *Chochmah* and *bitul* can be reached. “With this [זאת, which is the feminine *Malchus*] shall Aharon come to the Holy [which is *Chochmah* and *bitul*].” This rising from *Malchus* to *Chochmah* conquers the *klippah* of Bilaam and makes a person worthy of the blessing, “How good [מה טובו] are your tents, Yaakov.” “Good” [טוב] has the same *gematria* as the permutation of the Divine Name written as אהויה, the acronym of the phrase, “אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ”—that Hashem created “the heavens and the earth.” It is the symbol of binding the “earthiness” with the heavens, with *dveikus* on high. This *dveikus* means forgetting about all of the forces of earthly existence and receiving a fresh and power flow of life-force from Hashem’s existence alone.

Yet the main challenge is to subdue the force of Balak-Kayin who brought forty-two offerings to counteract the 42-Name that emerges from the prayer *Ana B’Koach* of Rav Nechunia ben Hakaneh and which is the analogue of all of the existence of this world. Even if a person has merited to repair his “upper three”—his *mochin* and awareness of Hashem so that he attains *dveikus* during prayer by virtue of the *hevel*-breath of the *Avos*—nevertheless, he still has the great task before him of subduing the *klippah* of Balak, the “seven lower *sefiros*” [the seven altars] where the forty-two offerings are brought. This is what happens after the prayer is over, when one returns to his life in this world and his everyday actions. At that point, one needs heavenly assistance to merit to bring all that he knows in potential down to reality and action. This

is a very difficult task, and in the language of the Kabbalists this is the fifth *tikkun* of the “beard” which parallels the Name [of the thirteen attributes of mercy], *Apayim*—the area of the face that is devoid of hair—and it is past them that the *hevel* flows until it reaches the place of the seven lower *sefiros*. This is what enables one’s prayer to impact his actions.

The Forty-Two Children

The Arizal taught that the prophet Elisha was a reincarnation of Kayin. Of Kayin the verse says, “וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה” —“And to his offering, He did not hearken...”¹¹ The words *לא שעה* can be rearranged to form the name *אלישע*, Elisha, *אלי שעה*—“He hearkened to me,” or *אלי שׁיע*, “the [370 heavenly lights] are for me.”¹² It was Elisha’s task to rectify the good within Kayin and so he was challenged by the forty-two children. They were killed because they teased Elisha by saying, “Come up, bald one [עלה קרח].”¹³ These were the souls of the *erev rav* that are reincarnated in the latter generations—they are imprisoned souls that demand rectification, and it is very difficult to accomplish this.

Elisha’s connection with the “370 lights” [שייע נהורין] of *dveikus* are what allowed him to look at the forty-two children and see that there was no good within them to rectify, and it was his gazing at them that caused the bears to come and devour them. They were a reflection of the *klippah* of Kayin that is very hard to repair, the sphere of action in this world. It is difficult for *tzaddikim*; how much more so for simple people. For even when a person is able to achieve a degree of *dveikus* during prayer, he still is beset by the *klippah* of the *erev rav* when it comes to bringing lofty knowledge and *dveikus* into the realm of action.

Even Elisha who was the aspect of the “370 lights” had so much trouble rectifying the aspect of forty-two, which is the total number of letters when the Name *HaVaYaH* is written simply, then in its first expansion, and a further expansion. [Note:

¹¹ Bereishis 4:5

¹² Sha’ar Hagilgulim #32

¹³ Melachim II:2:23

For the purpose of demonstration, this form of the 42-Name was written articulated by *alef*, but there are variants articulated by *hei* or *yud* that can apply at other points of the prayer or *avodah*. This subject is beyond the scope of the current *shiur*.]

י ה ו ״ ה
 יו״ד ה״א ו א״ו ה״א
 יו״ד ו א״ו ד ל״ת, ה״א א ל״ף, ו א״ו א ל״ף ו א״ו, ה״א א ל״ף

The total number of letters is forty-two. The light that Elisha carries only parallels the forty-nine gates of *Binah*, but not that of the fiftieth gate. The Arizal taught that the light of the forty-nine gates shone at the time of the exodus from Egypt, and it was only at the time of *Matan Torah* that we ascended to the level of the fiftieth gate. The forty-nine parallel the 42-Name, and even Elisha would only have been able to rectify the sparks of the *erev rav* and complete his *avodah* fully by rising above their level all the way to the fiftieth gate, where there is no self-awareness at all. In Kabbalistic terms, this is what is meant by a division that exists between the aspects of the 42-Name and the 72-Name, between the “body” and the “head.”

