

BS"D



To: [parsha@parsha.net](mailto:parsha@parsha.net)  
From: [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com)

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON **CHUKAS BALAK** - 5766

In our 11th cycle!

To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to [subscribe@parsha.net](mailto:subscribe@parsha.net). Please also copy me at [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com). A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

This week's Internet Parsha Sheet is sponsored by:

**Yacov and Julie Bass** [thebassfamily@sbcglobal.net](mailto:thebassfamily@sbcglobal.net) of Detroit Michigan in honor of the **recent marriage of Breindy Knopf and Tzvi Cinner**.

To sponsor an issue (proceeds to Tzedaka) email [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com).

<http://www.artscroll.com/Chapters/ptoh-001.html>

Parshas Chukas from Pirkei Torah Insights and discourses on the Chumash.

BY RABBI MORDECHAI GIFTER  
PARASHAS CHUKAS

This is the teaching regarding a man who will die in a tent: anything that enters the tent and anything that is in the tent shall be impure for seven days (Numbers 18:14).

We often convince ourselves of our ability to remain unaffected by negative influences, thinking that we can avoid their effects should we come into contact with them. However, we must awake up to the reality that we are convincing ourselves of a fallacy. Our posuk shows that all it takes is a contaminated atmosphere — devoid of any living influences — to affect man. One can have the strongest intention of remaining unaffected, but if he sets foot into the tent he becomes impure. He need not enter for more than a second to be affected and becomes impure for seven days.

Not only must we take steps to distance ourselves from people of negative influence, but even from negative environments, because even if we try not to be affected, we are indeed affected — and thus infected — by them.

[From last year] From: [ravfrand-owner@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand-owner@torah.org) on behalf of RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)] Sent: Friday, July 08, 2005 3:12 PM To: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org) Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Chukas

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Chukas -

Why Dama Ben Nesina Was Rewarded With The Birth of a Parah Adumah

This week's reading contains what is referred to as the quintessential 'chok' of the Torah. There are many laws that are 'chukim' [laws whose reason or logic is not apparent to us]. However, the Red Heifer (Parah Adumah) is THE classic case of an illogical law (chok). Not only is it a law whose reason is not apparent to us, it is also paradoxical in nature.

The Parah Adumah purifies those who are impure and it defiles those who are pure (one who carries the ashes). The question becomes: Is the Parah Adumah a source of purity or of impurity? Paradoxically it seems to be both!

There is a famous Gemara [Kiddushin 31a] that discusses to what extent a person must go to fulfill the mitzvah of honoring his parents. The Gemara marshals a story about a Gentile named Dama ben Nesina who resided in Ashkelon. Dama ben Nesina had the opportunity to earn a tremendous profit on a business deal. However, in order to conclude the deal, he needed to remove a key from under the pillow of his sleeping father. Rather than wake up his father, he was willing to forgo this tremendous business opportunity.

The Talmud comments that no good deed goes unrewarded. Dama ben Nesina was a farmer. Subsequently, a Parah Adumah was born into his herd of cattle. This was an extremely rare commodity. (Two white hairs invalidate the status of a Parah Adumah.) Dama ben Nesina was able to sell the Parah Adumah to the Sages of Israel for a sum equal to the entire loss of profit that he suffered as a result of his earlier fulfillment of the mitzvah of honoring his father.

The Chiddushei HaRi"m asks why the recoup of Dama ben Nesina's loss came about through the birth and sale of a Parah Adumah. He could have found the Hope Diamond in the belly of a fish. He could have won Power Ball! There are dozens of other ways that the Almighty could have given his reward. Why did Hashem bring it about specifically through a Parah Adumah?

The Chiddushei HaRi"m answers that when Dama ben Nesina gave up the business deal to avoid arousing his father, there was a tremendous commotion in Heaven. The Satan came to the Almighty and asked, "What Jew would ever do such a thing?" Every Jew would come up with a "teretz" [justification]. He would expound a "lomdus" [Talmudic logic] to justify waking up his father to make such a big profit. The fact that a non-Jew — who is not strictly obligated to honor his parents under the Seven Noachide laws — would do such a thing and a Jew who is obligated in Kibud Av v'Em would not do such a thing, raised a tremendous kitrug [charge] against the Jewish people in Heaven. We, who have a Mitzvah demanding a greater level of honoring parents, should be at least as good as those without this Mitzvah! Dama ben Nesina embarrassed us through this incident!

Therefore, in order to remove this charge from the Jewish people, Hashem engineered the reward to this very Gentile by means of a Parah Adumah. Where is there any nation in the world that would pay 150 million dollars for a cow?

One can go to the supermarket and buy four lemons for a dollar. Yet in the days leading up to Sukkos, Jews examine the citrus fruit very carefully and pay \$100 for an esrog! "Who is like Your nation Israel — one nation in the earth?" [Shmuel II 7:23]

In response to the Satan, the Almighty gave the Jewish People the opportunity to show how much they appreciate a mitzvah — and not just any mitzvah, but a paradoxical mitzvah that is totally irrational. Honoring Parents is a "mitzvah sichlee" [a logical commandment]. Even a Gentile would do that. But what kind of person would pay all that money for an animal that was only worth a fraction of a fraction of what they paid for it on the open beef market? A Jew would!

The Satan tried to incite the Almighty by saying: "Look what a Gentile does!" The Almighty taunted back Satan by saying: "Look what a Jew does!" This explains why Dama ben Nesina received his reward with the birth of a Parah Adumah in his herd.

#### The Symbolism of the Fiery Serpents

Later in the parsha, the Jewish people complained: "Why have you brought us up from Egypt for there is no food and there is no water and our soul is disgusted with the insubstantial bread?" Immediately thereafter, "G-d sent the fiery serpents against the people and they bit the people. A large multitude of Israel died." [Bamidbar 21:5-6]

The people came to Moshe, confessing their sin. They begged that he pray to Hashem for their forgiveness and Moshe did just that.

Hashem told Moshe to make a model of a fiery serpent out of metal, place it on a pole and advise the people suffering from snakebites to stare at it. This in fact became the source of cure for those so smitten. They would stare at the copper serpent and live.

This narration is one of the most peculiar stories in the Torah. Certainly this was miraculous. The "natural" way to cure snakebites would be through some kind of serum that would be an antidote to the poison of the snake. But this was Klal Yisrael in the Wilderness. These were miraculous times and "natural healing" would not suffice.

However, even the miracle should be "logical". A "logical miracle" would consist of Moshe fashioning a vial of anti snake venom serum out of copper, having the people stare at it and become cured. However, what was the point of curing the people specifically by having them look at a copper model of the very creature that attacked them?

The Mishneh [Rosh HaShanna 29a] comments on this: "Does the (copper) snake kill or the (copper) snake cure? Rather, when Israel lifted their eyes (toward the snake on the banner) they looked heavenward toward their Father in Heaven and this cured them; otherwise they withered away."

Hashem was sending a message that we need for time immemorial. We still need this lesson – even more so today than back then. G-d is saying "Of course it makes no sense to look at the source of your problem and be healed. That is patently ridiculous. I am asking you to look beyond the snake. Look at who really takes away life and who really restores life. Look at who really smites and who really cures."

If there would have merely been a metal bottle of snake serum there, the people could have erroneously believed that serum cures, medicine cures, science cures. Instead, the Almighty provided a cure that no one in his wildest dreams could think is really the cure: "This isn't the cure – this is the problem!"

This is the very point. The cure DOES NOT come from the snake. The cure comes from our Father in Heaven.

Rav Shlomo Freifeld, z"l, once commented: It is significant that the universal symbol of the medical profession today is the caduceus – the winged staff with two inter-twined snakes. It comes from this week's parsha: "They shall gaze at the copper snake and live."

Why did the medical profession pick this very symbol? Perhaps because at one time, the medical profession realized that the proper way to view doctors are as agents of the Almighty. One cannot get well without a good doctor and one needs a good doctor – one who has the merit to administer the proper care and treatment. But the doctor is merely an agent.

Just as everyone realizes that it is not the scalpel that removes the malignancy, but rather it is the surgeon who handles the scalpel, so too we must realize it is not the doctor who brings life, but it is the Master of the World who is using the doctor as his holy agent.

That is why this is THE appropriate symbol of the medical profession. We need this awareness today even more than they needed it then. Today, medicine is so advanced and doctors can do so much that we must always bear in mind that we are looking at the copper serpent. Healing will only occur if we subjugate ourselves to our Father in Heaven.

That is why, of all things, the Almighty took the source of the problem and made it into the source of the cure. This teaches us for then and for all generations "I put to death and I bring life. I struck down and I will heal..." [Devorim 32:39]. It is the Almighty who gives the 'klap' and hopefully it is the Almighty who will send the cure, speedily.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA [DavidATwersky@aol.com](mailto:DavidATwersky@aol.com)  
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD  
[dhoffman@torah.org](mailto:dhoffman@torah.org) These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #511, Autopsies And Insurance. Good Shabbos! 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@yadyechiel.org](mailto:tapes@yadyechiel.org) or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/>

for further information. RavFrاند, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. [learn@torah.org](mailto:learn@torah.org) 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208

---

From: [owner-weeklydt@torahweb2.org](mailto:owner-weeklydt@torahweb2.org) on behalf of TorahWeb.org  
[[torahweb@torahweb.org](mailto:torahweb@torahweb.org)] Sent: Tuesday, July 04, 2006 4:52 PM To:  
[weeklydt@torahweb2.org](mailto:weeklydt@torahweb2.org) Subject: Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - Reading In  
Between the Lines

The HTML version of this dvar Torah can be found at:

<http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

READING IN BETWEEN THE LINES

At face value, Bilam appears to follow precisely the word of Hashem. When he is instructed not to curse the Jewish people he complies. It is only after Hashem grants him permission to accompany the servants of Balak does he embark on his mission. Despite the granting of permission, Hashem is immediately angry with Bilam for going. If Bilam is following the directions he received, why is Hashem angry? Why should someone who listens to Hashem be recorded in history as Bilam harasha?

Rav Elchanan Wasserman in his Kuntres Divrei Sofrim develops an approach to understand the source of the cheat of Bilam. The fundamental obligation of each human being is to do the will of Hashem. This will is revealed to us in two different ways. Sometimes Hashem tells us explicitly what He expects of us. Other times He lets us try to determine on our own what He wants of us. The demands of the explicit revelation are straightforward. Whatever is told to us though a navi is the expressed will of Hashem. The second class of imperatives, however, is not as clear. We must determine based upon our understanding of the explicit commands of Hashem what He wants us to do when He doesn't expressly reveal His will. Obviously one who has a better understanding of the explicit will of Hashem will be able to apply that knowledge towards a clearer understanding of how to act in the absence of a stated message.

