

# OHRNET

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IN ISRAEL PARSHAT CHUKAT IS READ ON 5 TAMMUZ (JULY 1) AND PARSHAT BALAK ON 12 TAMMUZ (JULY 8)  
OUTSIDE OF ISRAEL PARSHIOT CHUKAT-BALAK ARE READ ON 12 TAMMUZ (JULY 8)

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### Chukat

## A WORLDLY MAN

*“And they shall take for the one who is impure from the ashes of the burned Korban Chatat, and place upon it living waters.”*

A person is an entire world. In our frail frames, there breathes a spirit that comes from above and yearns to return there. Our bodies, on the other hand, seek to maximize the pleasures of this world; our physicality draws us downward to the earth.

The soul and the body fight a perpetual war while we walk on this planet.

The dichotomy of being a human being is expressed exactly by the Hebrew word for “man” — *Adam*.

*Adam* is connected to *adama*, which means “earth”.

From the dust of the earth we were created, and to there our body returns. On the other hand, that same word *adama* can be read *adameh*, meaning, “*I will compare.*” Our job in this world is to aspire, to compare constantly where we are with where we’re supposed to be.

Our lowly origins oblige us to be as humble as the dust from where we come. On the other hand, we have a soul that is a part of G-d.

This paradox is expressed in this week’s Parsha. In the times of the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple), in order to purify oneself from tuma (spiritual negativity) a kohen took some of the ashes of the special red heifer sacrifice (*para aduma*) and poured ‘living water’ over the ashes.

What was the significance of this?

The Torah is reminding us that though we are encased in a physical frame, we are not necessarily trapped by it. For

even though our bodies may be no more than dust and ashes, inside us is an eternal living soul that can ascend to the stars.

Source: Rabbi Avraham Mordechai M’Gur in *Mayana Shel Torah*

### Balak

## REVENGE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MOAV

*“How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov...”*

I just got back from spending a couple of days in England. I hadn’t been there in a couple of years and I was interested to see how things had changed.

What struck me most was that it was almost impossible to go out into the street without having to avert my eyes.

Living in Jerusalem certainly has sensitized me to this total lack of inhibition in dress and public behavior. However, I am sure there has also been a precipitous decline in what used to be known as standards of public indecency. Wherever I went, the sidewalks, the billboards and the backs of buses were impossible to look at.

There was a total lack of *tzniut*.

*Tzniut* is a difficult world to translate. Most translators use the word ‘modesty’, but that’s woefully inadequate. Really, the reason why *tzniut* is so difficult to render into English is because it is something quintessentially Jewish. Words that define the essence of a nation rarely have single-word translations. The French word *chic* comes to mind; to adequately translate *chic* to any other tongue would require a truckload of adjectives: smart, well-tailored, fashionable, stylish, well-dressed, elegant, well-groomed, modish, well put together etc., etc., etc.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

### Chukat

The laws of the *para aduma* — the red heifer — are detailed. These laws are for the ritual purification of one who comes into contact with death. After nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam dies and is buried at Kadesh. The people complain about the loss of their water supply that until now has been provided miraculously in the merit of Miriam's righteousness. Aharon and Moshe pray for the people's welfare. G-d commands them to gather the nation at Merivah and speak to a designated rock so that water will flow forth. Distressed by the people's lack of faith, Moshe hits the rock instead of speaking to it. He thus fails to produce the intended public demonstration of G-d's mastery over the world, which would have resulted had the rock produced water merely at Moshe's word. Therefore, G-d tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not bring the people into the Land. *Bnei Yisrael* resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of Esav, denies them passage through his country, they do not travel the most direct route to Eretz Yisrael. When they reach Mount Hor, Aharon dies and his son Elazar is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aharon was beloved by all, and the entire nation mourns him 30 days. Sichon the Amorite attacks *Bnei Yisrael* when they ask to pass through his land. As a result, *Bnei Yisrael* conquer the lands that Sichon had

previously seized from the Amonites on the east bank of the Jordan River.

