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B'S'D'

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON BALAK - 5761

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org]
"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Balak -
Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R.
Yissocher Dov - In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand
Was G-d Bilaam's Agent? Doing it For 'The Cause' vs. For the Money

Parshas Balak contains the well-known story of Balak the King of Moav worrying about the imminent approach of the Jewish people. Moav correctly surmised that, given the fate of the other kings and nations that had challenged Bnei Yisrael [the Children of Israel] with conventional military tactics, Moav would not stand a chance confronting them in traditional battle.

Therefore, Balak devised a "secret weapon" -- the chemical weapon of his day. "And he sent messengers to Bilaam son of Beor..." [Bamidbar 22:5] Bilaam had the ability to curse someone. When he did so, the curse would in fact take effect on its intended victim. So Balak requested that Bilaam curse the "nation that has gone out from Egypt and covered the face of the land."

Bilaam asked the messengers to stay overnight, so that he could answer Balak's request the next morning based upon what G-d would tell him. G-d told Bilaam, "Do not go with them; do not curse the people, for they are Blessed" [22:12]. Bilaam relayed that message to Balak's messengers.

When Balak heard that Bilaam would not come, he assumed that the reason was because the proposed compensation was inadequate -- that he had tried to get away too cheap. Therefore, Balak sent a more prestigious delegation promising Bilaam a great reward and granting his every request.

Bilaam, not being anyone's fool, casually mentioned to the messengers, "Even if Balak will give me his entire treasury filled with silver and gold, my hands are tied -- I can only do that which G-d permits me to do." Again, they proceeded through the whole process of waiting overnight.

This time, G-d told Bilaam, "If these people are coming for your advantage (likra lecha), then go with them -- just only speak that which I tell you" [22:20]. If we can even use such terminology, it appears as if G-d changed his mind! The first time that Bilaam asked for permission, G-d said "No. You can not go!" Then, G-d appeared to suddenly change His mind. What changed?

Rash"i comments on the words "Im Likra Lecha," that if these people are coming for your benefit -- to give you payment, go with them. In other words, if you stand to make profit out of this venture, then I have no objection to your going.

That was the difference! The first time, when they asked Bilaam to come, they did not offer him anything -- neither money nor honor. In that situation, G-d told Bilaam, "Do not go." The second time, Balak offered Bilaam wealth and honor. In that situation, G-d told him, "If you stand to

gain from this, then you can go."

Is G-d worried about Bilaam's livelihood? Is He acting as Bilaam's agent? Pro bono, you cannot go. If you charge by the hour -- then you can go?

I heard a fantastic insight regarding this concept from Rav Shimon Schwab (1908-1995). The difference, says Rav Schwab, is that one of the most potent forces in the universe is doing something "Lishma" - for its own sake, without ulterior motives. Doing something altruistically, for the sake of what one believes to be right, is a force beyond belief. However, when people do things because they stand to make a dollar, rather than for the sake of a cause, it loses its potency.

Rav Schwab related this insight in the context of explaining the rise and fall of the Communist system during the previous century. Communism was a very successful movement. Until very recently, there were more than a billion and a half people who lived under Communist domination - and yet in recent times we have seen Communism disintegrate.

What made Communism so successful? Rav Schwab argued that Communism became so successful because there were "Lishma-niks." People like Lenin and Trotsky and Marx were people who wanted to give the world a better order. They wanted to give the world a new system to replace the "bankruptcy of capitalism," in which some are fantastically wealthy and some beg on the street. In a sense, Communism was based on very noble ideals. These were people who were -- for lack of a better word -- L'shem Shamayim [for the sake of Heaven]! They did it for the sake of Communism. They were Lishma!

Rav Schwab related that he remembered a Communists parade in his city in Germany in the 1920s. There was a Jewish kid who had rebelled against his parents and marched in the front line of this parade. He was despised. He was an outcast of the entire community. But this did not faze him, because he did it Lishma. He believed in what he was doing, like so many of our Jewish brethren who unfortunately believed in it.

When people are willing to give up their lives and souls for the sake of a cause, that is a very potent force. We can look back now, over 70 years later, and try to discover what happened to the movement that caused it to collapse. We can suggest that to a large extent, the system failed because it lost this element of 'Lishma'. When we saw that all the leaders of the various "Iron Curtain" countries had stashed away Swiss bank accounts and when we saw all the corruption and graft, we quickly recognized that the Lishma had been abandoned. Once they lost the element of Lishma, the potency of the force was gone.

This is what G-d was telling Bilaam: When Balak came and said "Curse the Jews" without offering honor or money, the reason why Bilaam was going was because he hated Jews. "We have to curse Jews! I want to eradicate Jews." This is a philosophy. It is a CAUSE. In that case, "Watch Out! You may not go." G-d knows that a sincere CAUSE is a lethal and potent force.

However, when Balak said, "I will give you Honor and Money," then G-d told Bilaam: If this is for your own benefit -- if you are doing it for the money, then go. That is a different story. If you are "in it" for the money and honor, rather than Lishma -- then your ability will not be nearly as potent.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusa Tapes: Tape # 153, Matrilineal vs. Patrilineal Descent In Determining Jewish Identity. Tapes or 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@yadychiel.org or visit <http://www.yadychiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright © 2001 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. This list is part of Torah.org: The Judaism Site (Project Genesis, Inc.). Torah.org depends upon your support. Please visit <http://torah.org/support/> or write to dedications@torah.org or donations@torah.org. Thank you! Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B Baltimore, MD 21208

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2000/parsha/ryud_balak.html

www.TorahWeb.org [From last year]

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN

Prerequisites for the Class

Parshat Balak does not contain any of the taryag mitzvot, nonetheless, it is rich, as it provides us with fundamental character development information. "Derech erez kadmah l'torah," is clearly demonstrated and personified by Bilaam.

