

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

PARSHAS  
BALAK

# בשבת

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אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

## A POWERFUL PUNCH

In the beginning of this week's *Parshah*<sup>1</sup> we find the officers of *Moav* alarmed at the success of the *Bnei Yisrael*, to the point where they reach out to their enemies, *Midyan*, to ask for help. In doing so, they compare the damage that *Klal Yisrael* has dealt to the damage an ox does to the grass on a field. Of all creatures, why does *Moav* compare *Klal Yisrael* to an ox?

Amongst other explanations, the *Medrash*<sup>2</sup> points out that the *Bnei Yisrael* have something in common with the horn of the ox. An ox can be particularly powerful and effective using its horn, despite the horn's small size.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, *Klal Yisrael* can be particularly powerful and effective with their *Tefillos*, despite the fact that there is no action involved, only words. This strength was so obvious that the leaders of *Moav* knew that it was futile to wage a physical battle. Their only solution was to fight fire with fire, and hire someone who was also effective using words.

We all know that the ox's horn is effective because of the muscle and weight of the ox behind it. Likewise, *Tefillah* is effective because of our thoughts and feelings behind our words. With that in mind, what, indeed, are the thoughts and feelings that we should focus on when *Davening*? The *Chovos HaLevovos*<sup>4</sup> explains that our *Tefillah* is not trying to get Hashem to 'change His mind,' so to speak. Rather, we use *Tefillah* to help us deepen the feeling that we are totally dependant on Hashem, which helps us grow in our *Emunah* and *Bitachon*.

One may ask, how does Hashem 'answer' our *Tefillos*? If we are focusing on ourselves - on our own growth and understanding of Hashem in our life, how does this cause our circumstances to change? The answer is simple - when we improve ourselves, Hashem responds by improving our situation.<sup>5</sup> In fact, sometimes Hashem is *waiting* to give us something wonderful, He just needs us to *Daven* for it. With this in mind, the many times we *Daven* are opportunities to change ourselves, and the way we see the world.

1 *Bamidbar* 22:4

2 *Bamidbar Rabbah* 20:4

3 *Eshed HaNechalim* s.v. מנגח בקרניו

4 *Chovos HaLevovos, Sha'ar Cheshbon HaNefesh, Cheshbon* 18

5 *Sefer Halkarim* 4:18

**Sometimes  
Hashem is  
waiting to give  
us something  
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Daven for it.**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It can be very difficult to strengthen our *Tefillah*, especially when we *Daven* for something and we don't see any response. Is there a mindset we can use in our approach to *Tefillah* that can help us?

The *Mabit*<sup>1</sup> (Moshe ben Yosef di Trani, 1505-1585) explains that *Tefillah* is a *Mitzvah*, and like any *Mitzvah*, we will get rewarded for doing the *Mitzvah*. If one has proper concentration during *Davening*, even if one doesn't get 'answered,' it's not as if they wasted their time. They will still receive reward, both in this world, and in the next world.<sup>2</sup> A *Mitzvah* is not something to be taken lightly!<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, the *Mabit* adds that even if we are not answered in the fashion that we hoped, we still may receive something similar to that which we asked for, much like Moshe *Rabbeinu* who was not allowed to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, but after *Davening*, was allowed to see the land.

Remember, *Tefillah* does not have to be about the results, but about the relationship to Hashem!

1 *Beis Elokim, Sha'ar HaTefillah* 15

2 *Shabbos* 127a

3 See *Beshivticha* on *Behaloscha*

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**Believe me, when a day goes by  
that I don't learn Mussar, I feel a  
chilling effect in my Yiras Hashem**

- The Chasam Sofer, *Chut HaMeshulash*,

p. 94

# WAKEUP CALL

Shimmy\* was a sweet and sincere thirteen year old, well liked by his peers and teachers. He was sharp and astute, and understood the Gemara without much work. However, Shimmy was easily distracted, and though he had the mental capability, and even the desire to learn, it simply wasn't enough to get him to focus on the task at hand.

As the end of the year approached, Shimmy's father informed him that he will be applying to a prestigious yeshiva for the coming year, and would be taking a *Bechinah* in a couple of weeks.

The day of the test arrived. Sitting across from the 9th grade rebbi was simply painful. The silence hung heavy in the air after every question asked. Here and there Shimmy would venture some form of an answer, only to be told that he had missed the mark. As the test grew to a close, the 9th grade rebbi said, "Thank you for applying, but I don't think this yeshiva is for you." And with that, Shimmy left the office.

Shimmy and his father drove home in silence. Later that day Shimmy went to his local shul for *Mincha*. He decided to sit in the *Ezras Nashim*, as he didn't want to be bothered by anyone. *Shemona Esrei* started like any other *Tefillah*, but suddenly, the floodgates opened. Trying to suppress his sobs, Shimmy spelled out everything to Hashem, his desire, the difficulties, the obstacles, and the challenges. He knew he wanted to learn Torah, he just found it so difficult! Finally catching his breath, Shimmy finished *Mincha*, and went home.

Shimmy is currently serving as a *Rosh Kollel* - but that's not the point. In Shimmy's words, "That *Tefillah* helped me understand that I'm not capable of doing anything and everything - Hashem is in charge. It was so cathartic to give my burdens over to Hashem. I'm still easily distracted, but with *Siyata Dishmaya*, I try to persevere.

"One other point - in retrospect, it was very good that I didn't go to that yeshiva. I am positive, with the way things were going, that I would not have done well there, and would not be where I am today. The yeshiva that accepted me gave me the tools I needed, both for learning, and for life."

*\*Based on a true story, told to the author. Name has been changed.*

**"I'm not capable of doing anything and everything - Hashem is in charge."**

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Hashem will sometimes withhold livelihood from people to cause them to pray, and deepen their relationship with Hashem.<sup>1</sup>
- It is imperative to take a moment before *Davening* to calm one's mind.<sup>2</sup>
- It is better to say fewer supplications with *Kavanah* than saying many without *Kavanah*.<sup>3</sup>

1 *Yoma* 76a

2 *Shulchan Orech, Orech Chaim* 90:20

3 *Shulchan Orech, Orech Chaim* 1:4