### Balak

Balak, king of Moav, is in morbid fear of *Bnei Yisrael*. He summons a renowned sorcerer named Bilaam to curse them. First, G-d speaks to Bilaam and forbids him to go. But, because Bilaam is so insistent, G-d appears to him a second time and permits him to go. While en route, a *malach* (emissary from G-d) blocks Bilaam's donkey's path. Unable to contain his frustration, Bilaam strikes the donkey each time it stops or tries to detour. Miraculously, the donkey speaks, asking Bilaam why he is hitting her. The *malach* instructs Bilaam regarding what he is permitted to say and what he is forbidden to say regarding the Jewish People. When Bilaam arrives, King Balak makes elaborate preparations, hoping that Bilaam will succeed in the curse. Three times Bilaam attempts to curse and three times blessings issue instead. Balak, seeing that Bilaam has failed, sends him home in disgrace.

*Bnei Yisrael* begin sinning with the Moabite women and worshipping the Moabite idols, and they are punished with a plague. One of the Jewish leaders brazenly brings a Midianite princess into his tent, in full view of Moshe and the people. Pinchas, a grandson of Aharon, grabs a spear and kills both evildoers. This halts the plague, but not before 24,000 have died.

## ISRAEL Forever

### HOLY COW!

The red heifer, the "holy cow" which features so prominently in the Torah portion of this week, played a double role in the history of our people.

The apparent purpose of slaughtering this animal and burning it was to provide the ashes that would be part of the purification process for a Jew who had become ritually impure because of contact with the dead. Our Sages, however, saw this as also serving as an atonement for the sin of the golden calf. They compare this to the situation of a child dirtying the palace of the king, requiring the mother to clean up. The golden calf spiritually contaminated the Jewish People, and its virtual moth-

er — the red heifer — was called upon to remove the filth.

One of the requirements for the red heifer was that a yoke was never placed upon it. This was to atone for the removal of the yoke of responsibility expressed in abandoning G-d for the golden calf. The moral of the story is that when Jews feel free to "take their destiny into their own hands" and abandon their responsibility as a Torah people, the inevitable result is a golden calf and the tragedy it triggered.

May reflecting on the need for a red heifer atonement serve to remind us of our responsibility to Heaven which alone can secure Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE SAGES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

"THERE WERE TEN MIRACLES FOR OUR ANCESTORS IN THE BEIT HAMIKDASH ... THE TENTH ONE WAS THAT NO ONE EVER COMPLAINED THAT IT WAS TOO DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO LIVE IN YERUSHALAYIM." — (AVOT 5:5)

Yerushalayim provided them with the opportunities for earning a livelihood. No one ever had to leave with a complaint that it was too difficult to make ends meet and he was therefore forced to leave Yerushalayim.

• Rav Ovadia of Bartenura



Although there were so many people who traveled to Yerushalayim, especially during the Three Festivals, there was no shortage of space or livelihood, for this was the city that G-d had endowed with His eternal blessing.

• Tiferet Yisrael

## PARSHA Q&A ?

### Chukat

1. "Take a perfect *para aduma* (red heifer)." What does the word "perfect" — *temima* — mean in this context?
2. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a *para aduma*?
3. A man dies in a tent. What happens to the sealed metal and earthenware utensils in the tent?
4. What happens to the one who: a) sprinkles the water mixed with the ashes of the *para aduma*; b) touches the water; c) carries the water?
5. Why was the *mitzvah* of the *para aduma* entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aharon?
6. Why does the Torah stress that *all* of the congregation came to *Midbar Tzin*?
7. Why is Miriam's death taught after the law of *para aduma*?
8. During their journey in the *midbar*, in whose merit did the Jewish People receive water?
9. Why did Moshe need to strike the rock a second

time?

10. When Moshe told the King of Edom that the Jewish People would not drink from the well-water, to which well did he refer? What do we learn from this?

### Balak

1. Why did Moav consult specifically with Midian regarding their strategy against the Jews?
2. What was Balak's status before becoming Moav's king?
3. Why did G-d grant prophecy to the evil Bilaam?
4. Why did Balak think Bilaam's curse would work?
5. When did Bilaam receive his prophecies?
6. G-d asked Bilaam, "Who are these men with you?" What did Bilaam deduce from this question?
7. How do we know Bilaam hated the Jews more than Balak did?
8. What is evidence of Bilaam's arrogance?
9. In what way was the *malach* that opposed Bilaam an angel of mercy?
10. How did Bilaam die?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