Bilam as a prophet had previously been given the word of Hashem explicitly. He knew about Hashem, as his self-description testifies, "yodea da'as elyon - one who knows the wisdom of the Almighty." He undoubtedly knew of the special relationship Hashem has with His people. The entire world was aware of the events of yetzias Mitzrayim. How much more so did a prophet of Hashem understand that He showered the Jewish people with His love. He knew that Hashem did not approve of his going with the servants of Balak. When Hashem "granted him permission" it clearly was not a change in His will. Bilam was merely being told that he will no longer receive an explicit command to not go. The obligation of following the unspoken will of Hashem required of Bilam to refuse to continue. Yet, Bilam justified his actions to proceed because he wasn't told explicitly to the contrary. Bilam is the model of listening to the explicit word of Hashem while simultaneously missing the complete message. As one who should have personified "yodea da'as elyon" he incurred the wrath of Hashem for ignoring His unspoken wishes.

Bilam the prophet had no excuse for not reaching the proper conclusion regarding what Hashem truly wanted. But how do we, who are not neviim, determine what the message of Hashem is when that message is not explicit? The secret can be found in the words that describe Bilam - "yodea da'as elyon". Hashem has given each of us access to the highest prophecy ever attained - the Torah, which is the prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu, the adon hanevi'im. The greater one's understanding of the Torah, the more he becomes a "yodea da'as elyon". One can only know how to read in between the lines if he knows intimately what appears on the lines.

Dinim d'rabbanan (laws of rabbinic origin) are the "in between the lines" of the Torah laws. Hashem gave us six hundred and thirteen biblical commandments. He also instructed us to safeguard these mitzvos and to

follow the spirit of the law and even to sometimes institute mitzvos d'rabbanan when the occasion arises. This area of Halacha is much more difficult than the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos. After all, if Hashem doesn't tell us explicitly how to enact the proper safeguard around His mitzvos, how do we know we are fulfilling His will with the safeguards that we put into place? Who are we to say what the spirit of any given mitzvah is all about? How can we be certain that we are responding appropriately to events such as those leading up to the celebration of Purim and Chanukah?

It is only those who have reached the thorough understanding of the explicit word of Hashem who can apprehend what His unspoken will is. Chazal and the chachamei haTorah in each generation are given the responsibility as the "yodei da'as elyon" to search and understand what is on the lines themselves to determine properly what is in between the lines. In contrast to Bilam who refused to submit himself to the unspoken will of Hashem, we are committed to fulfill the ratzon Hashem in its entirety, and look to the "yodei da'as elyon" with whom Hashem has blessed us to guide us in fulfilling His will.

Copyright © 2006 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

---

From: Avi Lieberman <AteresHaShavua@aol.com>

Subject: ATERES HASHAVUA

Mesivta Ateres Yaakov 1170A William Street Hewlett NY, 11557 (516)-374-6465 [AteresHaShavua@aol.com](mailto:AteresHaShavua@aol.com)

EMES LIYAAKOV

Weekly Insights from MOREINU

HORAV YAAKOV KAMENETZKY zt"l

[Translated by Ephraim Weiss <Easykgh@aol.com>]

"Even if Ballak will give me his entire houseful of silver and gold, I will still not be able to violate the words of Hashem."

Rashi on this pasuk comments that Billam had greedy nature, and desired other people's money. In addition, Billam was so sure of himself, that he felt that it was only proper for Ballak to pay such a fee for his services. Billam calculated, that for Ballak to wage a war against Bnei Yisroel would be a costly expenditure, that would carry with it an equal chance at both success and failure. However, if Ballak would hire Billam to curse Bnei Yisroel, he would be assured of victory. As such, a houseful of gold and silver was practically a bargain for Billam's service if not for the fact that Billam was unwilling to violate Hashem's command..

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l compares Billam's response to Ballak's invitation to the response of Rebbe Yosi ben Kisma in Pirkei Avos (6:9). Rebbe Yosi ben Kisma was approached by a man, who offered him tens of thousands of golden coins and precious jewels if he would move from the city of talmeydi chachamim in which he resided, to live in this man's village. Rebbe Yosi ben Kisma responded, "Even if you will give me all the gold, silver, and precious stones and jewels in the world, I will only live in a place of Torah." When Billam declined Ballak's invitation, he implied a price. Even if Ballak would pay him all the money that he owned, Billam would not disobey Hashem's direct command. Billam suggested that the reason for his refusal was due to the fact that Ballak's entire treasury was not a sufficient incentive for Billam to ignore Hashem. Billam was willing to be bought; the problem was that Ballak couldn't afford it. On the other hand, Rebbe Yosi ben Kisma refused any negotiations whatsoever, stating that even all the money in the world not convince him to leave the city of Torah in which he lived. Rebbe Yosi ben Kisma would not be bought at any price.

May we be zocheh to understand the disparity between our gedolim, and the reshaim of the nations of the world, so that we may internalize the lesson of Rebbe Yosi ben Kisma; the chashivus of Torah and ratzon Hashem.

From CHAIM OZER SHULMAN

[cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com)

5757

Chukas

In the Parsha of Mei Merivah Hashem says to Moshe and Aharon, "Yaan Ki Lo Heemantem Bi Lehakdisheini Leeinei B'nai Yisroel Lachen Lo Saviu Es Hakahal Hazeh El Haaretz Asher Nasati Lahem". (Perek 20 Pasuk 12).

Because you didn't trust me and failed to make a Kiddush Hashem in front of B'nai Yisroel therefore you may not bring the nation into Eretz Yisroel.

What is difficult to understand is how this particular punishment of not bringing the people into Eretz Yisroel relates to the Chet of Mei Merivah?

What is also troublesome is how Moshe and Aharon could make the mistake of hitting the rock, when Hashem told them explicitly: "Videbartem El Haselah", to speak to the rock?

Rashi on Pasuk Yud-Alef states that at first they spoke to the rock but it was the wrong rock and therefore no water came out. So they thought, maybe we ought to hit the rock, and the proper rock appeared and they hit it. But this doesn't entirely explain their actions, because if Hashem told them specifically to speak to the rock then even if at first water didn't come out, why did they think that it was proper to hit the rock, and why did they think that hitting it would help?

I would like to suggest the following: As we know, there are two types of miracles. There is a Neis Nistar, a hidden miracle, and Neis Nigleh, an open miracle. The Sefurno, however, in explaining the Chet of Moshe & Aharon states that even Neis Nigleh itself has two categories.

First, there is a Neis Nigleh that cannot be accomplished by natural means in those particular circumstances but in other circumstances could be accomplished naturally. An example would be hitting the rock, where in other circumstances hitting a rock could naturally cause water that is blocked by the rock to flow. Second, there is a Neis Nigleh that cannot be done naturally in any form, and which can be accomplished only by Hashem's words. An example would be speaking to the rock. This second level is obviously a higher form of miracle.

Hashem intended to perform the highest form of miracle to show B'nai Yisroel his dedication to them so that they should repent and do Teshuvah. So Moshe & Aharon sinned by performing a lesser miracle.

Now Rashi seems to learn a little differently from the Sefurno. He states that the Chet of Moshe & Aharon was, that if they had spoken to the rock B'nai Yisroel would have learned a lesson that if a rock, which doesn't hear or speak and doesn't need Hashem's sustenance, keeps the words of Hashem, we B'nai Yisroel Al Achas Kama Vikamah should listen to Hashem's words. But I believe that Rashi can still agree with the Sefurno that to bring forth water by speaking to the rock would have been a higher level of miracle.

With this explanation one can understand how Moshe & Aharon could make the mistake of hitting the rock. They understood that Hashem said to speak to the rock in the first instance, so that if B'nai Yisroel were worthy at that moment of the highest level of miracle then water would flow at Moshe's words. But once they saw that speaking to the rock did not help they understood that B'nai Yisroel are not worthy of the highest level of miracle, and therefore a lesser miracle, one of hitting the rock would have to be performed.

The fact that Hashem said to Moshe (in Pasuk 8) "Kach Es Hamateh", take the rod, perhaps led them to this mistaken conclusion. They understood that the rod was necessary so that if B'nai Yisroel would not turn out to be worthy of the highest level of miracle they would be prepared to hit the rock with the rod. In reality, however, the rod was to be taken, as the Mizrachi states, not to do anything with it but because of the miraculous powers that Hashem placed in the rod, even by just being in Moshe or Aharon's hand.

So Moshe and Aharon's Chet was in believing that even when Hashem promises that he will do something for B'nai Yisroel he only does it if they are worthy of it. And that was for Moshe & Aharon a grave error, since

much of what Hashem does for B'nai Yisroel they are not worthy of, but Hashem does so by his good will.

So now we can understand what the Midah Kineged Midah - measure for measure - was in Moshe & Aharon's punishment. Since Moshe & Aharon believed that B'nai Yisroel would have to earn all that is promised to them, they could not take the people into Eretz Yisroel, because the actual gift of Eretz Yisroel is not something that the people necessarily earned. It's something that Hashem promised and will fulfill whether or not B'nai Yisroel merit [deserve] it.

One last thought. In the beginning of Vaeschanan on the Pasuk of "Vaeschanan El Hashem BaEis Hahi Leimar ... Eebra Na Viereh" And I beseeched Hashem at that time saying ... Let me cross and see the Land, Rashi says Ein Chinun Bichol Makom Elah Matnas Chinam, that Vaeschanan means Moshe asked for it as a gift. This fits in nicely with my explanation. Moshe Rabeinu understood now that Bnei Yisroel can receive Eretz Yisroel even without meriting it, and he sinned by not realizing it. But now he's asking that he too should receive a gift without meriting it, and should see Eretz Yisroel as a Matnas Chinam. But H'K'B'H' Midakdek Im Chasidav Kichut Hasaara.

---

From: 11325-return-235-10500539@lb.bcentral.com on behalf of National Council of Young Israel [YI\_Torah@lb.bcentral.com] Sent: Thursday, July 06, 2006 9:40 PM Subject: Rabbi Avraham Steinberg Parshat Chukat-Balak 12 Taamuz 5766 July 8, 2006 Daf Yomi: Yoma 31

Guest Rabbi: RABBI AVRAHAM STEINBERG Young Israel of the Main Line

"New Balance Seekers"

The German philosopher Georg Hegel maintained that progress in human thought invariably follows the path of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Every idea is first challenged by a counter-idea, until the common elements of these two finally find reconciliation in a third and grander idea.

While much of Hegel's philosophy may be at odds with Torah ideology, this notion of his is not without parallel in Jewish thought and, I believe, it plays an important role in this week's Torah portion.

There is a striking resemblance between the opening and closing sections of this week's reading. The first section of Parshas Chukas is about "when a man shall die in the tent" (19:14), and the closing episode of Parshas Balak involves the slaying of two sinners "in the tent" (25:8).