Towards the end of chapter 5 of Avot, this week's perek, the mishna presents the differences between Avraham Avinu and Bilaam. One would have expected that Avraham would be portrayed as the one who observed Torah and mitzvot. This was taught to us in Bereishit (26:5) where Hashem expresses His extension of the covenant with Yitzchak as his father, "Listened to My voice, and observed My commandments, statutes and laws." The sages inform us that even rabbinic laws were scrupulously observed by Avraham, even eruv tavshilin. This was a phenomenal accomplishment when we consider the environment and times in which he lived - one immersed in idolatry. Bilaam, on the other hand, lived at a time when the entire world saw the hand of Hashem in Mitzrayim, the splitting of the Yam, and the revelation at Sinai. Still, he violated many laws of the Torah, including bestiality (Sanhedrin 105b).

The mishna does not focus on their actions, but rather on their nature and character. Avraham became the giant that he was, the father of the nation, because he had good character, and Bilaam, despite all his potential, was killed by the sword (Bamidbar 30:8) because of his terrible character traits.

The mishna in Avot notes that in his commentary, Rabbeinu Yonah, did not have to begin with the introduction that, "whoever possesses the following three traits is among the disciples of Avraham, and whoever has three different traits is among the disciples of the wicked Bilaam" (Mishna 19). It could have begun directly, i.e., "Whoever has a good eye (lack of jealousy), a humble spirit (modesty and humility), and a meek soul (humbling oneself and co-existing with average people) is to be reckoned among Avraham's students. Whoever has an evil eye (jealous of the next one's success and possessions), an arrogant spirit (haughty and proud) and a greedy soul (desire for wealth, and lust) is among the disciples of the wicked Bilaam.

The reason the mishnah explains itself, says Rabbeinu Yonah, is to emphasize and highlight the fact that these three character traits are what ultimately differentiate between these teachers and their students. Avraham becomes the, "Beloved of Hashem," (Isaiah 41:8) because of his good midot character, and though Bilaam could have been as good as Avraham, he does not because of his corrupt midot.

A person's character ultimately affects his beliefs: The personal greed of the meraglim causes them to speak badly of Eretz Yisrael, the jealousy of Korach that motivated him to rebel against Moshe and Aaron, and similarly, it was Bilaam's greed that led him to attempt to curse Benei Yisrael. Bilaam knew what was right when he proclaimed, "Let me die the death of the righteous," (Bamidbar 23:10) as understood in the Talmud to be referring to the Patriarchs (Avodah Zarah 25a). He wanted to die like them, reside in the World to Come like them, but lacked the strength of character to live like them.

This theme is portrayed by Rav Elchanan Wasserman zt"l in his Kovetz Maamarim. In his first essay (on emunah) he demonstrates that it is the heart (midot) that rules the mind (intellect) of man. We can therefore appreciate the daily admonition found in the third paragraph of Shema, "V'lo taturu acharei l'avchem v'acharei eineichem asher atem zonim achareihem" - "And not explore after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray." Should it not have said, "Do not stray after your mind"? Rav Wasserman contends that all intelligent minds understand and accept the existence of a creator, a G-d. However, the negative forces in man, i.e., his pride, greed, lust, drive for power, laziness, etc., interfere with the conclusions of the mind.

May we learn the lessons of Parshat Balaak, that the three sterling

attributes we mentioned are enough to categorize us as a student of Avraham, but one who is lacking these three traits, despite other positive ones, he has not yet been promoted to the class of Avraham Avinu.

From: shushi@shemayisrael.com Subject: PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM

Parshas Balak

He perceived no iniquity in Yaakov, and saw no perversity in Yisrael. (23:21)

The Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh once spent Shabbos in a city that was home to a large chassidic following. It happened that on that Shabbos a darshan, an ethical lecturer who would travel from city to city speaking from the podium, admonishing its inhabitants regarding their religious observance, also spent Shabbos in that community. The Baal Shem Tov was a person who empathized with all Jews. In his desire to provide the speaker with a large captive audience, he personally attended the drasha, lecture. The chassidim understandably followed suit. The darshan went up to the lectern and spoke penetrating words of inspiration. He laced his speech, however, with harsh criticism of the crowd for their lack of total religious observance, citing their lack of Torah study, flimsy minyan attendance, and diminished yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven. When the Baal Shem Tov heard the onslaught of invectives leveled at the community, he stood and proceeded to leave the room. Understandably, when the chassidim noticed the Baal Shem leaving, they, one by one, began to follow suit, until there was no one left to listen to the darshan's critique.

After Shabbos, the darshan came to the home where the Baal Shem was staying, complaining that because of the Baal Shem, everyone left his lecture, leaving him to speak to the four walls. He could not complete his intended drasha and who knows if now he would even get paid? Hearing this, the Baal Shem Tov arose from his chair. With tears streaming down his face, he turned to the darshan and said, "You permitted yourself to criticize Jews in public. I would like you to know that when a Jew toils throughout the day - going around the market in search of a livelihood for him and his family - and in the evening - after a full day of back-breaking labor, which has ultimately proven unsuccessful in yielding a decent financial return - just barely makes it to shul to pray with a minyan - his prayer causes an incredible uproar in Heaven. The entire Heavenly Tribunal gather together around the Heavenly Throne and say, "Who is like Your nation Yisrael"! And now, you - a creation of flesh and blood - have the audacity to censure such fine people!"

A similar incident occurred with Rav Meir, zl, the rav of Tiktin, Poland. A maggid once came to his community and asked permission to lecture in the main shul. Rav Meir not only gave permission, he even attended the discourse. The maggid began castigating the crowd, rebuking them with powerful words. He criticized their lack of business ethics, their petty infighting and lack of religious observance. In short, he was far from complimentary. Rav Meir listened intently to the maggid's words, and suddenly he began to cry with loud sobs.