### Chukat

1. 19:2 - Perfectly red.
2. 19:2 - Two.
3. 19:14,15 - The metal utensils are impure for seven days, even if they are sealed. The sealed earthenware vessels are unaffected.
4. 19:21 - a) Remains *tahor*; b) He, but not his clothing, contracts *tumah*; c) He and his clothing contract *tumah*.
5. 19:22 - Because Aharon was involved in the sin of the golden calf.
6. 20:1 - To teach that they were *all* fit to enter the Land; everyone involved in the sin of the spies already died.
7. 20:1 - To teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too does the death of the righteous.
8. 20:2 - Miriam's.
9. 20:11 - After he hit it the first time, only a few drops came out since he was commanded to *speak* to the rock.
10. 20:17 - To the well that traveled with the nation in the *midbar*. This teaches that one who has adequate

provisions should nevertheless purchase goods from his host in order to benefit the host.

### Balak

1. 22:4 - Since Moshe grew up in Midian, the Moabites thought the Midianites might know wherein lay Moshe's power.
2. 22:4 - He was a prince of Midian.
3. 22:5 - So the other nations couldn't say, "If we had had prophets, we also would have become righteous."
4. 22:6 - Because Bilaam's curse had helped Sichon defeat Moav.
5. 22:8 - Only at night.
6. 22:9 - He mistakenly reasoned that G-d isn't all-knowing.
7. 22:11 - Balak wanted only to drive the Jews from the land. Bilaam sought to exterminate them completely.
8. 22:13 - He implied that G-d wouldn't let him go with the Moabite princes due to their lesser dignity.
9. 22:22 - It mercifully tried to stop Bilaam from sinning and destroying himself.
10. 22:23 - He was killed with a sword.

- Right and wrong revenge
- Counting fingers to select the *kohen*
- Murder on the altar ramp
- The garment worn for tithing and removal of altar ashes
- What happened to the garments worn by the *kohen gadol* on Yom Kippur
- The sacred services forbidden to a non-*kohen* under penalty of premature death
- Why so many lotteries, what they wore at these lotteries and where they were held
- The second lottery and the order in which parts of sacrifice were brought to the altar
- The third lottery for offering incense and its unique character
- How many *kohanim* were involved in bringing the daily communal sacrifice components to the altar
- The water libation on Succot and the two additional logs on the altar for the daily afternoon sacrifice
- How many *kohanim* were involved in bringing the parts of a sacrificed ram to the altar and which services could be performed by a non-*kohen*
- When the morning daily sacrifice could be slaughtered and how this time was determined
- The Patriarch Avraham's time of prayer, his voluntary performance of *mitzvot*, and the pattern he set for the historical role of the Yeshiva
- Why a lookout for dawn was necessary and how he communicated what he saw
- Some insights on natural phenomena, on Queen Esther and on the prayers of the righteous
- What is done with animal and flour offerings in which a sacred service was performed before daylight
- The *lechem hapanim* showbreads placed after Shabbat

## ONE WAY TO GET RICH

When the third lottery of the day in the *Beit Hamikdash* came around, an announcement was made that only those *kohanim* who had never had the opportunity to offer incense should line up for the selection. The reason why no *kohen* ever got a chance to perform this service more than once in his career, explains Rabbi Chanina, is because there was a Heavenly blessing of riches that came along with it.

This idea of spreading the wealth arising from a mitzvah is extended to the role of the *sandek* who holds the baby when he is circumcised. Since circumcision is compared to offering incense, it is assumed that the crucial role played by the *sandek* will bring him riches. It is therefore customary, writes *RaMa* (*Yoreh Deah* 265:11), for the father to refrain from honoring the same person to be *sandek* for more than one

of his children, so that others will also have the opportunity to get rich.

The Gaon of Vilna challenges this explanation from both logical and practical perspectives. If the purpose of the custom is indeed to spread the wealth as in the case of incense, why is it limited to one family and not preclude anyone from ever being a *sandek* a second time? He also notes that we have never seen anyone actually become rich from being a *sandek* and concludes that there is a mystical reason found in the Will of Rabbi Yehuda Hachasid for limiting the *sandek* to one child in a family.

Among Chassidim it is customary for the Rebbie, the leader of the community, to fill the role of *sandek* for more than one child in a family because his status is comparable to that of a *kohen gadol*, who had the privilege of offering incense as often as he wished.

