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BS"D

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BALAK – 17 of Tamuz - 5779

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**Mashiach: When and How**  
**Rabbi Mordechai Willig**

*Mashiach: When and How*

I Bilam prophesied, " ולא עתה אשורנו ולא קרוב דרך כוכב מיעקב וקם " - I see it, but not now. I view it, but it is not near. A star shot forth from Yaakov, and a tribe has risen from Yisrael, and he will strike down the extremities of Moav and undermine all the children of Sheis" (*Bamidbar* 24:17) The Or Hachaim notes the seemingly repetitive phraseology, and associates it with the two different scenarios of *mashiach* described in the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 98a). The phrase (Yeshayahu 60:22) " אני ה' - בעתה אחישנה - I, Hashem, in its time I will hasten it" is self-contradictory. Will the ultimate redemption occur at a preordained time, or will Hashem hasten it? The Gemara answers: If they [*Am Yisrael*] merit it [*zachu*] I will hasten it. If not [*lo zachu*], it will come in its time. "I will see it but not now" implies not now but any time, even soon, just beyond my sight. This, says the Or Hachaim, is the scenario of *zachu*, I will hasten it. "I view it but it is not near" means it is far beyond one's view, not even close, describing the scenario of *lo zachu*, in its time. The Gemara raises an additional contradiction, not about the time of the messianic redemption but about its nature. Daniel (7:13) saw a vision of *mashiach* coming with the cloud of Heaven, i.e. of a swift, miraculous nature. However, Zecharya (9:9) describes him as humble and riding on a donkey, i.e. slowly and gradually, not miraculously. Once again, the Gemara

answers: If they merit it, *zachu*, it will be with the cloud of Heaven, swiftly and miraculously. This, says the Or Hachaim, is the shooting star from Heaven in Bilam's prophecy, a supernatural redemption. If not, *lo zachu*, it will be as a humble man riding on a donkey, slowly and gradually, not miraculously. This refers to a tribe from Yisrael arising as others in the world, naturally [*b'derech hateva*], as it says (Daniel 4:14) " ושפל אנשים יקים עליה - Hashem will appoint the lowest of men over the kingdom". This tribe will reign and do what the *pasuk* states, namely be militarily victorious over its neighbors.

II The Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim* 12:2) describes the messianic era based on the words of the prophets. He concludes: No one knows what will happen until it will happen. There are disputes among the Sages. Neither the order nor the details are fundamentals of religion. Lengthy discussions of these matters lead neither to love or fear of Hashem. Rather one should wait and believe, in general terms, in *Mashiach*. Attitudes towards, and developments in, *Eretz Yisrael* in the last one hundred and forty years have engendered protracted and bitter controversies in *Am Yisrael*. The seventy years of the Zionist movement featured widespread support of, and fiery opposition to, the establishment of a Jewish state. Since 1948 the wars, policies and leaders of the State of Israel are a constant source of controversy extending well beyond its changing borders. In the religious community, it is viewed positively as proto-messianic, neutrally as a necessary development, or negatively as Satanic. While, as the Rambam taught, the details are, and will remain, unknown, the words of the Or Hachaim may be a prescient description of our time. The slow and gradual process of redemption may refer to the Zionist movement, self-described as non-religious. Its achievements included the agricultural renewal of *Eretz Yisrael* after 1800 years of near desolation. The Gemara (*ibid.*) states: There is no clearer indication of the End, i.e. the signs of *Mashiach*, than this, as it says (Yechezkel 36:8), " ואתם הרי ישראל ענפכם תתנו ופריכם תשאוי לעמי ישראל" - Mountains of Yisrael you shall give your branches and bear your fruit for my nation Yisrael". The State of Israel, led primarily by non-observant Jews, including some atheists and anti-religious ones, has, as the Or Hachaim predicted, done what the *pasuk* says. With divine assistance, recognized even by some otherwise non-believers, the Israel Defense Force has prevailed against overwhelming odds, and has been consistently victorious over its neighbors. Taken together, these developments may indeed be a partial fulfillment of Bilam's prophecy of the slow and gradual process described in the Gemara and the Or Hachaim.

III The Rambam describes speculation about the details of the messianic era as essentially futile, as they will remain unknown until *Mashiach* comes. Argumentation over these matters, which often descends into vitriolic and even violent controversies, is counterproductive. It leads to baseless hatred, *sinas chinam*, which caused the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*. Every generation in which the *Mikdash* is not built, it is as if it was destroyed in its days (*Yerushalmi Yoma* 1:1). This means that the underlying cause, namely *sinas chinam*, still exists in that generation, preventing the messianic era, about which people and communities argue to the point of hatred, from arriving. These arguments, like the speculation described in the Rambam, will be resolved only by the *Mashiach* himself. This Shabbos, *Parshas Balak*, is *Shiva Asar B'tamuz*, the beginning of the three weeks of mourning over the *churban*, which culminate with *Tisha B'av*, its anniversary. We must recall the cause of the *churban*, and studiously avoid repeating *sinas chinam* and, thereby, extending the *churban*. Differing opinions about the theological approaches to eschatology are unavoidable, as the Rambam taught. Political arguments about the practical approaches to the intractable problems facing the Jewish

people in *Eretz Yisrael* and throughout the world are, likewise, unresolvable. Yet every Jew, by exhibiting the humility attributed by Zechariah to the *Mashiach* himself, can hasten his arrival by avoiding the acrimony and the hatred which result from absolute assuredness of the correctness of one's opinion and approach. The application of the Or Hachaim's interpretation of Bilam's prophecy to our time does not predict the future. The details of the timing and nature of the messianic era will, as the Rambam wrote, remain unknown until they actually transpire. With appropriate humility and uncertainty, we can foster greater mutual love among Jews of different opinions and communities, which can actually hasten the redemption we all crave and pray for daily. As the Rambam ruled, we must wait and believe, in general terms, in *Mashiach*. As the famous formulation of the Rambam's twelfth fundamental of faith says, "I believe with complete faith in the coming of *Mashiach*, and even though he may tarry, nevertheless I wait for him every day that he will come".

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from: Shabbat Shalom <[shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org](mailto:shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org)> reply-to: [shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org](mailto:shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org) date: Jul 18, 2019, 9:06 PM

### **Not Reckoned Among the Nations**

#### **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

The year is 1933. Two Jews are sitting in a Viennese coffee house, reading the news. One is reading the local Jewish paper, the other the notoriously antisemitic publication *Der Stürmer*. "How can you possibly read that revolting rubbish?" says the first. The second smiles. "What does your paper say? Let me tell you: 'The Jews are assimilating.' 'The Jews are arguing.' 'The Jews are disappearing.' Now let me tell you what my paper says: 'The Jews control the banks.' 'The Jews control the media.' 'The Jews control Austria.' 'The Jews control the world.' My friend, if you want good news about the Jews, always read the antisemites."

An old and bitter joke. Yet it has a point and a history and it begins with this week's parsha. Some of the most beautiful things ever said about the Jewish people were said by Bilaam: "Who can count the dust of Jacob ... May my final end be like theirs! ... How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel! ... A star will come out of Jacob; a sceptre will rise out of Israel."

Bilaam was no friend of the Jews. Having failed to curse them, he eventually devised a plan that worked. He suggested that Moabite women seduce Israelite men and then invite them to take part in their idolatrous worship. 24,000 people died in the subsequent plague that struck the people (Num. 25, 31:16). Bilaam is numbered by the rabbis as one of only four non-royals mentioned in the Tanach who are denied a share in the World to Come (Sanhedrin 90a).

Why then did God choose that Israel be blessed by Bilaam? Surely there is a principle *Megalgelim zechut al yedei zakai*: "Good things come about through good people" (Tosefta Yoma 4:12). Why did this good thing come about through a bad man? The answer lies in the principle stated in Proverbs (27:2): "Let someone else praise you, and not your own mouth; an outsider, and not your own lips." Tanach is perhaps the least self-congratulatory national literature in history. Jews chose to record for history their faults, not their virtues. Hence it was important that their praise come from an outsider, and one not known to like them. Moses rebuked the people. Bilaam, the outsider, praised them.

That said, however, what is the meaning of one of the most famous descriptions ever given of the people Israel: "It is a nation dwelling alone, not reckoned among the nations." (Num. 23:9)? I have argued (in my book, *Future Tense*) against the interpretation that has become popular in modern times, namely that it is Israel's destiny to be isolated, friendless, hated, abandoned and alone, as if antisemitism were somehow written into the script of history. It isn't. None of the prophets said so. To the contrary, they

believed that the nations of the world would eventually recognise Israel's God and come to worship Him in the Temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah (8:23) foresees a day when "ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" There is nothing fated, predestined, about antisemitism.

