

## Shabbat Times

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London	21:04	22:21	Cambridge	21:02	22:34
Manchester	21:19	22:57	Leeds	20:00	22:52
Birmingham	21:12	22:45	Liverpool	21:21	22:59
Oxford	21:05	22:36	Jerusalem	19:13	20:30

### Coming up...

- Summer Machane is coming! 29th July – 12th August. Spaces are filling up fast, so make sure to send your forms in! For more information, contact Akiva@bauk.org
- Applications for Tafkidim at sviva for next year are out. To apply go on [tinyurl.com/sviva5778](http://tinyurl.com/sviva5778)

### Shabbat Debate

*Every week we will be writing weekly debates to discuss over Shabbat.*

Why is the Parsha named after such a bad person, who is hardly even in the Parsha?



**ISRAEL  
MACHANE  
5777 HAS  
BEGUN!**



# SHABBAT

פרשת בלק

PARASHAT BALAK



תנועת בני אקבה  
BNEI AKIVA UK

# LASHEM שבת לה'

The most widely distributed weekly Torah periodical written by our youth in the United Kingdom.

## Undercover Angels of Mercy

Eli Maman

There is a small shul in the centre of New York City with a regular minyan for Shacharit. One morning there were only nine men in Shul so they waited a while for a tenth man. Eventually an old Jew showed up, and insisted on being the chazzan. However, he was taking a very long time and the other men were getting frustrated as they were getting late for work. All of a sudden they heard a massive explosion and an overwhelming crash. It was the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, and the nearby Twin Towers had been attacked. Some of the members of this minyan would have been inside had they started on time and davened at a regular speed. They felt relief as they realised their lives were saved by this old man.

In this week's parasha, Bilam is on his way to curse Bnei Yisrael when a sword-bearing angel comes and blocks his path. Rashi cites a Midrash which says it was the angel of mercy and was coming to prevent Bilam from sinning. Herein lies an interesting point; accentuated by Rav Pam. If one was to imagine an 'angel of mercy' you would probably picture a white, fluorescent being with a halo hovering over them, whereas an angel that appears with a sword may be the angel of death. Here, however, it is the angel of mercy that bears a sword. The message is that that which might appear to be destruction may actually be mercy. In other words, something that happens that you would be tempted to become frustrated at or brand a failure might really be Hashem protecting you - we simply fail to see it that way. In the above story these people felt rather frustrated at the speed of the chazzan but they did not realise it was really Hashem's mercy in ultimately saving their lives. The way someone sees something seemingly destructive depends on their attitude and bitachon (trust in Hashem).

In summary, let's try take on board the simple yet powerful message that the disappointments in life are often undercover 'angels of mercy' there to save us, which we should appreciate.

*Eli Maman is in Shevet Na'aleh and is a Madrich on Israel Machane 5777*



## “ Love Your Neighbour As Yourself”

We are all too familiar with the verse coined by Rabbi Akiva as “the grand principal of Torah”. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi – the founder of the Chabad chasidic dynasty – established that every morning before commencing the morning prayers, a person must declare that they undertake this *mitzvah* upon themselves. However, “Love your fellow as yourself” is sometimes easier said than done.

This week, we shall commence the three-week mourning period over the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, which we know occurred on account of our baseless hatred (Yoma 9b). Indeed, if we have yet to merit the rebuilding of the Temple, it must be that the cause of its destruction – the hatred in our hearts one person against the other – has not yet been resolved (Yerushalmi, Yoma 1:1). In these sensitive times, it behoves us to internalize this fundamental *mitzvah*. We must follow the Rebbe’s edict, and undertake to love unconditionally in order to remedy the baseless hatred.

But how is this *mitzvah* fulfilled? How do we love another as ourselves? If the *mitzvah* to love another is qualified by our own self-love, then we must contemplate how it is we love ourselves. If we understand the secret to self-love, we will unlock our potential to love others. This is not to say that we cannot love another unless we love ourselves first, rather it is the mechanism of self-love that can be duplicated in order to achieve love of another.