The achievement of *dveikus* during prayer is associated with the feminine [the ascent of *Malchus* to *Chochmah*], but the actualization of *dveikus* in action is associated with the masculine. The Vilna Gaon taught in his commentary to *Safra D'tzniusa* that it is much harder to rectify the male than the female. This is what Elisha saw: that the forty-two children could not be rectified until the end of time, because in truth it is difficult to rectify the *klippah* of Kayin until the final redemption arrives. This is why the Jewish people encounter so many obstacles in their pursuit of the final rectification.

Rising Above the 370 Lights

The solution is found, then, in rising above the level of the 370 lights and the corresponding forty-nine gates of *Binah*—we must rise to the fiftieth gate itself. “How goodly are your tents...”—we must come to the level of pure *dveikus* in Hashem Himself.

This means transcending even the head [to the *makifin*], to the three lights: “the primordial,” the “pure,” and the “refined and shining.” [These parallel the three nations of Moav, Ammon, and Edom on the far side of the Jordan whose territory will only be conquered when Moshiach arrives.] These are the ultimate sources of wisdom and *dveikus*, the Torah of *Atika Sesima'ah*—the Torah of the hidden mind of *Atik* [which is Kabbalah studied with *dveikus* and *bitul*].

And even if one finds that he cannot actualize all that he knows and feels in potential, he should at the very least make prayers of his study [as Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught]. Doing so reveals the oneness of Hashem in every single detail of the world and the Torah. When a person asks Hashem for every single little thing that he needs spiritually and physically, he reveals that He is everywhere absolutely. The person may not accomplish anything that seems to be much, but at the root of all roots, he is one in his pursuit of total *dveikus* with the *tzaddikim* and all of their *avodah*. By begging Hashem to help him repent over every little failing in his mitzvah observance, he binds himself completely to his source and will merit to repent completely. He will surely attain all that he seeks.

Just as there is an aspect of *Ana B'Koach* within the realm of the lower seven *sefiros* [the 42-Name in a lower manifestation], so too does it exist in the realm of the upper three *sefiros*, which is what is meant by the “*Shechinah* that rests upon the head of the person.” When a person is connected to the source, he achieves a bond with all of the Torah in all of its aspects even if he did not merit in action to master it practically. And this is also true of all of the variations of mitzvah that do not apply to a person practically [but with which the soul does need to be connected in order to receive spiritual vitality from all 613 *mitzvos*]. At the higher source, the *klippah* of Kayin cannot take hold, and so one must rise to connect at the very source. This level is called the “supernal *ayin*, or nothingness” where one only experiences the existence of Hashem.

As the Komarna Rebbe taught, in these latter generations one must rise to *dveikus* and beg Hashem for mercy to help him achieve every single thing that he needs

to achieve, because now is the time when the *sitra achra*—the *klippas* of Balak and Bilaam—stand against the Jewish people to block us from actualizing our *avodah*. One must be obstinate and keep on praying, and believe completely that prayer has the power to be effective. And the main aspect of prayer in this sense is *hisbodedus*. This is what is meant by, “the *tzaddik* decrees and Hashem fulfills it.” Hashem wants us to be obstinate and continue to pray for everything, since “the stubborn one succeeds” just like a child who is stubborn eventually wins his father over. Yet although the *tzaddik* is obstinate, he is also patient and does not “steal” anything from heaven. He believes in Hashem absolutely and accepts that everything difficult is for the purpose of spiritual repair, yet still holds strong to keep on praying. This is how the *tzaddik* is able to subdue the *klippah* aspect associated with the 42-Name and transform everything to holiness.

“Let Your Soul Know Wisdom”

This is the meaning of: “דעה חכמה לנפשך והיא כתר לראשך”—“Let your soul (*nefesh*) know (*d'ei*) wisdom (*Chochmah*) and it will be a crown (*Kesser*) for your head.”¹⁴ It is not enough to do *hisbodedus*; one must become bound up with the supernal *yichud* and draw the *dveikus* of *Abba* down to “your soul”—the realm of *Malchus* which is hidden in the upper three lights. We do this by asking Hashem plainly and clearly, constantly and patiently, for every single thing that we need spiritually and physically. Then it will be “a crown to your head”—the flow of Divine abundance will come down uninterrupted from the highest levels of *Kesser* to absolutely everywhere. Then we will come to bind ourselves to Hashem in the way of the *tzaddikim*, to be constantly connected above and to always feel the delight of unity with our Source. With the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy, speedily and in our days. Amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.

¹⁴ From the *Shabbos zemer* “*D'ror Yikrah*,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.