

DO NOT LOOK!

By Ozer Bergman

“[God] does not look at the sins of Jacob ...”
(Numbers 23:21).

Some of us might find this verse somewhat troubling. Does it mean that Hashem (God) doesn’t judge us for what we do? Does it mean that He doesn’t see what we do? Does it mean that it’s ... OK to do those things the *yetzer hara* (evil urge) whispers in my ear?

No, no and no. Rosh HaShanah is called Yom HaDin (Judgement Day); “He Who forms the eye, will He not see?” (Psalms 94:9); and our verse does call them “sins” so they are still forbidden. So, what does the verse mean?

Rebbe Nachman teaches us that Hashem’s way is to focus on the good that Jews do. If there are things that are not good about them, He turns a blind eye to those things. “All the more so, a person is forbidden to look at another in a negative light, to seek and find specifically what is wrong about [the other’s] worship. On the contrary. One is obligated to focus only on the positive.”

This is important throughout the year, but is especially important now, as we approach the period of *Bein HaMitzarim* (literally, between the straits, aka, The Three Weeks). This is the period of the year in which we mourn our exile, which began with the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash (Temple). The climax of The Three Weeks is the anniversary of the Temple’s destruction, 9 Av. (This year, 5771/2011, The Three Weeks begin Tuesday, 17 Tammuz [19 July] and conclude at the end of Tuesday afternoon, 9 Av [9 August]). The Talmud tells us that the reason for the destruction of the Temple—and our prolonged exile—is *sinat chinam* (baseless hatred).

It seems like a rather formidable task: rid ourselves of the tendency to look at people unfavorably. How do we do it? The Rebbe gives one suggestion in the first part of the lesson: Celebrate Shabbat! Enjoy it! Dress up! Make Kiddush on a wine you enjoy. Eat nicer meals than you do during the week. I’m sure you have no objection to this suggestion. But you’re probably a little curious: what’s the connection?

Hashgachah (Divine providence). Rebbe Nachman writes that when a person behaves right, God takes care of him/her with a personalized, tailor-made *hashgachah*. What would happen, he asks, if a person misbehaved? If he were to be treated with tailor-made *hashgachah* then, he would have a difficult, unpleasant existence. What does Hashem do to allow us to enjoy some good in life? He lets our life run naturally. That way, in the natural order of things and in the natural course of events, good things can happen to us.

Shabbat is holiness itself. All holiness demands appropriate celebration and joy. When we observe Shabbat by refraining from the 39 types of *melakhah* (loosely defined as “work”) and their offshoots, we remove the distractions that keep us from appreciating Hashem’s presence in life. The food, drink and other pleasures that we enjoy are meant to enhance our true joy, which is the recognition and feeling of God’s care and concern for us—His *hashgachah*.

When we celebrate Shabbat, our appreciation for Hashem’s “not looking at the sins of Jacob,” we internalize to some degree the same perspective, so that we, too, do “look at the sins of Jacob,” of our fellow Jews. For just as you understand God’s involvement, care and concern in your own life, you understand His involvement, care and concern in the other person’s life. You begin to understand that just as out of His love for you He overlooks your errors, mistakes and defiance—your sins—He also overlooks the errors, mistakes and defiance—the sins—of your fellow Jews. All the more so should you!

May we merit to see the good in others. Amen!

agutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

— Based on *Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #17

PARSHA PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

22:5 Balak sent messengers to Bilaam.

SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman once remarked, “Even [the glimpse of] the World to Come that we can experience in *this* world—when God bestows His grace upon us—is beyond all measure!” (*Tzaddik* 486).

Rebbe Nosson said, “The main goal of all our work in this world is to merit to be re-united back into *Ein Sof* (God’s Infinite Oneness) – and yet to maintain our separate existence. This is what we refer to when we speak of the eternal delight of the World to Come”.

Spiritual Power is Expressed Through the Mouth

Balak, king of Moav, saw that the Israelites had overcome Sichon and Og, who until then had been undefeated.

Balak was told that the Israelites drew their strength from Moshe, whose power was in his mouth—i.e., in the power of his prayer.

Balak therefore decided to battle the Jews with the aid of another man whose power resided in his mouth: Bilaam (Rashi). Our Sages teach that Moshe’s strength was matched by that of Bilaam (*Sifrei*).

Moshe corresponds to the state of consciousness associated with holy *Daat*, whereas Bilaam corresponds to the state of consciousness associated with impurity. In either case, the revelation of awareness, or consciousness, is through the mouth. As the verse states, one “speaks awareness” (*Psalms* 19) (LM I, 43; see also below, Chapter 31).