What then do Bilaam's words mean? "It is a nation dwelling alone, not reckoned among the nations." Ibn Ezra says they mean that unlike all other nations, Jews, even when a minority in a non-Jewish culture, will not assimilate. Ramban says that their culture and creed will remain pure, not a cosmopolitan mix of multiple traditions and nationalities. The Netziv gives the sharp interpretation, clearly directed against the Jews of his time, that "If Jews live distinctive and apart from others they will dwell safely, but if they seek to emulate 'the nations' they 'will not be reckoned' as anything special at all."

There is, however, another possibility, hinted at by another noted antisemite, G. K. Chesterton, who we have already mentioned in *Beha'alotecha*. Chesterton famously wrote of America that it was "a nation with the soul of a church" and "the only nation in the world founded on a creed." That is, in fact, precisely what made Israel different – and America's political culture, as historian Perry Miller and sociologist Robert Bellah pointed out, is deeply rooted in the idea of biblical Israel and the concept of covenant. Ancient Israel was indeed founded on a creed, and was, as a result, a nation with the soul of a religion.

We discussed in *Beha'alotecha* how Rabbi Soloveitchik broke down the two ways in which people become a group, be it a camp or a congregation. Camps face a common enemy, and so a group of people bands together. If you look at all other nations, ancient and modern, you will see they arose out of historical contingencies. A group of people live in a land, develop a shared culture, form a society, and thus become a nation.

Jews, certainly from the Babylonian exile onward, had none of the conventional attributes of a nation. They did not live in the same land. Some lived in Israel, others in Babylon, yet others in Egypt. Later they would be scattered throughout the world. They did not share a language of everyday speech. There were many Jewish vernaculars, versions of Yiddish, Ladino and other regional Jewish dialects. They did not live under the same political dispensation. They did not share the same cultural environment. Nor did they experience the same fate. Despite all their many differences though, they always saw themselves and were seen by others as one nation: the world's first, and for long the world's only, global people.

What then made them a nation? This was the question R. Saadia Gaon asked in the tenth century, to which he gave the famous answer: "Our nation is only a nation in virtue of its laws (torot)." They were the people defined by the Torah, a nation under the sovereignty of God. Having received, uniquely, their laws before they even entered their land, they remained bound by those selfsame laws even when they lost the land. Of no other nation has this ever been true.

Uniquely then, in Judaism religion and nationhood coincide. There are nations with many religions: multicultural Britain is one among many. There are religions governing many nations: Christianity and Islam are obvious examples. Only in the case of Judaism is there a one-to-one correlation between religion and nationhood. Without Judaism there would be nothing (except antisemitism) to connect Jews across the world. And without the Jewish nation Judaism would cease to be what it has always been, the faith of a people bound by a bond of collective responsibility to one another and to God. Bilaam was right. The Jewish people really are unique.

Nothing therefore could be more mistaken than to define Jewishness as a mere ethnicity. If ethnicity is a form of culture, then Jews are not one ethnicity but many. In Israel, Jews are a walking lexicon of almost every ethnicity under the sun. If ethnicity is another word for race, then conversion to Judaism would be impossible (you cannot convert to become Caucasian; you cannot change your race at will).

What makes Jews “a nation dwelling alone, not reckoned among the nations,” is that their nationhood is not a matter of geography, politics or ethnicity. It is a matter of religious vocation as God’s covenant partners, summoned to be a living example of a nation among the nations made distinctive by its faith and way of life. Lose that and we lose the one thing that was and remains the source of our singular contribution to the heritage of humankind. When we forget this, sadly, God arranges for people like Bilaam and Chesterton to remind us otherwise. We should not need such reminding.

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Jul 18, 2019, 2:50 PM subject: Rav Frand - The Nations' Non-Prophet @torah.org Rav Frand By Rabbi Yissocher Frand Parshas Balak

### **The Nations' Non-Prophet**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #1083 – K’rias Shema Al HaMitah: Why? Good Shabbos!

The Nations of the World Are a Non-Prophet Organization

Parshas Balak contains Bilaam’s Blessings/Curses from when he was hired to curse the Jewish people. (He intended to curse but instead he blessed, for the most part.) Chazal say that Bilaam was a prophet. Not only was he a prophet, but Chazal infer from the pasuk, “There did not arise again in Israel a prophet like Moshe” [Devorim 34:10] that in Israel such a prophet did not arise again, but a prophet of that stature did arise among the nations of the world, and that was Bilaam.

At the beginning of Parshas Balak, Rashi addresses the obvious question: Why did the Ribono shel Olam do this? Why did He give Bilaam profound prophetic powers? The Rambam in Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah says that in order to merit prophecy, there are requirements of spirituality and elevated status. A person needs to be wise, righteous, and modest to qualify. Why was Bilaam—who was wicked, and seemingly had none of the requisite attributes—given prophecy?

Rashi answers that Hashem gave Bilaam this gift so that the nations of the world not have a complaint against Him. Hashem gave Bilaam prophecy to preempt the claim — “If we had a prophet (like Israel) we would have repented.” To use a popular expression, they would claim, “It was not a fair playing field! The deck was stacked against us. They had Moshe Rabbeinu and other prophets and we did not have anybody.”

Therefore, Hashem gave them a great prophet, and they became even more immoral and corrupt. Rashi spells it out – originally at least, they were inhibited from transgressing sexual sins and they maintained a modicum of morality. Then Bilaam advised them to allow their daughters to become promiscuous. So much for the claim “Had we been given a prophet, we would have been better people.”

Many question this explanation of Rashi. It is still not a fair playing field! Had Hashem given them a Moshe or a Shmuel HaNavi or Yeshaya HaNavi, or a Yechezkel or even any of the Twelve Minor Prophets, then He could have preempted the claim of the nations that the deck was stacked against them. Moshe was an almost perfect human being. When he spoke, people were impressed, and they listened to him. However, the nations of the world were given Bilaam! A paradigm personifying all that a person should NOT be was Bilaam. He was haughty. He was lustful. He had an evil eye. He was stingy. He was depraved. He committed acts of bestiality. Bilaam is certainly not a role model for improving behavior, to say the least. The claim “It’s not fair” is still very much in place.

I heard an interesting approach to this question in the name of Rav Yaakov Galinsky [1920-2014]. Rav Galinsky was a Magid in Eretz Yisrael. He advanced the following thesis: Any prophet is no greater than the people for whom he prophesizes. Put succinctly, the nation makes the prophet!

An elevated people receive an elevated prophet; in a depraved society, the prophet will not be any better than the people are. Each generation gets the Navi it deserves. In a nutshell, that is the insight of Rav Galinsky. He demonstrates this principle from several places:

One example is when Klal Yisrael sins with the Golden Calf, the Almighty says to Moshe “Go descend, for your people has acted corruptly.” [Shemos 32:7] Rashi there interprets “Go, descend” — go down from your greatness (lech reid m’gedulasecha). The descent was not only in terms of elevation above sea level. Lech reid implied a spiritual descent. The people have sinned, how does that affect Moshe? The answer is that the prophet is who the people are. When the people fall, the Navi falls.

Another example: “If the anointed Priest will sin by the guilt of the people...” (Im haKohen haMoshiach yechetah l’Ashmas ha’Am) [Vayikra 4:3].

The most compelling proof is from a famous Mishna in Tractate Rosh HaShannah [3:8]. “And it was when Moshe raised his arms, Israel became strong...” In that epic battle between Amalek and Klal Yisrael, when their leader kept his hands raised, Israel was victorious and when he lowered his hands then Amalek became victorious. The Mishna itself inquires – does, then, Moshe’s arm movement have military significance? Rather, this teaches—the Mishna answers—that as long as Israel would cast their gaze upwards and subjugate their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they would be victorious, otherwise they would fall.

So the obvious question is, if that is the case, let Moshe Rabbeinu keep his hands up no matter what. The answer is that Moshe Rabbeinu’s strength was dependent on the actions of the people. When the people subjugated their hearts to their Father in Heaven, Moshe Rabbeinu had the strength to keep his hands held high. When the people veered from that for whatever reason, Moshe Rabbeinu lost some of his strength. The Navi is the people and the people are the Navi.

Rav Yaakov Galinsky offers an amazingly novel idea: Moshe Rabbeinu and Bilaam had the same potential. Bilaam did not have to become the person he became—the evil eye; the haughty spirit; the stingy person; the depraved moral degenerate. He could have been a Moshe Rabbeinu. It was all dependent on the people—the prophet’s “customers,” so to speak. Because of the inherent character traits of the nations of the world, he became a “Bilaam.”

