

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's portion Balak, we read about the attempts of the evil Bilaam to curse the Jewish people. When Bilaam opens his mouth intending to curse the Jewish people, Hashem causes Bilaam instead to utter praises of the Jewish people. In Bilaam's first "blessing" he says about the nation of Yisroel, "Behold! It is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations." (Bamidbar 23,9)

There are many interpretations on this verse. One of the spiritually inspirational interpretations of this verse is the following: We Jews are different than the Nations of the World. The Talmud tells us that a Jew is distinguished by three character traits: shyness, mercifulness, and dedication to doing of acts of kindness. (Yevamos 79b) The Talmud goes so far as to say that someone who lacks one of these qualities must be checked out to make sure that he is really Jewish! The following inspirational story illustrates how our Torah leaders exemplify what it means to be a doer of chessed - kindness.

Yossi Berman was very anxious to spend the day at the yeshivah in Kfar Chassidim. That was where he hoped to be accepted to learn, under the tutelage of the famed mashgiach (principal) Rav Elyahu Lopian, one of the great mussar giants of his generation.

It was Wednesday. Yossi planned to spend one day in the yeshivah to see if it was the right place for him — sit in on a couple of shiurim - Torah lessons, listen to Rav Elyah's mussar shmuess (ethics 'pep-talk'), meet some of the other bochurim - students — and then head home for Shabbos, which was about an hour and a half away.

After a short while, Yossi knew this was the right place for him. He felt comfortable around the young men, and enjoyed the davening and learning very much. Later that day, after meeting with the mashgiach, he would find out if he was accepted. The time came, and he was called to the mashgiach's office.

Although Rav Elyah was warm and caring, Yossi could not help but be intimidated and in awe of this great tzaddik. The mashgiach asked the boy about his home and family, and then asked some questions about the Gemara that Yossi had been learning. Yossi answered the questions on the Gemara very clearly and felt as though he had made a good impression.

Finally, Rav Elyah stood up, shook Yossi's hand, and welcomed him to the yeshivah. Yossi was incredibly impressed with the warmth of this man, and he looked forward to learning in the yeshivah and becoming close to him.

Although he was scheduled to leave the next day, Yossi decided to delay his departure for a few days and stay in the yeshivah for Shabbos. He didn't say anything to anyone about it, but on Friday he realized that he probably should have. He felt terrible, hoping the administration would not think him ungrateful or impolite by "barging" in for Shabbos. His anxiety turned to panic when he was told that the mashgiach wanted to see him. Yossi was frightened. He was sure he would be chastised for assuming he could stay for Shabbos without asking, and he would probably lose his chance to learn at the famous yeshivah.

All his dreams were to be destroyed by this one error. He was so disappointed in himself. He walked into the mashgiach's office and waited for the mashgiach to speak, too nervous to utter a word.

"Didn't you tell me that you were going home for Shabbos?" asked Rav Elyah. The small window of hope had just been shattered. If there was any chance of his being called in for another reason, now that seemed to just slip away. Yossi confirmed that he had planned to leave on Thursday but thought he would stay for Shabbos so that he could enjoy the yeshivah atmosphere a little longer.

The mashgiach nodded slowly, looked at Yossi, and continued. "Yossi, I guess you realize that there is a problem with your doing that." Yossi was on the verge of tears. He wanted to tell the mashgiach how very sorry he was and how he would never act so irresponsibly again.

Just as Yossi was about to speak, though, the mashgiach started to remove his kapota - frock coat. "Here, try it on for size." Yossi looked quizzically at Rav Elyah. What was going on? Was the mashgiach mocking Yossi somehow? But Yossi had actually misconstrued Rav Elyah's action.

"I imagine if you are staying unexpectedly, then you probably did not bring the proper Shabbos clothing. Try my kapota on. If it fits, I will be happy to give you a shirt, pants, and jacket for Shabbos." Yossi did not know if he should laugh or cry. He was so elated, not only that the mashgiach had not reprimanded him, but also because he now knew how very right he was in choosing this yeshivah. His mashgiach was an a Torah Great who thought about the needs of others just as he would think of his own needs.

Yossi ended up learning in the yeshivah for many years. He did not need any mussar shmuess (ethics 'pep-talk') to teach him how to act. He had already received the greatest mussar shmuess (ethics 'pep-talk') of all. The love that the mashgiach showed for him was enough to motivate him to learn Torah in that yeshiva for many years! (Rabbi Y. Spira, p. 98 [A Touch of Warmth](#)) **Good Shabbos Everyone.**