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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON **BALAK** - 5770

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, June 25, 2010
THE LONG GAME :: Rabbi Berel Wein

A number of my grandchildren petitioned me to take them to a baseball game while I was in the New York area. The game was played at the new Yankee Stadium, a large and imposing structure if there ever was one. Since I am an incurable dotting grandfather and baseball expert, I readily agreed to their request and we all went to the stadium to watch the game. I have often felt that baseball has many life-like metaphoric qualities to it. It is a game of great skill and enormous frustration. An athlete that is successful only thirty percent of the time is considered to be a star in this game. It is a game of nuances and subtleties, of inches either way and of unexpected and unpredictable events that form no pattern. It is also a game that has no time limitation to it.

The actual game usually takes close to three hours to finish though it can be shorter and many times is considerably longer. Unlike other sports, this one does not operate under the tyranny of the clock. It has its own constantly changing rhythm and pace. It is a slow game with intermittent eruptions of excitement.

The baseball season is a long one – at least twice as long as any of the other major professional sports. It is a sport that rewards individual excellence but demands team play. In all of these qualities it certainly mimics life itself and, perhaps, that is its greatest appeal as a spectator sport.

The game I attended was not a particularly exciting or well-played one. But my grandchildren thoroughly enjoyed themselves so I was more than satisfied. A grandparent must always be able to show a lighter side of one's self to one's future generations. In our current world this is called bonding. Though I was watching the game, my mind was wandering off to more weighty matters. The ability to sit through a long game in order to arrive at a final result is what lies at the heart of many issues in our personal and

national lives. We crave instant decisions and immediate clarity. "Now" is the imperative word in many segments of our society. My grandchildren have taught me never to leave the game until it is officially ended no matter how lopsided the score may appear at earlier on. The famous fable regarding the hare and the tortoise applies not only to baseball games but to all of life itself. King Solomon phrased it correctly when he wrote that the race is not always to the swift. The current issues that plague the Jewish world could stand a longer view. The role of the Israeli Supreme Court in religious matters, if it should have any role at all, needs long term perspective and not case by case provocations. So does a deeper understanding of the place of religion in a secular "Jewish democratic state." The spinning-its-wheels peace process, with the numerous two state solutions advocated but never capable of being implemented over the past ninety years, bears a longer perspective as to its current practicality or viability.

Life generally and Jewish life particularly is a very long game. Until the game is truly over, so to speak, we really cannot accurately assess winners and losers, wise policies and foolish decisions, hasty actions and truly measured responses. And since, like baseball, these issues have no known time constraints, it is obvious that we are in for a very long game. Since our life span is certainly limited and finite there is a natural tendency for humans to be in a hurry. We make all sorts of grandiose plans and predictions – Five Year Plans and the like – about a future of which we are completely ignorant. We forget that the law of unintended consequences is omnipresent in our lives, both personally and nationally. We are impatient for the game to end; having lost the childhood wonder at simply observing what is taking place before our eyes, no matter what the apparent score may be at the given moment.

Jewish life with all of its thrills and excitement, boredom and tiredness, improbabilities and constants, is a very long game. Viewing it from this perspective can help one achieve a more sanguine view in our lives. As the great baseball sage, Yogi Berra, once commented: "It ain't over until it's over!"
Shabat shalom.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
Weekly Parsha :: BALAK :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The Torah has great relevance to all current events. It is not a book of history but it is rather a book about humankind – its greatness and evil, wisdom and creativity and its pettiness and foolishness. This week's parsha allows itself to be read in the context of our current world and perhaps, most acutely, in the relationship of the Jewish people and the State of Israel to their adversaries and to the world generally.

The Jewish people under the leadership of Moshe have fought a number of wars against enemies - Amalek, The Emorites, the Canaanites, the king of Bashan, etc. - and emerged victorious in all of these physical encounters. The king of Moab, Balak, afraid to confront Israel directly again in open battle, devises a new strategy to destroy the Jewish nation. He hires a media expert, Bilaam, to conduct a public relations campaign against the right of the Jewish people to exist. He reasons that though they may not be defeated in war, they can be cursed in the eyes of the world.

To put Bilaam into our terms and times, he is the UN, rights commissions, the European Union, blockade breakers, NGO's, human rights activists and the literary and academic world. Balak is happy to fund Bilaam's efforts – the New Balak Fund. Bilaam's prose and poetry are unmatched for beauty in the Torah. He is the hero of the intellectual set, the advisor to kings and rulers, a recognized expert, while, in reality, he is nothing more than an empty suit.

Balak is convinced that if he cannot conquer and destroy the Jewish people by direct aggression he will now be able to do so through guile, falsehoods,

demonization and deligitimatization. Bilaam is Balak's default weapon against Moshe and Israel.

The Lord intervenes with Balak's scheme. Bilaam turns out to be completely unreliable as far as Balak is concerned. Bilaam gives advice to Balak regarding how the women of Midian and Moab can seduce the Jews into sinning and thereby bring Heaven's wrath against them. The Jewish nation is damaged by Bilaam but his main objective of destroying Israel is blocked by Divine fiat.

The insults become praise and the malevolence of his thought is somehow transformed into a badge of honor by Moshe and Israel and so recorded in the Torah. Balak's promising plot has failed in its objective and eventually he, his nation and Bilaam bring only death and destruction upon themselves.

The destruction of Judaism and the Jewish people has been an age old object of many Balaks and Bilaams. They still exist today and are still hard at work at their nefarious schemes. Yet somehow deep in our souls we know that the curses will be transformed into blessings and, eventually, enmity will subside and evaporate. May we be privileged to transform the current words of the Bilaams of today to words of blessing just as occurred to the original Bilaam of long ago
Shabat shalom

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
To weekly@ohr.edu
Subject Torah Weekly

Torah Weekly - Parshat Balak
For the week ending 26 June 2010 / 13 Tammuz 5770
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

OVERVIEW

Balak, king of Moav, is in morbid fear of Bnei Yisrael. He summons a renowned sorcerer named Bilaam to curse them. First, G-d speaks to Bilaam and forbids him to go. But, because Bilaam is so insistent, G-d appears to him a second time and permits him to go. While en route, a malach (emissary from G-d) blocks Bilaam's donkey's path. Unable to contain his frustration, Bilaam strikes the donkey each time it stops or tries to detour. Miraculously, the donkey speaks, asking Bilaam why he is hitting her. The malach instructs Bilaam regarding what he is permitted to say and what he is forbidden to say regarding the Jewish People. When Bilaam arrives, King Balak makes elaborate preparations, hoping that Bilaam will succeed in the curse. Three times Bilaam attempts to curse and three times blessings issue instead. Balak, seeing that Bilaam has failed, sends him home in disgrace.

Bnei Yisrael begin sinning with the Moabite women and worshipping the Moabite idols, and they are punished with a plague. One of the Jewish leaders brazenly brings a Midianite princess into his tent, in full view of Moshe and the people. Pinchas, a grandson of Aharon, grabs a spear and kills both evildoers. This halts the plague, but not before 24,000 have died.
INSIGHTS

My Mind's Made Up – Don't Confuse Me With The Facts!
"Balak, the son of Tzipor" (22:2)
It takes one to know one.

In Moav, proficiency in the black arts was as common as a cold. Balak was the greatest sorcerer in Moav. In those times, people could predict the future by creating talking birds. They would take gold for its head, silver for its beak, and copper for the wings. The parts had to be assembled at a certain time of day. Finally, they placed in its mouth the tongue of a real bird. Then they put it on the sill of an open window so that by day it faced the sun, and, by night, the moon. Seven days later, the bird's tongue began

to make a ringing sound. The sorcerer would then take a golden needle and pierce the bird's tongue. And then the bird would begin to talk. Using the powers of impurity, the bird would reveal the secrets of the future.

No one was more skilled in this form of divination than Balak. For this reason he was called Balak ben Tzipor. In Hebrew, the word tzipor means "a bird." In other words, the name implied, "Balak, who can foretell the future through a magic bird." Among other things that the bird told Balak was that he would at first be victorious over the Jewish People, but finally he would fail.

Once, Balak was preparing a bird to prognosticate the downfall of the Jews. While he was bowing and offering incense to the bird it suddenly took wing and flew out of the window. Balak was very disturbed when the bird did not return.

After some time, Balak saw the bird returning. However, pursuing the bird was a plume of flame. The flame singed the bird's tail. Balak knew that this was a sign that the power of the Divine Presence would eventually conquer the power of the dark side.

In spite of this, Balak still invited Bilaam to curse the Jews.

There are a couple of things in this bizarre story that don't quite add up. First, if Balak was the chief sorcerer in Moav, why did he need Bilaam? Was he looking for an apprentice? Also, if Balak saw the portent of the plume of flame, what did he hope to achieve by inviting Bilaam to curse the Jewish People. Wasn't it obvious to him that he would fail?

The answer is that the obvious is never an impediment to self-interest. Balak didn't want to be confused with the facts. Balak was so intent on the destruction of the Jewish People that he ignored the obvious portent of the bird and surmised that the Jewish People, like all other nations, were subject to the natural forces of the constellations. However, the Jews are above the stars. G-d supervises us with specific Providence.

And to answer our other question, Balak was not in need of a sorcerer's apprentice. Both he and Bilaam had expertise in different areas of sorcery. Balak was well versed in the outer facets of magic, the practical day-to-day aspects of cursing and spell-casting. Bilaam, on the other hand, had knowledge of the inner workings of the black arts. Balak surmised that together they would make an unbeatable duo, able to overcome clear indications of incipient defeat.