With this idea, Rav Galinsky explains a famous Medrash Rabbah at the beginning of Parshas Emor. The Medrash says that the Almighty showed Moshe each generation and its leaders, each generation and its wise men, each generation and its teachers, and he even showed Moshe the great thieves of every generation along with the prophets of every generation (Dor, dor v’chomsav; Dor, dor v’gazlanav; Dor, dor u’Nevivav).

Why did Moshe Rabbeinu need to know all this information? Rav Galinsky answers that it is because Moshe Rabbeinu had a question: Why were there not any prophets after the destruction of the second Bais Hamidash? Why in later generations (including our own) do we no longer have Neviim? The Ribono shel Olam says, “Because look at the generation. It is a generation with thieves and robbers. They did not deserve to have prophets among them.” The prophet is dependent on his generation.

That is how Rav Galinsky answers this question on Rashi. Bilaam had the potential to have been a Moshe Rabbeinu. But we see that the generation impacts the spiritual capabilities of their prophets. In effect, the nations of the world could not complain that they were given an imperfect prophet, because the prophet only reflects the spiritual essence of the nation to whom and for whom he prophesizes.

The Brisker Rav Asks a Question on the Rambam

I would like to share with you a brilliant observation from the Brisker Rav (Rav Yitzchak Ze’ev HaLevi Soloveitchik [1886-1959]).

The Rambam [Hilchos Melachim 11:1] rules as follows:

“The Messianic King will in the future arise and restore the Davidic Dynasty to the glory of its original sovereignty. He will build the Temple and

gather the dispersed of Israel, and all the laws will return in his days as they were in prior times. Sacrifices will be brought, and the Sabbatical and Jubilee years will be observed according to all the details that are set forth in the Torah. And whoever does not believe in him, or someone who does not 'wait for his coming,' not only does he deny the teachings of the other prophets, but he denies the Torah and Moshe Rabbeinu. For the Torah has testified about him as it is written: 'Then Hashem, your G-d will return your captivity and have mercy upon you, and He will gather you in from all the peoples to where Hashem your G-d has scattered you. If your dispersed will be at the ends of the heavens, from there Hashem your G-d will gather you in, and from there He will take you. Hashem your G-d will bring you to the land of which your forefathers took possession, and you shall take possession of it...' [Devorim 30:3-5]. And these words, which are explicit in the Torah, include all the words that were spoken by all the prophets. Even in Parshas Bilaam, it is mentioned and there [Bamidbar 24:17] he spoke of 'two anointed ones' (shnei Meshecheem) – the first anointed one being Dovid who saved Israel from the hands of their enemies, and the final anointed one who will arise from Dovid's descendants and bring salvation to Israel [at the end of days]. And there [Devorim 24:17] Bilaam says 'I see him but not now' — this refers to Dovid, 'I view him, but he is not near' — this refers to the Messianic King."

We use the term heretic (kofer) loosely today; but it is a serious term, and the Rambam applies it to someone who does not believe in the Moshiach's coming, or who does not personally anticipate it and await for it to happen.

The Brisker Rav asks a question which is worthy of the one who asks it: Yes, it says in the Torah that Moshiach is going to come, but where does it say that we are obligated to want and anticipate and wait for his coming and his bringing salvation?

The Rambam specifies two requirements: (1) I believe in the coming of the Messiah; and (2) And even if he tarries, I will wait for him (achakeh lo). Then the Rambam says that someone who fulfills the first requirement but does not fulfill the second requirement is a 'kofer' in the Torah of Moshe! The Rambam does not seem to bring any Biblical source to back up this second requirement!

The Brisker Rav says, "I will tell you where this requirement is stated. It is written in our parsha!"

The Brisker Rav cites a pasuk from Trei Asar [the Twelve Minor Prophets]: "And I shall be to them like a lion; like a leopard al derech Ashur." [Hoshea 13:7] What does this pasuk mean? We would be tempted to say that the last three words al derech Ashur means "on the way to Assyria." However, Rashi in Hoshea says that Ashur in this pasuk is not a proper noun, indicating the name of a place. Rashi says that every time Scripture mentions the place named Assyria, there is a grammatical dot (dagesh) in the letter Shin. In the word Aleph Shin Vov Reish in this pasuk in Hoshea, there is not a dagesh in the Shin. Rashi therefore translates the word as a verb meaning, "to lie in wait". So the pasuk is saying, "As the leopard lies in wait, anxiously anticipating its prey." Rashi says, "How do I know that the word Ashur in Hoshea means to want and anticipate and expect? Because it is parallel to the expression used by Bilaam – "Ashurenu, v'lo Karov" [I view him, but he is not near.] [Bamidbar 24:17] – the pasuk in our parsha.

This pasuk means that even though Moshiach may not be near, nevertheless – Ashurenu – I anticipate him; I want him; I expect him, I long for him. According to the Brisker Rav, this is the Rambam's source in "Toras Moshe" for waiting anxiously for Moshiach.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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## Laws of the 17th of Tamuz:

### Rabbi Yossi Michalowicz

1. The Talmud teaches us that five tragic events occurred on the 17th of Tammuz, the most notable being that: a.) The tablets, containing the Ten Commandments, were destroyed; and b.) The walls of the city of Jerusalem were breached, leading to the destruction of the Second Temple. To commemorate these tragic events, the Jewish people observe this day as a fast day. In addition, the custom developed to observe some mourning practices from this day until Tisha B'av.

2. The 17th of Tammuz is observed this year of 5775 on Saturday evening and Sunday of July 4- 5. The fast begins Sunday morning at 4:29 A.M. and ends at 9:52 P.M. One who finds it difficult to fast may eat at 9:42 P.M. The purpose of a fast day is to stir our hearts in order that we utilize the paths of Teshuva, returning to Hashem, and to serve as a reminder to us of our own actions and those of our forefathers. These mistaken actions are responsible for the terrible events, which befell our people. Remembering these tragedies should lead us to examine our conduct and return to Hashem.

3. One should not mistakenly assume that the abstinence from food and drink alone fulfills the requirement and purpose of a fast day. The true purpose of a fast day must be evidenced in one's improved deeds.

4. Pregnant and nursing women are not required to fast, if they find it difficult.

5. A person who is ill or suffering is not required to fast – even if there is no fear of danger to health.

6. One is permitted to eat before the fast, provided that one explicitly states before going to sleep that he/she plans to wake up early to eat before the fast begins.

7. Although it is permitted to bathe, it has become customary not to take a hot shower or bathe for pleasure. [One may certainly bathe or shower if one is dirty / perspired.]

8. It is proper for adults to refrain from swimming, unless it is needed for a medical condition or to cool off on a hot day. [Minors, however, may swim.]

9. One is permitted to rinse one's mouth, provided that you only rinse the front part of the mouth, taking care that no liquid enters the throat area. One should make sure to rinse with less than 3.3 fl. oz. of liquid at a time. [There is a stringent view that permits this only when in distress.]

10. You may take medications prescribed by a doctor. One, who has difficulty swallowing pills without water, may drink the amount of water required to swallow them.

11. When suffering from a severe headache, etc., aspirin or Tylenol, etc., may be taken. One may drink water as described above in #10.

12. There are other restrictions that begin on this day, as it begins the period of the three weeks. This will be discussed later on.

13. During the reading of the Torah on a fast day, the custom is that certain verses are read aloud by the congregation. The individual who is called up for that Aliya should not read the verses aloud with the congregation. Instead, he should wait until the reader says them aloud and read along with him.

14. One who mistakenly ate on a fast day must resume and complete the fast. He may say the Aneinu insertion during the Mincha Amida.