But the similarity is deeper than that.

Parshas Chukas begins with the Parah Adumah (red heifer) purification ritual. Although the true meaning of this mitzvah is ultimately elusive, the Commentators do present symbolisms and lessons we can draw from it. The Sforno (19:2) shows a recurring theme in the Parah Adumah's components. The wood from a mighty cedar tree symbolizes arrogance, the lowly hyssop, humility, and the crimson thread, sin (as red is always the symbol of sin). Thus the combination of these three in the Parah Adumah's pyre teaches that either extreme – excessive pride or excessive humility — is a sin. Only the balance between the two is appropriate.

The sprinkling of the heifer's ashes together with water further indicates that it is not ash (the ultimate symbol of fire's devastation), nor water (the exact opposite force), but their combination that is sought. The recurring lesson of the Parah Adumah is thus: neither extreme is of value if not tempered by its opposite. Indeed, this is a central motif in Parshas Balak, as well. The Gemora (Brachos 7a) teaches us that there is a milisecond of Divine wrath every day. Balak knew how to calculate that moment, and he was going to use it to curse the Jewish People. The result of this could have been catastrophic. To foil his plan, the Ribbono Shel Olam refrained entirely from becoming angry during the days of Balak's attempted curses. Some of the Commentators explain (I believe I first heard this insight in the name of Rav Are'le Belzer, but have seen similar explanations in the name of others since) that the function of the momentary Divine anger is to

imbue the world with a sense of absolute justice and intolerance for what is wrong. Although for the most part we must be tolerant and patient in order to countenance what is incorrect, there is a need for some degree of absolute, unbending truth. The one moment of Hashem's anger is to instill a small dose of absolute truth and intolerance for falsehood within Klal Yisroel.

Since G-d refrained from anger altogether during this time, this sense of truth was somewhat lacking from the world and there was a greater aura of love and acceptance, untempered by principled fairness. This is what led to the episode immediately following Balaam's departure: And the [Jewish] People began to sin with the daughters of Moav (25:1). Kindness that is not kept in balance by a strong sense of propriety and boundaries leads to excessive closeness and, as it were, licentious behavior. (Compare Kedoshim 20:17, where an act of incest is described as "chessed.")

It was therefore only through the act of Pinchas at the end of the parsha that balance was restored to the Jewish Nation. Pinchas, who on the one hand is described as Aharon HaKohen's grandson – Aharon the great lover of peace – performs the courageous act of a zealot, showing total intolerance for immorality, and the proper balance between love and morality is restored.

The Rambam teaches us that in order to correct a negative behavior, we must compensate to the extreme and behave in the exact opposite way. But ultimately, of course, the goal is to return to the proper equilibrium (See Shemone Perakim, chapter 4). Humanity has historically had a hard time with balance. People tend to be either exceedingly pleasure-seeking or exceedingly austere, fanatically controlling or anarchistic. But as committed Jews and adherents to the Torah we have the imperative to seek to master our middos and find the ultimate balance. It is this synthesis that brings sanctity and blessing to our lives.

Shabbat Shalom!

NCYI's Weekly Divrei Torah Bulletin is sponsored by the Henry, Bertha and Edward Rothman Foundation - Rochester, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Circleville, Ohio

---

From: Halacha [halacha@yutorah.org] Sent: Wednesday, June 28, 2006 11:20 AM Subject: Weekly Halacha Overview- Amira L'Nachri Part I BY RABBI JOSH FLUG Amira L'Nachri:

The Prohibition of Asking a Non-Jew to Perform a Prohibited Activity Part I

There is a prohibition to ask a non-Jew to perform an activity on Shabbat that would otherwise be prohibited for a Jew to perform. This prohibition is known as amira l'nachri (directing a non-Jew). This article will explore the reasons for this prohibition as well as some practical applications.

The Two Reasons for the Prohibition of Amira L'Nachri

The source for the prohibition of amira l'nachri is a Mishna, Shabbat 121, which states that if there is a (non-dangerous) fire, one is prohibited from asking a non-Jew to extinguish the fire. The Gemara, Shabbat 150a, states that amira l'nachri is a rabbinic prohibition. Rashi presents two reasons why amira l'nachri is prohibited. Rashi, Avodah Zarah 15a, s.v. Keivan, states that the prohibition of amira l'nachri is based on the prohibition of v'daber davar (Yeshaya 58:13), the prohibition of speaking about prohibited activities on Shabbat. If one is prohibited to mention these activities, it is certainly prohibited to ask someone else to perform these activities. Rashi, Shabbat 153a, s.v. Mai, states that the prohibition of amira l'nachri is based on the concept of sh'l'ichut (agency). By employing a non-Jew to perform an activity on Shabbat, the non-Jew is considered an agent of the Jew and it is considered (on a rabbinic level) as if the Jew is performing the activity himself.

R. Ya'akov Y. Kanievski, Kehilot Ya'akov, Shabbat no. 55, explains that both of these reasons are true and both are necessary components of the prohibition of amira l'nachri. Ran, Shabbat 64b, s.v. Tanu, rules that it is prohibited to ask a non-Jew on Erev Shabbat to perform a prohibited activity on Shabbat. Likewise, it is prohibited to ask a non-Jew on Shabbat to perform a prohibited activity after Shabbat. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 307:1-2, codifies Ran's ruling. R. Kanievski notes that if someone asks a non-Jew on Erev Shabbat to perform a prohibited activity on Shabbat, he will not violate v'daber davar, since it is permitted to discuss prohibited activities on Erev Shabbat. However, when the activity is performed by the non-Jew on Shabbat, the non-Jew will still be considered the agent

of the Jew and for this reason it is prohibited. Similarly, if the non-Jew is asked on Shabbat to perform an activity after Shabbat, there is no concern that the non-Jew is considered in agent because even if the Jew performed the activity himself it would be permitted. However, to ask the non-Jew on Shabbat to perform such an activity would violate the prohibition of v'daber davar.

#### Hinting to a Non-Jew

The two reasons for amira l'nachri are relevant to the discussion of hinting to a non-Jew to perform a prohibited activity. Or Zarua, Hilchot Shabbat no. 84, rules that just as it is prohibited to ask a non-Jew directly to perform a prohibited activity on Shabbat, it is likewise prohibited to hint to a non-Jew to perform an activity on Shabbat. Or Zarua does allow hinting to a non-Jew on Shabbat to perform melacha after Shabbat. Or Zarua's ruling is codified by Rama, Orach Chaim 307:22.

Ostensibly, the explanation of the ruling of Or Zarua is based on the premise that hinting does not violate the prohibition of v'daber davar since there is no mention of the prohibited activity. Nevertheless, hinting to a non-Jew would establish him as an agent of the Jew and therefore, hinting is prohibited. As such, if the Jew hints to the non-Jew to perform the activity after Shabbat, there is no concern that the non-Jew is acting as an agent of the Jew and it is permitted.

Mishna Berurah 307:76 (based on Magen Avraham 307:31), states that the prohibition of hinting only applies if the hint is given in the form of a directive. The example given by Mishna Berurah is directing the non-Jew to wipe his nose where he is supposed to understand that it is cold in the room. However, if the hint is not given in the form of a directive it is permitted.

Mishna Berurah's ruling can be explained based on the previous idea that the prohibition to hint to a non-Jew is based on the agency aspect of amira l'nachri. By directing a non-Jew to perform an activity, even if it is only through hinting, the non-Jew acts as an agent on behalf of the Jew. However, if there is no directive from the Jew, the non-Jew is not considered the agent of the Jew and there is no prohibition. It should be noted that even if there is no directive, there may be no mention of any prohibited activity by the Jew for this would violate the prohibition of v'daber davar.

#### The Prohibition of Benefiting From the Non-Jew's Activities

Mishna Berurah's allowance of hinting in a non-directive manner has limited applications. This is because the Mishna, Shabbat 122a, prohibits a Jew from benefiting from any prohibited activity performed by a non-Jew on behalf of a Jew, even if the non-Jew was not asked to perform the activity. Therefore, even if the hinting is performed in a way that does not violate amira l'nachri, there is still a prohibition to benefit from the result.

There are a few situations where there is no prohibition to benefit from the activity of a non-Jew. First, Rabbeinu Baruch, Sefer HaTerumah, no 252, rules that if a non-Jew lights a candle in a room that already had some light, there is no prohibition to benefit from the new light. The reason that he gives is that since it was possible to see prior to the prohibited activity, the benefit from the prohibited activity is insignificant. Tur, Orach Chaim 276, adds that after the original light is extinguished it is prohibited to benefit from the light that was lit by the non-Jew. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 276:4, codifies the ruling of Rabbeinu Baruch and the extension of Tur.

Second, Tosafot, Shabbat 122a s.v. V'Im, and Rabbeinu Baruch op. cit., distinguish between direct benefit and indirect benefit regarding certain cases of amira l'nachri. R. Yisrael Lipschitz, Kalkelet Shabbat, Dinei Amira L'Oved Kochavim, no. 5, applies this distinction to benefiting from a prohibited activity performed by a non-Jew on behalf of a Jew. He rules that if a non-Jew opens an envelope on Shabbat, it is permitted to benefit from the contents of the envelope since this is not considered direct benefit. R. Lipschitz, Kalkelet Shabbat, M'Lechet Shabbat no.1, also rules that there is no prohibition in benefiting from the absence of light caused by the extinguishing of a candle on Shabbat. Mishna Berurah 307:11, likewise rules that the only type of benefit that is prohibited is direct benefit. [See however, R. Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 2:77, who prohibits benefiting from a building where the door was opened with keys that were (prohibitively) brought from the public domain on Shabbat. It is possible that R. Feinstein will permit sleeping in a room whose light was extinguished because that is not considered a positive benefit. However, if the benefit is positive but indirect, R. Feinstein seems to take the stringent stance. R. Shlomo Z. Auerbach took both sides of the argument at different points in his life. He concluded that there is no prohibition to benefit from a prohibited activity unless the benefit is positive and direct (see Minchat Shlomo no.5, Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata ch.18, note 244, and Minchat Shlomo Tinyana no. 22).]

Third, the Mishna, Shabbat 122a, states that if the non-Jew performs the prohibited activity for his own benefit, it is permitted to benefit from that activity. The Gemara, ad loc., limits this leniency to cases where there is no concern that the non-Jew will perform additional prohibited activities on behalf of a Jew. For example, if a non-Jew cuts grass for his animals and there is leftover grass, it is prohibited for a Jewish acquaintance to feed the leftover grass to his animal because there is a concern that the non-Jew may cut more grass for the Jew. Regarding a

candle that was lit by a non-Jew, the candle that the non-Jew lights for himself is also sufficient for the Jew and there is no reason to suspect that he will light additional candles. This is codified by Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 325:11.

