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The Voice Inside of Us
(Shmuz #31)
Rabbi Bentzion Shafier

Balak knew that his land would be taken away from him by the Jews so he hired Bilaam to curse the Jews. But Bilaam couldn't, and instead, he blesses them. Bilaam tells Balak your only chance to get them is if you make them sin. So he went to the daughters of Moav and convinced them to have promiscuous relations with the Jews and make them do idolatry. Zimri ben Salou lived with a Moavite woman. Pinchas asked Moshe what to do. Moshe doesn't remember, and Pinchas reminded him. So Moshe told him to go ahead and do it himself. He took a spear and killed both people, picks them up and throws them down in front of all of the nation of Israel. At that exact moment, the plague stopped. However there was much controversy because Pinchas had just killed a head of a tribe. So God says that he is going to give Pinchas a covenant of peace and that he will live a long life. Why long life? The Sforno says that Pinchas got a long life because any damage to a person is because of an inner conflict. Since Pinchas had the covenant of peace, he had no inner conflict, and lived a long life since his body lasted longer. A human being has a given lifespan. At one point, the body just breaks down, it stops working. The Sforno says this isn't true, human beings could live much longer, it's a conflict inside that kills humans early.

The two leading causes of death are heart attacks and strokes -- 50% of deaths. Dr. Herbert Benson, in the 1960s, found that his patients had higher blood pressure in his office than in their house. You thought maybe because they were tense and nervous. He made a study between tension and high blood pressure. He discovered that high blood pressure comes from nervousness and stress. The psychiatrists tried to measure stress. They interviewed patients and tried to come up with a rating. The death of a spouse was the greatest stress, then a divorce. If a person lost a spouse, they are 10 times more likely to die in that year than anyone in their category who remained with their spouse alive.

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Divorced people are 12 times more likely to get sick compared to the same person not divorced. Stress contributes to diabetes, asthma, etc. In 1999 the Senate paid for Herbert Benson to spread his message, stress kills, but relaxation has the opposite effect. That's what the Sferno was saying 500 years ago! If you ever told this to a doctor in the 1960s, they would laugh at you! The Torah is a blueprint to understand human beings. Every time I'm tense, I am damaging myself. The ultimate cure for anxiety and tension is belief. God is taking care of me.

In American society you are taught that guilt is bad. But that is false, it is a very important part of human growth. Children are transparent because they cannot cover up. Adults can cover themselves up very well, so they are very hard to read. For example a five-year-old takes a cookie, the first couple times the child will deny taking the cookie but pretty soon he or she will confess because of the internal voice inside. At 10 years old the child could lie better, the voice is still there but the child's personality covers up the voice. Another example is a lie detector test. You could lie as much as you want, but internally you know you're lying, it's in your conscious. The voice inside tells you that you are lying. When God created us, he created us with an inner sense of right and wrong, a sense of morality and goodness. It speaks loud and clear you could listen to it or you could not listen to it. Imagine a friend of yours asks you to commit a crime of insider trading. By committing this crime you'll be making \$25,000 and it is highly unlikely that you wouldn't get caught. You can either do it or not do it. If you do it, you will be \$25,000 richer but you can't look at yourself in the mirror because you'll suffer from guilt. The voice inside is questioning you, it says i'm embarrassed by the way you acted, the voice doesn't stop -- it's a part of you.

God gave us the voice as an inner guidance system, how to do good. The voice demand that you grow, that you accomplish, that you do something significant with your life. You cannot fool that voice, you cannot cover yourself up to it. You cant say i'm making money, i'm going to be a big wealthy businessman. The voice says so what? You're not doing what you were put here on earth to do. To learn Torah, perform mitzvot

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and do chessed. No matter how busy you are, the voice will find you, you can't run from it. Because if you do, you are destined to be miserable. The conflict inside of you is very damaging, not just according to the Torah, but according to science.

The Gemara in Yevamot says that any man without a wife is living without happiness. You tell this to a single guy, he understands it right away. You tell it to a married guy, he may disagree, he's not happy. The Maharal says that all joy in life comes because of sheleimot. When a man is growing and perfecting himself, then happiness comes. When a couple is accomplishing, striving for greatness, they are fulfilling their potentials and will be happy. We live in a world with such wealth, such luxury -- 64% of the US population is overweight -- so much food! We have secure lands and many opportunities here. You would think that everyone is happy. But in the US, every year there are 18 million prescriptions written for antidepressants -- for one kind of antidepressants! There are many more types!

Victor Frankel said that man without meaning or purpose will be miserable because that's not what he was created for. You were created to grow. Are you a better person now than you were last week? It nags you and you can't shut it off, because it is you! God wants us to be happy in Olam Hazeh even though we were created for Olam Habah. The litmus test to see if you are a good Jew is one question: are you truly happy? If you are at peace, no inner conflict, you will be happy. You may not be the person getting the most honor, but you'll be happy. When you learn, you're a different human being, you are growing and you'll be happy. Even if you're in the working world you should set aside time to learn everyday. If you want to get the most out of life, lose the anxiety says the Sforno and Dr. Benson. But it's more than that, we must prevent conflict within us by listening to the voice inside.

Henry Ford was known for saying that he never did anything for anyone but himself. One day he was walking down the road and hears a dog crying in pain because its stuck in barbed wire. He helps the dog out of the barb wire and his friend tells him

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that I thought you'd never do anything to help anyone but yourself. He responds, *that* was for me. The dog's cries were bothering me. He had to do something about the voice inside bothering him, he felt it against his will, he had to do something about the feeling in his heart. A human being needs to give, to do for others, because that's what the voice preaches. And if you listen to that voice and not fight it you will be one of the rare people in our society that is truly happy.

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