15. One, who is not fasting altogether, should not say Aneinu.

16. We add the Avinu Malkeinu prayer for Shacharis and Mincha, even when praying alone at home without a Minyan.

### Laws of the Three Weeks:

1. Although the Talmud mentions that the mourning of the Tisha B'av

- season begins on the first day of the month of Av, the accepted custom amongst Ashkenazic Jews is to begin mourning from the 17th of Tamuz.
2. There are different levels of mourning in terms of restrictions, with the mourning intensifying as we get closer to Tisha B'av:
    - From the 17th of Tamuz
    - From the 1st of Av
    - The week that Tisha B'av falls [i.e. from the Sat. night before Tisha B'av]
    - Tisha B'av
  3. We do not make weddings during the three weeks.
  4. It is permitted to celebrate an engagement with a festive meal during the three weeks, provided there is no music and dancing. From Rosh Chodesh [1st of Av] one should only serve light refreshments.
  5. Dancing on weekdays is prohibited during the three weeks.
  6. Generally speaking, it is prohibited to shave or get a haircut during the three weeks.
  7. It is permitted to trim one's mustache if it interferes with eating.
  8. If one shaves daily, one may shave during the Three Weeks if one may lose one's job or may lose customers because one does not shave. However, if the only concern is that people will make fun of him, one is not permitted to shave.
  9. Shaving is prohibited during the week that Tisha B'av falls, even if one suffers financial loss.
  10. Adults may not give minor children a haircut during the week that Tisha B'av falls. There is a minority opinion that prohibits this for the entire Three Weeks.
  11. Women may not cut their hair during the Three Weeks. She may trim the hair on her temples, for the sake of modesty. A woman may tweeze her eyebrows and perform similar cosmetic activities.
  12. A Shaitel [wig] may be washed /cut or professionally cleaned and/or set during the Three Weeks - but not during the Nine Days.
  13. It is permitted to cut your fingernails during the Three Weeks.
  14. Playing or listening to music for enjoyment is prohibited during the Three Weeks. Listening to recorded music is also prohibited. Playing is permitted on a professional basis in order to make a living.
  15. It is not prohibited to hear background music, such as what one hears while waiting in a doctor's office.
  16. It is permitted to take music lessons if the lessons are not for pleasure and there will be a loss of skill because of the time lost. The Kaf HaChayim writes: "Those who teach music during these days, should teach sad songs, and it would be even better if they did not teach any music at all."
  17. There are opinions that permit singing during the weekdays. Everyone agrees that it is permitted to sing sad or moving songs, similar to what we sing on Tisha B'av. For that matter, one should only listen to recorded acappella music of sad or moving songs.
  18. One may not recite the Shehechyanu blessing during the Three Weeks for purchases or new fruits. However, you may say it on Shabbat.
  19. Therefore, one should not purchase items during the Three Weeks that

- would require that blessing being said. [e.g. buying a new suit.] One may purchase new items that do not require a Shehechyanu. [e.g. a pair of new shoes or underwear.]
20. One should not purchase a car for pleasure or convenience until after the Three Weeks. One may purchase a car if it is for work; however, the Shehechyanu blessing should not be recited until after the Three Weeks.
  21. You may purchase a necessary appliance, such as a refrigerator, washing machine or bed, to replace one that broke during the Three Weeks.
  22. One should not engage in dangerous activities during the Three Weeks. For this reason, some follow the practice not to schedule surgery during the 3 weeks, and certainly not during the 9 days, unless the doctor insists that it cannot medically be postponed.
  23. It is permitted to bathe, shower, or swim for pleasure until the 1st of Av. It is prohibited during the Nine Days.
  24. Although a parent should not strike one's child at any time of the year, a parent should be extra cautious and refrain from striking one's child during the Three Weeks.
  25. There are no mourning practices conducted on the Shabbos.
  26. One need not decrease business activity, construction, or planting until the Nine Days begin.
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from: **Daniel Kaminetsky** <danielkam@gmail.com> date: Fri, Jun 15, 2018 at 4:15 PM

[1] **These notes are an approximate transcript of a recorded shiur given by Rav Moshe Tzvi Weinberg. The shiur is available on YuTorah.org.**

**Rav Moshe Tzvi Weinberg  
Tammuz and The Three Weeks**[1]

Certain sections of the Torah that are difficult to learn on a pshat level. For example the Meraglim. They were the greatest Jews of their time. Part of the Dor Deah. Saw HKBH face to face. Chet Ha'egel another example. Impossible to understand without delving into the deeper sefarim. The incident with Kuzbi and Zimri. Zimri ben Salu was a Nasi. Picture the biggest Tzadik in your mind and that person does not even come close to any of these people. Yet Zimri was involved with a non-Jewish woman in public. Can't begin to grasp these things. So when we come to the Meraglim, it's the same thing. Kulam anashim. They were all righteous. Roshai Bnai Yisrael. Kol Nasi bahem. We are talking about massive Tzadikim. Will try and shed some light on the whole situation. What was their mistake? Had to have lofty kavanos. No way they just messed up.

The Ishbitzer Rebbe has a comment that explains how to look at the episode, and it is probably applicable to all of these Bamidbar parshiyos, whether it's Bhaaloscha, in which Bnai Yisrael have some troubles, shelach, Korach, Chukas Balak. Ishbitzer was always trying to look at the positive. This comment of the Ishbitzer was printed in the biography of R Tzadok HaKohain M'Lublin. Rav Tzadok was a Talmudic genius turned Chassidic Rebbe. Born into rabbinic family, well versed in revealed areas of Torah. Drawn into Court of the Ishbitzer, the Mai Hashiloach, Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner, and eventually Rav Tzadok went on to become a great Chassidic Rebbe. Rav Tzadok says in name of the Ishbitzer, the sins of these people are the backbone, the words of the Torah. When we study Chet Hameraglim, according to the Vilna Gaon, being mekayem a Mitzva doraisa to study Torah. Reading about these mistakes is studying Torah. If a single letter or word or pasuk was missing from these parshiyos, as painful as some

of those words are, the Torah itself would be ruined. Torah would be pasul. Yet our greatest Mitzvos are not recorded in the Torah. These aveiros were lofty on some deeper level. Have to learn pashut pshat as well. There is simplistic level which is there. But the Ishbitzer was saying, on a deeper level, these mistakes were not simplistic mistakes. For example, Korach. He was a gadol hador. Gives us perspective on who we are dealing with.

So how do we understand the kavanos of the Meraglim? Why didn't they trust Hashem to take them into Eretz Yisrael? Baal Hatanya explains in Lukutai To rah that they didn't want the lifestyle of Eretz Yisrael. Up to this point the Meraglim were sitting in the ananei hakavod, learning Torah 24 hours a day, eating the mon, drinking from the be'air, their clothing didn't get worn out – it was the ultimate Kollel lifestyle. Everything was provided for them. They just sat there and soaked up the ziv hashechinah. Now being told they are going to go into Eretz Yisrael and they will have to plant and dig and far the land. Didn't want to trade their spiritual lifestyle in the desert for one that was so physical. This was their mistake. They said Eretz Yisrael is a land that is "ocheles yoshveha." The Eretz, the gashmi swallows up those who sit and learn. They saw the land was a place where people get caught up in gashmiyus. They lose all of their religious values. Terrified to go there. Why give up the amazing opportunity to spend 24/7 with HKBH? But it was a mistake, because it's not what HKBH wanted from them. The tachlis of a Jew in this world is to elevate the regular. To involve ourselves with physicality. The beauty of Judaism is that we can take something physical and make it holy. It is davka what separates Judaism from all other religions. The Pope doesn't marry. Christians believe the Pope is so holy so needs to be poresh from nashim completely. By us it is the exact opposite. Peru Urvu is the first mitzvah of the Torah. To be involved in a maaseh gashmi. A very physical act between husband and wife that is done in a holy way. It's the foundation of Torah. The muslims don't drink wine because they hold it is off limits until Moshiach comes. Indeed, Chazal say drinking wine can lead to trouble. Isha Sotah. Yet we bring in our holiest day of the week, Shabbos, with a cup of wine. While our non-Jewish neighbors and consuming wine in an unholy way, we take wine, which could be used in a physical and low way, and we make it holy. That's how we bring in Shabbos. This is something unique about the Jewish people. Torah highlights this idea that physicality is very much part of our Judaism. For example, Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky writes in Parshas Mishpatim that the Shalosh Regalim are always described in relation to what is happening in the ground. We have a moed because we are planting and harvesting. Is that what the holiday is really about? We planted and made money? Crops grew? That's the best reason for a holiday? Where is the spiritual element to it? He says no. davka through this we see what Judaism is all about. The way we plant and harvest, there are halachos that govern that. All of Seder Zeraim teaches us the way we do this. Its all Mitzvos to be used in a holy way. There is no difference, Reb Yaakov says, between serving HKBH with eating and serving HKBH with davening. One would think learning and davening are holy, but others actions . . . But it's the same thing with eating and sleeping. Those are holy actions too, if done for the right reasons. This is what separates us from all the other religions of the world and is what the backbone of Judaism is all about. To be mekadash the mundane.