#### Amira L'Nachri:

#### The Prohibition of Asking a Non-Jew to Perform a Prohibited Activity Part II

#### BY RABBI JOSH FLUG

Last week's issue discussed the prohibition of amira l'nachri and the two reasons for the prohibition. This week's issue will discuss certain situations where the prohibition of amira l'nachri is suspended.

#### Amira L'Nachri in Order to Fulfill a Mitzvah

There are two cases in the Gemara where amira l'nachri is permitted for the purpose of fulfilling a mitzvah. First, the Gemara, Gittin 8b, states that one is permitted to ask a non-Jew to sign the closing documents on a property in Eretz Yisrael. The Gemara states that the reason why it is permitted is because the mitzvah of yishuv Eretz Yisrael (settling the Land of Israel) overrides that prohibition of amira l'nachri. Second, the Gemara, Eiruvim 67b, records an incident where Rabbah allowed someone to ask a non-Jew to carry water through a rabbinically ordained public domain (a private domain without an eiruv chatzeirot) in order to perform the necessary preparations for the mitzvah of b'rit milah.

There are three opinions presented by the Rishonim to explain the basis of both of these leniencies. First, Sefer HaTzur, Hilchot Milah (49a), rules that it is permitted to ask a non-Jew to perform a prohibited activity if it is for the purpose of fulfilling a mitzvah. Sefer HaTzur notes that it is permissible to ask a non-Jew to light the Shabbat candles on Shabbat (if they were not lit before Shabbat, see "The Mitzvah of Lighting Shabbat Candles Part I"). It is clear from Sefer HaTzur's ruling that one may ask a non-Jew to perform a bona-fide melacha (such as kindling) in order to perform a mitzvah that is not biblically mandated (the mitzvah of lighting Shabbat candles). This would explain both leniencies presented by the Gemara.

Second, Rambam, Hilchot Shabbat 6:9-10, rules that it is permissible to ask a non-Jew to perform an activity that is only prohibited (for a Jew) on a rabbinic level if the motivating factor is to alleviate a mild illness, to resolve a pressing situation or to perform a mitzvah. One of the examples Rambam gives is to ask a non-Jew to carry water through a rabbinically ordained public domain in order to perform the necessary preparations for the mitzvah of b'rit milah. Rambam then states that it is permissible to ask a non-Jew to sign the closing documents on a property in Eretz Yisrael. Rambam implies that the latter case is an exception to the rule. One may only ask a non-Jew to perform a bona-fide melacha if it is for the mitzvah of yishuv Eretz Yisrael.

Third, Tosafot, Gittin 8b, s.v. Af Al Gav, suggest that both cases presented by the Gemara are the exceptions to the rule. The mitzvah of yishuv Eretz Yisrael allows one to ask a non-Jew to perform a bona-fide melacha. The preparations for the milah are also an exception to the rule in that one is permitted to ask a non-Jew to perform an activity that would constitute a rabbinic violation (for a Jew). Tosafot rule that one may not ask a non-Jew to perform other activities that entail a rabbinic violation in order to fulfill other mitzvot.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 307:5, rules in accordance with the opinion of Rambam, but mentions that there is an opinion that is more stringent (i.e. the opinion of Tosafot). Mishna Berurah 307:23, rules that the opinion of Rambam should be considered the normative opinion. Therefore, it is permitted to ask a non-Jew to carry food through a rabbinically ordained public domain if it necessary for the Shabbat meal (see Rama, Orach Chaim 325:10 and Mishna Berurah, ad loc.). It is also permitted to ask a non-Jew to activate an air conditioner on a hot day if the occupants of the room are very uncomfortable. [See R. Yitzchak Weiss, Minchat Yitzchak 3:23. R. Weiss' ruling follows the opinion that activating an air conditioner only constitutes a rabbinic prohibition. According to Chazon Ish, Orach Chaim 50:9, activating an air conditioner constitutes a biblical prohibition and it would therefore be prohibited to ask a non-Jew to activate the air conditioner, even if the occupants of the room are very uncomfortable.]

Rama, Orach Chaim 276:2, notes the opinion of Sefer HaTzur that it is permissible to ask a non-Jew to perform a bona-fide melacha in order to perform a mitzvah. Rama rules that one may rely on his opinion in an extremely pressing situation. R. Avraham Danzig, Chayei Adam, Hilchot Shabbat 62:11, states that asking a non-Jew to fix the eiruv strings on Shabbat is an example of an extremely pressing situation since many people will transgress Shabbat if the eiruv not fixed (michshol d'rabim). Mishna Berurah 276:25, codifies the ruling of Chayei Adam. Based on the ruling of Chayei Adam, R. Ovadia Yosef, Liviati Chen, no. 17, permits asking a non-Jew to restore the power to the lights in a synagogue in order that the congregants should be able to recite K'riat Sh'ma and pray using a siddur (mitzvah d'rabim).

#### Amira L'Nachri for a Choleh

The Gemara, Shabbat 129a, states that one may ask a non-Jew to perform any melacha in order to treat a choleh (an ill person). There is no distinction between a bona-fide melacha and a rabbinic prohibition; both are permitted. The parameters of defining a choleh and the basis for this leniency were already discussed in a previous issue.

Amira L'Nachri during Tosefet Shabbat

There is a concept of Tosefet Shabbat which allows one to accept Shabbat before Shabbat actually starts. Although the Mishna, Shabbat 34a, states that one is permitted to violate certain rabbinic prohibitions during the bein hashmashot period (the time period between sundown and nightfall), Mordechai, Shabbat no. 290, rules that one may not violate any rabbinic prohibitions during the time of tosefet Shabbat. This ruling is codified by Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 261:4. [This ruling severely limits the leniency of the Mishna because most people accept Shabbat before bein hashmashot (in order to fulfill the mitzvah of tosefet Shabbat). Even if one does not formally accept Shabbat, when one recites Bo'i Kallah in the Lecha Dodi prayer, it is considered an acceptance of Shabbat.] Nevertheless, Teshuvot Mahari Veil, no. 116, rules that it is permitted to ask a non-Jew to perform melacha during the time of tosefet Shabbat. He states that his justification is not based on the Mishna's leniency. Rather, the reason why it is permitted is that not every community accepts Shabbat early. As, such, Mahari Veil employs a concept (based on the Gemara, Chullin 49b) that if one place observes a stringency and another does not, the place that observes the stringency may be lenient regarding some of the corollaries of that stringency. Therefore, if a community accepts Shabbat and other communities have not yet accepted Shabbat, one may be lenient regarding amira l'nachri, which is a 'corollary' of Shabbat itself. Mahari Veil's opinion is codified by Rama, Orach Chaim 261:1.

Magen Avraham 261:7, offers a different justification for allowing amira l'nachri during the tosefet Shabbat period. Rashba, Shabbat 151a, cites the Ba'alei HaTosafot as ruling that during tosefet Shabbat it is permitted to ask another Jew who has not yet accepted Shabbat to perform melacha. Taz, Orach Chaim 263:3, explains that the basis for the leniency is that the prohibition of amira only applies to situations where it is prohibited for all people to perform the amira. If there is a situation where people are permitted to ask a non-Jew to perform melacha, the prohibition of amira does not apply to anyone. [Taz's explanation explains why the prohibition of v'daber davar does not apply during tosefet Shabbat. See P'ri Megadim, ad loc., who discusses the agency aspect of amira l'nachri.]

According to Rashba, there is no prohibition of amira l'nachri during tosefet Shabbat simply because there are other people who have not yet accepted Shabbat and the prohibition of amira does not set in. Magen Avraham notes that Mahari Veil's reason is necessary for a situation where the entire community already accepted Shabbat. Rashba's reasoning only applies if there are still people in the same community who did not accept Shabbat. Mahari Veil's reason would still apply if the whole community accepted Shabbat but there are other communities that did not yet accept Shabbat.

The Weekly Halacha Overview, by Rabbi Josh Flug, is a service of YUTORAH, the online source of the Torah of Yeshiva University. Get more halacha shiurim and thousands of other shiurim, by visiting [www.yutorah.org](http://www.yutorah.org). To unsubscribe from this list, please click here.

---

From: Aish.com [<mailto:newsletterserver@aish.com>]

Sent: Sunday, July 02, 2006 8:03 AM

Subject: New @ Aish.com - July 2, 2006

Tammuz and the Forces of Nature

[http://www.aish.com/literacy/concepts/Tammuz\\_and\\_the\\_Forces\\_of\\_Nature.asp](http://www.aish.com/literacy/concepts/Tammuz_and_the_Forces_of_Nature.asp)

TAMMUZ AND THE FORCES OF NATURE

BY REBBETZIN TZIPPORAH HELLER

What can happen when we see everything as being fully within our grasp and under our control. This month is named after the ancient Babylonian sun god. (1) I can't say that if I were selecting names for Jewish months that this is the first one that would have come to mind. In fact, it seems the opposite of what the entire concept the Hebrew calendar is about. Each month offers us the opportunity for growth and renewal. Idol worship is pagan and limiting. Invoking the name of a central figure in a cult that worshipped the sun as the source of all energy seems somehow retrogressive. It takes us back to archaic prehistory before our forefather Abraham made sense of nature and realized that there is a Divine, hidden hand that gives it unity, elegance of form, and purpose. Sun worship may be pre-historic, but it is still "in." Although no one uses the term anymore (except the most avid vacationers), that doesn't change the fact that the way we often relate to nature is not that far removed from the way the pagan sun worshippers did. We still think in terms of nature having its own rules that work autonomously and never change. We use axioms such as "possible" and "impossible" as though nature isn't subordinate to any force beyond itself. It isn't hard to see why. Nature, as epitomized by the sun, is quite an awesome force. The sun may be eons away from the earth, but anyone who

ever had heavy-duty sunburn knows how irrelevant that fact is in the face of the enormous heat, energy and light that it generates. When we harness its energy for the good or the opposite, we feel that we have mastered forces far greater than our own. We cook up an abysmal admixture of nature worship and self-worship. We use it to destroy the planet we live on, the people with whom we share it, and our own spiritual integrity. The astral sign of the month is Cancer, the crab, and it represents an approach to life. The early mystics would talk about how the heat of the long summer days would stick to us and envelope us with its ennuil to the point that we'd feel we can't do anything without it forcing us to acknowledge its grip. Our reliance on science, technology, and nature without seeing G-d as their underlying Source, eats away at our souls, until we are consumed by the spell of empowerment that they cast. Even when we seek God, what we see is shaded by our inability to think in terms that are above and beyond the constraints of the physical world. The 17th of Tammuz Five tragedies took place in this month. Each one of them gives us a glimpse into the abyss, of what can happen to us when we see everything as being fully within our grasp and under our control. The first and most well known of the tragedies that took place is the destruction of what is arguably the most precious object that any human being could ever possess -- the Tablets of the Law, written in God's own Hand. What was the sequence of events that made this disaster inevitable? G-d gave the Ten Commandments on the sixth of Sivan. On the seventh, Moses climbed up Mount Sinai to learn the details and multi-leveled meanings of the entire Torah. He told the people to anticipate his return 40 days hence. His intent was not to include the day that he ascended the mountain since it was not a full 24-hour day (in the Hebrew calendar a new day begins when the sun sets on the previous one). The people assumed that he meant to include the day that he began his journey. This tragic technical misunderstanding had far reaching consequences.

