

# A LESSON LEARNED

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

*"Go and ascertain what Laban the Aramean intended to do to Yaakov our Patriarch"* Hagaddah Shel Pesah

The instruction given by the author of the Hagaddah to go and learn from the story of Laban requires that we ask "What is the great lesson that he expects us to learn?" Furthermore, he does not give us an answer. Instead we are presented with a recital of the history of Yaakov Abinu a'h from his days living with Laban until he descended to Egypt with his family. What do I learn from that well-known series of events?

Rabbi Don Yitzhak Abarbanel zt'l points out that Laban did not perpetrate any acts of destruction upon Yaakov and his family -- all of his evil was in his mind. It was only through an analysis of his words that we understood his wicked intentions. It was through the kind intervention of G-d that the destruction was prevented. The promise to Abraham Abinu -- that his offspring would live and prosper through the special providence of Hashem -- was the factor that saved Yaakov from harm and that same Hashgaha -- protection -- has protected Jews throughout history.

The Vilna Gaon takes this point one step further. The thing we must "Go out" to learn is that Hashem does miracles for us --even though we are not aware of His intervention on our behalf. There are "Ten Mentions" -- zekhirot -- that a Jew should remember to say every day. They include the Exodus from Egypt, the Shabbat and what Hashem did to Miriam when she spoke Loshon Hara about her brother Moshe Rabenu. One of the things we must keep on our minds daily is "What Balak and Bilaam attempted to do to us when we were in the desert." Why is this on the list with other more outstanding events with obvious lessons?

The story of Bilaam is one of a gentile prophet hired by a King to curse the Jews. The King, Balak, saw that military might could not stand up to the Jews and so he devised a plan to fight fire with fire. The Jews were known for the power of their mouths -- prayer -- and so he hired one who was known for the power of his mouth -- cursing. The one thing he did not take into consideration was G-d's divine intervention for His beloved Chosen People. Every curse turned out to be a blessing. The Jews never met Balak and they were not privy to his failed attempts. G-d's miracle on their behalf was unbeknownst to them --just as Yaakov's rescue from Laban by G-d was without his knowledge of what Laban was really thinking. This is the lesson of our history.

In every generation they rise up against us to destroy us. Sometimes it is an open display of hatred

and actions that physically attempt to wipe us out. At other times it is wicked plans that we never discover because our Lord in His mercy derails the enemy's efforts and scuttles his plans without making headlines. "Go out and learn" to be thankful to G-d for all that He does to protect us from annihilation in every generation whether we see it or not.

### **TABLE TALK -- QUESTIONS FOR THE SEDER TABLE**

The Seder opens with the little poem that lists the order of the night's proceedings --Kadesh, urhatz... --literally say Kiddush and then wash your hands. If we look at the list we see that the first 2 "Kadesh" --say kiddush and "urhatz"--wash your hands are in the Hebrew form of a command. "Go and say Kiddush" and "Go and wash your hands." The balance of the list is in "passive" or "descriptive" forms.

"Karpas" -- parsley.

"Yahatz" -- the splitting of the massah.

"Mageed" -- telling of the story.

Why are only the first two in the form of commands?

Answer: The purpose of the Seder is to increase one's awareness of his or her servitude to G-d. We were taken out of the bondage of Egypt for a purpose. We were freed in order to become slaves to our Creator and to serve Him rather than human kings. By the end of the evening we should reach a state of gratitude and appreciation for this act of kindness -- allowing us to serve G-d --with wild praising and song called Hallel. It is, therefore, appropriate that we begin our night in the imperative mode, a tone suggestive of the master speaking to His servant. [Source Shirat Yehudah Hagaddah]

SHABBAT SHALOM

HAG KASHER V SAMAYACH Text Copyright &copy 2007 by [Rabbi Raymond Beyda](#) and [Torah.org](#).