**Light Insight**

**The Right Club**

“Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock with his staff twice.”

(Numbers 20:11)

If you’ve ever played golf, you’ll know how important it is to choose the right club. If you’re on the fairway, you probably need a wooden club. If you use an iron club, you’ll be wasting your energy, because the power of your swing will not connect with the ball to its maximum efficiency.

On the other hand if you are in a sand trap, you’ll need a heavily angled iron to chip the ball back onto the grass fairway. If you use a wood, it will be next to useless. It all depends on using the right tool for the job.

A Jew’s ‘club’ is his voice. So much of what we do, we do with our voices: Prayer, Torah study, blessings.

As Isaac said when he felt Jacob’s arms covered with goatskins, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, and the hands are the hands of Esau.”

(Numbers 26:22)

The Voice is given to Jacob. And the Hands, to Esau. The internal power which emanates from the heart — that’s the Voice, the external power of action. The Hand is the domain of Esau.

In our times, it is Esau who sends men to the moon, who builds cities of glass and steel that scrape the sky, who plumbs the depths of the ocean trenches. Esau knows how to use his hands. And while Jacob can also vie with Esau in these fields, when he does, he’s really not playing with his ideal ‘club.’

When Moses hit the rock instead of speaking to it, he was sending out a message which contradicted the fundamental essence of the Jewish People. It was as if he was saying: “The voice isn’t adequate. You need to use Esau’s skills, Esau’s hands.”

The power of the Jewish People is not in its arms. It is in its voice. The voice lifted up in prayer. The voice of concern and brotherhood. The voice of Torah ringing from the halls of study. That’s the only ‘club’ we need.

**The People’s Tent**

“How goodly are your tents O Jacob!”

(Numbers 24:5)

What was so ‘goodly’ about the tents of Jacob? Bilaam noted that not one of Israel’s tent entrances was aligned opposite the other. Every tent was angled so that its entrance looked out only onto the side of the tent of its neighbor.

What was so special about that? True, it showed a discretion and a respect for privacy — but why, specifically, should it be this non-alignment of the tent-openings that caused Bilaam to proclaim the Jewish People deserving of the Divine Presence to dwell among them?

In fact, Bilaam’s whole intention was to find some universal flaw in the Jewish People which would allow him to bring them down — to curse them by accusing them of some endemic sin.

However, he could find no such common flaw. For even though one Jew might stumble in one area, his neighbor would, as it were, step into the breach and excel in that same area, thereby compensating for him.

And so on throughout the entire people. Bilaam could not find one ubiquitous vice that ran throughout the body politic of the Jewish People, try as he might.

That’s the hidden meaning of his words, “How goodly are your tents, O Jacob!” “None of your entrances (to sin) are aligned corresponding to the entrance of your neighbor. None of your sins are aligned opposite the sins of your neighbor. And so — I can’t get a ‘clear shot’ through to the middle! I can’t wound you by lobbing a shot clear into your midst — into your heart. For each one of you steps into the breach — the weakness of one is the strength of the other — leaving no opening to the sin which crouches at the door...”
Jim Silver wrote:

Assuming Mars is ever colonized and Jews live on Mars, will they need to pray UP to face Jerusalem? This question is based on the fact that the orbit of Mars is outside the Earth’s orbit of the Sun.

Dear Jim,

You’ve certainly asked your question to the right Rabbi: When I was in school, I took up space!

Even on Mars you wouldn’t face upwards to pray because one should pray with his head slightly bowed and his eyes downward. Also, facing up towards earth might look like you were praying to a star. A Jewish no-no.

Of course, there may be other valid halachic views on this issue; therefore, when you get to Mars, ask your local Orthodox Rabbi.

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