



# דרכים בפרשה

בלק



מה טובו אהליך יעקב משכנתיך ישראל

*How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov, your dwelling places, O Yisroel (24:5)*

Although Bilaam initially set out to curse the Klal Yisroel, in the end he only managed to give brachos. After observing the camp, he was simply blown away with the differences between the Jews and the other nations.

מה טובו אהליך: על שראה פתחיהם שאינן מכוונין זה כנגד זה. Bilaam noted how they were *dwelling according to their tribes*; each and every *shevet* managed to maintain its own separate identity, and the tents were arranged so that the entrances did not face one another (Rashi).

Observing the tremendous level of *tznius* in which Klal Yisroel conducted themselves, Bilaam was left in awe. There was something so different and special about these people; it was actually their modesty that made them so special.

There is a great misconception in the world! People believe that in order to be noticed and make an impact, one must “put themselves out there”, as if they are part of a billboard or some marketing campaign.

I would like to share a *Gemara* in *Mesechta Brochos* (5b) that demonstrates the exact opposite. Rav Yochanan went to visit Rabi Elazar while he was ill. Rav Yochanan

noticed that the room was very dark, so he uncovered his shirtsleeve, revealing his arm. As a result (of his flesh glowing so brightly-*Rashi*), the entire room was illuminated. Rav Shach *zt”l* wonders: If indeed his body gave off such light when he uncovered his sleeve, shouldn’t his face have already caused the darkness of the room to dissipate just by walking in? Rav Shach answered, “*Ah zach vos iz badekt iz bashaint, un ah zach vos is nisht badekt iz nisht bashaint!*” Something that is covered is nice, but uncover it and it does not have the same beauty. Rav Yochanan was known as the most beautiful person, yet his face would not give off that same radiance and beauty because it was constantly exposed.

Klal Yisroel is a nation of modesty. The *Iyun Yaakov* in *Mesechta Brochos* (62b) comments that modesty is what determines whether the *shechina* resides within a person. Furthermore, in *Sefer Shmuel* (ch.24), we learn that after being chased for a long time, Dovid finally had the opportunity to kill King Shaul. He refrained from doing so because he noted an extreme level of modesty in Shaul. When he saw this modesty, he felt as if he was looking

directly at the *shechina*. This modesty is what saved Shaul's life!

We are compared to stars to remind us that we don't need to be like the *umos ha'olam*. We can maintain the highest levels of *tznius* with the reassurance that we will be even more beautiful than those that ignore it.

There is yet another element of *tznius* that is worthwhile to take a moment and think about:

Why is it that people have a feeling that they need to have what someone else has; where does this desire stem from? The Torah tells us *Lo sachmod*- do not covet what your neighbour has. But isn't it a natural tendency? He has it and I want it, so now I got to have it as well.

As a child, my parents would always tell me to stop looking at what everyone else has. איזהו עשיר? השמה בחלקו - a rich person is one that is happy with his/her lot. But how can I be happy if his piece is bigger than mine; if his car, house, job, you name it seems better than mine? The answer of course is as my parents said all along: STOP LOOKING AT WHAT EVERYONE ELSE HAS. If we would focus on our own, and learn to be happy with what HaShem has given us, there would never be an interest in coveting what the next person has.

Bilaam saw that each shevet kept its own

identity. There was no need to copy what someone else was doing, or to have what the other person had, because they were happy with their own portion. How was it that they didn't desire what the others had? Simple! They could not see into the other person's tent. Their tents were designed in a way that would provide protection from others looking in. There was no need to flaunt it just because they had it.

Bilaam saw the *tznius* and proclaimed **הן עם לבדד ישכן ובגוים לא יתחשב** - *Behold! It is a nation that will dwell separately and not be reckoned among the nations.*

What makes us special is that we are different than everyone else. Take away *tznius* from the *Yid chas v'shalom*, and we are left with assimilation because there is no way to stay separate without dressing and acting differently.

**Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפאל**



**ALL PARSHA**  
A MEMBER OF THE OR

**DOWNLOAD ALL PARSHA!**  
the new free parsha app

Download on the **App Store** GET IT ON **Google Play**