After the drasha, the maggid came over to the rav's home to hear his opinion of the speech. Rav Meir said, "Your words were penetrating and indeed true, because - without a doubt - I am filled with sin. I must ask you, however, why you felt it important to reprove me in public? Was it necessary to humiliate me in front of the entire religious community? You could have rebuked me in private and still achieved the same effect."

The maggid, hearing these words, became visibly shaken "Rebbe, I did not mean you. I would never suspect the rav of any impropriety, let alone transgressions such as the ones I mentioned. No, I was speaking to the assembled members of the community."

"The people are pure of any blemish. They are pious and holy,"

answered Rav Meir innocently. "If you found reason to censure anyone, it must have been me to whom you were speaking. Hence, I ask you again: why did you embarrass me in public?"

This story sends home a number of messages. One of these messages identifies the chasm that lies between our generation and those that preceded us. It might be a good idea to reflect on this point.

How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov, your dwelling places, O Yisrael. (25:5)

Rashi says that Bilaam was prompted to praise the Jewish home when he observed that the entrance to each person's home was not aligned one opposite the next. He was impressed with their modesty. In the Talmud Sanhedrin 108a, Chazal give an alternative explanation that does seem to coincide with that of Rashi. Rabbi Yochanan says that from the blessing of that evil one (Bilaam), we are to ascertain what was originally in his heart. He wanted to curse them, that there should no longer be houses of Torah study and houses of worship, but he ended up saying, "How goodly are your tents." He did not want the Shechinah to repose among the Jewish People. Now he said, "Mishkenosecha Yisrael," "Your dwelling place, Yisrael."

At first glance, it appears that Rashi's explanation is inconsistent with that of Rabbi Yochanan. According to Rashi, Bilaam's intention was to laud the individual Jewish home, while Rabbi Yochanan contends that Bilaam's focus was on the shuls and yeshivos and Hashem's resting His Presence there. Is there an irreconcilable dispute or can these two expositions be unified? The Baalei Mussar take a more penetrating approach towards understanding the meaning of "their doors were not aligned one opposite the other." It goes beyond the fact that they were modest, not exhibiting what goes on in the privacy of one's home to the rest of the neighborhood. No, there is a more profound aspect to this privacy between Jews. They had no interest in what was going on in their neighbor's home. They were not nosy; they were not envious. There was neither jealousy nor rivalry between them. Each one lived his own individual lifestyle, and his neighbor was not concerned if his house was huge, what type of furniture he had, if he had live-in-help, or how he spent his day. Each Jew was satisfied and happy with his individual way of life. The comings and goings of his neighbor was not his affair - unless his neighbor was in need. Then, he was there immediately, without question, prepared to assist in any manner.

When people are happy with their own lives, when there is self-satisfaction, there is no jealousy and there is no rivalry. Jealousy is a terrible character trait which can result in tragic consequences. Jealousy causes one to defer to his base desires. It stunts one's spiritual development as it chokes his life-line to spirituality. Commensurate with the manner and zest that one pursues materialism, so, too, does he detract from spirituality. Pursuit of materialism and spirituality do not complement each other. As one increases, the other decreases.

The primary prerequisite for maintaining the Shechinah's Presence in our shuls and yeshivos is that there be no rivalry among Jews. When we do not respect one another, when our differences constitute a reason for denigration or envy, then the yetzer hora, evil-inclination, takes a stranglehold on our souls, encouraging us through its blandishments to follow our physical desires. Only after one has cleansed himself of this demanding and demeaning character trait can he ascend the spiritual ladder.

Sponsored by Moshe Shimon and Tibor Rosenberg in memory of their father

From: SHLOMO KATZ [SMTP:skatz@torah.org] Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Balak
Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Parashat Balak
Volume XV, No. 36 16 Tammuz 5761 July 7, 2001

In this week's parashah we meet Bilam, the gentile prophet who is called upon by the Moabite king Balak to curse Bnei Yisrael. R' Avigdor Nebenzahl shlita (rabbi of the Old City of Yerushalayim) observes that when one reads the parashah superficially, Bilam appears to be a perfect tzaddik. Throughout the parashah, Bilam asserts repeatedly that he cannot do anything against Hashem's will; he cannot speak a word that G-d has not commanded. Do we acknowledge this?

Yet, Bilam is counted by the Sages (Sanhedrin 90a) as one of the seven people who have no share in the World-to-Come. Indeed, the gemara (ibid. 106b) states that any negative inference that can be drawn from a verse regarding Bilam should be drawn (in contrast to the general rule that one should interpret people's actions favorably, even the actions of other wicked people who have no share in the World-to-Come). How is this consistent with the image of Bilam that our parashah conveys?

R' Nebenzahl explains: Bilam's righteous image was part and parcel of his wickedness. The midrash states that Bilam was the same person as the trickster Lavan. Whether this is meant literally or whether it simply means that Bilam was a disciple of Lavan's ways, it conveys that Bilam was thoroughly deceitful. Bilam's piety was itself an act! After all, did he really have to ask Hashem whether he should curse Bnei Yisrael? Did he think that Hashem performed the ten plagues, split the sea and appeared at Har Sinai just to have Bnei Yisrael die in the desert? Of course not!

What was Bilam's end? The same end that befalls so many dishonest people. Bilam's patron, Balak, soon realized that this "prophet" was a fraud, but Bilam himself believed his own lies. He even had the audacity to pray (23:10), "May my soul die the death of the upright and may my end be like his." We should not wonder that someone whose entire life is a lie convinces himself that he will share eternity in the company of the greatest tzaddikim. (Sichot L'sefer Bemidbar)

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] To: weekly@ohr.edu
Subject: Torah Weekly - Balak
* TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Balak

STREETS OF HEAVEN

"Bilaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, 'If Balak will give me his houseful of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem my G-d to do anything great or small.'" (22-18)

A fable: A rich man, nearing death, is grieved because he has worked very hard for his money and he wants to take it with him to Heaven. He prays that he might be able to take along some of his wealth. An angel hears his plea and appears to him. "Sorry," says the angel, "but you can't take your wealth with you." The man implores the angel, "Please speak to G-d. Please. Please. Maybe He'll bend the rules just this once!"