When dawn broke on the 16th of Tammuz, an entire nation held their breath waiting to receive the Tablets of the Law and to begin learning its truth. This was one of the most significant events that we could ever anticipate. We define truth as "the entire picture". By the nature of things, the only possible way to access truth comes from beyond the limitations of human intellect and experience. To understand what happened next we have to digress for a moment. The Torah was given to humans, and we humans are full of complexities and contradictions. We want to go beyond our borders but we also love control and familiarity. We want to know God, but we would prefer to make Him "smaller" rather than making ourselves "bigger." Our ability to visualize beyond the moment that we live in makes us yearn for a better world, and aspire to be among those who make it happen. Envisioning potential inspires us to make sacrifices for what we believe in. The same ability to visualize beyond the moment can also make us see things through the prism of false pragmatism. We think we are just being realistic and predicting how things are likely to be, when we fall into the trap of "awfulizing." As our imagery grows more vivid, we are paralyzed with despair or fear. The images that we conjure up are the source of our worst moments of silent terror. When our mental imagery is in tune with God's vision of reality, it can move us toward what is known as Divine inspiration, "ruach ha-kodesh". This can only happen when we are not blocking out His truth with our own agendas (which are so subtle that even we are not always aware of their existence). When our filters are on, it creates inner chaos. Our fears promote fantasy and dread. Since the source of the falsehood that we project lies within us, it is referred to in the Talmud as "the Satan" which literally means "the accuser". The accuser is, of course, someone very familiar to all of us; it is the embodiment of our inner world as only G-d can see it. "The Satan showed them Moses, dead lying on a bier," the Talmud tells us. When he failed to arrive at the moment they expected to see him, the image that they saw was the face of doom. They were leaderless. They were in a desert, heading towards the unknown. Their journey had been fueled by Moses' vision, his Divine inspiration, the miracles that he brought about. Nothing made sense anymore. It was impossible to survive in this environment for more than a few days at best. All of this is completely true -- if you are a sun worshipper and you think that the only possibilities are by definition ones that co-exist in cozy harmony with the axioms provided by your ability to describe the physical rules that govern our world. THREE REACTIONS The Jews in the desert responded to this crisis in three different ways. One group of people, Egyptians camp-followers and others who wanted to share the spiritual adventure that the Jews were on but also wanted everything to "make sense" to them, used the crutch that they had leaned on throughout their entire history. If what G-d does is "too big" to make sense to them, they will cut Him down to size, and force Him to fit into their pantheon of gods who represent various forces. They no doubt thought that they could harness energy, make it work for them, and get on with life without seeking anything beyond themselves and their set of axioms. They pressured Aaron to form a representation of their spiritual autonomy, a calf that symbolized both newness and youth that had the potential one day to be an ox, the strongest of all the domesticated animals. They envisioned themselves as empowered and talked themselves into believing that faith in a manmade symbol can actually evoke a spiritual force. In the era of

rampant idol worship, this way of thinking "made sense." Aaron did not realize how far this group had gone. He demanded that people give him their gold and jewelry, hoping that he would be able to buy time. Using occult forces, one of the idolaters took over the job of creating a symbol, and made the fabled golden calf. It seemed alive, real, and they believed that they had succeeded in making symbol that had vast spiritual power (similar perhaps to the Japanese Shintoists in World War II who believed that their emperor was G-d incarnate and that their flag had actual energy).

GROUP TWO The second group was composed of born Jews and sincere converts. When they heard G-d proclaim, "Have no other gods before Me," something deep inside of them was touched. They wanted truth more than comfort, and the very thought of any form of idol worship, or any deed that would block them from knowing and serving God, was completely abhorrent to them. If they were left to their own devices, they would have probably managed to hold out until Moses' return, and later confront him with their fears that his prophecy had failed him since he didn't keep his word. When he would have explained his mistake, the air would clear, and their journey towards Israel would have continued as planned. But they were not in isolation. The first group influenced them, as did their own conscience. Both sides seemed flat and untrue. They took refuge in cynicism towards Aaron and the Levites for remaining true to their "dead" leader rather than "being responsible" and "taking control" and "being realistic," and simultaneously mocked the passionate idolaters and satirized their devotions.

GROUP THREE The third group was made up of people who realized that they were witnessing an entire nation betray everything that G-d had shown them. The plagues. The splitting of the sea. The Ten Commandments. The manna that came down from heaven. G-d had forced them to look beyond their limited horizons. The people in this third group would neither reject what their own eyes had seen, nor would they take refuge in making skepticism a replacement for truth. But they, too, were caught up in illusion - an illusion far more insidious than the others. Their illusion was that there was no hope. The Jewish people were doomed. There was no point in trying to turn things around. The people they loved were choking by a noose that they had placed around their own necks: they were irredeemable. They gave into one of the worst illusions that we have; the illusion that the force of evil generated by sin is greater than the force of good that is generated by tshuvah (return to God). They, too, attributed too much force to the golden calf. They should have seen it as precious metal twisted into an interesting form that holds attraction to people who don't know better.

When Moses came down from the mountain, he took in the entire situation as soon as he saw it. He acted swiftly, and allowed the Tablets (which in any case were so heavy that it required a miracle for him to hold them) to crash to the floor. The stone "body" of the Tablets shattered and the spiritual luminescence of their message flew back to their creator. Was he right? The Talmud tells us that there is no doubt about the matter. He was right! He did the equivalent of tearing up a marriage license before anyone could formally accuse a new bride of betraying her husband. If we could not rise above worshipping nature, submitting to the tyranny of human-conceived options and the possibility of destroying the authentic bond that we were promised -- so be it! It is not as though we rejected the Tablets; we never had them to begin with. The tragedy was muted, which opened the way for forgiveness. Echoes of the day Four other traumatic events happened later in history that force us to think about who we are and who we want to be. To one degree or another, each event is an echo of the tragedy that took place on the 17th of Tammuz. The Romans placed an idol in the sanctuary of the Holy Temple. No sacrilege could be more vulgar. The reason G-d allowed this to happen is that He wanted us to see where our chosen path would take us. By this time, we had lost our collective identity, and had buried our consciousness in endless fighting. Each group sincerely believed in their own cause. Each thought that they had a moral right to rule. Each took G-d out of the picture as they attacked each other with ever increasing savagery. The Romans had been conducting their public life like this for years. They believed in control, nature and power. We had the opportunity to see where this road leads. The end of the trail was the horror of and desecration of the sanctuary. The walls around Jerusalem were breached. This is the date recorded in the Talmud as the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. A breach in the wall was the beginning of the end. It could only happen when our faith was fragmented, and the divine protection that we had been given in the past was no longer something we could count on. What this means concretely is that if we wish to abandon our reliance on G-d and replace this with belief in ourselves or in nature, we will have to pay the price. The daily offerings could no longer continue. In the time of both Temples a consequence of the battle for Jerusalem was that there was no possibility to continue the service as it had been conducted for hundreds of years. The symbolic meaning of the sacrifices (which are called korban, that which makes close, in Hebrew) is that it is up to us to elevate the world to God, not to create illusions that dwarf Him to make the "fit" more comfortable. The Romans burned a Torah scroll. They believed in the rules made by man, not those made by God. Does this mean that the month of Tammuz is "a bad month"? Far from it. It is a month of challenge and confrontation. Without

challenge, there is no growth. Without confrontation, there is no way to see things as they are. On the third of Tammuz something happened that broke all the rules of nature. Joshua was leading the Jews in battle in Givon against their enemies, the Amorites. As the day drew to a close, the battle had not yet reached an absolute conclusion. For the moment the Jews seemed to be winning, but if the battle would reach its inevitable end as darkness came, there would be no decisive victory, and the next morning they would face off against an enemy who would come at them with renewed vigor. Each moment was precious. A miracle happened. The sun didn't set. The day stretched on for 12 more hours. The rules were broken, the battle was won, and at least for the moment, no one worshipped the sun, but only its holy, infinite, unknowable Maker. Footnote 1. See Ezekiel 8:12 - 18, and Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, by Prof. J. B. Kramer, Pritchard Press, pg 55. Author Biography:

With her trademark blend of wit, down-to-earth advice, and profound Torah scholarship, author and educator Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller with Sara Yoheved Rigler shows us how to confront the eight essential challenges of life - including the challenge of anger, the challenge of relationships, the challenge of parenting, even the challenge of happiness. In "Lets Face It!" we learn how to embrace life's numerous challenges and transform them all into positive opportunities for personal growth and a deeper connection to the Creator. Click here to read an excerpt.

This article can also be read at:  
[http://www.aish.com/literacy/concepts/Tammuz\\_and\\_the\\_Forces\\_of\\_Nature.asp](http://www.aish.com/literacy/concepts/Tammuz_and_the_Forces_of_Nature.asp)

Like what you read? As a non-profit organization, Aish.com relies on readers like you to enable us to provide meaningful and relevant articles. Join Aish.com and help us continue to give daily inspiration to people like you around the world. Make a secure donation at: <http://www.aish.com/membership> or mail a check to Aish.com, 400 South Lake Drive, Lakewood, NJ 08701  
 Copyright © 1995 - 2006 Aish.com - <http://www.aish.com>

From: [kby-parsha-owner@kby.org](mailto:kby-parsha-owner@kby.org) on behalf of Kerem B'Yavneh Online  
[\[feedback@kby.org\]](mailto:feedback@kby.org) Sent: Wednesday, July 05, 2006 7:10 AM To: KBY Parsha  
 Subject: Parshat Chukat

Chukat From Exile in Egypt to Eretz Yisrael  
 Rosh Hayeshiva

RAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG SHLITA

When Bnei Yisrael wanted to traverse Edom on their way to Israel, Moshe sent emissaries to the king of Edom saying, "So said your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that has befallen us. Our forefathers descended to Egypt ... and the Egyptians did evil to us." (Bamidbar 20:14-15)

There are two questions here:

1. Why did Moshe feel it necessary to relate the troubles of the past to the king of Edom?
2. "Your brother Israel. Why did Moshe mention brotherhood here?" (Rashi) Chazal answer in Midrash Tanchuma as follows:  
 "You know all the hardship that has befallen us." [Moshe] said to [the king of Edom]: You know that when G-d said to Avraham, "Know with certainty that your descendants shall be aliens in a land not their own, and they will enslave them and they will oppress them" (Bereishit 15:13) -- we were enslaved and you were free ... This is comparable to two brothers, against whose grandfather a debt-document was presented. One of them paid it. Some time later, he began to ask something of his brother. He said to him, "You know that the debt that I paid was upon both of us, and I was the one who paid it. Therefore, do not deny the request that I ask."