• *Yoma* 26a

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“Those who suffer shame from others but do not shame them, who hear themselves embarrassed but do not respond, who serve G-d with love and happily accept the sufferings which He imposes upon them — concerning them it is said (*Shoftim* 5:31) ‘Those who love Him shall be like the sun which goes forth with all its power.’ ”

• *Beraita, Yoma* 23a

“The zealous rush to do what G-d has commanded them, as we find that ‘Avraham woke up early and saddled his donkey’ (*Bereishet* 22:3) to fulfill the Divine command to sacrifice his son.”

• *Beraita, Yoma* 28b

- Bodily cleanliness for reputation and for prayer
- The *tevilah* (immersion) in mikveh before entering Sanctuary
- The long knife as an alternative to *tevilah*
- The five *tevilah* immersions and ten washings of the *Kohen Gadol* on Yom Kippur
- Location of the mikveh
- Different views on the order of immersion and washing when garments were changed
- Slaughtering of the morning daily sacrifice on Yom Kippur – start and finish
- Order of the service in the *Beit Hamikdash* every day
- Not skipping a mitzvah at hand and relevance to *tefilin*
- Ordering of the menorah lamps in the morning
- When the incense was offered in the morning and afternoon
- Warming up the mikveh for an old or sensitive *Kohen Gadol*
- The Pareveh chamber, its purpose and background
- The public and private sacred garments of the *Kohen Gadol*
- Judgment Day for the poor man, rich man and handsome man who failed to study Torah
- First *viduy* confession of the *Kohen Gadol* – where and what
- Where the altar stood
- What the individual's *olah* burnt-offering atoned for
- The text of the *viduy* confession

## IN THE NAME OF THE GEMARA

In the earliest part of our morning *shacharit* service we recite a statement of the Sage Abaye about the order of the daily service in the *Beit Hamikdash*, which is introduced in a most unusual way:

“Abaye presented the order of the service in the name of the *Gemara* and according to Abba Shaul.”

The background for this introduction is a dispute between the Sage Abba Shaul and the other Sages regarding one stage of the daily service. There is a consensus that between the morning arrangement of five of the lamps of the menorah and the other two, there must come another service. While Abba Shaul contends that it is the slaughtering of the daily sacrifice and applying its blood to the altar, the other Sages are of the opinion that it is the offering of the incense on the golden altar, which is performed at this interval.

Rambam (Laws of Regular and Additional Sacrifices 6:4) rules like the majority opinion, while the Tur (*Orech Chaim* 48) rules like Abba Shaul. The commentaries explain this dif-

ference of opinion as being based on what is meant by the Sage Abaye's statement “in the name of the *Gemara*”. Rashi explains it as meaning that there was a consensus of the Sages of his time in favor of Abba Shaul's position based on what they had received from their teachers. This certainly explains the position of the Tur in ruling like Abba Shaul and why it is this text that appears in our *siddurim* prayer books. Rambam, however, understood Abaye's statement “in the name of the *Gemara*” as quoting an anonymous source rather than a consensus and therefore followed the general principle of ruling like the majority position.

There is a glaring omission in Abaye's list of services that is pointed out by *Tosefot*. The first service of the day, the ceremonial tithing of the ashes of the sacrificial altar, is not mentioned!

The answer given by *Tosefot* is that since we learned back in *Yoma* 20 that there were occasions when this tithing was done as early as the first third of the night, or midnight, it could not be considered an integral part of the daily service which could only be performed after daybreak.

• *Yoma* 33a

## WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“Here is someone who it was certainly worth violating the Shabbat in order to save his life!”

• *The Sages Shemaya and Avtalyon after reviving the frozen Sage Hillel, who listened to their Torah lecture from a skylight on a snowy Shabbat – Yoma 35b*

“When Moshe, in the thirteen attributes of Divine mercy (*Shmot* 34:6), referred to G-d as forgiving intentional sins and rebellious ones along with those committed involuntarily, he was appealing to G-d that when Jews repent their sins He should treat their serious intentional and rebellious sins as merely being unintentional lapses.”

