

Thus, Yisrael will dwell secure, solitary, in the likeness of Yaakov. (33:28)

Rashi explains that one day, when the enemy is driven out, there will no longer be a need for Jews to band together and live in large communal groups for protection. Then, they will be able to live individually, secure, “each under his vine and under his fig tree.” In an attempt to define the concept of badad, solitary, the Yalkut Shimoni makes the following remarks: “It will be badad – not like the badad of Moshe Rabbeinu, who said, Hashem badad yanchenu, “Hashem alone guided them” (Devarim 32:12). It will also not be like the badad of Yirmiyahu HaNavi who said, Mipnei yadecha badad yashviti, “Because of Your mission, I sat alone” (Yirmiyah 15:17). Rather, it will be like the badad expressed by the wicked Bilaam, Hen am l’vadad yishkon, “Behold! It is a nation that will dwell in solitude” (Bamidbar 23:9).

In Likutei Tikun Shlomo, Horav Binyamin Shlomo Spitzer explains that the goal of the Jewish People from its inception as a nation through its receiving the Torah at Har Sinai was to be separate, without any intermingling with the gentile nations. In order to maintain a level of kedushah, holiness, it is essential that a strong partition be in place to maintain their distinctiveness. Regrettably, the alternative to disengagement is assimilation, which has been the root of many of our problems throughout history. In order to prepare us for this “experience,” Hashem first led us through the wilderness. The reason for this was simple: Just like a child must be trained and educated, so did the nascent Jewish nation have to be protected and experience solitude. Living “alone” would prepare them for a life of dedication to Torah – without disturbance of any kind.

This was not, however, Hashem’s real goal. They were not to live in isolation, in a desert, surrounded by nothing. The next step in their educative process was one of exile. They were hounded, chased, oppressed, reviled and persecuted by their enemies. Once again, they were alone against the world. No one wanted them. Everybody hated them. They only had each other. This was still not the experience that Hashem sought for them.

This is the meaning that the Yalkut expresses: It was not Moshe’s badad – being led in the wilderness – that Hashem sought for them; nor was it Yirmiyah’s badad, of persecution and exile

that was Hashem's goal for them. It was the badad that Bilaam envisioned, a solitude in which the Jewish People will live in the world community, secure, protected, respected and admired. What will separate them from assimilation? It will be their own self-respect: their pride in being Jewish; their pride in being the Am Hashem, nation of G-d; their pride in being committed, observant and devoted Jews. They will not need to assimilate, because they will realize how distinctive it is to be a Jew. That is the true definition of badad – not alone, but outstanding.