Hashem said to Avraham: "To your descendants I will give this Land." (15:18) However, it is not clear who the descendants of Avraham are -- Yitzchak or Yishmael? Yaakov or Esav? And while it is possible to exclude Yishmael, since he is the son of the maid, Esav is different, as Malachi states: "Was not Esav the brother of Yaakov -- the word of Hashem -- yet I loved Yaakov." (Malachi 1:2) Why was Esav excluded and the promise fulfilled only with Yaakov?

This is because in the brit bein habetarim (covenant of the pieces), it says (Bereishit 15:13-18):

Your descendants shall be aliens in a land not their own, and they will serve them, and they will oppress them, four hundred years ... The fourth generation shall return here ... On that day Hashem made a covenant with Avram saying, "To your descendants I have given this land."

Thus, it is clear that the same descendants who will be aliens, and will descend to Egypt -- they are the very same descendants to whom the Land will be given.

Regarding Esav it says: "Esav took his wives, his sons, his daughters ... and went to a land because of his brother Yaakov." (Bereishit 36:6) Rashi cites a Midrash:

"Because of his brother Yaakov." Because of the debt of the decree, "Your descendants shall be aliens," which was placed on the descendants of Yitzchak. [Esav] said, "I will leave here, and I will share neither in the gift, that this land is given to him, nor in the payment of the debt."

Therefore, it says in the end of Parshat Vayishlach: "These are the chiefs of Edom by their settlements, in the land of their possession -- he is Esav, father of Edom" (36:43), and immediately afterwards it says: "Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojourning" (37:1), and the story of the descent to Egypt begins. The account of the exile was fulfilled only through Yaakov, whereas Esav settled in his possessed land.

This is why Esav is mentioned in the Passover Haggadah: "To Esav I gave Mount Seir to inherit, and Yaakov and his sons went down to Egypt." (Yehoshua 24:4) Esav went complacently to his inheritance, while the decree of exile was fulfilled through Yaakov. Thus, they were the ones through whom the promise, "To your descendants I have given this land," was fulfilled.

This is why Moshe mentioned to the king of Edom, "So said your brother Israel." As Rashi explains, since we are brothers we should have both paid the debt, and therefore, "Let us pass through your land" -- you cannot contest the inheritance of Israel, just as you did not pay the debt.

Only the refinery of the suffering, subjugation, and the troubles of the exile, award rights to the Land of Israel, as Chazal teach: "G-d gave three good gifts to Israel, and all were given to them only through suffering: Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and the world to come."

With this we can understand Rashi's opening comment on the Torah in explaining the narrative of Bereishit. Rashi cites from the Midrash that it would have been proper to begin the Torah with, "This month shall be for you the beginning of the months" (Shemot 12:2), the first mitzvah given to Am Yisrael. However, the Torah begins with the story of Creation because of, "The strength of His deeds he declared to His people, to give them the heritage of the nations." (Tehillim 111:6) If the nations of the world will say to Israel, "You are robbers, for you stole the Land," we will say to them, "G-d created the world; He took Eretz Yisrael from them and gave it to us."

This interpretation does not explain, though, what is the purpose of all the stories from Parshat Lech Lecha, in which Eretz Yisrael is promised, and on? Rather, all the narrative until, "This month shall be for you," comes to teach how Yishmael and Esav were separated from the descendants of Avraham. Only through Yaakov was the decree of brit bein habetarim fulfilled, and only through him was the promise of the Land fulfilled.

To subscribe to additional mailings, please visit <http://www.kby.org/torah/subscriptions.cfm>.

---

From: [peninim-bounces@shemayisrael.com](mailto:peninim-bounces@shemayisrael.com) on behalf of Shema Yisrael Torah Network [[shemalist@shemayisrael.com](mailto:shemalist@shemayisrael.com)] Sent: Thursday, July 06, 2006 6:55 AM  
To: Peninim Parsha  
PENINIM ON THE TORAH  
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM -  
ParshasChukas/Balak

Parashas Chukas This is the decree of the Torah, which Hashem commanded, saying. (19:2)

One of the close chassidim of the Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, recounts that he had the "privilege" to be with the Rebbe in the Warsaw Ghetto prior to their transfer to Auschwitz. It was Shabbos Parashas Chukas, 1944, as the Rebbe sat down to deliver his Torah lecture during Seudah Shlishis. He cited the opening pasuk of our parshah, then continued with the following. "Zos is an acronym for (zayin) (aleph) (taf), Z'chor al tishkach, 'Remember and do not forget.'" If one has the desire to retain his Torah study, to hold it in his memory, he can follow three suggestions as guidelines for not forgetting what he has learned. First, tzivah, "was commanded." The gematria, numerical equivalent, of tzivah is 101, alluding to Chazal's maxim that one should study everything that he learns 101 times. Indeed, they add that one cannot compare what one studies 100 times to that which he reviews 101 times. That one extra time makes a world of difference.

The second suggestion is Hashem. One should conjure up in his mind that he is standing before Hashem. This will enable him to remember his learning better. Third is leimor, "saying." He should articulate that which he is learning. This will also assist in the process of internalizing the Torah knowledge into his memory bank.

The purpose of citing this d'var Torah is to emphasize the saintly Rebbe's ability to think and remain immersed in Torah, despite the pain and deprivation to which he was subjected. It also demonstrates the commitment and devotion of his chassidim who listened and remembered this Dvar Torah sixty years later.

This is the (Torah) teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent. (19:14)

In the Talmud Berachos 63b, Chazal derive from this pasuk that the words of Torah firmly endure in a person who kills himself for it. This is a reference to those who give up their lives, who devote themselves fully to the study of Torah. Nothing stands in the way of their commitment to Torah study. The venerable Rosh

Hayeshivah of Mir Yerushalayim, Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl, sustained a major heart attack two years prior to his passing. A number of days after the event, he was visited by Horav Shlomo Lorinz, Shlita. The Rosh Hayeshivah lamented that he had no time to sleep because he had to study seven blatt, double pages, of Talmud and ten chapters of Rambam. "Perhaps the Rosh Hayeshivah should ask the cardiologist if it is advisable to strain oneself under such conditions," Rav Lorinz suggested. Rav Leizer Yudil (as he was fondly called) replied, "The Rambam clearly states, 'Everyone is obliged to study Torah, even the elderly and the sick.' Why do I have to ask a doctor, if the Rambam, who himself was a physician, has rendered the decision for me?"

This has been the attitude of gedolei Torah, the giants of Torah, towards its study. They have not looked for excuses, nor have they accepted them. They did what they were supposed to do, and this is the reason that they have become gedolim. No shortcuts, no excuses, just Torah study as if their life depends upon it.

Therefore, it is said in the Book of the Wars of Hashem: "The gift of the sea (Yam Suf)." (21:14)

In those days, it was common to detail the events surrounding the famous battles that took place. This was recorded in prose or aphorism. The Splitting of the Red Sea would surely have been recorded in that book. This is the simple explanation of the pasuk. Horav Shmuel Halevi Vosner, Shlita, takes a more hashkafic, philosophic, and halachic approach to rendering an explanation of this pasuk. Not every war and battle in which the Jewish people were involved is recorded in Tanach. Only certain battles achieve this distinction. Why?

Rav Vosner explains that only those battles whose purpose was to increase kavod Shomayim, the honor of Heaven, by catalyzing within Klal Yisrael an elevated state of ahavas and yiraas Hashem, love and awe of the Almighty, were included in Tanach. Otherwise, those battles had no eternal value and, thus, did not merit being recorded for posterity. This is intimated by the pasuk which is cited above, Es vaheiv b'sofah, "Those wars whose end purpose (sofah) brings about an increase in ahavas (vaheiv) Hashem." This is consistent with Chazal's exegesis in the Talmud Kiddushin 30b, which refers homiletically to the milchamah shel Torah, "war," spirited discussion between two study partners of Torah literature. They study Torah together, and while their discussion may, at times, become passionate and even intense, they do not stir from their place until they come to "love each other."

This is why the milchemes haChashmonaim, war of the Chashmonaim, which preceded the miracle of Chanukah, is not recorded in Tanach. They used their victory to inappropriately seize the monarchy for themselves, an act which certainly did not increase kavod Shomayim. This is consistent with the Ramban's commentary to the pasuk Lo yassur shevet m'Yehudah, "The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah" (Bereishis 49:10). Malchus, monarchy, belongs to the descendants of Yehudah. No one else may seize the monarchy for himself. The Chashmonaim were pious and virtuous. They were the individuals who saw to it that Torah would not be forgotten by the Jewish People. Yet, this family was gravely punished for seizing the monarchy of Klal Yisrael for itself. It is important to emphasize that this was their only transgression, and, while it was not done with malice, it was still counter to the Torah. Their war was not recorded in Tanach, since it did not ultimately reflect Hashem's Will.

The war that the Jews of Persia fought against Haman and his anti-Semitic henchmen catalyzed spiritual rejuvenation, joy and unparalleled happiness. It stimulated an unprecedented return and commitment to Torah and mitzvos. Thus, it was recorded for posterity in Tanach.

Parashas Balak

He (Balak) sent messengers to Bilaam... saying, "Behold! A people has come out of Egypt, behold! It has covered the surface of the earth... Bilaam said to G-d, "Behold! The people coming out of Egypt has covered the surface of the earth." (22:5,10,11)

Upon careful perusal of the text, we note a disparity between Balak's actual request of Bilaam and the manner in which Bilaam later related this request to Hashem. Balak said, "Behold! A people has come out of Egypt." He described Klal Yisrael's exodus from Egypt in the past tense. They have left Egypt. There is nothing that binds them to that country, to that period in history. Bilaam seems to intimate something quite different when he says, "Behold, the people are coming out of Egypt." He refers to Klal Yisrael in the present tense. They are still in the middle of their exodus. It is not yet completed. What are they expressing, and what should we derive from their divergent statements?

In his sefer V'zos HaBrachah, Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, gives the following explanation. Balak's perspective of the emerging Jewish nation was quite different than that of Bilaam. Balak viewed Klal Yisrael through his human eyes, which gave him only a superficial view of the nation. He saw the "here and now" of the Jewish People. Bilaam, however, as a prophet who related what Hashem told him, could speak only the absolute truth. Thus, his perspective was quite different.