Balak proves the old adage: "My minds made up. Don't confuse me with the facts!"

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
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From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>
To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>
Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Balak

For I know whomever you bless is blessed and whomever you curse is cursed. (22:6)

What a wonderful epitaph for the wicked Bilaam. His power of speech is so powerful that his blessings and curses have efficacy. How is he different from the great tzaddikim, righteous men, whose ability to bless is also highly effective? The difference is in the curse: they do not curse anyone. A tzaddik only blesses. His mouth is holy and, thus, used only for sanctity. Bilaam's mouth was a public vehicle for communication. He conveyed whatever he pleased.

This is not the only area which "distinguished" Bilaam. Indeed, the Tanna in Pirkei Avos 5:19 asks: "How are the disciples of our forefather, Avraham, different from the disciples of the wicked Bilaam?" What kind of

question is this? The disciples of Bilaam are kofrim, heretics, who do not believe in Hashem. They serve idols and are immoral, while the disciples of Avraham Avinu believe in Hashem and observe His Torah which is their blueprint for life. These two disciples are as discrepant from each other as their mentors were!

Horav Shlomo Heyman, zl, Rosh Yeshivah of Mesifita Torah Vodaath, explains Chazal's question in a practical manner. What about Avraham's talmidim, students, gave them the fortitude and resolution to follow Avraham, to become believers in Hashem, acting in direct contrast to the common belief in idolatry that prevailed at the time? It was a generation filled with spiritual darkness and moral bankruptcy. How did Avraham's students succeed? What made these special individuals gravitate to Avraham?

Chazal explain that the force that swept these people to Avraham was the power of their middos tovos, fine character traits. What these individuals lacked in terms of religiousness they compensated in terms of character refinement. They were essentially decent people who were not swayed by the moral and spiritual turpitude which reigned. They saw the truth through the haze of ambiguity, because their middos were inherently good. We tend to be blinded by - and, as a result, gravitate to - evil, because we do not see clearly. Our ability to focus on the good is limited by our character traits. When one's middos are consistent with perceiving the truth, he is able to see the emes. This epitomized Avraham's talmidim.

In contrast, Bilaam's students had such base character traits that they were able to ignore the myriad of miracles which Hashem had wrought for the Jews. Anyone with a modicum of common sense was aware that there was a G-d Whose Divine supervision directed every aspect of life in the universe. Yet, Bilaam's students did not see. Why? Because they had bad middos. They had middos that blinded them from perceiving the truth. The most awesome revelation the most wondrous miracle, has no impact if one cannot perceive it.

Things have not changed over time. Our present-day secularists are aware of the Almighty. They know within their hearts that their lives are a sham. Yet, they continue spewing their heresy, denigrating religious observance, and venerating their loose moral code of behavior - due to a lack of character refinement. Their middos ra'os, negative character traits, control their lives. They cannot see, or they do not want to see. In any event, their vision is stunted; and their lives are similarly stunted.

They came to Bilaam and said to him, "So said Balak ben Tzipor, 'Do not refrain from going to me. For I shall honor you greatly and everything that you say to me I shall do.'" (22:16,17)

Horav Avraham Weinfeld, zl, author of Lev Avraham, notes that when one peruses the dialogue between Balak and Bilaam, he observes that the primary focus and concern of each participant was: kavod, honor.

Officially, they were discussing matters of critical importance to the state. Moav was "under siege." The Jews were coming! Something had to be done to prevent their citizens from being overrun by the dangerous Jews. Bilaam was the man that could put a stop to them. He would do what he did best: curse them. This was the official script of the conversation. When one reads the words, however, the one word which strikingly stands out in Balak's request and ensuing dialogue is: kavod. These were world leaders, discussing the welfare of their citizens, but from their conversation one notices that the primary question was how much glory Bilaam would receive.

Balak begins his initiative to Bilaam, "I shall honor you greatly." Later, when Bilaam has demurred Balak's request, the king of Moav asks, "Why do you not go to me? Am I not capable of honoring you?" (ibid 22:37). It never entered Balak's mind that Bilaam had a reason for rejecting his offer, other than not getting enough kavod. Balak knew his customer.

Finally, even when Balak saw that Bilaam is blessing - not cursing- he said, "Now, flee to your place. I said I would honor you, but - behold! Hashem has withheld you from honor." (ibid 24:11) Does this make sense? Balak is

convinced that Hashem prevented Bilaam from successfully cursing the Jews only because Bilaam was unworthy of receiving kavod!

This does not mean that the wicked never feel any compassion. Rare moments do occur, such as when Balak gave Bilaam a tour of Kiryas Chutzos, a metropolis streaming with men, women and children, so that Bilaam would take pity upon its innocent citizens and curse the Jews. Their compassion was rare and misplaced. Curse the Jews, so that they do not attack you. Whoever said the Jews were attacking? Did they really care about the "innocent civilians," or was their own glory their primary concern? Come to think of it - the same dialogue is occurring during our very own lives, when the Jewish nation is blamed for catalyzing all of the strife in the world. Some things just do not change. The Balaks and Bilaams of antiquity seem to regenerate themselves, and the Jew is always the responsible party.

If the men came to summon you, arise and go with them. (22:20)

Bilaam represents the truly evil/wicked person. This is because he did not overtly do anything bad. He made sure to cover up his trail, his true intentions. Not only was he concerned with his reputation, he knew that evil achieves greater efficacy when people least expect it. This is why it is surprising that the Tanna in Pirkei Avos asks: "How are the disciples of our forefather, Avraham, different from the disciples of the wicked Bilaam?" Is there any question about determining the wickedness of Bilaam? He is a cretin, the essence of evil. What question can there be concerning how to distinguish between his students and those of Avraham Avinu? Veritably, the Tanna's question seems imprecise. Should the question not be the distinction between Bilaam and Avraham? What do the students have to do with it? Horav Yechezkel, zl, m'Kozmir, explains that if we ask this question then our perception of Bilaam is misguided. Bilaam does not appear to be an evil person. He has neither horns nor a pitchfork with an evil smile. No, Bilaam can be found studying Torah, davening in shul, dressed no differently than any other righteous Jew. The evil is embedded deep within him. The sheker, fallaciousness, is not noticeable. It is only when we view his students, see how they act, their demeanor and character, that the evil with which their mentor imbued them rises to the fore. When we look at the talmidim of Avraham Avinu and contrast them with the talmidim of Bilaam ha'rasha, we see the true essence of Bilaam.

At first, Bilaam was instructed by Hashem not to entertain the messengers of the king of Moav. Hashem did not want Bilaam to go with them. It was later, when the agents returned and offered Bilaam a considerable sum of money, that Hashem acquiesced to the request. Hashem's permission is ambiguous. Rashi explains that the word lecha, "to you", also connotes, "for your benefit." This indicates that even though Hashem recognized Bilaam's insatiable greed, He was not going to deprive the cretin from making a profit. It would have to be done within the specific criteria that Hashem indicated to him. It seems surprising that Hashem would allow this evil man to proceed simply because he could make some money. What is Rashi teaching us?

The Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, quotes the Chidushei HaRim who wonders why sinners are often successful in their war against Torah-observant Jews. Why do they often succeed in preventing us from achieving spiritual ascendancy? Somehow, they are able to throw a wrench in the proverbial mechanism of life, constantly creating challenges to our religious observance. The Gerrer Rebbe explained that they are sincere in their virulent pursuit of sheker, falsehood. Their bogus activities, their animus for everything true, is surprisingly sincere. They are committed to transmitting their deceit to whomever they can reach. They actually believe in their artificial way of life. Thus, they will do everything within their power to destroy any challenge that represents authenticity, the true way a Jew should live. Regrettably, the observant do not always support the authentic with the same sincere commitment as the falsifiers demonstrate in promoting their fraud.

When Bilaam originally indicated his desire to join the agents of Moav, the Jewish People feared that it was out of sincere animus towards them and what they represented. This could prove to be a dangerous challenge. After all, he was promoting his lie, which had a basis in truth. Once he indicated that it was the money that he sought, however, he was acting like the good old greedy snake that he was. There was no integrity to his hatred. It was purely for the sake of self-gratification. He had returned to thinking only of himself. Such a challenge would not create a problem. It was sheker built upon the foundation of sheker. Thus, it would not succeed.

A similar idea is expressed by the Tchebiner Rav, Horav Dov Berish Weidenfeld, zl. At first, Hashem allowed Bilaam to accompany the agents. Yet, in pasuk 22, we find the Torah relating that Hashem was angry with Bilaam for going with them. "God's wrath flared because he was going." What happened? He explains this anecdotally. There was once a wealthy miser whose stinginess grew with the wealth that he amassed. He absolutely could not tolerate spending an extra penny - even for himself. Indeed, when he left his mansion to go to town, he took his stately carriage up to the gates of the city. There, he would alight from the carriage and walk the rest of the way to save a few pennies on the "meter." He did not want to incur any extra expense for feeding the horse or paying time for the driver. Yet, when he had a din Torah, monetary dispute with a Jew, he would come roaring into town on his carriage, led by four horses. His purpose was to impress upon the judges that he was a wealthy man, an individual with whom to be reckoned. The judges would get the message and fear rendering an unfavorable decision against him. Unique in his ability to withstand external pressure from baalei batim, laymen, the presiding Rav commented to the miser, "You always enter the town on foot, but to bury a Jew you are willing to ride in your carriage." This man's priorities were starkly obvious.