• *The Sages, in explanation of the order of the confession made by the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur*

## DIVINE DRAFT DODGERS

From: Terry in London

Dear Rabbi,

*There is a lot about Judaism that makes sense to me. However, there is one thing that I just don't understand. Why don't religious people serve in the Israeli Army? Isn't it a mitzvah to protect the Jewish people and maintain control over the Land of Israel?*

Dear Terry,

Religious people do in fact serve in the Israeli Army. Plenty of nationalistic-religious and even 'charedi' Jewish men serve as regular duty soldiers and in the reserve. Many religious women contribute through different venues of national service in hospitals and other social services.

If you mean to ask why many yeshiva students and Torah scholars don't serve (some do), that is a complicated question which needs much study. The following is not an exhaustive explanation, but rather a general overview.

Ideally, there should be no need for war and armies, as in the verse: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war anymore". Unfortunately, humankind has yet to be unified in their service of G-d and thereby reach this ideal state of peace. Until then, war and conflict will continue to be a paradoxically painful part of life.

Within this context, Judaism recognizes the unfortunate need for self-protection that may involve both defensive and offensive war. There are many examples of this in the Torah involving such righteous individuals as Abraham (Gen. 14), the sons of Jacob (Gen. 34), Moses (Ex. 2:12), Joshua (Ex. 17), Saul and Samuel (I Sam. 15), David, Solomon and many more. However, just as the Torah regulates other physical needs such as eating, working, procreation etc., G-d delineates a particularly Jewish way of warring.

The first principle is that a Jewish army, including every soldier, must place its trust in G-d for success. The Torah relates, "Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, Pick men for us, and go out and fight against Amalek...When Moses would raise his hand, Israel would prevail, and when he would lay down his hand, Amalek would prevail" (Ex. 17:8-11). Our Sages remarked, do Moses' hands make or break war? Rather, when he would lift his hands, the soldiers would look upward and subjugate their hearts to their Father in Heaven and they would succeed (Rosh Hashanah 29a).

A second principle is that Torah learning is vital for military success: "If you toil in Torah study [see Rashi]...you will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you" (Lev. 26:3-8). Furthermore, the Talmud relates that the captain of the host of G-d appeared to Joshua criticizing him for having had the soldiers sleep on the night before the battle of Jericho instead of learning Torah. Joshua later corrected the situation by having the soldiers learn all night before combat, resulting in their subsequent miraculous victories (Megilla 3a). Similarly, during the siege of Sancherib on Jerusalem, King Hezekiah placed a sword at the entrance of every synagogue and house of study saying, "Whoever doesn't learn Torah will be stabbed with this sword" (Sanhedrin 94b). Afterwards the Jews merited a miraculous victory and the enemy was slain overnight.

A third principle is that the draft to the Jewish army must be based on the preceding ideas - namely that a portion of the eligible soldiers be drafted for the specific purpose of praying and learning Torah for the benefit of the combat units. This is derived from the following verse, "So Moses spoke to the people saying, 'Arm from among you men for the army...A thousand for each tribe, a thousand for each tribe, from all the tribes of Israel you shall send into the army'. From the thousands of Israel one thousand was given

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## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### FATHERS AND SONS

There is a beautiful program in Israel and other countries called "Avot u'Banim" – "Fathers and Sons". By offering treats and prizes to elementary school-age boys if they study over the weekend with their fathers in a central synagogue, this program has created an exciting revolution in father-son relations and has remarkably increased weekend Torah study.

While the father is almost always in the role of teacher, the opposite is sometimes true. The program directors are fond of showing a photo of a non-observant truck driver studying with his son who somehow is enrolled in a religious school. Anxious to participate in the program, the youngster brought along his father and began to teach him Chumash.

## CROSS ME PLEASE

**Question:** On my way to my office in the morning I am often accosted by a child who asks to help him or her cross the street in accordance with the instructions received from the parents to cross only with adult guidance. In my hurry I am sometimes tempted to forgo actually walking with that child to the side of the street opposite to where I am going, and just settling for taking a good look to see that there is no traffic and telling the young petitioner that it is safe to cross. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** While we can appreciate your need to get to your office in a hurry, we would like to call your attention to the shortcomings in simply telling “the young petitioner” that it is all clear for crossing.

When parents wisely train their children to refrain from crossing the street alone, they are trying to tell them that they are too young to rely on their own judgment and must seek the help of an adult who will serve as a surrogate parent for this crossing. When that child learns that you are not assuming the parental role of actually accompanying him across the street, but are only offering a judgment that it is safe to cross, he will be tempted in the future to also rely on his own judgment, with all that can result from such immature action.

