

## Moav became very frightened of the people, because it was numerous, and Moav was disgusted in the face of Bnei Yisrael. (22:3)

The Torah uses two terms to refer to *Klal Yisrael*: *Am*, people/nation, *Bnei Yisrael*, children of *Yisrael*. Moav was frightened of the nation due to their numbers, which imply a physical battle, a physical victory for the Jewish nation. Concerning the children of *Yisrael*, which is the term most often used to describe our People, Moav was disgusted. Fear means that one is afraid, but he still has hope for victory. A change of tactics might be necessary in order to quash the Jewish threat. Disgusted, the term which is used in a confrontation with the children of *Yisrael*, sounds more like resignation, despair, giving up without a fight. How do we understand this, and what is the Torah's message?

*Horav Yosef Nechemia Kornitzer, zl* (Rav of Prague, pre-World War II) quotes David *Hamelech* (*Sefer Tehillim* 8:3), *Mipi olelim v'yonkim yisadeta oze*, "Out of the mouth of babes and suckling's You have established strength." David asserts that our nation's strength, its ability to survive, is predicated on the Torah study of Jewish children. Their Torah is pure, untainted by sin. He cites *Midrash Eichah* (*Pesichta Rabbasi*, 2), which records the statement of Rabbi Abba *bar* Kahana, "There have never risen wise men among the non-Jewish nations like Bilaam and Avnimus *HaGardi*." (The latter was a Greek philosopher who was an acquaintance of Rabbi Meir.)

The nations of the world asked these two (Bilaam and Avnimus), "Will we be successful in engaging them (go to war against the Jews)?" They replied, "Go to their synagogues and study halls; if the children are vocally chirping in Torah study, you will not emerge victorious. If, however, you do not hear the sounds of Torah being studied, you will be successful against them. Thus, their Patriarch, Yaakov, assured them, 'Any time that the voice of Yaakov is chirping in the synagogues and study halls, there is no validity in Eisav's hands. (He cannot vanquish them.) If the sound has been stilled, then Eisav's hands will rule.'"

Balak was a greater sorcerer than Bilaam. Hence, the Torah writes that Balak was frightened of the Jews due to their numbers. Nonetheless, he did not despair; he was not yet miserable and disgusted. He would have to work harder, have better strategy. It was doable. When he saw that the *Bnei Yisrael*, the children of *Yisrael*, were devoted to their learning, however, he became outraged, repulsed by the reality that had set in. He would be unable to triumph over the Jews because their children were learning.

*Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl*, observes that, throughout the Torah, we see that *nashim tzidkaniyos*, righteous women, did everything in their power to ensure that their children would be availed a strong, uncompromising Torah education, devoid of any negative influence. Sarah *Imeinu* wanted Yishmael to be away from Yitzchak. Chana gave birth to Shmuel *HaNavi*, and she immediately dedicated him to spend his life in the Sanctuary. When Shimshon was born, his

mother dedicated him to be a *nazir*. All these women conceived by miraculous intervention. They each understood that her son was a gift; thus, they each sought to ensure that the child grow up pious and a credit to his people. Sadly, so many of us take our children for granted. They are a gift – a miracle from Hashem.

The *Mashgiach* (*Kaminetz*, Yerushalayim) points out that in contradiction to the women cited above, the *Shunamis* that Elisha blessed, also gave birth miraculously. Instead of his being sanctified to Torah, however, he went out and worked in the fields. His life came to an untimely end, after which Elisha miraculously resurrected him. The *Navi* instructed the *Shunamis*, “Lift up your son!” (*Melachim* 4:36). He meant elevate him, sanctify him, teach him Torah and give him the opportunity to grow spiritually. She listened, and the boy ultimately grew up to be the *Navi* Chavakuk.