Bilaam was such a person. It was not his habit to ride on a donkey. He walked to his destination. When it came to cursing Klal Yisrael, however, he rode. This is the underlying meaning of the pasuk, explains the Tchebiner: "G-d's wrath flared because he was going, ki holeich hu." Normally, Bilaam was a holeich, walker. He never rode. He only rode to curse Jews. This angered Hashem.

An anecdotal exegesis, but, when we think about it, are we any different? Are our priorities any less misplaced? Do we pull out all the stops when it involves an issue about which we are passionate? Does davening suddenly become more exciting when we are involved in a dispute and our presence lends greater significance to our position? When our presence makes a statement, we make that statement loudly and clearly, regardless of the possible inconvenience to our schedules. We put our money where it gives us greater personal return - even if we do not necessarily believe in what we are doing. It is all about us. That was Bilaam's problem. It was all about him.

Hashem opened the mouth of the she-donkey. (22:28)

The she-donkey speaking intelligently to Bilaam - giving him mussar, rebuking him for striking it - is probably one of the strangest miracles recorded in the Torah. Clearly, Hashem was teaching this base individual that even a donkey, an animal not recognized for its unusual intelligence, can act intelligently - if Hashem deems it to be necessary. Likewise, the most, wise, erudite person can act like an utter fool when Hashem decides it should be so. Bilaam did not take the hint. The Kli Yakar comments that Hashem wanted Bilaam to know that just as the she-donkey had been granted the ability to speak for the glory of Klal Yisrael, so, too, was he granted prophecy for one reason: to utter the blessings Hashem put into his mouth. Why did he not listen?

That goes to the crux of Bilaam's problem: he had an ayin ra, evil-eye; or he was short-sighted. He refused to look, to see, to delve into the future/potential, or to look back at the past/origin. He refused to look at the whole context - from the beginning to the end. When we take into consideration the origins of Bilaam and his outstanding potential for greatness, we wonder how foolish he was to have ignored it all. Chazal

teach us that Bilaam was Lavan's son, Yaakov Avinu's first cousin and brother-in-law. The she-donkey was Yaakov's gift to Bilaam, to ensure that Bilaam, as advisor to Pharaoh, would go easy on the Jews. Bilaam was acutely aware of the sublime level of his brother-in-law and his nephews. He could have followed them and achieved untold distinction. Instead, he chose to follow the dark side, the path of sorcery and ritual impurity. He was singularly immoral, an individual whose code of ethics was non-existent.

Bilaam epitomizes lost potential, the man who could have reached the zenith, but, instead, plunged to the nadir. He understood what G-d wanted from him, but he rejected it. He looked at everything with ayin ra, a negative, jaundiced perspective, ignoring its potential, always looking for the downside and the shortfall. The donkey intimated to him: You can only do what Hashem wants. You will not succeed against Hashem. Bilaam ignored the message and acted accordingly.

Chazal teach that this was no ordinary donkey. It had incredible yichus, pedigree. In fact, according to the Tanna in Pirkei Avos 5:6, it was one of the ten things that were created on Erev Shabbos, at twilight, on the sixth day of Creation. The meaning of this is debated by the commentators. The Rav, R' Ovadiah m'Bartenura, writes that on Erev Shabbos, the decree was issued that the donkey would speak to Bilaam. Tosfos Yom Tov explains that the donkey could not have survived for thousands of years. The consensus among a number of Rishonim, early commentators, is that the power of speech that this donkey miraculously possessed was granted on Erev Shabbos.

Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer teaches us that the donkey which accompanied Avraham Avinu to the akeidah was none other than the son of the original donkey that was created on the Erev Shabbos of Creation. This donkey later served Moshe Rabbeinu, his wife and sons, when they returned to Egypt to take part in Hashem's plan for liberating the Jews from Egypt. This is the donkey that Moshiach ben David will ride as he heralds the future Redemption. We see from here that the she-donkey that spoke with Bilaam was created on the Erev Shabbos of Creation.

There is, however, another question that we should address: Why is it necessary for the donkey upon which Moshiach Tzidkeinu will ride to be thousands of years old? There is no shortage of available donkeys/horses for Moshiach to ride on. Why should this donkey date back to Avraham and the Akeidah and, according to some commentators, actually be the same donkey which was created on the first Erev Shabbos.

Horav Moshe Schneider, zl, Rosh Yeshivah of Toras Emes in London explains that to take the Jews out of Egypt, where they had sunk to the forty-ninth level of ritual impurity, amidst unparalleled miracles and wonders, the Jewish People needed a special z'chus, merit. No simple z'chus would have sufficed. It had to be unusual. It required the z'chus of mesiras nefesh, devotion to the point of self-sacrifice, manifest by Avraham Avinu at the Akeidah. This was the greatest expression of self-sacrifice - unprecedented and unparalleled. This donkey participated in that experience and continues to "carry" its eternal merit. It was this merit that was employed to earn the Jewish people their exit visa from Egypt.

Today, too, as we wait for the advent of Moshiach, we also call upon the z'chus of mesiras nefesh of our Patriarch, so that we can finally achieve our long-awaited Redemption. Whether Bilaam's donkey was the same one that played a role in the Egyptian exodus and will complete its performance in the Final Redemption - or if it was that donkey's ancestor - it was one very special donkey. Regrettably, the individual for whom this important lesson was intended ignored it completely. He had serious myopia which distorted his perspective.

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

Rashi explains that the solitude of Klal Yisrael is the result of its Patriarchal origins. We are fortunate to be able to live sequestered. Thus, the annihilation that will be wrought against the wicked nations will not reach us, because we will have been dispersed from within their midst. Simply

put, what many of our secular co-religionists feel is a curse, is, in effect, our good fortune. Regrettably, this has not prevented many of our own from attempting to establish roots in the non-Jewish community. Why can they not see what even the wicked Bilaam was able to observe? We must remain separate.

In his Responsa, Meishiv Davar, the Netziv, zl, interprets this pasuk homiletically. "When Klal Yisrael is an am levadad, a nation in solitude, then yishkon, they will dwell in peace with no fear of external challenges for their well-being. But, if ba'goyim, if they attempt to assimilate among the nations of the world, lo yisdashav, they will not achieve personal, distinct recognition. Instead, they will be hounded by the goyim, gentiles. This is consistent with Chazal's statement in the Talmud Sanhedrin 104A: "Why was Klal Yisrael stricken with eichah (Eichah yashvah badad, How (does Yisrael) sit in solitude? Yirmiya's lament about the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash.) Rav said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, "Hashem said, 'Yisrael shall dwell securely, alone, in a land of grain and wine, just like Yaakov. Even its heavens shall drip dew.' (Devarim 33:28). Now their dwelling shall be alone."

Maharsha explains that R' Yochanan's statement distinguishes between two forms of isolation. Hashem had originally planned that His People would enjoy a splendid isolation in Eretz Yisrael, free from all outside influences and threats. Regrettably, Klal Yisrael did not have the fortitude to take pride in isolation, to view separatism as an opportunity to achieve greater spiritual distinction unimpeded by the moral bankruptcy and dogma of the prevalent society of the day. Thus, they more easily fell prey to assimilation and its consequence: sin. As a result, Yisrael was conquered and was condemned to a pathetic isolation in which they were shunned by all.

The Netziv offers an alternative explanation. It was Hashem's plan that the Jews separate from the gentiles due to their negative spiritual influences. The Jews could not deal with isolation. They thought it was a punishment - not an opportunity to protect themselves. Thus, they did whatever they could to reverse the policy of isolationism, to endear themselves to the gentiles. Hashem had no alternative but to have the gentiles act toward the Jews with animus and rejection. Ultimately, Hashem's plan for isolation of the Jews was fulfilled. Instead of the isolation being carried out with pride, dignity and tranquility, however, it was experienced through degradation and persecution. This is what the Navi lamented. Why did the badad, solitude, have to occur in this manner?

When Hashem "warned" Avraham Avinu, Ki ger yiheyeh zarcha b'erec lo lahem, "Your offspring shall be aliens in a land not their own" (Bereishis 15:13), it was not meant to be a foreshadowing of the future. The Netziv views it as a sort of promise, an insurance policy to guarantee Jewish survival. This isolation policy has truly kept us spiritually and morally distinct. Without it we would blend in with contemporary society until the distinction between the Jew and the gentile is totally eradicated.

Atah Hu Hashem Elokim asher bocharta b'Avram, v'hotzeiso M'ei Uhr Kasdim v'samta shemo Avraham u'matzasa es levavo ne'eman lefanecha. It is You, Hashem, the G-d Who selected Avram; You took him out of Uhr Kasdim, and You made his name Avraham. You found his heart faithful before You.

Up until this point, the tefillah has focused on Hashem as Creator of a universe that is mind-boggling in size and expanse, including within it billions of galaxies and their individual hosts. Among the "smallest" of these galaxies is the planet earth with its billions of inhabitants. From all of these inhabitants, Hashem chose one little boy, at the age of three years old, upon whom to confer His attention. He - Avraham - would teach the world about Hashem. In other words, the entire universe, including planet earth with its many inhabitants, was worthy of being created in order to produce Avraham Avinu! Not bad. It is a shame that we as Jews, as Hashem's am ha'nivchar, chosen nation, do not stop to think about this - although we say it daily by rote. As descendants of Avraham, we have relevance. We are the reason for the world. Well, not really. We are the reason for the world -

when we learn Torah, which is the real reason for the world. When we study Torah and observe mitzvot, we have relevance. We become the part of the reason that Avraham was selected to be the Patriarch of the Jewish People. He would transmit his beliefs to us. We connect with him when we adhere to his legacy. It is as simple as that.