Several excruciating minutes pass. Then the angel reappears and says, "Your petition has been granted. You may take one suitcase with you." The angel disappears. Overjoyed, the man gathers his last strength and his largest suitcase and fills it with bars of pure gold. He places it beside his bed, waiting for his final journey.

Shortly afterwards, the man arrives at the Gates of Heaven. There to greet him is the Admitting Angel. Seeing the suitcase, the angel says,

"Hold on, you can't bring that in here!" "But," the man explains, "I have permission from the Highest Authority!" The man asks the angel to verify his story.

The angel picks up his celestial cellphone and checks: "You're right. You are allowed one carry-on bag, but I'm supposed to check its contents before letting it through." Opening the suitcase to inspect the worldly items that the man found too precious to leave behind, the angel exclaims: "You brought pavement?!?"

It's not only Heaven's streets that are paved with gold. In this world too, the streets are paved with gold - but you have to recognize it. You have to be aware of the glint. When you help an old lady across the street - you've paved this world with gold. When you take a piece of fruit and say a blessing, acknowledging Who the blessing comes from, you've paved this world with gold. When you dominate your bad character traits, you've paved your world with gold. And most of all, when you study the Torah - the holiest thing in this world - you've paved this world with gold.

"Bilaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, 'If Balak will give me his houseful of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem my G-d to do anything great or small.' "

Who mentioned anything about a houseful of silver and gold? By Bilaam talking about money, he revealed his mercenary nature. As if to say, "If I were able to transgress G-d's word, I would - but only for a king's ransom."

In the next world, all the gold and silver will be mere pavement. However, if you "pave" your life with good deeds and the service of G-d, you will find there's more than a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Sources: * Rashi; Gur Aryeh; Rabbi Menachem Nissel

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<http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2001/07/05/Columns/>
SHABBAT SHALOM: We have seen the enemy
By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(July 5) Parashat Balak (Numbers 22:2-25:9)

This week's Torah portion gives us an amazing glimpse into how the nations of the world look upon the Israelites as they emerge from slavery into freedom and seemingly have an invincible army. The portion of Balak does not emphasize the frontal enemy of Israel, the Amalekites. Our wars with them, as well as with the Amorites and other Canaanite nations (Palestinians?) - and even our confrontation with Egypt - are described elsewhere. Here, we are faced with the attitude of the bordering Middle Eastern nations to this newly formed people, intending to carve out its destiny within the maelstrom of this region.

Balak, the king of Moab, is frightened of the Israelites, and vastly overestimates their global designs as well as their military might: "This multitude will lick up all that is round about us as the ox licks up the grass of the field." (Numbers 22:4) He therefore turns to Balaam, a magician and a soothsayer, an accomplished poet and master of the spoken word, to curse the Israelites so that they may be vanquished (22:6).

From a contemporary perspective, Balaam represents the media masters of the world. Is it not true that these manipulators of minds have the power to destroy with a word?

The first message of our Torah reading is that those who speak to the cameras of world opinion - and even the various heads of state themselves - can be bought by promises of monetary gain (materialistic oil interests?).

Initially, Balaam understands that G-d will not allow him to curse the nation which has suffered so much and is certainly adhering to a higher moral standard than its terrorist and despotic neighbors. From this perspective, the gentile prophet should have sent Balak's delegation

packing but, tempted by wealth, power, and impressive robes, he tells them to stay the night; he will seek to assuage G-d (or his conscience) by importuning and beseeching. And when G-d says definitely not, Balaam addresses the delegation: "Go home! G-d refuses to give me leave to go with you," (imachem in Hebrew, Numbers 22:13)" leaving a door open so that if a more important delegation were to arrive, who knows maybe Balaam could yet be convinced.

The foreign ministry reports back to Balak that Balaam won't come "with us" and so, without wasting a breath, the next verse records that Balak sends more princes, this time with a larger number of dignitaries.

The higher-ranking officials arrive, showering promises of great honor and the readiness to MEET any monetary demand. Answers the soothsayer: "If Balak would give me his house full of gold and silver, I would not be able to do anything great or small that would violate the word of G-d, my Lord." (22:18)

On the surface, Balaam's answer may sound noble, but there is a hidden message. When Balaam speaks of all the gold and silver in Balak's house which could not get him to violate the "word of G-d," he again leaves the possibility that perhaps a more generous monetary offer could tip the scales. Rashi suggests that the expression of "silver and gold" reveals Balaam's real craving for what he seemed to spurn - money. And indeed, Balaam does set out to curse the Israelites.

THE BIBLE goes on to say that the gentile prophet does not recognize the protective hand of G-d determining the destiny of Israel. Indeed, even his donkey tries to prevent the disastrous journey - because even a stupid ass has to be amazed by the miraculous events contributing to the preservation and preeminence of Israel as a "Kingdom of Priests." And ultimately, Balaam learns from his donkey.

At least this gentile spokesman understands that he must record the truth prior to standing before the television cameras or his newspaper going to press. He may have come to curse, but he stays to praise. He evokes Jewish destiny in glowing terms, extolling the uniqueness of Israel (23:9) and evoking our ultimate Messianic victory (24:17-19). He affirms unmistakably that "no black magic can be effective against Jacob and no occult powers against Israel" (23:23) - in the final analysis, evil words spoken by evil people are totally impotent before the will of the Divine.

But our Sages understand that it is not the speaking donkey - or even the Divine Will - which succeeded in changing Balaam's mind. It is rather the deeds of the Israelites themselves which evoked the adulation

First of all, there is the very success of this fledgling nation against every one of her enemies - Israel had just emerged from a great military victory against the terrorizing Amorites. Most importantly, though, it was the modest and sanctified lifestyle of the Israelites and their commitment to their traditions and ideals which made the greatest impact on Balaam. "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your Sanctuaries, O Israel." (24:5) Balaam was amazed as to how the Israelite encampment was constructed so that everyone's privacy was maintained because no one could see into his neighbor's home.