One would think on Shavuos we would only bring a Korbon Olah, which was offered completely to Hashem. Yet instead we bring the shetai halechem. Bread and sheep but the bread is all you need. Sheep not me'akev. Bread is eaten by the Kohanim. One might think that on the day we received the Torah we would want to engage in only spirituality. That we'd have no interest in doing something physical, that we would not focus on the eating, yet that is davka what we highlight. Non-Jews are only allowed to bring a Korbon Olah. Not allowed to bring a Shelamim. Mefarshim explain that it is because they don't understand how to be mekadash achilah. They understand you put something on an altar and burn

it completely. But can't grasp concept that a human being can eat and it is a holy thing. This is why davka after Yisro converts to Judaism he brings a Korbon shelamim. To show, now I understand what it means to be a Jew. I can be mekadash the mundane. Kli Chemdah was one of the students of the Avnei Nezer. In Parshas Veyera he says that when we take physical things and use it for a mitzva, it is no longer a davar gashmi. It becomes ruchni. A spiritual matter. This is what it means when the Mishna says "Ratzah HKBH lezakos es Yisrael". Lezakos is from the lashon shemen zayis zach. We want to purify ourselves, our physical selves, so Hashem "hirbah lahem Torah Umitzvos". Hashem gives us the opportunity to take the "lahem", the you, the physical, and turn it into Torah and Mitzvos. That is how a person is mezakeh themselves. How they refine themselves and purify themselves.

Rav Dessler writes in the first volume of Michtam MeEliyahu that when his great-grandmother got married to Rav Yisrael Salanter, they had a discussion in the Yichud room. They struck a deal to make sure they would never fight. Rav Yisroel Salanter said, for all physical matters, you get the final say and for all spiritual matters, I get the final say. Defer to me. At the end of the day, Rav Yisrael Salanter ended up deciding everything because every decision became a spiritual matter. When they had to decide what color to paint the wall, it wasn't just a physical decision. Maybe blue will remind them of techeles, and techeles domeh layam . . . it will help them see HKBH. So every decision became a spiritual matter and he had the final say on everything. This was the mistake of the Meraglim. They didn't understand this concept. Thought better to live a purely spiritual existence and never engage physicality and be bothered with it.

Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz, the Belzer Rebbe, takes it one step further. He makes the following observation. By the list of names of the Meraglim, the children of Yosef, Menashe and Ephraim, who are usually listed together are broken up by Zevulun and Binyamin. The reason for this is as follows: who of all people embodies this idea of being mekadash the mundane? Yosef HaTzadik. The Zohar explains that a Tzadik is someone who is able to bring a oneness to heaven and earth. Takes what's up there and what's down here and bring them together. That was Yosef Hatzadik. We say in Pesukai Dezimrah every day a pasuk from Divrai Hayamim: Lecha Hashem hagedulag vehagevurah vehatiferes vahanetzach vehahod ki chol bashamayim uva'aretz lecha Hashem hamamlacha. In those pesukim we are alluding to 7 traits of HKBH. When we count Sephiras HaOmer, each week corresponds to one of these 7 attributes. Some of these attributes are stated explicitly. Such as chesed, Tiferes, gevurah, netzach, hod. These 7 traits also correspond to the 7 ushpizin we invite to the Succah. Chesed is Avraham. Gevurah is Yitzchok. The 6th attribute, Yesod, is Yosef. We see this hinted to in the pasuk in Mishlai, Tzadik Yesod Olam. So Yosef is the Tzadik and Yosef is the one who knows how to involve himself with Olam. To be involved with Gashmiyus and make it into a davar ruchni, make it holy. Let's look again at the pasuk in Divrai Hayamim. Lecha Hashem hagedula. Gedula is code word for chesed. gevurah is gevurah. Like it says. Tiferes is teiferes. Netzach is netzach. Hod is hod. What's the code word for Yesod, for Yosef? Ki chol bashamayim uva'aretz. Because Yosef is exactly that idea. To bring together Shamayim and Aretz. Happens to be that the Gematriya of ki chol = yesod. Yosef is the one who knows how to take something physical and make it holy. The ultimate example of this is the incident with eishes Potiphar. Ultimate Nisayon in the ultimate gashmiyus act in the most gashmi place in the world, ervas ha'aretz, the most disgusting land, Mitzrayim, where gilui arayos was rampant, and Yosef said I'm not going to allow myself to degrade this holy act. Not going to allow it to be come something done in an unholy way. And he is rewarded with the beracha of an extra letter that was added to his name. Gemara in Sotah says that Rabi Shimon Chasida says, Yosef honored Hashem's name in private, as he could have committed the aveira and no one would have known, no one was there, was seduced for over a year, midrashim talk about the crazy things

she did to him, she tried to convince him it was leshem shamayim, she said she saw in the heavens they were meant to be together, and he was handsome and she was beautiful and she waited for a specific moment, and he was on the verge of sin but he withheld himself. Because of that, says the Gemara he got an extra letter from Hashem's name, a heh. We see this in various places in Tehilim where it says Yehoseph. Why heh? Gemara in Menachos says "ki beukah Hashem tzur olamim". Hashem created the world "bekah", with a yud and a heh. Olam habbah with the yud and olam hazeh with the heh. Yosef, who brought together heaven and earth, was zocheh to get the heh added to his name. he earned the heh. Understood what olam hazeh was all about. Understood how to use gashmiyus in the right way. A Rasha doesn't understand that. Lo hamaisim yehallelu kah. Doesn't understand how to bring together yud and heh. He understand there is holy and regular. But by Jews there is no holy and regular. Everything is holy. Every action we do can be used in a holy way. Rasha doesn't understand that which is why at the Seder, he says Mah Ha'avoda hazos lachem? What is this avoda of "lachem"? Doesn't understand physicality. Spirituality he understands. Can't understand how eating a bowl of cholent or playing basketball can be holy. Now we can answer the question of the Belzer rebbe. Yosef's two sons are split up by Zevulun and Binyamin because if Yosef represents this idea of combining heaven and earth, the spiritual and the physical, Zevulun and Binyamin also have this trait. Zevulun was the greatest business man of all time – every dollar he earned he channeled toward Yissachar, toward Torah learning. He was wealthy but he used every bit of his wealth for Torah. Binyamin was the same thing. Zohar says Yosef was the higher level Tzadik and Binyamin was the lower level Tzadik. Tzadik- a person who combined shamayim and aretz. So when the meraglim are going out, Moshe tries to couple together those that should grasp this idea of what it means to be a Tzadik.

Unfortunately, the meraglim failed, but luckily not all of them failed. Which of them passed the test? Who was going to be the one who took them into Eretz Yisrael? The one who understand more than anyone else the whole concept of Eretz Yisrael, to be mekadash the physical? To make Eretz Yisrael a holy place? Yehoshua. He understood the message of uniting yud and heh. When he was heading out, Vayikra Moshe l'Hoshea bin nun Yehoshua. Was given a heh to his name. Rashi explains "kah yoshiacha me'atzas meraglim". Kah- yud and heh. You should be saved from the technique of the meraglim because of the yud and the heh. You understand it. He gives him a beracha that he should understand what it means. When you see the massive fruit of Eretz Yisrael, see the kedusha. It's pure. You're ingesting kedusha. Fruit of Eretz Israel have halachos. Its not a regular apple. It's a holy thing.

Let's try to connect this idea to the avoda of the summer and the three weeks. Three weeks are a difficult time for Klal Yisrael and especially the nine days which is when we remember the chet of the meraglim. Beginning of three weeks more kneged chet ha'egel. Chet hameraglim was even worse of an aveira then chet ha'egel which was avoda zara. In some ways, chet hameraglim was the ultimate rejection of Hashem. Three weeks are referred to as the Bein Hamaitzarim. From pasuk in Eicha, kol rodfeha hisiguha bain hamaitzarim. Our enemies were chasing us and we were trapped "Bain Hameitzarim". In narrow places. We had no where to turn. Enemies closing in and we had no where to hide. This is the feeling being described. And we describe this feeling because during this tekufa, Hashem is very angry at us. Tamuz and Av are the worst months of the year. Bnai Yisasschar says every month corresponds to a different composition of the shem Hashem yud key vav key. When you say Hashem's name during that month, we are supposed to have that arrangement of the name in mind. Name of Hashem for Tammuz, the month we just brought in in heh vav heh yud. Hashem's name completely backwards. HKBH says I am totally not interested in you in Tammuz. Don't want to have anything to do with you.