Moshe Shimon and Tibor Rosenberg in memory of their father Pinchas ben Shimon z"l Rosenberg niftar 18 Tammuz 5719

From Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org & genesis@torah.org

To ravfrand@torah.org

Subject **Rabbi Frand on Parsha**

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Balak

Mistaking The Angel of Mercy For The Satan

"Bilaam got up early, he saddled his donkey and he accompanied the officers of Moav. G-d was angered that he went and He placed an Angel of G-d on the road to prevent him." [Bamidbar 22:22] Rashi identifies the angel as an angel of mercy. G-d tried to stop Bilaam with an angel of mercy because He wanted to stop Bilaam from doing what he was about to do to himself (engage in an activity that would ultimately lead to his own death). However, the pasuk later says that the donkey saw the angel and he was holding a drawn sword. Since when would an "angel of mercy" be carrying a drawn sword? What happened to the merciful angel that Hashem sent to save Bilaam from carrying out his ill-conceived mission?

Rav Pam once beautifully observed that the angel of mercy can appear in all different types of guises and costumes. Sometimes he appears as the scariest creature we have ever seen. Its job is to stop us from doing what we are doing - for our own good! He will do whatever it takes him to accomplish that mission. The "merciful" aspect of the angel is not his appearance or his facial expression -- it is the fact that he is stopping someone from hurting himself.

Rav Pam mentioned this to his Yeshiva students in the context of disappointments they may encounter along the road to finding their designated life's partner. A young man may meet a young woman and think this is the greatest shidduch that can ever happen. He is so excited and full of anticipation and then something happens to derail it. Suddenly, the imminent shidduch is called off. Naturally, the boy and his family are very distraught and full of disappointment.

Many times in life -- we realize later -- that the cause of our momentary disappointment was the greatest thing that ever happened to us. The Ribono shel Olam knows better. He knows that this first one was not the right one. The more appropriate match will yet appear in the future.

When the shidduch broke, it appeared as tragic, as a calamity, as an angel with a drawn sword in his hand. However, the truth of the matter is that it was an angel of mercy. The angel of mercy does not always appear with a halo. He can sometimes appear in a horrible guise. But if that stops a person from doing something harmful to himself then the "mission of mercy" has succeeded.

This does not only apply to matrimonial matches. It applies to a person's whole life. It applies to business deals, to buying homes, and to all kinds of financial moves that a person places much faith in only to see them turn out to be great disappointments. Many times, the short term disappointment which caused him to change his original plans or goals turns out to have been the greatest blessing that could have happened.

Before Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky came to America, he applied for a certain Rabbinical position in Europe. He lost the job to another candidate. Rav Yaakov was disappointed by that turn of events. He needed to earn a livelihood so he had no choice but to travel to America. For a time, he was in Seattle, Washington and for a time he was in Toronto, Canada. He ultimately wound up in Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and became its great Rosh

Yeshiva and the rest is history. The Rav whom he lost to in Europe as well as that entire city where he wanted the Rabbinate were totally wiped out by the Nazis.

There are thousands of stories like this. Many times, we think we are halted by the Satan who derails our plans. Often we are mistaken - the angel we think is the Satan is really the Malach haRachamim [Angel of Mercy]. The Master of the World had greater plans in mind for Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky, but at that time it appeared to him like an angel with a sword drawn against him.

We must always bear this in mind. We cannot judge anything by its cover, not even angels.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

The Search for Truth (The TorahWeb Foundation)

Did Bilam really think he could outsmart Hashem?

The Talmud cites several "all inclusive" principles. Hillel told the proselyte that the essence of Torah is, "Love your fellow as yourself," and Rabbi Akiva said that this is the all-encompassing principle of Torah. Ben Azai said that the verse "This is the book of the generations of Adam" (Breishis 5:1) is all-encompassing. The Talmud says, "Which is a small verse upon which all the essentials of the Torah depend? 'Know Him (Hashem) in all your ways' (Mishlei 3:6, Berachos 63a)."

I would like to suggest that there is an all-encompassing verse of mussar, human behavior and psychology: "All the ways of a person are right in one's own eyes" (Mishlei 21:2). Some people may do something wrong even though they know that it is wrong, but the overwhelming number of people believe that what they are doing is right, and are often very resistant to any suggestion that they may be wrong.

Perhaps this is the greatness of the patriarch Abraham in his willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac. For decades, Abraham vociferously protested the pagan ritual of human sacrifice. "G-d would never desire human sacrifice. This is an abomination!" If he carried out the Divine command to bring Isaac as an offering, he would have to declare, "All my life, I have been in error." Abraham was willing to do so. It is a sign of greatness to admit that one was wrong.

We are often victims of self-deception. When we have a desire to do something, the defense mechanisms in our subconscious minds can develop ingenious reasons why what we wish to do is right and proper. This is termed rationalization. We concoct logical reasons for what we wish to do and we believe them, and if criticized, we vigorously defend our mistakes. Rabbi Eliahu Dessler in Michtav M'Eliyahu (Search for Truth) has a powerful essay on "the Perspective of Truth." He cites the Torah statement that "a bribe will blind the eyes of a judge and distort even the thoughts of the righteous" (Devarim 16:19). We are all bribed by our desires, and we cannot think objectively. We rationalize our behavior. The Talmud says that even the minutest bribe can bring about a distortion of judgment.

The tzaddik of Apt was a judge in a litigation that went on for several days. Abruptly, he withdrew from the case, saying he had lost his objectivity. On Friday evening, when he put on his Shabbos kaftan, he found an envelope with money that one of the litigants had put into a pocket. "Now I understand why I lost my objectivity. A litigant had tried to bribe me by putting money in my kaftan. Even though I did not discover the bribe until several days later, my thinking had shifted to favoring him. I did not know why this was happening, but I felt that I had lost my objectivity. That is the

power of a bribe. It can distort your judgment even if you are unaware of the bribe."

How much more so are we subject to distortion when the "bribe" is within us, and has the power of a strong desire!

A chassid asked Rebbe Yisrael of Rhizin for a guideline to avoid faulty decisions. The rebbe told him that the way a tightrope walker keeps his delicate balance to avoid falling to his death, is that when he feels a tug to one side, he leans a bit to the other side. "Many of your desires arise from the yetzer hara. When you feel an urge to do something, pause and think of reasons why you should not do it. That may enable you to keep your balance, to do what is right."

Forty years of treating people with alcohol addiction have shown me the validity of Rabbi Dessler's observation. One recovered alcoholic said, "In all my years of drinking, I never took a drink unless I decided it was the right thing to do at the time." The calamitous results of alcohol and drug abuse are totally ignored. The craving for the pleasant effect of the chemical blinds one to its disastrous consequences. One is bribed into rationalization. Rabbi Dessler states that intense learning of mussar and sincere prayer for Divine guidance can protect us from dangerous self-deception.

Bilam was no fool. He was told in no uncertain terms that Hashem would not allow him to curse Israel, and he obviously knew the infinite power of Hashem. Yet, his hatred for Israel distorted his judgment, and he tried to do what he logically knew he could not do.

If we wish to do what is right, we must be on the alert and on the defensive. Our defense mechanisms operate in the subconscious part of our minds which is "cunning, baffling and powerful." We must exercise our conscious mind to the limit with prayer and mussar to avoid self-deception.

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The Donkey who Triumphed over a Prophet and the Fly who Triumphed over a President

Hashem opened the mouth of the she-donkey and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you struck me these three times?"

Balaam said to the she-donkey, "Because you mocked me! If only there were a sword in my hand I would now have killed you!"

The she-donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your she-donkey that you have ridden all your life until this day? Have I been accustomed to do such a thing to you?" He said, "No."

Then Hashem uncovered Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of Hashem standing on the road with his sword drawn in his hand. He bowed and prostrated himself on his face.

Three times the donkey angered Balaam and enraged him: "If only there were a sword in my hand I would now have killed you!" Until it became clear to him that his anger was the result of his shortsightedness, "Had it not turned away from me, I would now even have killed you and let it live." (Bamidbar 22:33) And that he had to thank her.

Anger, Our Sages have taught us is rooted in pride. Who are you to do this to me? Do you not know who I am and what I'm worth? When someone becomes full of these arrogant feelings, his threshold for anger is very low and any little thing not to his liking can make him angry until he has a tsunami-like explosion that destroys himself and those around him.

Fortunate is the man who overcomes his anger and woe to the prophet who is bested by his donkey.

A lost fly didn't notice the sign, "Entrance to flies prohibited." And innocently flew into the President's room while giving an interview and had the gall to land on the President of the United States. A few brave waves of the presidential arm were not enough to make him understand his fatal mistake and so he was crushed to death with a presidential hand and a presidential smile.

If only the fly had opened its mouth and said, "Your honor, Mr. President, why are you angry? Why can you not conquer your anger? What is your ethical right to kill me? Was my intention to make you mad? To kill, to

murder out of senseless anger? You are exhibiting Presidential strength against a fly and are even anticipating applause on the stellar performance. Where is your squashing strength when in the streets of Teheran people are being butchered and you, your voice is silent? There are millions there waiting for a show of support from you, for a strong hand to hold on to them against a despotic and violent and murderous regime. And you're overpowering flies.

There were no speech writers here nor members of your entourage to teach you artificial smiles and gestures. Here we saw the measure of the man, Barack Hussein Obama.

Fortunate is the man who overlooks the honor due him and woe to the president who is bested by a fly.

