

**Evil-Eye Protection (Balak)*****Ignorance, the root and stem of all evil. -Plato***

In Judaism, there is a concept that people have the power, just by looking at others with evil thoughts, to somehow cause something negative to happen. The “chamsa” (upraised palm symbol) is popular in Sephardic culture as a ward against the “evil eye.” Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Prague, the *Kli Yakar* (1550-1619), explains that there is something more effective.

When the evil sorcerer, Bilaam, attempts to curse the Children of Israel in the desert, he is confounded time and time again by God. God forces Bilaam to bless the nation of Israel instead. In one of the most famous lines uttered by Bilaam, he states:

***How goodly are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel. -  
Numbers 24:5***

The *Kli Yakar* quotes the Talmud (Tractate Bava Batra 66a) that part of the blessing was because no tent opening looked onto the opening of its neighbor. The Children of Israel practiced a noteworthy modesty, not seeking to cast an eye upon the goings-on of other households. Bilaam realized that if the Children of Israel had already taken proper precautions against the evil eye internally, then he would have no chance to cast an evil eye.

The *Kli Yakar* adds that the merit of the “tents” protected Israel from the evil eye. The tents are a synonym for none other than study of the Torah, of Jewish law and tradition, which protected and continues to protect the Children of Israel from the evil eye.

May we never have an “evil eye” cast upon us, or at least protect ourselves with study and modesty.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

*Dedication*

*To the MedEx program assisting doctors in making Aliyah and their recent event in Buenos Aires. <https://www.nbn.org.il/aliyah-medex/>*