I'm furious. Not interested in your avodas Hashem. Jew has to be very careful what he does during this time. It's a physically dangerous time for us as Jews. Feel this terrible pressure because of this awkward relationship with Hashem. Walls are closing in on us. What we are daevning to do is to change this time from Bain Hameitzarim to nachalah bli maitzar. That's an expression that Chazal use in the Gemara in Shabbos, that a person who is me'aneg in Shabbos, who understands Shabbos and honors and celebrates Shabbos in the right way is zocheh to a nachalah bli maitzar. Portion without any walls. That's what we are trying to do. Want to get out the Bain Hameitzarim and turn it into Moshiach. The ultimate in expansion. This is what these times will become le'asid lavo. The Arizal says, whenever we are struggling and we are at the border, like in Eretz Yisrael, where people are fighting over property and everyone is trying to push the borders, and when we push back and take a little bit of land, we've taken away from the Palestinians. And the same vice versa. Arizal said, all battles of kedusha vs. the sitra achra are border battles. Every bit of kedusha we have, that means we have weakened the Yetzer Hara that much more. We destroy a small part of it. We're not fighting over neutral territory. It's kedusha vs. tumaah. We're fighting on those borders. If during the Bain Hamaitzarim we're trying to expand the borders because we are feeling trapped, what's the best way to accomplish that? Rav Shlomo Fischer in his Drashos Bais Yishai asks how can we expand the borders? There are 613 Mitzvos. There is a concept of Baal Tosif. So how can we expand? Can't add Mitzvos? Can't wrap Tefilin on our legs. He answers by saying the area we can expand, that we can make infinitely more deeper than it is naturally, is the chol, the mundane. When we take the regular and breathe more kavana into it, and put more neshama into it, then we're able to expand the borders. He says there is an amazing halacha in Shulchan Aruch siman resh lamed alef. Every bit of pleasure a person gets in this world, a person shouldn't do for his own pleasure. Every pleasure, whether it's eating, sleeping, playing basketball, should be done as a form of service to Hashem. As it says, bechol derachecha daeihu. In all of your ways, in everything that you are doing, daehu. Know Hashem. See Hashem. In Pirkei Avos it says, vechol ma'asecha yihyu l'shem shanayim. Even those things that look like they are a reshus, they look optional, eating, drinking, sleeping, marital relations, all of the needs of the body should all be done to serve Hashem. Or at least a stepping stone to serve Hashem. If you see something is going to benefit you as a religious Jew, do it. If not, don't. It's a simple Cheshbon. Does what I am about to do help me in my service to the RSO or not. Could be anything. Playing basketball could be the biggest Mitzva or the biggest waste of time. Depends on kavana. Am I doing it to strengthen my body? To give me a healthy break so that I can learn better? Than every shot is a mitzva. Am I doing it because I am lazy and I just don't want to learn? Then it's an aveira. It's bittel Torah, a waste of time and a terrible thing. have to ask ourselves that simple but difficult question. Does this help me as a Jew or does this hurt me? In this way a person can serve Hashem constantly. This was Yehoshua. Yeshoshua was bechol derachecha daehu. He understood that Eretz Yisrael was the holiest place in the world, because we have to work in the dirt, build houses and be involved in the physical.

Rav Pinchas Friedman, a Belzer chosid from Eretz Yisrael wrote a remez to this idea. The Gematriya of Yehoshua and bechol derachecha daehu are the same. 391. He understood this halacha. The Rizhner Rebbe observed that all of the actions listed in the halacha of the Shulchan Aruch that we quoted have a yud and a heh. Achila, shtiya, halicha, yeshiva, kimah, sicha, tashmish which is referred to in the Gemara as biah, all have a yud and heh in the name. Everything we do has a yud and a heh because it brings together shamayim and aretz. As opposed to the vav heh. Torah, Mitzva, avoda. That's the higher level stuff. Our avoda in this world is the Avoda of the yud and the heh. This is what the Gemara in Eiruvim says: miyom shecharav Bais Hamikdash dayo l'olam sheyishtamesh bishtai osiyos. Since the times of the Bais Hamikdash Hashem's name has been reduced from four to two

letters. As it says kol haneshama tehallel ka. In our times, that's all we have. That's our avoda. Because our tefilah is not as good as it used to be. And we have many more recreational activities. This is the iker avoda during the summer and the three weeks. To elevate the yud and the heh. This may be the only way we can approach Hashem during the three weeks. Our Tefilah and Torah is not up to par all year round. But during the three weeks? Hashem says I am not interested. Doesn't want our Tefilah. Our Torah.

Rmt's daughter once misbehaved in Erev Shabbos. They warned her if she keeps it up no Shabbos treats. She didn't listen. So they told her you are punished. No treats. But can I still have chicken? And soup? Of course, they said. Just can't have the treats. The special stuff. That's the three weeks. Hashem says I'm not interested in you. But He still lets us live. And function like human beings. That much He doesn't take away. And this is how we sneak in to have a relationship with Hashem through the back door. At a time where He says forget it. Get out of here. He turns his name around and says I don't want to talk to you. I want nothing to do with you.

IyH, we should take this message to heart. We should be zocheh to be mekayem that pasuk in a new way. Kol rodefa hisiguha bain hemaitzarim. Kol rodef yud heh, hisig vav heh. If you chase the yud heh you will get the vav heh. You'll be zocheh to the vav heh. The missing letters of HKBH's throne. Ki yad al kes kah. Hashem said that Amalek is blocking out the vav and the heh. Hashem's name is not complete until we get rid of Amalek. Amalek doesn't understand this concept. Ultimate reshaim. Don't understand being mekadash the physical. Think the whole concept of bringing kedusha to the guf is a ridiculous thing. Make fun of bris Mila. So IYH we should take the message of the meraglim to heart, and see the nechama very soon and that min hamaitzar karasi kah, we should get out with the yud and the heh and see the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash bimhaira beyamainu.

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### **Fast of the 17th of Tammuz: Historical Background & Customs**

OU Staff  
July 18, 2011 The 17th day in the Jewish month of Tammuz, Jews the world over fast and lament to commemorate the many calamities that have befallen our people on this ominous day.

The purpose of such fasts in the Jewish calendar is, according to Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov's Book of Our Heritage, "to awaken hearts towards repentance through recalling our forefathers' misdeeds; misdeeds which led to calamities..."

#### **A HISTORIC DAY OF CALAMITY**

Going all the way back to Biblical times, Moses descended Mount Sinai on this day and, upon seeing the Golden Calf broke the first set of Tablets carrying the Ten Commandments (Shemot 32:19, Mishna Taanit 28b).

In the First Temple Era: The priests in the First Temple stopped offering the daily sacrifice on this day (Taanit 28b) due to the shortage of sheep during the siege and the next year 3184 (586 BCE), the walls of Jerusalem were breached after many months of siege by Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian forces.

In Melachim II 21:7 we find that King Menashe, one of the worst of the Jewish kings, had an idol placed in the Holy Sanctuary of the Temple, according to tradition on this date. The Talmud, in Masechet Taanit 28b, says that in the time of the Roman persecution, Apostomos, captain of the occupation forces, did the same, and publicly burned the Torah – both acts considered open blasphemy and desecration. These were followed by Titus and Rome breaching the walls of Jerusalem in 3760 (70 CE) and Pope

Gregory IX ordering the confiscation of all manuscripts of the Talmud in 4999 (1239).

In later years this day continued to be a dark one for Jews. In 1391, more than 4,000 Jews were killed in Toledo and Jaen, Spain and in 1559 the Jewish Quarter of Prague was burned and looted.

The Kovno ghetto was liquidated on this day in 5704 (1944) and in 5730 (1970) Libya ordered the confiscation of Jewish property.

Other interesting occurrences on this day include Noach sending out the first dove to see if the Flood waters had receded, (Bereishit 8:8) in 1650 (2100 BCE); Moshe Rabbeinu destroying the golden calf, (Shemot 32:20, Seder Olam 6, Taanit 30b – Rashi) and then ascending back up Har Sinai for the second time where he spent the next forty days pleading for forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf, (Shemot 33:11, Rashi).

#### **The Fast of the Fourth Month**

The Mishna in Ta'anit 4:8 associates the 17th of Tammuz as the "Fast of the Fourth Month" mentioned by the prophet Zechariah. According to this Mishna, the 17th of Tammuz will be transformed in the messianic era in a day that "shall be joy to the House of Judah" full of "gladness and cheerful feasts".

#### **Customs**

The fast of the 17th of Tammuz is observed from the break of dawn until night (as defined by halacha), one of four Jewish fasts to be observed in this manner – 3 Tishrei, 10 Tevet, 13 Adar, and 17 of Tammuz.

Expecting or nursing mothers and those who are ill are expected to observe the fast but with lenience, refraining from meat, luxurious food and hard liquor.

Minors that are old enough to understand, though exempt from fasting, should also be fed only simple foods as a manner of education.

Unlike the two Jewish fast days Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av, washing and wearing leather are permitted on this day.

Special prayers (vayichal and anenu) are added to the morning and afternoon prayers. Ashkenazim add the latter only in the afternoon service (mincha).

This day is the beginning of the Three Weeks, an annual period of mourning over the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem.

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from: Mordechai Tzion toratravaviner@yahoo.com to:

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Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Shehechyanu on Game Q: I am a kid and received as a gift a game I really love. Do I recite Shehechyanu? A: Yes (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 223:3).