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Yossef Brook

From Rabbi Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com>
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Subject [Rav Kook List]

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Balak: Sweet Dreams

Dreamt a disturbing dream, but can't remember it? The Talmud recommends reciting the following prayer while the kohanim bless the people:

"Master of the World! My dreams and I belong to You.... If the dreams are good - bolster them like the dreams of Joseph. And if they need to be remedied - fix them like the bitter waters that Moses sweetened...

"Just as You transformed the curses of wicked Balaam into blessings, so too, make all of my dreams be for the best." (Berachot 55)

Transforming Bad Dreams

There are two ways in which evil tidings may be transformed into good ones. In the first way, the means remain unfavorable, but the final result is good. One example is the sale of Joseph into slavery and his subsequent imprisonment in Egypt. All of the various causes were adverse, incurring much hardship for Joseph. But the ultimate result - Joseph's rise to greatness, and his ability to provide during the years of famine - was certainly for the best.

However, it is even more impressive when the causes are also changed into positive ones, so that the end is achieved by propitious means. An example of this type of transformation occurred with Balaam. God could have let Balaam curse the people of Israel, and only later changed his curses to blessings. But instead, God "placed a hook in Balaam's mouth" - as the Midrash describes God's complete control over Balaam's powers of speech - so that only blessings came forth. Thus, even the means - Balaam's prophecies - were favorable.

We pray that our dreams should be completely transformed for the good. Like the 'curses' of Balaam, we want both the ends and the means to be auspicious and beneficial.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, p. 274)

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Orthodox Union / www.ou.org

Joy During the Nine Days

Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik (adapted from lectures)

The Mishnah (Ta'anit 25b) says that once the month of Av begins, during the Nine Days, we have to reduce our joy. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach

Chaim 551:2) rules according to the Rishonim who interpret this rule as meaning that we may not engage in business, build items that bring us pleasure or make preparations for joyous events, such as building a garden house or preparing for a wedding. The Rema adds that for the sake of a mitzvah, all these activities are permissible.

The Magen Avraham (no. 8) adds that the reason for the custom not to make weddings during the Nine Days, even though it is a mitzvah to get married, is that it is an inauspicious time. This explanation of the custom seems inadequate because the Gemara (Yevamot 43a) states explicitly that the reason we do not make weddings in the beginning of the month of Av is because we reduce our joy. It seems difficult to reconcile the Magen Avraham's explanation that the custom is due to the Nine Days being an inauspicious time with the view expressed in Yevamot that the reason is due to a required reduction in joy.

We can explain this difficulty through a more precise understanding of why preparation for a joyous occasion that constitutes a mitzvah is permitted during the Nine Days. We are permitted to prepare for a joyous occasion that constitutes a mitzvah not because such preparation is an exception to the general rule against preparation for joyous occasions. Such preparation is permitted, rather, because the general prohibition does not apply at all to preparation for a joyous occasion that constitutes a mitzvah. This is because the nature of the general prohibition is that one is not permitted to prepare for an event that is primarily a joyous occasion. When the joyous event is also a mitzvah, the preparation is viewed as for the mitzvah, not for the component of joy that might accompany it. The preparation is permitted because it does not fall within the general prohibition of preparing "for an event that is primarily a joyous occasion." This preparation, rather, is for a mitzvah occasion.

However, while a wedding is a mitzvah, the essence of the mitzvah itself is to bring joy to the bride and groom. Therefore, even though preparation for mitzvah occasions does not generally fall under the general prohibition of preparing for joyous occasions during the Nine Days, preparation for a wedding does fall under the general prohibition because the mitzvah is for the object of the preparation, the wedding, to be a joyous occasion.

Adapted from Shiurei Harav on Mourning and Tisha B'Av, based on the lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. This and other books are available for purchase at <http://www.ou.org/sefarim>

Orthodox Union / www.ou.org

Balak - Bribery

Rabbi Asher Meir

The Torah forbids judges from taking bribes in no uncertain terms: "Don't accept bribes, for bribes blind the sighted and distort the words of the wise" (Shemot 23:8). The Torah reiterates in Devarim, "Don't slant judgment and don't show partiality; and don't accept bribes, for bribes blind the sighted and distort the words of the wise" (Devarim 16:19).

The most basic understanding of this directive is that it forbids a judge from accepting payment to favor one side. However, this understanding is problematic. As Rashi points out, the Torah has just forbidden slanting judgment or showing favoritism. Therefore, Rashi explains, this commandment comes to forbid accepting money "even to judge truthfully". The Chinukh explains that bribes are forbidden for truthful judgment because if they become habitual then this will lead to accepting bribes to distort judgment.

However, this raises a new question: if it is forbidden to accept bribes even to judge truthfully, then why does the Torah give the reason that bribes distort judgment? According to the Chinukh's explanation, this addition seems superfluous; each judge knows whether he is impartial or not. The problem is rather that the judge may accept bribes and act against his acknowledged better judgment. On this point Rashi on Devarim writes: "Once he accepts a bribe, it is impossible that he won't be inclined towards [the giver] and seek to justify him." In other words, a simple prohibition on slanting judgment would not be enough, because the judge would be convinced that he is truly objective. It is necessary for the Torah to explicitly prohibit bribery, the reason being the subtle corrosive impact of a bribe.

However, Rashi on Shemot gives a different explanation. There he writes: "Even someone wise in Torah, if he takes bribes he is destined to lose his mind and forget his learning, and his eyes will darken." According to this approach, it seems that this prohibition is meant to prevent this spiritual blindness per se.

This fits in with what we wrote in a previous column on Torah judgment. The judgment of a judge in Torah court is not considered to be merely an exercise in legal scholarship; it is a unique level of applying Divine justice to human affairs. Justice is a Divine prerogative; another verse relating to judgment states, "Don't show partiality in judgment; hear the small and the great equally. Don't fear any man, for judgment belongs to G-d" (Devarim 1:17). Yet HaShem delegates this prerogative to human agents, the dayanim. Indeed, the word *elohim* can refer either to G-d or to human judges, as we see in chapter 82 of Tehillim which states that "Elokim" (G-d) judges in the midst of "elohim" (the judges). Thus judgment is akin to prophecy. One of the characteristics of the *mashiach* is that he will be able to "judge by smell" because of his prophetic character (Sanhedrin 93b).

Therefore, the distortion of judgment due to bribes is despicable without any connection to any miscarriage of justice. The judge has a unique opportunity to carry out an awesome Divine prerogative, and to attain a level akin to prophecy. Accepting payment from one side blinds his eyes and withholds this unique level from him. This itself is a terrible crime, which Rashi describes as the "darkening of the eyes". Rabbi Asher Meir is the author of the book *Meaning in Mitzvot*, distributed by Feldheim. The book provides insights into the inner meaning of our daily practices, following the order of the 221 chapters of the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*.

From Yeshiva.org.il <subscribe@yeshiva.org.il>
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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

The Spurned Shadchan
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

In honor of this week's parshah, in which the words *mah tovo ohalecha Yaakov* are mentioned, I bring you this article about the creation of the Jewish household.

The phone rings. Mrs. Weinberg, a shadchan who often calls to ask shaylos, is on the line.

"I suggested that a local girl meet a bachur who is currently learning in Eretz Yisroel." Mrs. Weinberg began. "Both families did their research and agreed that it sounded worth pursuing, but they decided to wait until the summer when the bachur would be visiting his family here."

"When the summer arrived," Mrs. Weinberg continued, "I called the families back to arrange for the young people to meet. However they told me that someone else suggested the shidduch, and that they are following up through the other shadchan. Are they permitted to cut me out of the arrangements? After all, it was my idea first!"

Does Mrs. Weinberg have a claim? If she does, for how much money and against whom?

SHADCHANUS GELT

Before we discuss these issues, we need to establish whether paying a shadchan is indeed a halachic requirement.

I often find that people feel that one is not required to pay a shadchan. However, this is a misconception, since the halachic sources require paying a shadchan a fee, usually called by its Yiddish name, *shadchanus gelt* (Rama, Choshen Mishpat 264:7). Just as you expect to pay your real estate broker, so too, you should assume you will pay the shadchan. (We should be aware that a shadchan's claim for services rendered has a stronger foundation than a doctor's fee for an office visit, see *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah* 336:2, but that is a topic for a different article.) Furthermore, there is nothing wrong with a shadchan requesting payment for services rendered just as an attorney or accountant has every right to demand payment for services.

BROKERAGE FEES

Although it sometimes sounds strange, *shadchanus fees* are halachically categorized as brokerage fees. Just as one pays a real estate agent for arranging a transaction, so too one pays a shadchan for making the arrangements necessary for the engagement and marriage to transpire. Therefore, we must first explain the halachic sources for brokerage fees.

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 63b) mentions the responsibility to pay a broker's fee to the person who arranges the sale of property or merchandise (*Shulchan Aruch* Choshen Mishpat 185:1; Rama 87:39). This is a standard business practice, similar

to paying a commission to a stockbroker, real estate agent, or personnel recruiter (sometimes called a "headhunter").

BUT WHAT IF I DIDN'T ASK HIM?

People easily understand that if you approach a broker or agent, you thereby obligate yourself to pay him for his services. However, some people assume that if you did not solicit the service, are not obligated to pay. Does this distinction have any basis?

According to halacha, you are required to pay for any unsolicited benefit that you would usually pay for. Providing unsolicited benefit is called *yored lisoch sdei chaveiro shelo birshus*, entering someone else's field without authorization, and the provider of the benefit is referred to simply as the *yored* (Gemara Bava Metzia 101a).