Balak was aware that the Jews were privy to an array of exceptional and unprecedented miracles and wonders as they left the land of Egypt. Balak figured that it was all over. The miracles and their influence were in the past. After all, let us look at the history of the Jews during their sojourn in the wilderness. They complained bitterly when they did not receive their meat. When water was at a premium, they complained. They left Har Sinai, k'tinok habore'ach mibais hasefer, "like a young child fleeing from school." They feared that Hashem would add more mitzvos to those that they had already accepted. The meraglim, episode of the spies, created a great chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name. Is it any wonder that Balak felt that this nation had left Egypt? They had severed any relationship with the past. A people that has broken its ties with the past has little foundation upon which to build its future. They should be easy to curse effectively, because, in reality, they had already handicapped themselves by disassociating themselves from the Almighty.

Bilaam, on the other hand, was an individual in whom Hashem placed His words. Thus, he could articulate only the truth. He saw a nation that was leaving Egypt. It was not an event that had passed, but rather, it was an ongoing manifestation of Hashem's miraculous power and awesome might. This nation had neither severed its bond with the Almighty nor disconnected itself from the Egyptian exodus. It is an experience that is alive and well in their minds and hearts, continuing to inspire them. Veritably, they had had setbacks, but these were merely delays that had temporarily impeded their forward march towards their home in Eretz Yisrael. Yes, their past is linked with their present.

We may add that this idea applies equally in contemporary society. While it is true that we see that many of our brethren have alienated themselves from the religion of their ancestors, let us not overlook the many who have returned. Those who have left have done so because there is nothing to bind them to the past, to their roots, to their heritage. It is an ongoing legacy that continues to inspire, specifically because it is evolving and progressing forward until the advent of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

He crouched and lay down like a lion, and, like a lion cub - who can stand him up? (24:9)

Simply, this pasuk alludes to Klal Yisrael's ability to occupy its land with dynamism and strength. Once they are settled there, they will be firmly rooted. The Talmud in Berachos 12b takes this idea further. Chazal say that they wanted to include this pasuk in Krias Shema, but they did not do so because of its length. Rashi explains that its relationship to Krias Shema is to be found in the words b'shachbecha u'bekumecha, "When you retire and when you arise." Hashem watches over us, allowing us to lie down in peace and serenity, like a lion who fears nothing. Likewise, Hashem guards us when we are up and about, permitting us to move freely with confidence, manifesting the same calm as if we were laying down.

Horav Yerachmiel Kromm, Shlita, explains that Chazal are teaching us a powerful lesson. Ein baal ha'neis makir b'niso, "The one to whom a miracle has occurred is not (necessarily) aware of the miracle." This means that often situations occur which we do not realize are directly related to our well-being. Similarly, at times, we are unaware of a tragedy which has been averted. Hashem, Who saw to our being spared from disaster, knows. This is what occurred in the Bilaam/Balak dialogue. If we peruse the pesukim and compare this episode with the other wars fought against the Jews, we note that Amalek, Sichon and Og, archenemies of our people, harbored no secrets with regard to their feelings towards us. They openly came against us, battling us in a blatant attempt to destroy our nation. Balak and Bilaam did everything surreptitiously, concealing their evil behind closed doors. Indeed, we knew nothing of their evil machinations - at the time. This is why the Navi Michah (6:5) exhorts us, "Hear now, what Balak, king of Moav, Schemed, and what Bilaam ben Beor answered him, (and all the events) from Shittim to Gilgal, in order to recognize the righteous acts of Hashem." There is a special distinction in remembering how the evil Bilaam - together with Balak - schemed against us, because this will help us to realize how Hashem always protects us, even when we are unaware of His presence. This is the reason that the Torah goes to such length in detailing their evil dialogue.

In his Teshuvos, Yore Deah 356, the Chasam Sofer comments that throughout the Torah we find only one incident for which there is no verification from anyone who witnessed what took place. This is the episode of Balak and Bilaam and their scheme against our people. Every other miracle from Egypt throughout the forty-year trek in the wilderness was attested to by 600,000 men who transmitted these miracles to their children. According to those commentators who say that Yisro and Moshe Rabbeinu's sons arrived after the Giving of the Torah, they were the only individuals who did not stand at Har Sinai to witness the miracles. Even the beginning of the world, the story with the serpent, the Flood and the Tower of Bavel, according to the Ramban, were events that were transmitted from Adam to Shem, the son of Noah, the rebbe of Yaakov Avinu, who was fifty years old when Shem died. Yaakov taught this to his son Levi, who, in turn, transmitted the history to Amram, Moshe's father. Every generation of elders has taught its children to the point that we can clearly say that we were there! We saw it all, except for the story of Bilaam. No one knew what

went on covertly between these two. The Torah records it for posterity, because Hashem wants us to know - and always remember. This is why the Torah does not mince words in recording every aspect of the story: so that we will realize that Hashem is always there, even when we do not see a revelation of His might and wonders clearly before our eyes.

In his commentary to Parashas Haazinu, the Chasam Sofer cites the Mishneh L'Melech's explanation of David Hamelech's praise in Sefer Tehillim 136:4, "To Him Who alone performs great wonders." Is there anything novel about the fact that Hashem works alone? Certainly, He does not need assistance of any kind. David is teaching that there are miracles of which Hashem alone is aware. The baal ha'neis is unaware that he has just been the recipient of Hashem's beneficence in the way of a miracle. This is the lesson that the Torah seeks to teach us.

Horav Yitzchak zl, m'Volozhin, was well aware of Czar Nikolai's vehement hatred of the Jewish People. As Rosh Hayeshivah of the famous yeshivah in Volozhin, he met many times with the ministers in St. Petersburg in an attempt to avert a vicious decree against Russian Jewry. He was a respected and familiar face in the halls of power. During one of his trips, a minister asked him to explain a passage in Sefer Tehillim (117:1,2), "Praise Hashem, all nations; praise Him, all the states! For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of Hashem is eternal." What purpose is there in having the nations of the world praise Hashem for His kindness to the Jews? Does it not make much more sense for the Jews to praise Hashem?

Veritably, the Talmud in Pesachim 118b asks this question. Instead of directly responding, Rav Itzile (as he was referred to fondly) used this as an opportunity to convey some of his emotions to the minister. "Let me explain," he said. "There are often times when the ministers convene with the Czar to arrive at a collective decision on how best to deal with the 'Jewish problem.' Decrees are written up, some of which become law, and others which for some unknown reason do not materialize. Only you know the many conferences that have been held with the primary focus of making life miserable and unbearable for the Jews. For some reason, they did not reach fruition. That 'reason' is Hashem. Only you, the nations of the world, are aware of how often Hashem has covertly saved us. You know how many decrees were not actualized. Therefore, you are able to praise, because you know the truth. We have no idea of all you have attempted to do to us. We trust in Hashem's constant protection. You see it clearly."

The Brisker Rav, zl, used his great-grandfather's exegesis to explain Yisro's comment to Moshe (Shemos 18:11), "Now I know that Hashem is the greatest of all gods, for in the very matter in which [the Egyptians] had conspired against them." Hashem punishes a person middah k'neged middah, measure for measure. Klal Yisrael had been the subject of Egypt's harsh treatment, their cruelty and evil for many years. They understood the depth of many of the plagues and punishments that the Egyptians were sustaining, because they were acutely aware of how each punishment fit measure for measure to the evil which the Egyptians had perpetuated. They were limited, however, in their perception. They did not understand all of the punishments, because they did not know how they fit middah k'neged middah. Their awareness of the Egyptian evil was limited to their level of cognition and no more.

On the other hand Yisro, knew more. He had a deeper understanding of events, because he had a greater knowledge of these events. Chazal tell us that Hashem does not coalesce a machshavah, thought, with a maaseh, action. In other words, one is not punished for his evil intentions which are not realized. One is punished only for what he does, not for what he thinks and plans. His intentions do not catalyze punishment. Regarding non-Jews, however, this concept does not apply. Hashem does count their evil intentions against them. This presented a dilemma for the Jewish People. They certainly were aware of the Egyptian's evil actions, which enabled them to understand the punishment they were justly receiving. They remained, however, in a quandary regarding a number of punishments which did not "fit" into the scheme of measure for measure.

When Yisro entered upon the scene, he was able to understand all of Hashem's punishments. As a member of Pharaoh's elite cabinet, Yisro was privy to all of the evil intentions and machinations that Pharaoh and his rogue henchmen were planning against the Jews. They were held culpable for their intentions. As Moshe related the many miracles to his father-in-law, Yisro understood exactly why these punishments were meted against the Egyptians, because he knew the truth. "Now I know," he said, because he really knew.

We should be cognizant of and forever thankful to Hashem for all that He does for us - both of that which we are aware and, equally so, for that of which we are unaware.

Sponsored in memory of our dear Mother and Grandmother GIZI WEISS - Morry & Judy Weiss, Erwin & Myra Weiss and Grandchildren Gary & Hildee Weiss, Jeff & Karen Weiss, Zev & Rachel Weiss, Elie & Sara Weiss, and Brian "Love and memories are gifts from G-d that death cannot destroy"  
Peninim mailing list [Peninim@shemayisrael.com](mailto:Peninim@shemayisrael.com)  
[http://www.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim\\_shemayisrael.com](http://www.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim_shemayisrael.com)

From: [hamaayan-owner@torah.org](mailto:hamaayan-owner@torah.org) on behalf of Shlomo Katz [[skatz@torah.org](mailto:skatz@torah.org)]  
Sent: Thursday, July 06, 2006 7:06 PM To: [hamaayan@torah.org](mailto:hamaayan@torah.org) Subject:  
HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Chukat-Balak  
Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by SHLOMO KATZ  
Chukat-Balak Volume 20, No. 35 12 Tamuz 5766 July 8, 2006  
Sponsored by  
Martin and Michelle Swartz and family on the yahrzeit of Martin's grandfather John Hofmann a"h  
Rikki and Nat Lewin on the 65th yahrzeit (this past week) of Nat's grandfather, Harav Aharon ben Harav Noson Lewin (the "Reisher Rav") z"l hy"d  
Today's Learning: Megillah 3:6-4:1 O.C. 582:1-3 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Yoma 31 Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Ma'asrot 5

The Gemara (Bava Batra 14b) teaches: "Moshe wrote his book - i.e., the Torah - and the parashah of Bilam." Commentaries ask the obvious question: Isn't the parashah of Bilam part of the Torah? Why is it singled out?

R' Chaim Zimmerman z"l (Rosh Yeshiva in Chicago; died mid-1990s) explains: The parashah of Bilam and the rest of the Torah serve different purposes. The entire Torah, other than this section, is G-d's word to His nation. The parashah of Bilam, however, is G-d's word about His nation. More than that, it is directed not only to the Jewish People, but to the world at large. Indeed, that is why it was said originally by a non-Jewish prophet.