Helping an Eldery Woman Stand UpQ: [Question from a man]: Is it permissible to give an elderly woman a hand if she is unable to get up from a bench? A: It is permissible under two conditions: 1. She asks for the help. 2. There is no woman anywhere around to help her (But see Shut Mishneh Halachot 5:142).

Gum in Restroom Q: Is it permissible to chew gum in the restroom? A: Yes. The blessing should obviously be recited outside of the restroom.

Depression Q: What should I do if I am depressed? A: Involved yourself with things that bring you happiness, such as listening to classes, music, physical activity, etc. But if the situation becomes more severe or there is no improvement, turn to a psychologist, and may Hashem help you.

Symbol of Bnei Akiva Q: The symbol of Bnei Akiva has the Ten Commandments with rounded tops. Shouldn't it be changed so that the tops

are squared off? A: The Ten Commandments were indeed square. Baba Batra 14a. See Yerushalimi Shekalim. It seems that rounding off the Ten Commandments on top was influenced by Christian artists. But since we are simply discussing a symbol and not the exact tablets, there is no problem to leave it as most of Am Yisrael does (R' Osher Rata told me that Ha-Rav Chaim Druckman, Rav of Bnei Akiva, was once asked about this issue, and he answered that they indeed should be square but it is difficult to change it since this symbol was been accepted and known for many years. The Lubavichter Rebbe was strongly opposed to using the round design. Shaarei Halachah U-Minhag, vol. 1 p. 199. And the same is true of the Steipler Gaon. Shut Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot 2:535. And when Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv was asked about the shape of the Ten Commandments on a Torah Ark being built, he answered that one should not change the accepted custom and they should be rounded on top. Ha-Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach similarly said that most Shuls he had seen have rounded Tablets, and even though he does not know the reason, since they are square in reality, but the custom is Israel is Halachah. He added, however, that he rescinded his position after hearing in the name of the Steipler that they are to be square. Miktavim U-Ma'arim Volume 1 #94. Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievsky said, however, that one should not change the accepted custom and they should be round. Yisa Yosef 4:36. And Ha-Rav Moshe Sternbuch wrote that while it is preferable to use the square design, it is permissible to use the round design since it is not an exact depiction but rather merely a symbol. Shut Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot ibid. And when Ha-Rav Yitzchak Yosef was appointed as Sefardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, he was given a gift by the Jewish community in Turkey: a gold breastplate in the shape of the Ten Commandments hanging from a chain. Rav Yosef wore it around his neck when he met the Pope as the Jewish response to the gold cross worn by the Pope. The Tablets were rounded on top).

Purim Greater than Shabbat Q: Is it true that Purim is holier than Shabbat and all the other holidays? A: No. But obviously it has its uniqueness.

Stance of Rabbi Which Others Reject Q: Isn't there a problem when a Rabbi takes a stance on an issue which almost everyone else rejects? A: This was indeed the problem of Avraham Ha-Ivri ("The Hebrew" which can also indicate being "on the other side"), who was on one side (of believing in one G-d) while the entire world was on the other side. But in the end, it all worked out. Don't just follow the herd.

Who's Right – Us or Satmar Q: How can we know that we are right in our philosophy and not Satmar? A: There are things we are right about, as our eyes can see: Building Eretz Yisrael, the return of Am Yisrael to Eretz Yisrael, the establishment of the State of Israel, the wars of Israel. And there are things which Satmar is right about, as our eyes can see: Fulfilling all of the Mitzvot, even the seemingly light ones, and dedicating every free moment to learning Torah.

Accident on Account of Cell Phone Q: Someone was on his cell phone while driving and caused an accident, and was miraculously saved. Does he recite Ha-Gomel? A: It is a dispute, since he is guilty for the accident. He should therefore recite the blessing without Shem U-Malchut (see Shut Avnei Derech of Ha-Rav Elchanan Printz Volume 8 #176).

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 subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**  
**Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Balak**  
 פרשת בלק תש"ט

**ויקם בלעם בבקר ויחבש את אתונו**

**Bilaam arose in the morning and saddled his donkey. (22:21)**

Devotion to the point of *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, is a powerful and potent catalyst for success in a given endeavor – for better or for worse. We derive this from Bilaam, whose intention to curse the Jewish People was so strong that he woke up early in the morning and personally saddled his donkey – something that an individual of his stature would never do. Nonetheless, his hatred of the Jews was so intense that he was willing to perform this menial task himself, if it would mean that he would arrive earlier and get down to business.

*Rashi* observes how far hatred can drive a person to violate even his own norms of conduct. Bilaam was so driven by his hatred of the Jews that he saddled his own donkey. Hashem responded to him, “*Rasha*, evil one, their forefather, Avraham (*Avinu*) already preceded you.” This refers to the *Akeidas Yitzchak*, Binding of Yitzchak, when Avraham arose early in the morning and saddled his donkey. *Rashi* implies that if not for Avraham’s *mesiras nefesh* and devotion to arriving at *Har HaMoriah* as early as possible, so that he could carry out Hashem’s command, Bilaam’s zealousness to destroy the Jews would have been successful.

Bilaam’s saddling his own donkey was an indication of his hatred of the Jews. Avraham’s saddling his donkey was proof of his overriding love of Hashem. Both were zealous for their individual ideal – for better or for worse. Bilaam’s actions were pure evil; Avraham’s endeavor was pure good. Both were *moser nefesh*, willing to sacrifice themselves, for what they believed in. This teaches us a powerful, almost frightening, lesson: Dedication has potency. *Mesiras nefesh* makes a powerful difference. When we are up against an enemy who is dedicated to causing us harm, we must be prepared with equal commitment. Bilaam’s dedication almost garnered for him the success that he sought, had our Patriarch, Avraham, not preceded him with his own brand of dedication. How are we to understand this? It certainly is not about merit, because Bilaam’s actions cannot -- by even the remotest stretch of the imagination -- be viewed as meritorious. He was an evil, morally-flawed, and profligate individual. Yet, had our Patriarch not exhibited a tremendous amount of *mesiras nefesh* – who knows? Bilaam’s curses might have found their mark.

*Horav Levi Dicker, zl*, explains how this phenomenon works. Man has been granted *bechirah chafshis*, free-will, with which he has the power to decide if he will commit good deeds or act inappropriately and perform evil. Hashem instilled the concept of *hishtadlus*, effort/endeavoring, in His world, whereby the greater the effort one expends, the greater the results. If one were to invest all of his energy in one specific area, this is the highest level of *hishtadlus*. Obviously, Hashem would like us to invest our *kochos*, energies, into increasing our *mitzvah* performance and Torah study. This is called *mesiras nefesh*. Since this has nothing to do with merit and it is under the purview of free-will, one can conceivably be *moser nefesh*, give all of his devotion, to evil, and be successful. He put forth his *hishtadlus* to the negative, and, by all of the rules of free will, he should be permitted to see “positive” results from his “negative” choice.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that with regard to *hishtadlus*, it is not the *z'chus*, merit, which is gained through the vehicle of *mesiras nefesh* that garners success, but the actual *mesiras nefesh* in its own right that engenders positive results. It is the level of one’s steadfastness -- not his ideals, goals, morals -- that ensures his success.

Thus, Bilaam, as evil as he was, still had a fighting chance to curse *Klal Yisrael* – successfully. It was Avraham *Avinu*’s *mesiras nefesh* that preempted and overwhelmed Bilaam’s dedication. Dedication begets success. Avraham’s dedication preceded that of Bilaam. Veritably, Avraham’s act of fealty was greater, since his *mesiras nefesh* was founded and based upon love for Hashem. Bilaam’s allegiance was built upon hatred of Hashem’s People. I think love trumps hatred.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* draws an analogy to a well-respected individual who erects a wall around his house. It is not becoming a man of his stature to be standing out in the heat performing construction. He should leave this work for those who are suited for it. Yet, at the end of the day, the wall is standing and providing protection and security. It has nothing to do with the builder’s merit. It is merely the natural result of building a wall. Avraham *Avinu* was *moser nefesh* to saddle his donkey. His stature had nothing to do with his success. His commitment, however, did.

**תמת נפשי מות ישרים ותהי אחריתי כמהו**

**May my soul die the death of the upright, and may my end be like his. (23:10)**

Bilaam offered a prayer on behalf of himself, in which he alluded to his deep yearning to die as do the righteous. His arrogance had no shame. He chose to continue living a life of moral profligacy, but asked to die like the holy Patriarchs. He was not in contact with reality. He should have known that one cannot live like an animal and expect to die as a person. One who lives like a *goy* does not get the opportunity to die as a Jew. The death one experiences is the consequence of the life that he has led.