Nobody is perfect. We all have shortcomings and failures. Nobody knows about these shortcomings in ourselves better than ourselves. We don’t live in denial, and we do not ignore our failings. How can we love ourselves despite all the negative that we know? It is the belief that our totality transcends the sum-total of our actions that allows us to love ourselves whilst upholding an honest attitude towards our misdemeanours. We can love ourselves because we maintain a healthy distinction between totality and particularity, and we don’t allow ourselves to become self-defined by those decisions we don’t necessarily love – or perhaps even hate – in ourselves. We self-identify with the good, and as such we can truly love ourselves.

Somehow, this attitude – which is generally so naturally applied to ourselves – is not so easily applied to others. Despite being so forgiving towards ourselves, we write-off other people, making sweeping generalizations and cruel negative judgements of character. All this without really knowing what challenges the other person faces (see Tanya, ch. 30). The Mishnah says (Avot 1:6), “judge all of the person favourably” – this means we must judge the “all” – the totality – of a person favourably.

In the Viduy – confession – prayer on the High Holidays, we confess that “טפלונו שקר” – we accused falsely. The kabbalists, playing on the Hebrew word טפלונו – which also shares the same root as “insignificant” and “marginal” – explain this to mean that we accuse falsely by placing over-emphasis on the marginal aspects of a person. Instead of focusing on another person’s totality – which is good inasmuch as it transcends misdemeanour – and loving them, we focus on the insignificant shortcomings. When we focus on the person’s peripheral faults and shift them into the spotlight, we make the subject evil. This is a false accusation.

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin writes (Ha’Emek Davar, introduction to Sefer Bereishit) that the people of the Second Temple period were:

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## The Week that Was...

-Israel Machane began on Wednesday!!! Check our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter channels to see what adventures our five groups are having!

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**“... Pious and Torah Scholars, but they were not upright in their worldly dealings. Thus, because of the baseless hatred in their hearts one against the other, they suspected that anyone whose ways in Fear of Heaven differed from their own were Sadducees and heretics ... Until ultimately the Temple was destroyed.”**

Hatred is manifest when we replace the principal with the marginal, and erroneously judge the “all” of another person negatively. This judgmental attitude is antithetical to Torah values and against the teaching of our sages. The obstinacy to choose the path of hatred and divisiveness is what destroys us as a people. It is what destroyed the Beit Hamikdash and prevents it from being rebuilt.

This attitude is exactly the one that the evil prophet, Bilaam, took in our *parasha*. We have previously noted (Binyan Ariel, Balak 5774) that Bilaam consistently takes a particular vantage point before cursing the Israelites (Bamidbar 22:41):

**“... He saw from there the edge of the people.”**

Bilaam focuses on the edge – the periphery, the margins – of Am Yisrael. This, he believes, is the secret to their weakness. After Bilaam is unsuccessful the first time, he tries to get a “better view” (23:13):

**“... You shall see but the furthest edge of them, and shall not see them all...”**

Bilaam’s method seeks to focus on the marginal shortcomings, to make the particular into the principal. Bilaam – because of the evil and hatred in his heart – seeks to falsely accuse Am Yisrael of being something they simply are not – bad. True, we all have shortcomings, but these are peripheral to our true self.

“Love your fellow as yourself” – we all have shortcomings. We do not blur the truth or severity of our misdemeanours, but we also do not allow them to confuse us into believing that we are something we are not. We judge the “all” of ourselves favourably and we love ourselves. It is with this mechanism that we must relate to others.

In these three-weeks of mourning, may we pay heed to the Rebbe’s edict and indeed undertake to banish the hatred from our hearts and fill ourselves with boundless, unconditional love.

**SUMMER MACHANE 5777**

**3 August - 16 August** *NEW LOCATION!*

Year 6, 7, 8 in North Wales  
 Year 9 in Holland  
 Year 10 in Spain

**for more info contact [akiva@bauk.org](mailto:akiva@bauk.org)**