

# THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT BALAK

15-16 JULY | 17 TAMMUZ

## Is there such a thing as oversharing?



**LEORA  
SALTER**

Youth Director  
@ Finchley  
United Synagogue

A famous philosophical question is asked: "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it still make a sound?" A comparable, modern-day question can also be asked: "If two friends go out for the day and they did not take a selfie, did they really go out?"

In this week's parasha, Balak, king of Moav, hires the prophet Bilaam to curse the Jewish people. As he sees the Jewish people, ready to curse them, he says the words: "*How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your*

*dwelling, O Israel!*" (Bemidbar 24:5). Rashi (1040-1105) explains that Bilaam said this because he saw that the entrances of the Jewish people's tents were facing away from each other. Each tent's opening faced a different direction, so no one could peep into their neighbour's tent.

We live in a time when everything is recorded and we have little privacy. Bilaam came from a culture that knew no boundaries and then saw the modesty of the Jewish people, with their respect for private space.

This challenge also faces our world today. To what extent should we publicise our lives? To what extent should we be looking at our neighbour to see if the grass is

greener? Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993), Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University, New York, suggested that we model our personal lives after the structure and layout of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). The *Mishkan* consisted of an outer courtyard, the *Kodesh* (the Holy) and the *Kodesh Ha'Kedoshim* (Holy of Holies). The *Kodesh Ha'Kedoshim* housed the sacred Ark which held the Tablets, and was the most private and inaccessible part of the *Mishkan*.

On a personal level, we need to be aware of which feelings, experiences and news are better kept private, within our own 'tent', to achieve the greatest level of modesty.

## Parasha Quiz

1. Bilaam saddles his own donkey in this week parasha.

**Who else in the Torah saddles their own donkey?**

2. We normally clap our hands when we love something.

**When and why does Balak clap his hands in this week's parasha?**

3. There are 6 parashiot in the Torah that are named after a person.

**How many can you name?**