The case where the Gemara demonstrates this halacha is very instructive: Someone owns a field that he usually plants, but he has not yet planted it this year. Someone else planted the field without asking the owner's permission and now asks the owner to pay him! Is the planter entitled to compensation for his efforts? The Gemara rules that he is entitled to compensation since you benefit from his work.

HOW MUCH DO YOU OWE THE YORED?

You are required to pay the *yored* as much as you have benefited. If he performed work for you that would normally require you to hire someone, you must pay him the market rate for hiring someone for this work (Gemara Bava Metzia 76a; Sma, Choshen Mishpat 375:1).

WHY MUST ONE PAY THE SHADCHAN?

When a single person or the parent of a single person asks someone if they know of any marriageable prospects, they are asking them to perform a valuable service on their behalf. This service has a market value, just as any other brokerage or recruiting fee has a market value (Rama Choshen Mishpat 264:7).

WHAT IF YOU DID NOT ASK THE SHADCHAN?

Although there are halachic differences whether you approach the shadchan or the shadchan offers his/her service, in either case you are required to pay the shadchan. The basis for this requirement is as follows:

In this latter instance the shadchan is a *yored*, since you received benefit from him for an unsolicited service that you would normally pay for (Gra, Choshen Mishpat 87:117). As explained above, you must pay him whatever you would have otherwise paid for that service (Gemara Bava Metzia 76a, 101a).

AM I REQUIRED TO PAY SHADCHANUS TO A FAMILY MEMBER OR CLOSE FRIEND?

This shaylah was discussed hundreds of years ago. A professional shadchan contacted Mr. Reuven suggesting a gentleman he thought appropriate for Mr. Reuven's widowed sister-in-law. Mr. Reuven was involved in researching the shidduch and in arranging the couple's meeting. When the couple announced their engagement, Mr. Reuven informed the professional shadchan that he was expecting half the *shadchanus gelt*, claiming that he was the shadchan who convinced the woman to consider this shidduch. The professional shadchan contended that he was the only shadchan, and that Mr. Reuven was an interested party and not a shadchan. Mr. Reuven countered that the professional had never made direct contact with his sister-in-law but relied exclusively on him to encourage the shidduch. The matter was referred to Rav Yair Chayim Bachrach, known as the *Chavos Yair* (after one of the *seforim* he authored). The *rav* ruled that Mr. Reuven was indeed a shadchan since he influenced his sister-in-law to pursue the shidduch. He was therefore entitled to half the *shadchanus fee* even though he was related to one of the principals (*Shu't Chut HaShani* #3, quoted in *Pischei Tshuvah*, Even HaEzer 50:16).

WHO MUST PAY THE SHADCHANUS FEE, THE PARENTS OR THE COUPLE?

Usually the parents of an engaged party pay the *shadchanus gelt*. Are they required to pay this fee, or is it really the responsibility of the young couple that the parents assume? As we will see, there are halachic ramifications to this question.

The *poskim* debate this question, making razor-thin distinctions that have major ramifications. Some contend that the responsibility falls upon the young couple since they are the ones who benefit, even though the prevalent custom is that the parents pay (*Shu't Avnei Nezer*, Choshen Mishpat #36). Others contend that since the parents usually pay, the shadchan only expects payment from them and therefore he has no claim against the young couple (*Halichos Yisroel* #3, quoting *Eirech Shai*, Choshen Mishpat Chapter 185).

There is a major dispute between these approaches. The first opinion holds that if the shadchan is unable to collect from the parents, he may collect from the couple. According to the second opinion, his only claim is against the parents, and if he cannot collect from the parents, he cannot claim his fee from the young couple.

ARE THERE ANY HALACHIC DIFFERENCES WHETHER YOU ASKED THE SHADCHAN, OR HE APPROACHED YOU WITH THE SUGGESTION?

Since we have learned that one must pay the shadchan whether or not one solicited him initially or not, does it make any difference whether I asked the shadchan or the shadchan approached me first?

There are several differences in halacha that pertain to whether you solicited the shadchan initially or vice versa, including when you are required to pay the shadchan and whether one violates the mitzvah of bal talin if one fails to pay the shadchan on time.

If you approached or telephoned the shadchan initially, then you have hired him or her to perform a job -- in this case to find an appropriate shidduch. If he/she succeeds in his/her mission, then you are required to pay when the job is completed, and you must pay the shadchan as soon as the couple becomes engaged (Shu't Halichos Yisroel #1-2). Furthermore if you do not pay him/her on time and the shadchan demands payment, you will violate a Torah prohibition called bal talin, not paying a worker on time, a mitzvah we will explain shortly.

However, if you did not hire the shadchan, then you do not violate bal talin if you do not pay him/her on time since the shadchan is not your employee.

Another difference in halacha affected by whether the shadchan was solicited or not, is whether you must pay him or her at the time the couple becomes engaged or at the wedding. If the shadchan solicited you, then the time you are required to pay the shadchan depends on minhag- accepted local custom (Rama Choshen Mishpat 185:10). If the local custom is that people do not pay the shadchan until the wedding, then the shadchanus gelt is considered a marriage expense to be paid then, not an engagement expense. However, if you solicited the shadchan then you are required to pay the shadchan when his/her job is completed, which is when the couple becomes engaged (Shu't Halichos Yisroel #4).

BAL TALIN – PAYING WORKERS ON TIME

As explained above, if one hired the shadchan, one must pay him/her on time because of the mitzvah of bal talin.

WHAT IS ON TIME?

There are two deadlines, sunset and daybreak, and one is obligated to pay one's worker before the first deadline after the job is completed. Therefore, if the worker finished his job before the end of the day, I must pay him by sunset. If he completed the work at night, I must pay him before daybreak (Bava Metzia 111a). (As mentioned above, one violates this prohibition only if the worker demanded payment and the owner refused to pay and there was no understanding or prearrangement of late payment.) According to this approach, if you went to a shadchan who, Baruch Hashem, arranged a successful shidduch, one should make sure to pay him or her immediately after the couple becomes engaged before the next deadline arrives (Shu't Halichos Yisroel #11). Others contend that one need not pay the shadchan until the wedding unless the custom is otherwise (Rav Elyashiv, introduction to Shu't Halichos Yisroel).

Still other poskim contend that since the responsibility of paying the shadchan really lies with the marrying couple, there is no violation of bal talin if the shadchan is assuming that the parents are paying his fee since they are technically not required to pay shadchanus gelt.

HOW MUCH MUST I PAY THE SHADCHAN?

One must to pay the shadchan what is the accepted fee in your community for this service (Pischei Teshuvah, Even HaEzer Chapter 50:16).

DIVIDING THE FEE

What happens if two different shadchanim were involved at different stages of encouraging the shidduch? Are they both entitled to be paid? How does one divide the fee? As we can imagine, this is not a recent shaylah.

An early posek, the Shev Yaakov (Choshen Mishpat #13), discusses the following case: Levi recommended that Reuven's son meet Shimon's daughter. After the engagement of the young couple, Gad claimed that he had originally suggested the shidduch to the parties and thus he is entitled to part of the shadchanus.

The Shev Yaakov researched the claims. As it turned out, Gad had indeed originally suggested the shidduch to both parties, but Shimon and his family had no interest in pursuing it. Levi, however, was a more persistent shadchan and convinced Shimon to consider Reuven's son for his daughter.

Shev Yaakov ruled that Gad was not entitled to any part of the shadchanus fee. He contends that a shadchan is only entitled to a fee when he was involved in the part of the discussion that reached fruition. However in this case, Gad's proposal did not accomplish anything and therefore he is not considered to be a shadchan.

By a similar reasoning, a real estate agent who showed a prospective client a house, but was unable to interest them in the house, and then a different agent showed them the same house and succeeded in convincing them to purchase the house, the second agent is entitled to the commission according to halacha. (In these instances, if accepted business practice is different it might affect the halacha, which is a topic for a different time.)

Thus, it seems that Mrs. Weinberg is not entitled to any shadchanus fee in our situation, since she was not part of the actual introduction that took place. Notwithstanding that the Shev Yaakov ruled that Gad was not entitled to a share of the fee, there are cases in which the shidduch involves several parties and each is entitled to a part of the fee. If Sarah suggested a shidduch, but then felt that Rivkah would be a better go between, and eventually Leah was necessary to get involved and was instrumental in the couple subsequently becoming engaged, all three ladies are considered partial shadchanim according to many poskim. The accepted practice in this case is to divide the accepted shadchanus fee and to award 1/3 to each of the ladies. Other poskim contend that only the person who suggested the shidduch and the one who finalized it are considered shadchanim and they split the fee – but that a go-between who neither suggested a shidduch nor finalized it is not viewed as a shadchan (Shu't Avnei Nezer, Choshen Mishpat #36).

SOME INTERESTING SHADCHANUS STORIES

A shadchan unsuccessfully attempted to arrange a shidduch between a daughter of the wealthy Weiss family and the son of the wealthy Schwartz family. Although the two families did meet and enjoyed one another, the shidduch did not materialize and the Weiss girl subsequently married someone else. Later, other shadchanim suggested a match between a younger Weiss daughter and the widowed Mr. Schwartz, and the couple became engaged. The original shadchan now claimed that he is entitled to a percentage of the shadchanus gelt, claiming that his involvement in the previous unsuccessful shidduch was instrumental in forging the close relationship between the two families that caused the latter shidduch to happen. Does the original shadchan have a claim?