He was moved by the sensitive interpersonal relationships, the love and respect displayed toward one another by family members and the harmony with which neighbors lived together in peace. And when Balaam saw the commitment the Israelites had to their academies and synagogues (the mishkan) - their fealty to traditional values and teachings and their faith in Divine Providence - he understood, and proclaimed, the invincibility of this divinely elected people.

But alas, what gentile might and word could not do to the Israelites, the Israelites do to themselves. Balaam and Balak return to their homes to leave Israel in peace - but the Israelites run after the blandishments of the pagan societies. The very next chapter opens with "and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab... and Israel joined himself to the [idolatry of] Baal of Peor." (25:1-3)

We failed in the desert not because of what our enemies did or said,

but rather because of our own moral weakness and rejection of the birthright which initially formed our national definition and mission. Indeed, we are "a people who dwells alone, not subject to the machinations of other nations;" (23:9) it is not what the nations do, but rather it is what we do or what we do not do which is of supreme significance.

Shabbat Shalom

From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] neustadt@torah.org To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Balak - THE 17th DAY of TAMMUZ

BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

THE 17th DAY of TAMMUZ

The three-week period known as Bein ha-Metzarim, the time of year when we mourn the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash, begins with a fast day on the 17th day of Tammuz, and ends with a fast day, on the ninth day of Av. Let us review the laws of the day known as Shivah Assar b'Tamuz - the 17th Day of Tammuz.

In most places the fast begins 72 minutes before sunrise (alos amud ha-shachar)(1) and ends 50 minutes after sunset (tzeis ha-kochavim)(2). Sunrise and sunset times are calculated by various government agencies and are readily available to the general public.

Food and drink may be consumed any time(3) during the night of the 17th(4) - but only if one remains awake all night. Once a person retires for the evening, the fast begins, because people do not normally eat until breakfast the following morning - which is well past alos amud ha-shachar. Retiring the evening before, therefore, is tantamount to starting the fast. Consequently: Unless one explicitly states(5) before going to sleep that he plans to wake up early to eat before the fast begins, he may not eat in the morning upon awakening, even before alos amud ha-shachar. For him, the fast has already begun(6). One who normally drinks coffee, juice, etc., in the morning upon arising, does not need to stipulate that he will drink this morning as well. One who normally does not drink anything in the morning should stipulate before retiring that he is planning to get up in the morning to drink. B'dieved, if he failed to do so, he may drink nevertheless(7). "Going to sleep" means deep sleep, whether in a bed or not. Napping or dozing does not mean that the individual has finished eating and begun the fast(8). Although, as stated, it is permitted to eat before alos amud ha-shachar [if one intended to do so the evening before the fast], one who eats then must contend with another halachic issue - the strict prohibition against eating before davening Shacharis(9). The rules are as follows: According to the Zohar(10), one who wakes up at any time during the night [after midnight] may not eat before davening - even though the time of davening is several hours off. Although there are special individuals who abide by the Zohar(11), the basic halachah is not as stated in the Zohar and the prohibition does not begin until the earliest time for davening, which is alos amud ha-shachar(12). As stated, it is permitted to eat until alos amud ha-shachar. However, one who did not begin to eat until he was within half an hour of alos amud ha-shachar must do one of the following(13): Limit his food intake: Eat fruit (any amount)(14), eat any shehakol type of food but without being kovei'a seudah (eating a regular, scheduled meal)(15), or eat less than 2.2 fl. oz. of bread, cake, cereal, etc.(16) All drinks,- except intoxicating beverages,- are permitted in any amount(17). Eat any kind and any amount of food, but appoint another person to remind him to recite Kerias Shema and Shemoneh Esrei(18). Once alos amud ha-shachar arrives, it is questionable if it is permitted to go back to sleep before davening. If he does go back to sleep, he should appoint another person to wake him up for davening(19). An alarm clock is not sufficient for this purpose(20).

FAST DAY ACTIVITIES

Although it is permitted to bathe on a fast day, it has become customary not to take a hot shower or bath(21). It is also proper for adults to refrain from swimming(22), unless it is needed for a medical condition or to cool off on a hot day.

The poskim differ as to whether it is permitted to rinse one's mouth with water on the 17th of Tammuz(23). Some permit rinsing the front part of the mouth, taking care that no water enters the throat area(24), while other poskim allow this only when in distress (tza'ar)(25). According to the second view, then, one may not schedule a fast-day visit to a dentist [which will require him to rinse his mouth] unless he is in pain(26).

Medications prescribed by a doctor may be taken on the 17th of Tammuz. One who has difficulty swallowing pills without water may drink the amount of water required to swallow them. There is no need to ruin the taste of the water before drinking it(27).

When suffering from a severe headache, etc., aspirin or Tylenol, etc., may be taken. The poskim, however, do not permit taking those medications with water, unless the water is first made to have a bad taste(28).

DAVENING ON A FAST DAY:

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 aliyah should not read the verses aloud with the congregation. Instead, he should wait until the reader says them aloud and read along with him(29).

One who mistakenly ate on a fast day must resume and complete the fast(30), and he may recite aneinu at Minchah(31). One who is not fasting altogether should not say aneinu(32). A minor who is not fasting need not say aneinu [for the purpose of chinuch](33).

One who is davening Shemoneh Esrei together with the sheliach tzibur should not say aneinu as a separate blessing like the sheliach tzibur does; he should say it as it is said in private recitation, in Shema koleinu(34).

