

בשבת

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A NATION OF MORNING PEOPLE

Parshas Balak tells the story of Balak and Bilaam, a nefarious partnership with the aim of destroying the entire Jewish nation. King Balak hired Bilaam to use his potent power of speech to curse *Klal Yisrael*, as they traveled towards Balak's nation of Moav. Nevertheless, despite Balak and Bilaam's terrible desire, their plans were thwarted, when Hashem forced Bilaam to replace his curses with blessings.

In his litany of blessings, Bilaam mentions that *Klal Yisrael* is, "A nation that rises like a lion."¹ In what way is *Klal Yisrael* like a lion? Rashi² explains that Bilaam was describing the behavior of your standard Jewish person in the morning; how they wake like a lion, with strength and energy, ready to perform the *mitzvos* of the day.

It's a beautiful sentiment, but plenty of people get up early in the morning; some people go running, some people head off to work, and so on. What is particularly special about *Klal Yisrael's* early morning routine? The Gur Aryeh³ explains that the simple acts performed in the morning — putting on one's *tefillin*, and wearing a *tallis*, has an 'awesomely powerful G-dly effect.' This, he says, is true for all *mitzvos* that *Klal Yisrael* perform. Thus, Bilaam was effectively saying, "What an amazing nation, they get up early in the morning, with alacrity and strength, and they *move the world*."

Many people may get up early in the morning, and may even be excited by it. But Bilaam's praise of *Klal Yisrael* was focused on what they accomplish with this early routine. How their days are filled with spiritual prowess, and how they are happy and excited to involve themselves in *avodas Hashem*.

Bilaam is laying out the secret to *zerizus*. By recognizing the exceptional value and spiritual impact of the *mitzvos* that we do, who wouldn't jump out of bed in the morning, ready to take on the day?

1 *Bamidbar* 23:24

2 *ibid.* s.v. הן עם

3 *ibid.* s.v. כשהן עומדין

"What an amazing nation, they get up early in the morning, with alacrity and strength, and they move the world."

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

As mentioned in the *Dvar Torah*, a great way to work on *zerizus* is to impress upon oneself the importance and value of what one is doing.

We can all relate to the idea of waking up early in the morning for a flight — we know that if we hit the snooze button, we may not get home! We assign value to getting up, and our eyes will spring open the moment the alarm clock rings.

Similarly, when we are engaging in any *mitzvah* or Torah learning, the more we give value to our endeavors, the more we will be excited to keep doing them.

And, as mentioned in the 'Did You Know,' another great way to work on *zerizus* is to act passionate about the thing that you are doing.¹ Did your mother ask you to take out the garbage, and you simply don't feel up to it? Take a deep breath, and tell yourself you are going to do the best garbage-taking-out ever. When we put our bodies into motion, it will have an immediate impact on our feelings.

1 *Mesillas Yesharim* Chap. 7

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One who acquires Torah knowledge without *Yiras Shomayim* is considered to have “snatched” that knowledge on his own, as opposed to being granted that knowledge by Hashem. Indeed, Torah knowledge acquired in such a fashion will never lead to lasting success. - R' Chaim Kanievsky shlita, *Orchos Yosher*, pg. 43

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EARLY MEMORIES

Dovid Saltzman didn't see his father much during his younger years. Mr. Tzvi Saltzman worked long hours, coming home late at night, after young Dovid had already gone to sleep. By the time *Shabbos* came, Tzvi Saltzman was so exhausted, it was hard for him to spend time with his family, more than the obligatory *Shabbos* meals.

Nevertheless, it was important for him to spend time with his children, so he devised a plan. Though Dovid was just ten years old, his father would wake him up early in the morning. Then the two of them would learn some *mishnayos* together, while Dovid sipped a hot cocoa that his father had made for him. Afterwards, father and son would head to *Shacharis*, and by the time Dovid was dropped off at home, his mother had already woken. Dovid looked forward to this special time with tremendous excitement, it was the highlight of his day.

Years later, Dovid found himself in *Beis Medrash*, learning full time. However, he had a difficult time getting up in the morning, and found that he was missing the *yeshiva Shacharis* more often than actually getting there. He needed a plan. "Hi Rebbi," Dovid said to Rabbi Barish. "I was wondering... could we learn together in the morning? Before *Shacharis*?"

Rabbi Barish raised an eyebrow, but immediately understood what was going on. "That sounds like an excellent idea. What would you like to learn?"

"*Mishnayos*," Dovid responded without hesitation.

And so, starting the next day, Dovid and Rabbi Barish learned *mishnayos* fifteen minutes before *Shacharis*. Dovid felt that old feeling again, the adrenaline rush in the morning — not just because someone is waiting, but because of the special time with someone important.

Fast forward fifteen years, and Dovid still has a *chavrusa* in the morning. It's become part of his routine; it's a great way to get some learning in, and it's a great motivation to get up on time. And for Dovid, it reminds him of those memorable moments, quiet all around, just him, his father, and a *sefer* between them.

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- The only way to wake up like a lion is to go to sleep like a lion. Have you ever seen someone go to sleep like a horse, and wake up like a lion?¹
- One way to feel *zerizus* is to act with *zerizus*. If you move your body with excitement and enthusiasm, it will have a fantastic effect on your feelings.²

¹ *Divrei Meir* (R' Meir of Premishlan), pg. 64

² *Mesillas Yesharim*, Chap. 7

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