The parties referred this shaylah to the Avnei Nezer (Choshen Mishpat #36). In a very complicated ruling he contends that the original shadchan might be entitled to a very small percentage of the shadchanus gelt for his role. He suggests a compromise on this basis, but rules that one could not be certain that he is entitled to any part of the fee.

IF A SHADCHAN ASKS FOR A HIGHER THAN TYPICAL FEE, AM I REQUIRED TO PAY IT?

If the shadchan did not provide any unusual shadchanus service, and the fee for a shadchan in your area is fairly standard, then the shadchan is not entitled to the extra fee. However, if there is no standard shadchanus fee in your area, or the shadchan performed a special service, then one must pay the shadchan's higher fee (see Rama, Choshen Mishpat 335:1 and 264:7; Shach 264:15). Shadchanus is like any other profession where one may not charge significantly above the going rate. However, when there is no fixed accepted amount, then the shadchan is not overcharging since there is no market amount. Similarly, if the shadchan extends him/herself more than is expected, he may command a higher fee since one is paying for the extra service (see Rama 335:1)

According to the Midrash, Moshe Rabbeinu was the shadchan between Klal Yisroel and Hashem at the giving of the Torah. Furthermore, Hashem Himself is indeed the ultimate Shadchan of every marriage. Thus, we should respect the wonderful role of the shadchanim in our midst who are involved in a mitzvah that emulates both Hashem and Moshe.

(סנהדרין קה ב)

ארבעה הדייטות: בלעם ודואג ואחיתופל וגחזי:
'בלעם' - בלא עם (שאינו לו חלק עם עם); דבר אחר 'בלעם' - שבלבל ישראל בעצתו שהשיאו לבלק, כדבעינן למימר לקמן, והפיל מהם כ"ד אלפים); 'בן בעור' - שבא על בעיר (שבא על אתונו כמו בהמה דמתרגמינן בעיר).
תנא: הוא (אביו של בלעם) בעור, הוא כושן רשעים, הוא לבן הארמי: 'בעור' - שבא על בעיר; 'כושן רשעים' - דעבד שתי רשעיות בישראל: אחת בימי יעקב (שרדף אחריו ובקש לעקור הכל), ואחת בימי שפוט השופטים (לאחר מיתת יהושע, דכתיב (שופטים ג, ח) 'ויחר אף ה' בישראל ויתנם ביד כושן רשעים'); ומה שמו? - לבן הארמי שמו.

כתיב (במדבר כב, ה) 'בן בעור' וכתוב (במדבר כד, ג) 'בנו בעור' (משמע בעור בנו של בלעם היה)?
אמר רבי יוחנן: אביו - בנו הוא לו בכביאות (לבלעם בנביאות: שבלעם גדול מאביו היה בנביאות).
בלעם, הוא דלא אתי לעלמא דאתי - הא אחריני אתו (הא שאר נכרים אתו! כלומר: מדקא חשיב תנא דמתניתין דבלעם שהיה נכרי בהדי הדייטות, וקאמר דאין לו חלק - מכלל דשאר נכרים יש להם חלק)! מתניתין מני? רבי יהושע היא, דתניא: רבי אליעזר אומר (תהלים ט, יח) 'ישובו רשעים לשאולה כל גוים שכחי אלהים: 'ישובו רשעים לשאולה' - אלו פושעי ישראל; 'כל גוים שכחי אלהים' - אלו אומות העולם - דברי רבי אליעזר; אמר לו רבי יהושע: וכי נאמר 'בכל גוים' והלא לא נאמר אלא 'כל גוים שכחי אלהים' (אלו נאמר 'ישובו רשעים לשאולה בכל הגוים' משמע כדקאמר; השתא דכתיב 'כל גוים שכחי אלהים' לא משמע אלא אותן השוכחים אלוה, כגון בלעם [ושכמותו], אבל אחריני - אתו, כדאמרין בריש פרקין (דף צא:); ורעו זרים צאנכם ובני נכר אכריכם [ישעיהו טא, ה] ועמדו זרים ורעו צאנכם ובני נכר אכריכם - לעולם הבא)! אלא 'ישובו רשעים לשאולה' - מאן נינהו? 'כל גוים שכחי אלהים' (דמשום הכי בורר הקב"ה הרשעים שבהם, ונותן אותם בגיהנם, ואין להם חלק לעתיד; אבל השאר יש להם חלק); ואף אתו רשע נתן סימן בעצמו (שאינו לו חלק לעתיד), אמר: (במדבר כג, י) 'מי מנה עפר יעקב ומספר את רבע ישראל תמות נפשי מות ישרים [ותחי אחריתי כמהו]: אם תמות נפשי מות ישרים (אם ימות מיתת עצמו) - תהא אחריתי כמהו (דודאי יש לו חלק עמהם), ואם לאו (דלא ימות אלא לגיהנם); [וייחרג] - הנני הולך לעמי 1

(במדבר כב, ז) וילכו זקני מואב וזקני מדין [וקסמים בידם ויבאו אל בלעם וידברו אליו דברי בלק]; תנא: מדין ומואב לא היה להם שלום מעולם (דכתיב 'המכה את מדין בשדה מואב' [בראשית לו, לה]); משל לשני כלבים שהיו בעדר, והיו צהובין זה לזה (כעוסי; כאדם שכועס - פניו צהובין); בא זאב על האחד - אמר האחד: אם איני עוזרו, היום הורג אותו - ולמחר בא עלי! הלכו שניהם והרגו הזאב.

אמר רב פפא: היינו דאמרי אינשי: כרכושא (חולדה) ושונרא (כרכושא אין להם שלום מעולם) עבדו הלולא מתרבא [שומן] דביש גדא [בעל] מזלרע.

(במדבר כב, ח) [ויאמר אליהם לינו פה הלילה והשבתי אתכם דבר כאשר ידבר ה' אלי] וישבו שרי מואב עם בלעם - ושרי מדין להיכן אזול?
כיון דאמר להו "לינו פה הלילה והשבתי אתכם דבר" - אמרו: כלום יש אב ששונא את בנו (שהוא סבור שיאמר לו הקב"ה 'קלל את בני', דקאמר בלעם "לינו פה [הלילה]")?
אמר רב נחמן: חוצפא - אפילו כלפי שמיא מהני (דאהני ליה מה שהחציף פניו לומר לשלוחי בלק "לינו פה"); מעיקרא כתיב (שאמר לו הקב"ה בתחילה) (במדבר כב, יב) [ויאמר אלקים אל בלעם] לא תלך עמהם [לא תאר את העם כי ברוך הוא], ולבסוף כתיב (במדבר כב, כ) [ויבא אלהים אל בלעם לילה ויאמר לו אם לקרא לך באו האנשים] קום לך אתם [ואך את הדבר אשר אדבר אליך אתו תעשה]; אמר רב ששת: חוצפא - מלכותא בלא תאגא היא (כלומר: שררה גדולה, ואינו חסר אלא כתר מלכות), דכתיב (שמואל ב, ג, לט) ואנכי היום רך ומשוח מלך (כלומר: איני גדול מהם אלא משיחת מלכות) והאנשים האלה בני צרויה קשים ממני וגו' [ישלם ה' לעשה הרעה כרעתו].

אמר רבי יוחנן: בלעם - היגר ברגלו אחת היה, שנאמר (במדבר כג, ג) [ויאמר בלעם לבלק התיצב על עלתך ואלכה אולי יקרה ה' לקראתי ודבר מה יראני והגדתי לך] וילך שפי (כמו [חולין נד]:) 'בוקא דאטמא דשף מדוכתיה'; שמשון - בשתי רגליו, שנאמר (בראשית מט, יז) [יהי דן נחש עלי דרך] שפיפון עלי אורח הנושך עקבי סוס [ויפל רכבו אחרו] ('שפיפון' משמעו שתיים).
בלעם - סומא באחת מעיניו היה שנאמר (במדבר כד, ג) [וישא משלו ויאמר נאם בלעם בנו בער ונאם הגבר] שתום העין (שתום = פתוח, כמו שתומו ניכר, כלומר: עינו אחת פתוחה - מכלל דהאחרת סתומה! והכי נמי מתרגמינן 'דשפיר חזי'; אית דמפרשי כמו ס תום, ולא מילתא היא); קוסם באמתו היה (כגון מעלה בזכורו): כתיב הכא (במדבר כד, ד) [נאם שמע אמרי אל אשר מחזה שדי יחזה] נופל וגלוי עינים, וכתוב התם (אסתר ז, ח) [והמלך שב מגנת הביתן אל בית משתה היין] והגהמון נופל על המטה [אשר אסתר עליה ויאמר המלך הגם לכבוש את המלכה עמי בבית הדבר יצא מפי המלך ופני המן חפון].

איתמר: מר זוטרא אמר: קוסם באמתו היה; מר בריה דרבינא אמר: שבא על אתונו.
מאן דאמר 'קוסם באמתו היה' - כדאמרן; ומאן דאמר 'בא על אתונו היה', כתיב הכא (במדבר כד, ט) כרע שכב [כארי וכלביא מי יקימנו מברכיך ברוך וארייך ארוך] וכתוב התם (שופטים ה, כז) בין רגליה

(סנהדרין קה ב)

כרע נפל שכב [בין רגליה כרע נפל באשר כרע שם נפל שדוד] (מה כריעה דהתם דאית ביה נפילה - בעילה היא, אף כריעה דהכא דכתיב 'נופל' - בעילה היא: שבא על בהמתו).