The *Chafetz Chaim*, *zl*, explains that life for the Jew is, for the most part, not a bed of roses. We encounter thorns along the journey we call life – sharp, painful thorns. We have many restrictions in Jewish life; food, environmental/social restrictions, time-bound restrictions, in addition to the plethora of positive commandments that we must perform. We accept and revel in this way of life, because we see the beauty of its results. We look at the world around us, and we can proudly and ecstatically proclaim, “I am proud to be an observant Jew!” As a result of our inculcation in Torah and its primary focus of our lives, we understand and are secure in the belief that the cessation of life, otherwise known as death, is the transition from a temporal life to a life of eternity, of permanence. Since we live with this acknowledgement, we do not fear death, because we spend our lives preparing for that transition.

The *Chafetz Chaim* would remark, “The world worries, ‘I do not have with what to live.’ I ask them, ‘have you already addressed with what you will die?’” In other words, we, as observant Jews, understand that we are just passing through on our way to the ultimate World of Truth. Thus, we live a focused life, not haphazard, ordained by whims and desires. We have a destiny and a destination. Bilaam thought he could have it all. To live like a *goy* and die as a Jew is an incongruity which even he could not change.

*Horav Shlomo Levenstein, Shlita*, quotes from the *tzavaah*, will, of *Horav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, zl*, in order to demonstrate the meaning of *mos yesharim*, death of the upright.

“I ask that, if (at the end of my life) I will be in such (serious) condition that I will be racked with pain, no medicine or pain killers be administered that will blunt my cognitive ability. The greatest treasure is for a person to leave this world in complete control of his cognitive faculties, in close clinging/ attachment with *Hashem Yisborach*, so that he can return his soul to Hashem in complete purity and holiness.”

Afterwards, *Rav Michel Yehudah* added, “The *neshamah*, soul, derives much *nachas ruach*, spiritual satisfaction/bliss, when, at the moment of its disengagement from the body (referring to himself), it passes on from this house (referring to his modest home). This is for a number of reasons, primarily because in this home from time to time, the sounds of Torah (study) and *tefillah*, prayer, were heard. (Veritably, this is probably all that was heard in his home, but *Rav Michel Yehudah* was the paradigm of humility.) It was a home in which the extras and luxuries associated with *Olam Hazeh*, This World, were at a minimum (probably non-existent). *Rav Yechezkel Michel* performed “some” acts of *chesed*, loving-kindness, from this house, as well as invigorating the lives of those who were downcast in emotional pain, thus fulfilling the primary obligations of a man in this world.

We have but a glimpse into the life and outlook of a Torah giant who lived in our generation. He was truly a *yashar*. Yet, Bilaam *ha'rasha* sought such a death. What *chutzah!*

**אראנו ולא עתה אשורנו ולא קרוב**

**I shall see him, but not now, I shall look at him, but it is not near. (24:17)**

Bilaam's pronouncements encompass four periods in our nation's history: from the time they spent in the Wilderness; their conquest of the Land; the period of greatness following their conquest; and the End of Days, where he “sees” the greatness of our nation – not now – but later. *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, notes that one of the principles of our faith is the belief that everything that Hashem does is good – even if we do not presently “see” the good before us. As the above *pasuk* implies, “I shall see him – but not now.” Presently, we do not see the good. It hinges on our faith in Hashem and our trust in His *chachanim*, wise men/sages, whose words we accept as truth, even when the circumstances appear to be totally opposite of what they say. *Hakol l'tovah*, everything is for the good. This is what is meant by *emunas chachanim*, faith in the words of our sages. The sky may be clouded over, darkness may be settling in, but if our wise leaders say, “Do not worry; It will be good,” we believe that we will, in the near future, be privy to an unambiguous and unconditional good.

One of the *chassidim* of *Horav Chaim Halberstam's (Sanzer Rav, zl)* had been waiting for years to be blessed with a child – to no avail. One year he said, “Enough!” He came before the saintly *Rebbe* and pleaded, “It is *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, a new year is about to commence. Please, *Rebbe*, bless my wife and me that we will finally hold our own child in our arms.” The *Sanzer* blessed him that they would have a *ben zachar*, male offspring, that year.

The man's faith in his *Rebbe's* blessing was unequivocal. If the *Rebbe* said that they would be blessed with a boy – then they would have a boy. The prospective father immediately went to the Russian ministry to file the birth of his son. When the clerk asked for the child's name, the man said, “Yitzchak.” This demonstrates his level of *emunas chachanim*. The *Rebbe hut tzugezagt*, gave his word. He was certain that it would occur. Why not file now? [Indeed, this should be a Torah Jew's relationship with his *Rebbe*. The *Brisker Rav, zl*, notes that once *Eili HaKohen* assured Chanah, mother of *Shmuel HaNavi*, that she would be blessed with a child, her entire countenance was

transformed. The pain that she had lived with for nineteen years, the prayers that had accompanied her every movement, changed, once she received the *Kohen's* assurance. The veil was lifted. She was a new person. It was like money in the bank!]

One year passed, and the *Sanzer's* blessing was realized. The proud father and mother were blessed with a child. The blessing, however, was not fulfilled exactly as the *Rebbe* had promised. They were blessed with a little girl. The *Rebbe* had “promised” a boy. *Nu!* A girl is fine. The proud parents were ecstatic with their new addition.

What about the fact that the *Rebbe* had said a boy? This did not in any way trouble the *Chassid*. The *Rebbe* said a boy; it would be a boy. When? It is unimportant. The *Rebbe hut tzugezagt*. It will happen. Certainly, there must have been a good reason that the *Rebbe's* blessing did not materialize exactly as he had spoken. Be patient.

Another year passed, and their family expanded with the addition of another child – a girl. The *chassid's* faith in the *Rebbe* was rock solid, remaining unshaken. The *Rebbe* said a boy; it will happen. This went on for the next three years. Each time, they were blessed with a little girl. They now were a family of seven! Father, mother, and five daughters. It was during the sixth year that the *Rebbe's* blessing achieved complete fruition with the birth of their son, whom they named Yitzchak.

The *chassid* was firm in his belief that there was a good reason that the birth of their son (which had been the *Sanzer's* original blessing) was preceded by the birth of his five sisters. The reason became clear twelve years later when their son reached the age of twelve.

One day, the Russian army dispatched two soldiers to collect boys who had turned eighteen years old to be drafted into the army. They had papers to pick up “eighteen” year old Yitzchak to be inducted into the army. Father, mother and sisters all countered that Yitzchak was a mere twelve years old. Indeed, all that the soldiers had to do was to take one look at Yitzchak and see that he was short, his body build clearly not that of a teenager, his face smooth. The soldiers did not accept the various proofs which the family members provided, and they took Yitzchak with them to their commander. Let him decide how old Yitzchak really was. The commander took one look at the young boy and screamed at his soldiers, “How could you for one moment think that this child is ready to be a soldier in our glorious army?”

*Baruch Hashem*, Yitzchak was returned home, where he continued in his Torah studies, achieving great success in scaling the heights of Torah knowledge. He ultimately became one of the preeminent Torah leaders of his generation. The *Rebbe's* blessing materialized in such a manner that Yitzchak was able to devote his entire life to Torah study. His parents never doubted the veracity of the *Sanzer's* blessing for one moment.

**Va'ani Tefillah**

**וקרנו בישועתך – V'Karno tarum b'Yeshuashecha. And enhance his pride through Your salvation.**

*Karno* is usually translated as “his horn.” The strength and beauty of an animal is highlighted by its horns. Thus, with regard to *David Hamelech*, ancestor of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*, the term *karno* is used to mean “his glory.” Furthermore, the horn had a special relationship to the glory of *David Hamelech*, since it was with the oil poured from a horn flask that *Shmuel HaNavi* anointed him. A horn is quite sturdy, thus symbolizing the endurance of the Davidic dynasty which has withstood the test of time. *Moshiach Tziddkeinu* will be a descendant of *David Hamelech*. *Shaul Hamelech* was anointed from an earthenware vessel, foreshadowing the short tenure of his monarchy. The horn demonstrates the glory of *Malchus Bais David*, the chosen monarch of Hashem.

*Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl*, explains that the function of the *shofar* was not simply to make noise. When *Adam HaRishon* was created on the sixth day, he was immediately able to accept Hashem's kingship. Royalty/monarchy was introduced and became a reality with the creation of man. When Hashem blew life into man's nostrils, his soul entered his body, making it possible for him to accept and emulate Hashem's royalty. Therefore, the blowing of the *shofar* will forever be that symbol which brings royalty into the world.

*Sponsored in loving memory of our dear mother, grandmother and great grandmother on her yahrzeit Mrs. Hindy Herskowitz נפ'ל'ו תמוז תשל"ד - נפ'ל'ו יוסף צבי הלוי ז"ל - אבי Herskowitz and family*

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