The other problem is that the child asking you to help him cross the street is making contact with an adult world that is still unfamiliar to him. How much effort you expend in crossing him has a significant impact on his growing up.

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over for each tribe, twelve thousand armed for battle” (Num. 31:3-5). The Midrash (Mattot 22:3) explains that the three-fold mention of thousand indicates that in fact three thousand were drafted from each tribe: 1000 for combat, 1000 for logistic support and 1000 for Torah study and prayer.

This reveals that a full third of eligible soldiers occupied spiritual units that are considered no less important for the war effort than logistic and combat units. This inter-dependency is apparent in the teaching of our Sages (Sanhedrin 49a), “If it weren’t for David’s Torah study, Yoav would not have succeeded in war; and if not for Yoav’s effort in battle, David would not have been able to learn Torah, as in the verse, ‘David administered justice and charity for all his people, and Yoav was over the host’ (II Sam. 8:15)”. In fact, the contribution of spiritual soldiers is considered so valuable that the exile in Egypt was blamed on Abraham’s mobilizing scholars for battle rather than for prayer and Torah study (Nedarim 32a). According to Rambam, the entire tribe of Levi was also exempt from combat for this purpose, and he concludes that anyone who dedicates himself to a life of Torah study is also in this category (Shemita 13:12,13).

A fourth principle is that the combat soldiers should be free of sin. In addition to those exempt from military service because of a new house, a new vineyard or a new wife, the

Torah also exempts the “fearful and fainthearted” (Deut. 20:8). Our Sages explained that this includes a soldier who fears that his transgressions will hinder Divine Providence for success, and will adversely affect his fellow fighters. He is allowed to return with the others to save him embarrassment as a sinner. However, Rashi there (20:3) explains that merely saying the ‘*Shema*’ is enough to merit Divine protection.

Based on the above, the early founders of Israel and its military recognized the importance of full-time Torah study to Jewish survival and continuity. Although they didn’t draft soldiers for that purpose, they agreed to defer service to anyone who was committed to serving the Jewish people world wide and in Israel by learning Torah and praying, thereby fulfilling the Torah dictate for ‘spiritual’ units. Most observers of Israel’s military history, while considering the great effort, self-sacrifice, courage and perseverance of the nation, still consider Israel’s victories to be miraculous. This is a phenomenon that is unparalleled in history and is the result of the unique combination of David and Yoav - Torah and military prowess – in our days as in days of old. The yeshiva students and Torah scholars are doing their job. We await the day when all Jews will be committed soldiers in the army of G-d, free of sin and prepared to proudly proclaim, “Hear O Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One!”

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Tzniut is that uniquely Jewish combination of inconspicuous self-effacement, privacy, modesty, understatement and that quality of not-wishing-to-catch-the eye (that's as inelegant an adjectival phrase as one could find!). The verse states about this essential Jewish quality: "All the honor of the daughter of the king is inwardness."

As Jews, both female and male, we cherish inwardness and withdraw from public display.

At the end of this week's Torah portion, the Jewish People start to commit acts of immorality with the women of Moav. The Moavite women lure the Jewish men into idol worship by promising them their favors if they would worship the god Peor.

The worship of Peor was by defecating in front of the idol. One could hardly think of a more disgusting method of worship than this. What was behind this obscenity, however, was the premise that man is no more than a machine that produces waste, no better than an animal.

By seducing the Jewish men to worship Peor, it was as if

the women of Moav were saying to them "There's nothing special about the Jewish People! How can this nation dream of tzniut, of a higher calling, when their own digestive systems belie their earthly nature? Why don't you just be like the rest of us and 'Let it all hang out'."

The daughters of Moav are alive and well and living in London...and in New York, Paris, Munich, Rome, Athens, Los Angeles...

The Talmud explains that all of Bilaam's blessings in this week's Parsha returned to curses. With the exception of one: "How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov."

The tents of Yaakov are the tents of Torah.

To the extent that the Jewish home is built around the immortal values of the Torah and the priceless value it attaches to tzniut, will we protect ourselves and our children from a world obsessed with the body; while at the same time fulfill our vocation to be a light to the nations.

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