



And the word
of Hashem from **Yerushalayim**

From the teachings of the
Rosh Yeshiva of Ateret Yerushalayim
Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva

Ha-Rav **Shlomo Aviner** Shlit" a

Parashat Balak - #287

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On the Parashah... The First Thing We Say in Davening Each Morning

[Tal Chermon]

Our first meeting with the Creator in the morning is the verse "How goodly are your tents, Yaakov." This is how we begin our daily davening – with a verse that points to Jewish modesty. How so? Because the entrances of Yaakov's "goodly" tents did not face one another, and thus prevented intrusions upon the privacy of other families (Rashi on Bemidbar 24:5).

And yet the verse comes from the mouth of an evil person who was completely corrupt: Bilaam. This is a person who had relations with his donkey (Sanhedrin 105b), who was

punished in Gehinom for his sexually activity (Gitin 56b) and who caused the Jewish People to sin with the daughters of Moav (Bemidbar 24:14 with Rashi) though he clearly knew that their G-d hated harlotry (Sanhedrin 106a). But when Bilaam experienced a spiritual elevation, through the hand of Hashem which rested upon him, he clearly recognized the modesty which is deeply ingrained within the Jewish nature. He was so amazed by it that he began his third prophecy – the most elevated of all – with this praising of their modesty. Recognizing and acknowledging our essential modesty is how we meet our Creator each and every morning.

Rav Aviner on...

"Igrot Kodesh" ("Holy Letters") of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Q: When some Chabad Chasidim have a question, they open the Rebbe's collection of letters and find the answer on that page. Isn't this prohibited on account of "consulting the dead" (Devarim 18:11) or "Do not engage in sorcery" (Vayikra 19:26)?

A: The commentators of the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 179:4) mention that it is permissible to open a holy book and find an answer, and this is even called a "minor prophecy" (Chida in Shiyurei Beracha, Yoreh Deah 179:1 in the name of the Maharikash. Shut Chaim Shaal 2:38 #41. Shem Ha-Gedolim, Erech Nun #14. Mishnah Berurah 322:24. Aruch Hashulchan 322:8.). This means that there is no prohibition. There is a similar method of opening the Tanach and locating verses which answer particular questions. This is called "Goral Ha-Gra" – the lottery of the Vilna Gaon. There is the famous story about the Tzadik of Jerusalem – Reb Aryeh Levin – in which he used the "Goral Ha-Gra. During the Israeli War of Independence, a group of thirty-five soldiers was sent to provide additional defense for the Gush Etzion Settlements. Tragically, everyone in the group was killed. After the war the bodies were discovered but the Chief Rabbinate of Israel was unable to identify twelve of them. Reb Aryeh Levin used the Goral Ha-Gra – which involves using a particular format of the Chumash and flipping the pages back and forth until eventually a particular verse is chosen. In each case, the verse chosen clearly identified particular body with a fallen soldier (See "A Tzaddik in Our Time: The Life of Rabbi Aryeh Levin," pp. 111-117). The "Goral Ha-Gra" was also used by Ha-Rav Aharon Kotler when he wanted to immigrate to Israel from Russia, but Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein was greatly urging him to come to America in order to strengthen Judaism there. The verse which came out in the "Goral" was "Hashem said to Aharon: Go meet Moshe in the desert" (Shmot 4:27). He understood this to mean: "Hashem said to Aharon" – this was a hint to his name Ha-Rav Aharon Kotler. "Go meet Moshe in the desert" – Go meet Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein who is in the spiritually desolate desert of America. Ha-Rav Kotler indeed went to America and established the yeshiva in Lakewood, New Jersey, which today is one of the largest

yeshivot in the world (see the book "Ha-Gaon," p. 1118 by Ha-Rav Dov Eliach). And it is related in the book "Lev Eliyahu" (vol. 1, p. 35 in introduction) that Ha-Rav Elya Lopian used the "Goral Ha-Gra" (he once told his students that he received this "Goral" from the Chafetz Chaim) before he moved to London. The verse which came out was: "I will descend with you to Egypt and I will surely bring you up" (Bereshit 46:4). There is therefore no prohibition in acting this way, but that does not mean that it will work - it depends on who performs it. Reb Aryeh Levin, Ha-Rav Aharon Kotler and Ha-Rav Elya Lopian were Torah giants and holy individuals. It is possible to ask any question in the world through the "Igrot Kodesh" but that does not mean that everyone will receive a true answer, since, although it is a minor prophecy, not everyone is suited to receive it. It is related that Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik – the Brisker Rav – who was a completely righteous person – once tried the Goral Ha-Gra. He opened the Chumash, landed on the verse: "You shall be wholesome with Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 18:13) and he stopped (Ha-Gaon, pp. 1126-1127). Similarly, it is written in the book Orchot Rabbenu (p. 218) that Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky said that this father – the Steipler Gaon – was not in favor of using the Goral Ha-Gra for two reasons: 1. We do not know exactly how to do it. 2. You shall be wholesome with Hashem, your G-d." Therefore, someone who acts this way does not perform a transgression, but this is not the way of the Torah. If you want to know the answer to a question you have to exert effort or take counsel with a Torah scholar.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Har Ha-Bayit - Temple Mount

Plane over Temple Mount

Q: Is it permissible to fly a plane over the Temple Mount?

A: No. Its holiness reaches up to the highest heavens. Shut Yabia Omer 5 YD 26:9 (And there is a famous incident in which Sir Moshe Montefiore and his Rabbi entered the area of the Temple mount in a box carried by non-Jews, and the Rabbis of Yerushalayim excommunicated them. But since Moshe Montefiore was a G-d-fearing man, he came to the Rabbis of Yerushalayim with his Rabbi. He apologized with an innocent heart and explained that he acted this way based on the ruling of the Raavad [Hilchot Beit Ha-Bechirah Chapter 6], and the Rabbis of Yerushalayim were pacified. Shut Yabia Omer ibid. Shut Yechaveh Daat 1:25).

Tearing One's Garment

Q: Should one tear his clothing when seeing the spot where the Temple stood?

A: No, since it is under our sovereignty (Tal Chermon – Moadim, p. 218).