At the Minchah service, Avinu malkeinu is recited, - even when one is davening without a minyan(35).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Beir Halachah 89:1 quoting Rambam. [While some calendars list alos amud ha-shachar as 50 minutes before sunrise, there is no halachic basis for this calculation.] The custom in Israel is to calculate alos amud ha-shachar as 90 minutes before sunrise. In England and in other countries, alos may be much earlier; see Minchas Yitzchak 9:9. 2 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:62. 3 Some authorities maintain that it is improper to eat more than one normally does on the night before the fast, since that defeats the purpose of fasting (Eliyahu Rabbah 563:1). This stringency is quoted by some poskim but omitted by the Mishnah Berurah and many others (see Be'er Heitev 568:22; Aishel Avraham Tanina, ibid.; Elef ha-Magen 602:6; Kaf ha-Chayim 563:11; Igros Moshe O.C. 3:88; b'Tzeil ha-Chochmah 2:48). 4 A ba'al nefesh should begin the fast before nightfall of the 17th; Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 550:9. See also Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 565:8. 5 It is preferable to do so verbally, but it is valid as long as one had the condition in mind. 6 O.C. 564:1. One who did not know this halachah and ate in the morning without having made the stipulation the night before, may still recite aneinu (Shevet ha-Kehasi 1:180). 7 Mishnah Berurah 564:6 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 564:2 based on Rama, ibid. See, however, Mateh Efrayim 206:6, who is more stringent. 8 Mishnah Berurah 564:3. 9 O.C. 89:3. According to the Minchas Chinuch (#248), this may be a Biblical prohibition. 10 Quoted by the Magen Avraham 89:14 and by all the latter poskim. 11 Aruch ha-Shulchan 89:26. 12 Consensus of all the poskim; see Mishnah Berurah 89:28; Aruch ha-Shulchan 89:26; Yalkut Yosef, pg. 147. 13 Women are exempt from the following rules (Harav S.Z. Auerbach, written responsum published in Lev Avraham, vol. 2, pg. 20). 14 Based on Mishnah Berurah 232:34 and 286:9. 15 Based on Mishnah Berurah 639:15. 16 Mishnah Berurah 89:27. 17 Based on Mishnah Berurah 232:35. 18 Based on Mishnah Berurah 235:18. See also 89:34. 19 See Siddur ha-Gra, pg. 88, quoting Harav Y.L. Diskin and Binyan Olam 1. See Siyach Halachah, pg. 149. 20 Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shevus Yitzchak, vol. 2, pg. 287. 21 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 550:8; Aruch ha-Shulchan 550:3. 22 Be'er Moshe 3:77; Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Mo'adei Yeshurun, pg. 108). Minors, however, may swim; Nitei Gavriel, pg. 34 quoting Puppa Rav. 23 O.C. 567:3. 24 Aruch ha-Shulchan 567:3 This seems to be the view of Be'er Heitev 567:5 and Da'as Torah 567:3 as well. See also Magen Avraham, who allows rinsing the mouth as long as less than 3.3 fl. oz. of water are used at a time. 25 Mishnah Berurah 567:11 following the view of the Chayei Adam. Kaf ha-Chayim 567:13-14 also rules stringently. 26 Nishmas Avraham O.C., pg. 290. 27 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Nishmas Avraham, vol. 5, pg. 46). This is permitted on Tishah b'Av as well, ibid.; Harav M. Stern (Debreiner Rav, written responsum in Nitei Gavriel, Bein ha-Metzarim, pg. 30). 28 See Nishmas Avraham O.C., pg. 282, concerning Tishah b'Av. 29 Mishnah Berurah 566:3. 30 Ibid. 549:3. 31 Ibid. 568:3. See Shevet ha-Levi 5:60. 32

Beur Halachah 565:1. 33 Shevet ha-Levi 8:131. 34 Ibid. 565:1. 35 Sha'arei Teshuvah O.C. 584:2 quoting Shevus Yaakov and Kitzur Shalah; Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Mo'adei Yeshurun, pg. 112). See, however, Da'as Torah 584:1 who states that s ome do not recite Avinu malkeinu when praying without a minyan. Weekly -Halacha, Copyright 1 2001 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly -Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross@torah.org . Torah.org depends upon your support. Please visit <http://torah.org/support/> or write to dedications@torah.org or donations@torah.org . Thank you! Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B Baltimore, MD 21208

From: Young Israel Divrei
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Young Israel Divrei Torah - <http://www.youngisrael.org>
16 Tammuz 5761 July 7, 2001 Daf Yomi: Kiddushin 61
Guest Rabbi: RABBI BINYAMIN HAMMER Young Israel of
New Hyde Park, NY

The saga of Bilaam and his cruelty to manipulate and curse Klal Yisrael is well known to us and our youngest of children. Bilaam stands without equal, the only individual in the Torah to be described as wicked, referring to him as Bilaam HaRasha. Furthermore, the Talmud in Masechet Sanhedrin 105a portrays Bilaam as possessing the most immoral and disgusting behavior, lowering himself to the level of sinning with animals.

Yet, for every valid reason not to allow Bilaam to accompany Balak to curse the Jewish people, HaShem's primary motivation is, (Bamidbar 22:12) "lo telech imahem," you shall not go with them. Rashi commenting on the pasuk, (Bamidbar 22:13) informs us, that HaShem was protecting Bilaam's dignity from traveling with these lowly emissaries. The Ohr HaChaim takes this thought one step further; HaShem was questioning, how Bilaam, a messenger of G-d, could even meet with such unworthy people. The Ohr HaChaim adds, HaShem was so bothered with preserving the dignity of Bilaam, that he killed the chamor - donkey, who stood up to Bilaam, so that people would not say, "This is the donkey that brought down Bilaam." Why is HaShem so concerned with Bilaam's dignity? Wouldn't keeping the donkey alive create a greater Kiddush HaShem - sanctification of G-d's name, showing that HaShem has dominion over all his creatures and can even have a donkey speak?