What does this parashah teach about Klal Yisrael / the Jewish Nation? It teaches that Klal Yisrael is a unit. Individual Jews may be righteous or wicked, but the Jewish People as a whole is always righteous in G-d's eyes. By way of analogy, R' Zimmerman observes, the laws of physics that describe the movement of atoms in general do not predict the movements of a specific atom. Similarly, every individual Jew has bechirah / free will to do good or bad. Independently of those choices, however, every Jew has a right to exist because he is part of Klal Yisrael as a whole.

Where do we see this in our parashah? When Bilam failed in his first attempt to curse Bnei Yisrael, Balak said to him (23:13), "Go now with me to a different place from which you will see them; however, you will see its edge but not see all of it." The Jewish Nation as a whole, Balak realized, could never be cursed. (Torah L'Yisrael p.50)

\*\*\*\*\*

"This is the decree of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, to say: 'Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they shall take to you a completely red cow, which is without blemish, and upon which a yoke has not come.'" (19:2)

The law of Parah Adumah / Red Heifer is regarded by our Sages as the quintessential chok / decree, i.e., a law with no discernible rational explanation. However, there is disagreement about exactly what aspect of Parah Adumah is a chok. It is not the basic mitzvah; our Sages tell us that the Parah Adumah atones for the sin of the Golden Calf. "Let the mother come and clean up the mess that her calf made," our Sages say. [Understood simply, the sin of the Golden Calf brought death to the Jewish People, while the Red Heifer cleanses man of the impurity of death.]

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (rabbi of Brody, Galicia; died 1869) suggests that the chok is contained in our verse. "Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they shall take to you--i.e., to Moshe--a completely red cow." Why should the Parah Adumah be Moshe's? Indeed, there is an opinion in the Gemara which states that each Parah Adumah in history was prepared only by someone who first was sprinkled with the ashes of Moshe's Parah Adumah. Of all of the Jewish People, Moshe seemingly was the one who least needed atonement for the Golden Calf! This is the mystery of the Parah Adumah.

(Kohelet Yaakov: Drush Heh Le'Parashat Parah)

From the same source:

"Miriam died there and she was buried there." (20:1)

The Zohar states: "Once judgment was exacted against the Parah Adumah [in the preceding chapter], judgment was exacted against Miriam." What does this mean?

R' Kluger explains: The Gemara (Mo'ed Kattan 28a) asks, "Why is the death of Miriam recorded next to the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah?" The Gemara answers: "To teach that just as the Parah Adumah atones, so the death of the righteous atones." But why are two atonements needed?

R' Kluger writes: One of the laws of the Parah Adumah is that it purifies one who is impure, but if one who is pure comes into contact with it, he becomes impure. Why? This alludes to the fact that it is easier to repent from improper deeds than from improper thoughts. One who has done bad deeds knows he has sinned, and he repents. He was "impure" and he becomes "pure." However, one who has only had improper thoughts does not believe he has sinned. He thinks he is "pure," but his failure to repent leaves him "impure."

The death of the righteous has the potential to atone for the sin of improper thoughts. Why? Because the suffering that one experiences when the righteous die

is in one's mind. If one is pained in his thoughts at the death of a tzaddik, he thereby purifies his thoughts and achieves atonement.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Behold! it is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations." (23:9)

The message of the gentile prophet Bilam, writes R' Aharon Lewin z"l hy"d (the "Reisher Rav"; rabbi of Rzeszow, Poland and member of the Polish Senate from the Agudath Israel party who was murdered by the Nazis 65 years ago this past week), is that any attempt by the Jewish People to assimilate into the non-Jewish world must inevitably lead to the former's destruction. If the nation does not dwell in solitude, it will not be reckoned at all because it will ultimately disappear.

How can we protect ourselves? R' Lewin writes that one answer is provided by the following enigmatic statement of the Gemara (Menachot 43b):

The verse (Bemidbar 15:39) states: "It shall constitute tzitzit for you, that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them." [Says the Gemara:] See this mitzvah and remember another mitzvah. Which mitzvah? Kilayim!

R' Lewin explains: Kilayim is the prohibition against mixing species. For example, the Torah prohibits planting wheat and grapes together. Likewise, the Torah prohibits interbreeding animals of different species (as defined by halachah). The mitzvah of Kilayim reminds us that G-d created each plant and animal with unique characteristics and He intends that each remain unique.

Similarly, G-d created separate nations. In particular, He separated Klal Yisrael from the other nations, and He intends that it remain separate.

What aid did He give us to remind us of our separateness? He gave us a uniform, i.e., tzitzit. When we see ourselves in that uniform, we will remember our own separateness.

(Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun)

\*\*\*\*\*

"He declaimed his parable and said: 'Who will survive when He imposes "El"?' (24:23)

The Midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer comments: Bilam said, "G-d created seventy nations and did not attach His Name to them. He did attach His Name to 'Yisra-El.' And, He equated the name of 'Yishma-El' with the name of 'Yisra-El.' Accordingly, who can survive in his (Yishmael's) days?!"

R' Alexander Aryeh Mandelbaum shlita observes: The Midrash is teaching that the descendants of Yishmael derive their power to oppress the Jewish People from the fact that G-d's Name is in their name. This alludes to their strong emunah, both their willingness to sacrifice their lives for their beliefs and their willingness to kill others because they believe it is G-d's will. These characteristics were not found among the other nations that persecuted the Jewish People throughout their history.

(Matzmiach Yeshuah p.15)

\*\*\*\*\*

HaMaayan, Copyright © 2006 by Shlomo Katz and Torah.org. Posted by Alan Broder, [ajb@torah.org](mailto:ajb@torah.org).

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives are available starting with Rosh HaShanah 5758 (1997) at <http://www.torah.org/learning/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.

Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. [learn@torah.org](mailto:learn@torah.org) 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

From: RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM PARSHA COLUMN [[Shabbat\\_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org](mailto:Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org)] on behalf of Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column [[parshat\\_hashavua@ohrtorahstone.org](mailto:parshat_hashavua@ohrtorahstone.org)]  
Sent: Wednesday, July 05, 2006 5:05 AM To: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshiot Chukat/ Balak by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Chukat - Balak (Numbers 20:1 - 25:9) By Shlomo Riskin

"TORAH LIGHTS" WEBCAST VIDEO

Rabbi Riskin's insights

on the Parsha - now live online @ [www.ots.org.il](http://www.ots.org.il)

Efrat, Israel - One of the great mysteries of history and sociology is the persistence of the nation of Israel despite persecution, pogrom, and close to 2,000 years of exile. I was even invited to lecture at the other end of the world - before the universities of Beijing and Kaifeng, China - on the mysterious and miraculous survival of Israel, and the universities provided me with the topic! Even Balaam, the Gentile Biblical Prophet of the nations of the world recognized this unique character of Israel - and attempted to define its source.

"How can I curse the nation which is not cursed by G-d, and how can I express anger against the nation not angered at by G-d? It is because I see them from the head of the mountains and I look upon them from the valleys" (Numbers 23:8, 9)

Our classical commentary Rashi interprets Balaam's incite: "(In order to understand the mystery of Jewish existence) I must look upon Israel's heads (beginnings, forefathers) and the origin of their roots. I see them established and strengthened like these mountains and valleys by their Patriarch's and Matriarch's" (Rashi, ad loc). And it is precisely because our nation continues to derive its nourishment from the ideals and teachings of its Biblical forebears that Israel has a unique message, quality and power, so that "Behold it is a nation that can dwell alone, without taking account of or being accounted as worthy by the Gentile nations." (ibid 23:9) In other words, we have an independent, self-starting and self-continuing ideology which enables us to go strong despite world anti-semitism. (Perhaps apocryphal) Incident is recorded that in the first year of the Jewish State President De Gaulle of France came to Israel as the guest of Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. The "Lion of Judea" remembering the tree lined Champs Elyses of Paris, hurriedly instructed the police force to chop down trees from the Galilee and to set the trees up along Dizengoff Street where the Prime Minister of Israel would ride together with the President of France in special cavalcade. Unfortunately although the streets were aligned with cheering Israelis the high winds caused tree after tree to fall to the ground, causing not a little cynicism and a good deal of laughter. An amused De Gaulle turned to his host and said, "Apparently your trees are not yet rooted in your soil" responded Ben Gurion, "that may be so but our nation has been rooted in our soil for the past 4,000 years." And the fact that Ben Gurion regularly hosted a Bible class in the Prime Minister's office and a Talmud class in his own home only confirmed the truth of his comment....

This significant idea – indeed the very secret of our national eternity – is magnificently expressed in a mishnah in the second chapter of the Ethics of the Fathers. The Mishnah records that Rabban Yohanan ben Zakai sent out his five best disciples to discover the single most important character trait. R. Eliezer said a good eye, R. Yehoshua said a good friend, R. Yose said a good neighbor, R. Elazar said a good heart and R. Shimon said one who sees what will be born. (Hebrew *noled*) He then sent the same five out to discover the worst character trait from which individuals must distance themselves. Each gave the opposite of what he had said before (with R. Eliezer saying an evil eye and R. Yehoshua saying an evil friend etc.) and R. Shimon saying, one who borrows and does not pay back.

Clearly, R. Shimon does not seem to be in sync with his colleagues. How come in the second instance he does not say that the worst characteristic is one who does not see what will be born, one who does not recognize in advance the results of his actions?

Allow me to give an alternate explanation of the Hebrew phrase "Ro'eh et hanolad" (as first suggested to me by Rabbi Shalom Gold). Perhaps it does not mean "one who sees what will be born" but rather "one who sees from whom he is born", one who realizes that he did not emerge from a vacuum but rather from glorious ancestors who gave gifts of universal morality and optimistic faith in the ultimate perfection of society as their legacy for the future. We believe that it is precisely our Jewish adherence to the ideals of our past which has enabled us to continue to live in a way in which we can still envision an even more significant future. And if G-d forbid we forget our moorings, if we forsake the very roots of our existence and the teachings of our classical texts, then we shall have cut ourselves off from the very soil which nourished us until now and enabled us to live until this point in history. If we become guilty of national Alzheimer's, we will truly be like those who have borrowed from others and not paid them back; in such a case, we shall have been responsible for the end of Jewish history and the cessation of Jewish eternity.

It is to be hoped that this is not the case, and that we understand that the Tomb of our Matriarchs and Patriarchs in Hebron, Mother Rachel's gravesite and the burial place of Joseph are much more than pieces of real estate which can be overlooked and traded away. It is no accident that the Hebrew word for grave is also used in rabbinic literature to mean womb: continued Jewish future will only be possible if it is rooted in Jewish past.

Shabbat Shalom

---