

## Dwelling Apart: Blessing or Curse?

Deuteronomy 4:35

35 Unto thee it was shown, that thou mightiest know that the LORD, He is God; there is none else beside Him. [mil'vado]

Adon Olam (hymn written by Ibn G'virol)

And when all shall end

He still all alone [l'vado] shall reign.

He was, He is,

and He shall be in glory.

Deuteronomy 32:12 (JPS translation; 1917)

12 The LORD alone [badad] did lead him, and there was no strange god with Him.

(Several commentators interpret *badad* meaning Israel rather than God is alone. The cantillation bears out this understanding.)

Numbers 22:39-41; 23:1-12

39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kiriath-huzoth. 40 And Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him. 41 And it came to pass in the morning that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into Bamoth-baal, and he saw from thence the utmost part of the people.

1 And Balaam said unto Balak: 'Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.' 2 And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. 3 And Balaam said unto Balak: 'Stand by thy burnt-offering, and I will go; peradventure the LORD will come to meet me; and whatsoever He showeth me I will tell thee.' And he went to a bare height. 4 And God met Balaam; and he said unto Him: 'I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered up a bullock and a ram on every altar.' 5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said: 'Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.' 6 And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt-offering, he, and all the princes of Moab. 7 And he took up his parable, and said: From Aram Balak bringeth me, the king of Moab from the mountains of the East: 'Come, curse me Jacob, and come, execrate Israel.' 8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? And how shall I execrate, whom the LORD hath not execrated? 9 ***For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone [l'vadad], and shall not be reckoned among the nations.*** 10 Who hath counted the dust of Jacob, or numbered the stock of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let mine end be like his! 11 And Balak said unto Balaam: 'What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.' 12 And he answered and said: 'Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD putteth in my mouth?'

Midrash Tanchuma (also cited by Rashi, *in situ*)

When the nation is happy, no other peoples rejoice with it...and when other nations are happy in this world, the Jewish people eat with each and every regime without their adding it to the cost, as it is written "and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *in situ*

It will live in an isolated land without much intercourse with other nations living its "internal" national mission as *am*, as a national social body and will not seek its greatness as *goy* among *goyim*, not as a powerful imposing national body among the other individual nations.

Deuteronomy 33:28-29

**28** And Israel dwelleth in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone [badad], in a land of corn and wine; yea, his heavens drop down dew. **29** Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee? a people [*am*] saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and that is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall dwindle away before thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places. {S}

Micah 7:14-end

Tend Thy people [*amcha*] with Thy staff, the flock of Thy heritage, that dwell solitarily [*l'vadad*], as a forest in the midst of the fruitful field; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. **15** 'As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things.' **16** The nations shall see and be put to shame for all their might; they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. **17** They shall lick the dust like a serpent; like crawling things of the earth they shall come trembling out of their close places; they shall come with fear unto the LORD our God, and shall be afraid because of Thee. **18** Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth the iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. **19** He will again have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. **20** Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob, mercy to Abraham, as Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

Exodus 19:3-6

And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying: 'Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: **4** Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. **5** Now therefore, if ye will hearken unto My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all peoples [*ha'amim*]; for all the earth is Mine; **6** and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation [*goy kadosh*]. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.'

Psalms 4:9

In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; for Thou, LORD, makest me dwell alone [*l'vadad*] in safety.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (on Meditation)

To taste the hidden light of Torah -- the secrets which will be revealed in time to come -- you should seclude yourself as much as you can to pray and speak to God. Take a good look at yourself and make a reckoning. What are you doing with your life? How is your time spent? Is this the right way to spend your life -- to behave as you do before the Holy One, blessed-be-He, who bestows goodness upon you every moment of the day? Weigh all the different aspects of your life very carefully. If you make yourself the judge over everything you are doing, you will be able to rid yourself of all fears and worries. You will never be afraid of earthly powers -- princes or rulers, wild beasts, robbers or the like. Nothing in the world will frighten you. Only before God will you stand in fear and reverence. This is the way to elevate the fear that is within you to its true root, which is in Da'at, understanding. You will attain perfect knowledge, because you will know before Whom to stand in awe: God alone, in His greatness and glory. Then you will be able to understand the revealed Torah and you will attain genuine humility. You will learn how to put your whole soul into your prayers. All sense of self and physical being will be totally nullified as you pray, and you will be able to pray without any thought of personal gain. When you reach the point where your sense of self and physicality totally disappear, as if you were simply not in the world at all, then you will discover the hidden secrets of the Torah. This is the concealed light which is destined to be revealed in time to come. All this you can achieve through *hitbodidut*, secluded prayer (15).

Genesis 2:18-24

**18** And the LORD God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone [l'vado]; I will make him a help meet for him.' **19** And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them; and whatsoever the man would call every living creature, that was to be the name thereof. **20** And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. **21** And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the place with flesh instead thereof. **22** And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from the man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. **23** And the man said: 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' **24** Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto [v'davak] his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

Numbers 11:14-15

**14** I am not able to bear all this people myself alone [l'vadi], because it is too heavy for me. **15** And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in Thy sight; and let me not look upon my wretchedness.'

Deuteronomy 1:9

And I spoke unto you at that time, saying: 'I am not able to bear you myself alone [l'vadi];

I Kings 18:22, 19:10-14

Then said Elijah unto the people [ha'am]: 'I, even I only, am left [l'vadi] a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

**10** And he said: 'I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left [l'vadi]; and they seek my life, to take it away.' **11** And He said: 'Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD.' And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake; **12** and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. **13** And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said: 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' **14** And he said: 'I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left [l'vadi]; and they seek my life, to take it away.'

Leviticus 13:46

All the days wherein the plague is in him he shall be unclean; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone [badad yeshev]; without the camp shall his dwelling be.

Talmud Bavli- Tractate Arakin 16b

How is the case of the leper different (with regard to the process of atonement) that the Torah says, "he shall sit apart; outside of the camp will be his place"? He created division between man and wife, between man and his friend. Therefore, the Torah says "he shall sit apart."

Rashi on Leviticus 13:46

He shall dwell alone—that other unclean persons shall not dwell with him. Our Rabbis said: Why is he different from other unclean persons to dwell alone? Since by his slanderous tongue, he separated man from his wife, and a man from his fellow Jew, so he too will be separated.

Shadal (Shmuel David Luzzato) on the Torah

The imperative of isolation [badad] is always found in conjunction with sitting [y'shivah].

Lamentations 1

**1** How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! **{S}** **2** She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; she hath none to comfort her among all her lovers; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. **{S}** **3** Judah is gone into exile because of affliction, and because of great servitude; she dwelleth among the nations, she findeth no

rest; all her pursuers overtook her within the straits... 8 Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore she is become as one unclean; all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness; she herself also sigheth, and turneth backward.

Jeremiah 15:17

17 I sat not in the assembly of them that make merry, nor rejoiced; I sat alone [badad yashavti] because of Thy hand; for Thou hast filled me with indignation.

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. Hilkhot De'ot 6:1-2

It is the nature of Man to be drawn in his thoughts and actions after his neighbors and friends, and to follow the customs of the people of his country. Therefore, it is incumbent upon him to connect o righteous individuals and to dwell amongst them always so that one may learn from their deeds. . . . And if he finds himself in a country whose leaders are bad and whose people do not tread upon the straight and narrow, he should go to a place where there are righteous people who act properly. And if all the countries he knows and hears about behave improperly, as in our time...he should dwell isolated and alone, as it is written, "let him sit alone [yeshev badad] and keep silent." (Lam. 3:28)