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz z"l, the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, offers a profound insight into Kavod HaAdam, the dignity of the human being. Although disgracing Bilaam would have created a Kiddush HaShem, in G-d's estimation preserving the majesty of man takes preference to His own honor.

This donkey which HaShem created in the last moments of Creation was not needed to protect Klal Yisrael from Bilaam's wickedness. Their salvation was relying in HaShem. Rather, G-d created this donkey for Bilaam's self-protection, to have him reexamine his own evil intentions. So important is the dignity of every human being, that HaShem defends even the least deserving.

Our life's goal is to walk in the path of HaShem, trying to reach lofty heights. If we perceive life as walking an obstacle course with difficult challenges along the way, we miss the message that HaShem is sending us. The steps to growth are paved with G-d's love for us and deep respect for our dignity. We must continue to walk on that dignified road and help save those who have fallen by the wayside, despite how much they have declined. If HaShem could look out for a Bilaam HaRasha, we can be certain, that He is looking out for us as well.

Shabbat Shalom.

From: RABBI MORDECHAI KORNFELD Kollel Iyun
Hadaf[SMTP: kornfeld@netvision.net.il] To: daf-insights Subject:
Insights to the Daf: Kiddushin 56-60 The Yisrael Shimon Turkel

Maseches Kidushin Insights into the Daily Daf brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim daf@dafyomi.co.il, <http://www.dafyomi.co.il>

KIDUSHIN 58 (13 Tamuz) - Dedicated by Chaim Ozer & Rena Shulman of Teaneck, New Jersey, in memory of his grandmother, Rebbetzin Chiena Kossowsky Z"L, an extraordinary Tzadekes and Melumedes, who passed away on 13 Tamuz 5755 on her 82nd birthday.

KIDUSHIN 59 - dedicated by Marsha and Lee Weinblatt in memory of her mother, Esther Friedman (Esther Chaya Raizel bas Gershom Eliezer) and father, Hyman Smulevitz (Chaim Yisachar ben Yaakov).

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Kidushin 57 INCREASING THE HONOR OF HASHEM AGADAH: The Gemara cites a Beraisa which relates that Shimon ha'Amsuni (or, according to others, Nechemyah ha'Amsuni) used to expound every word "Es" that appears in the Torah as a Ribuy, adding something to the Halachah of the verse in which the word "Es" appears. When he arrived at the word "Es" in the verse, "Es Hashem Elokecha Tira" -- "You shall fear Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 6:13), he did not expound the word "Es." His students asked him, "Rebbi! What will be now with all of the words 'Es' that you heretofore expounded?" He replied, "Just like I received reward for expounding (Derishah), so, too, I received reward for ceasing to expound (Perishah)."

The Beraisa continues and says that the word "Es" in the verse was not expounded until Rebbi Akiva came and taught that the word "Es" in the verse, "Es Hashem Elokecha Tira," is a Ribuy to teach that one must fear Talmidei Chachamim.

From Shimon ha'Amsuni's statement, "k'Shem she'Kibalti" -- "*just like* I received," it is evident that he was giving equal importance to his refraining from expounding the word "Es" as he gave to his expounding of the word "Es." In what way was his refraining from expounding "Es" equal in importance to expounding it?

The MAHARSHA explains that every Derashah of every word "Es" that he had made was for the sake of increasing the honor of Hashem ("Marbeh Kevod Shamayim"). His aim was to show how even the smallest word in the Torah has great meaning and importance and is not extra. His motive for refraining from the Derashah of "Es" in the verse of "Es Hashem Elokecha Tira" was the same: to increase the honor of Hashem. Since there is nothing else in the world that deserves the same Yir'ah that one must have for Hashem, refraining from adding something else was a way of showing the tremendous degree of Yir'as Hashem that a person must have, thus increasing the honor of Hashem.

In this light, the Maharsha explains the view of Rebbi Akiva as well. While he agrees that no creation in the world deserves the same degree of Yir'ah as Hashem, there is, however, a certain type of Yir'ah that is another way of showing honor to Hashem. When one honors a Talmid Chacham, the honor is being given to the Torah knowledge which he has attained. Giving such honor is a form of giving honor to Hashem.

(The RASHBA says that even though Shimon ha'Amsuni agrees to Rebbi Akiva on this point, nevertheless the magnitude and degree of Yir'ah is still not the same, and therefore we cannot derive the obligation to have Yir'ah for Talmidei Chachamim from the verse of Yir'as Shamayim.)

Kidushin 58 THE MONETARY VALUE OF "TOVAS HANA'AH" QUESTION: Rebbi Chiya bar Avin asked Rav Huna whether "Tovas Hana'ah" -- the right of a person to choose the recipient of the Matanos Kehunah -- is considered a monetary commodity or not (see also Insights to Nedarim 84b and Chulin 131a).

If Tovas Hana'ah is viewed as being a commodity with monetary value, then how do we measure its value? What extra amount of money does the person in "possession" of the Tovas Hana'ah have because of it? Do we evaluate the market-value of Tovas Hana'ah by determining how much a person would pay to acquire the privilege of giving Matanos Kehunah to whomever he wants? If that is the case, then only that amount of money (that someone would pay for the rights of Tovas Hana'ah) is considered the extra money that the owner has.

Alternatively, do we say that the entire value of the item or items for which the person has the rights of Tovas Hana'ah is considered as belonging to him, and he is the owner of the entire worth of those items?

ANSWERS: (a) The RITVA discusses this question in the Gemara's discussion concerning one who steals the fruits of Tevel of his friend. The Gemara states that

if Tovas Hana'ah has a monetary value, the thief must pay the owner for the value of the Terumah that was in the Tevel. in addition to the value of the Chulin fruits. The Ritva discusses exactly how much the thief must pay. Must he pay only the exact worth of the Tovas Hana'ah, or must he pay back the entire value of the Terumah, because any item for which one has the rights of Tovas Hana'ah is considered to belong entirely to him?