Bilaam is the Opposite of the Torah

Bilaam stands in opposition to the Torah. Each letter in his name—*bet*, *lamed*, *ayin*, *mem*—alludes to the Torah and indicates his obsessive desire to uproot it.

Bet and *lamed* are, respectively, the first and last letters of the Torah.

Ayin has the numerical value of 70, and as such alludes to the seventy faces, or interpretations, of the Torah.

Finally, *mem* has the numerical value of 40 and corresponds to the 40 days in which the Torah was given.

Because Bilaam was steeped in impurity, he desired to uproot the Torah, which is associated with purity (LM I, 36:2).

23:7 Balak, king of Moav, has brought me from Aram.

The Forces of Evil Attempt to Lower Our Consciousness to the Mundane

"Aram" is a reference both to Bilaam's ancestor, Lavan the Arami, and to Aramaic, the official *Targum* ("translation") of Torah. Just as Lavan had attempted to drag Yaakov into a material state of consciousness (see *Genesis* 31), so did Bilaam try to bring the Jewish people into the mundane sphere—the "translation" into physicality of the lofty spiritual levels that may be found in this world.

When a person's spirituality is subverted and "translated" into something mundane, his connection to God is weakened.

Bilaam intended to bring the Jews to this level in order to cause them to sin (see LM I, 19:4).

23:23 What is God doing?

The Jews Are, at Their Source, Higher than Angels

The messianic days, the Jews will be closer to God than are the angels, and so the angels will then ask the Jews, "What is God doing?" (Rashi).

The Jews' root of being is higher than that of the angels (LM II, 1:1). The source of the souls of the Jewish people is to be found in the Throne of Glory, which is in the World of *Beriyah*, whereas the angels come from the relatively lower world of *Yetzirah*.

Two Ways of Apprehending God

A person can attain a transcendental consciousness that seeks God with the query, "What?" That is to say, "What more can I find out about God? What other levels are there? What else is so far beyond me that I must strive to reach?" This will be the general level of understanding in messianic days. At that time, our experience will be one of deep yearning for God (LM II, 7:8-10).

At present, on the other hand, as a general rule we must strive to recognize that "the earth is full of His Glory" (*Isaiah* 6), assuring ourselves that we are capable of experiencing Godliness even in this world.

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

6. The primary reason why prayers are not accepted is that the person's words lack grace. Therefore, every person must make an effort for his words to have true grace. A person merits this by engaging in Torah study, and then his prayers will be accepted.

7. A Jew should always look to the intellect in every thing, and connect himself to the wisdom and the intellect that are found in every thing, so that the intellect in every thing will shine its light for him and he may draw close to God through that very thing. For the essential vitality in every thing is nothing other than the intellect and wisdom it contains, as it is written, "Wisdom gives life to its possessors" (*Ecclesiastes* 7:12). The intellect is a great light and, like the sun, shines to a person in all his activities. Even when a person sometimes comes to a place of obscurity and darkness, God forbid, nevertheless, when he merits to see the intellect and vitality in every thing, the intellect then shines its light for him and draws him close to God. This is how Joseph merited to withstand his test - he looked for the intellect in every thing.

8. It is impossible to attain the light of this intellect except through Malkhut (Kingship). In other words, one must accept upon himself the Kingdom of Heaven in truth and in perfect faith, and rein in his mind and dismiss his own wisdom completely, as if he has no intellect of his own whatsoever. He must abhor all secular wisdom and thinking, and wait, long and yearn only to receive light and vitality from the true intellect and wisdom -

namely, the supernal holy intellect which is the essence of the holy vitality that exists in everything.

9. The essence of the battle between the good inclination and the evil inclination lies in this area alone. For the good inclination incites a person to abhor all secular wisdom and thinking, as well as all the physical desires that are pure folly and genuine foolishness; and it impels him to connect himself only to the light of the holy intellect. But the evil inclination incites a person to the opposite, as in, "A fool does not desire understanding" (*Proverbs* 18:2). This latter case was personified in Esau who scorned his birthright, which is the concept of holy wisdom and intellect. Each person must empower the good inclination to prevail over the evil inclination, as our Sages, of blessed memory, said, "A person must always incite the good inclination against the evil inclination" (*Berakhot* 5a). A person merits to do this by engaging in Torah study with energy and enthusiasm.



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