The Ritva proves the second way of understanding from our Mishnah. The Mishnah states that a man, even a Yisrael, can be Mekadesh a woman with Terumah and other Matanos Kehunah. The Mishnah seems to equate the ownership that a Yisrael has over an item of Terumah to the ownership that a Kohen has over an item of Terumah. A Kohen, who owns the actual Terumah, can certainly use the entire amount for his own purposes, as it all belongs to him. Consequently, if a Yisrael's ownership is compared to that of a Kohen, that means that the rights he has of Tovas Hana'ah gives him the value of the entire Terumah, the same value that the Kohen has when he owns the Terumah.

Therefore, asserts the Ritva, one who steals Tevel from a Yisrael must pay the Yisrael the full value of the Terumah (the same amount that it is worth to a Kohen).

(b) Other Rishonim dispute the Ritva's assertion. The RAMBAN and RASHBA (and the first opinion quoted by the Ritva) maintain that the value of Tovas Hana'ah is merely the value of the rights to give the Matanos to whomever he wants, and it is not the value of the Matanos themselves. Hence, when the Gemara says that the thief must remunerate the value of the Terumah that was in the Tevel that he stole, it does not mean that he must pay back the full value of the Terumah (the amount that it is worth to a Kohen), but rather he must pay back the value of the Tovas Hana'ah of the Terumah (which is substantially less than the Terumah's actual value).

(The TOSFOS RID agrees that the value of the Tovas Hana'ah is not the same as the value of the Matanos Kehunah themselves. However, he agrees with the Ritva, albeit for a different reason (see there), that the thief must pay back the full value of the Terumah to the Yisrael.)

Kidushin 59 GIVING MONEY FOR KIDUSHIN THAT WILL NOT TAKE EFFECT UNTIL AFTER THIRTY DAYS QUESTION: The Mishnah (58b) states that when a man is Mekadesh a woman by giving her money and saying that after thirty days she will become Mekudeshes to him ("Harei At Mekudeshes Li l'Achar Sheloshim Yom"), and then another man comes in the interim and is Mekadesh her, she is Mekudeshes to the second man. The Gemara asks what is her status if no other man is Mekadesh her within thirty days. Rav and Shmuel answer that she is Mekudeshes (when thirty days pass), even though the money that the man gave her is no longer present (i.e. it has been spent).

The Gemara explains that this is not similar to a case of "Mekadesh b'Milvah," where a man lends money to a woman and then is Mekadesh her with that loan. The Gemara differentiates between a normal case of "Mekadesh b'Milvah" and the case of our Mishnah by saying that the money of a loan is given to the borrower for the borrower's personal use in the first place, while in the case of our Mishnah, the money was originally given for the purpose of Kidushin.

Why should the purpose for which the money was originally given make any difference? The reason why the Kidushin is not valid when one is Mekadesh a woman with a loan is because the money has already been given prior to the time that the Kidushin takes place, and at the time of the Kidushin nothing additional is being given to the woman (see Rashi). The same reason applies in every case in which the money was given earlier than the time the Kidushin takes effect and the money is no longer present! Even though the money being used is the money of the *debt*, and the debt *does* exist even though the actual money that was given no longer exists, that debt was already in the domain of the woman prior to the time that the Kidushin takes effect!

ANSWERS: There are two primary approaches among the Rishonim.

(a) The RAN explains that since the money was originally given for the purpose of Kidushin, at that she received the money, the woman was Makneh herself to the man. The Kidushin takes effect at the moment that the money was given originally. In contrast, when the money was given originally for the purpose of a loan, the time that the Kidushin would take effect is only later -- after the money was already given to her.

The reasoning for this difference can be explained as follows. The problem of being Mekadesh with a loan is not that the loan has no monetary value, but rather that the woman is already in possession of that value, as Rashi points out. If one wants to make Kidushin take effect with a loan, this problem prevents the Kidushin from taking effect. In contrast, when the Kidushin was already performed (because the money, initially, was given for the sake of Kidushin and the woman was Makneh herself at that time, even though the Kidushin did not take effect at that time), the debt can now be used to finish off the Kidushin (since the debt is the

present form of the money that was originally given).

(b) The RASHBA has a completely different understanding of the Sugya. The Rashba explains that, indeed, if the Kidushin would be made with the debt of the money that the man gave to the woman originally (for the sake of Kidushin thirty days later), it would be no different than any other case of Mekadesh b'Milvah, and the Kidushin would not be valid. The reason the Kidushin is valid in the case of our Mishnah is because we view the Kidushin as being performed with the pleasure that the woman receives when the man tells her that she does not have to return the money to him ("Hana'as Mechilah"), rather than with the debt itself. The difference between these two ways of using a loan for Kidushin is stated clearly earlier in Kidushin (6b).

The RASHBA maintains that in our Mishnah, the money of the Kidushin is automatically viewed as such (money given for the sake of Kidushin), even without stating so specifically. The reason is simple. A regular loan is the property of the borrower, unconditionally. The only thing he must do is pay it back when the term of the loan is over. When the man gave money to the woman and said, "Harei At Mekudeshes Li l'Achar Sheloshim Yom," the money obviously was not meant to be a loan. If the woman does not wish to become Mekudeshes afterwards, she must give the money back immediately. It is hers only if she wishes to become Mekudeshes with it. Therefore, the status of the act of Neseinah, of the giving of the money, remains contingent upon whether or not she can keep it. This is not a situation of a debt, but rather a situation of deciding if it is hers or not. The case of "Mekadesh b'Milvah" is not a valid Kidushin because the money belonged to her before the Kidushin was to take effect; in contrast, giving the money to her now (i.e. letting her keep it and not have to return it) is a valid way to make Kidushin take effect == through the Hana'ah of receiving (getting to keep) the money. (Even though it is only Hana'ah and not a complete Neseinah since she already received it earlier, nevertheless the fact that she does not have to return the money is considered like Hana'as Mechilah.)

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