[אבל הפסוק בבמדבר עוסק בעם ישראל, ולא בתיאור של בלעם?! אולי משום שבלעם השתמש בלשון זו - כנראה בזה הוא עוסק. אך מוסרים בשם הגאון מוילנא שיש לגרוס: ומאן דאמר 'בא על אתונו היה' - דכתיב הכא 'נפל וגלוי עינים', וכתוב התם 'בין רגליה כרע נפלי']

(במדבר כד, טז) [נאם שמע אמרי אל] וידע דעת עליון [מחזה שדי יחזה נפל וגלוי עינים] - השתא דעת בהמתו לא הוה ידע, דעת עליון הוה ידע?

(לא הוה ידע [בלעם] מאי בעיא לאהדורי, כדמפרש: דאמרי ליה שרי בלק: מאי טעמא לא רכבת אסוסיא [כלומר: שאלו אותו בענין אחר, כי בענין כח הנבואה שלו לא מצא תירוץ]) מאי 'זעת בהמתו'?

דאמרי ליה (שרי בלק): מאי טעמא לא רכבת סוסיא? אמר להו: שראי להו ברטיבא (באחו, לרעות עשבים לחים). אמרה ליה: 'הלא אנכי אתונך' [במדבר כב,ל]: ותאמר האתון אל בלעם הלא אנכי אתונך אשר רכבת עלי מעודך עד היום הזה ההסכן הסכנתי לעשות לך כה ויאמר לא!?

- (אמר להו): לטעינא בעלמא (לישא משאות ולא לרכוב); (אמרה ליה) 'אשר רכבת עלי'!?

- אקראי בעלמא (כשאין לי סוס מזומן);

(אמרה לו) 'מעודך עד היום הזה', ולא עוד אלא שאני עושה לך מעשה אישות (שאתה בועלי) בלילה: כתיב הכא 'ההסכן הסכנתי' וכתב התם (מלכים א,א,ב) [ויאמרו לו עבדיו יבקשו לאדני המלך נערה בתולה ועמדה לפני המלך] ותהי לו סוכנת [ושכבה בחיקך וחס לאדני המלך] (סוכנת. מחממת)!

אלא מאי 'ויודע דעת עליון' - שהיה יודע לכוון אותה שעה שהקב"ה כועס בה; והיינו דקאמר להו נביא לישראל (מיכה ו,ה): עמי זכר נא מה יען בלק מלך מואב ומה ענה אותו בלעם בן בעור מן השטים ועד הגלגל (משחטאו בשטים ועד שנכנסו לארץ וחטאו בגלגל - עשיתי עמהם צדקות הרבה) למען דעת צדקות ה'!

מאי 'למען דעת צדקות ה'?

אמר להו הקב"ה לישראל: דעו נא כמה צדקות עשיתי עמכם שלא כעסתי כל אותן הימים בימי בלעם הרשע (שהיה בלעם מצפה לקללכם: בשעה שהקב"ה כועס בה - כל הקלותות מתקיימות), שאילמלא כעסתי כל אותן הימים - לא נשתייר משונאיהן ש"ל ישראל שריד ופליט; היינו דקאמר ליה בלעם לבלק (במדבר כג,ח) מה אקב לא קבה אל ומה אזעום לא זעם ה' - מלמד שכל אותם הימים לא זעם ה'.

[אלקים שופט צדיק ו]אל זועם בכל יום (קרא הוא [בתהלים ז,יב]) - וכמה זעמו? רגע (כדמפיק ליה מקרא), שנאמר (תהלים לו,ו) כי רגע באפו חיים ברצונו [בערב ילין בכי ולבקר רנה]; איבעית אימא (ישעיהו כו,כ) לך עמי בא בחדריך וסגור דלתך בעדך חבי כמעט רגע עד יעבור זעם; אימת רתח?

כתלת שעי קמייתא (של יום: זמן קימה: שכל שלש שעות זמן קימה, לעמוד ממתנו; וכועס הקב"ה בשעה שרואה המלכים שמשתחווים לחמה בשעה שמוניחין כתריהם בראשם, כדלקמן), כי חורא כרבלתא (קירשת"א בלע"ז) דתרנגולא. כל שעתא ושעתא נמי חורא (רוב שעות מתלבנות ומכספת, שאינה כל שעה בחוזק אדמיות?) כל שעתא ושעתא אית ביה סוריקי סומקי, ההיא שעתא לית ביה סוריקי סומקי (אפילו כשמכספת - יש בה שורות שורות אדמות מאד, כרגילותם, אבל אותה שעה - כולה מכספת).

ההוא מינא דהוה בשיבכותיה דרבי יהושע בן לוי, דהוה קא מצער ליה; יומא חד נקט תרנגולתא ואסר ליה בכרעיה, ואותיב, אמר: כי מטא ההוא שעתא - אילטייה!

כי מטא ההוא שעתא - נמנס; אמר: שמע מינה: לאו אורח ארעא, דכתיב (משלי יז,כו) גם ענוש לצדיק לא טוב [להכות נדיבים על ישראל] - אפילו במיני לא איבעי ליה למימר הכי (אין נכון לצדיק שיהא מעניש, ולא הוה ליה איניש נענש בשבילו).

תנא משמיה דרבי מאיר: בשעה שהחמה זורחת והמלכים מניחין כתריהן על ראשיהן ומשתחווים לחמה - מיד כועס.

(במדבר כב,כא) ויקם בלעם בבקר ויחבוש את אתונו [וילך עם שרי מואב]

תנא משום רבי שמעון בן אלעזר: אהבה מבטלת שורה של גדולה - מאברהם, דכתיב (בראשית כב,ג) וישכם אברהם בבקר [ויחבוש את חמרו ויקח את שני נעריו אתו ואת יצחק בנו ויבקע עצי עלה ויקם וילך אל המקום אשר אמר לו האלקים] (אהבה שאהב הקב"ה את אברהם ביטלה שורה של גדולה: שחבש הוא בעצמו); שנאה (ושנאה ששנא בלעם הרשע את ישראל) מבטלת שורה של גדולה - מבלעם, שנאמר (במדבר כב,כא) ויקם בלעם בבקר ויחבוש את אתונו [וילך עם שרי מואב] (שחבש הוא בעצמו).

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: לעולם יעסוק אדם בתורה ובמצוה - אפילו שלא לשמה - שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה: שבשכר ארבעים ושתים קרבנות שהקריב בלק (בין פרים לאילים: ז' פרים וז' אילים ג' פעמים - הרי מ"ב בין פרים ואילים) - זכה ויצאה ממנו רות.

אמר רב יוסי בר הונא: רות - בתו של עגלון, בן בנו של בלק מלך מואב היתה.

אמר ליה רבא לרבה בר מרי: כתיב (מלכים א,א,מז) [וגם באו עבדי המלך לברך את אדנינו המלך דוד לאמר] ייטב אלהים את שם שלמה משמך ויגדל [את] כסאו מכסאך [וישתחו המלך על המשכב]; אורח ארעא למימרא ליה למלכא הכי (וכי דרך ארץ כן, שיאמרו וייטב אלהים שם שלמה משמך?) והא חלשא דעתיה דאמרי ליה שיהא גדול מאביו?

אמר ליה: 'מעין' קאמרה ליה ('מעין שמך' קאמר ליה, ומעין כסאך - ולא גדול ממך); דאי לא תימא הכי - (שופטים ה,כד) תבורך מנשים יעל אשת חבר הקניז מנשים באהל תבורך - 'נשים באהל' מאן

נינהו? שרה רבקה רחל ולא (שרה ורבקה - דכתיב 'ויביאה יצחק האהלה שרה אמו' [בראשית כד,זס]; רחל ולא - דכתיב [בראשית לא,ג] 'ויצא מאהל לאה ויבא באהל רחל'); אורח ארעא למימרא הכי (שאמרה דבורה ליעל [שתהא] ברוכה משרה ורבקה)? אלא 'מעין' (ברכת שרה) 'קאמר[ה] - הכא נמי 'מעין' קאמר.

ופליגא (האי דמשנינן שם שלמה משמך 'מעין' - פליגא) דרב יוסי בר חוני, דאמר רב יוסי בר חוני: בכל אדם מתקנא חוץ מכנו ותלמידו; בנו (מניין שאינו מקנא בו) - משלמה (דקאמרי ליה לדוד 'ייטב אלהים שם שלמה משמך'), ותלמידו - איבעית ויהי כעברם ואליהו אמר אל אלישע שאל מה אעשה לך בטרם אלקח מעמך ויאמר אלישע] אימא (דקאמר ליה לאליהו) (מלכים ב,ב,ט)] ויהי נא פי שנים ברוח אלי (ונתן לו אליהו ולא נתקנא בו), ואיבעית אימא (במדבר כג,כג) ויסמך את ידיו עליו ויצוהו [כאשר דבר ה' ביד משה] (אף על גב דהקב"ה לא אמר ליה אלא 'וסמכת את ידך עליו' - חדא, אזיל איהו וסמך תרתי).

(במדבר כג,ה) וישם [ה'] דבר בפי בלעם [ויאמר שוב אל בלק וכה תדבר]:

רבי אושעיא אומר: מלאך (שמסרו הקדוש ברוך הוא למלאך שלא יניחנו לקלל); רבי יונתן אומר: חכה (נתן בפי בלעם, שלא היה מניחו לקלל, והיינו 'וישם')

אמר רבי יוחנן: מברכתו של אותו רשע אתה למד מה היה בלבו (דכתיב 'ויהפוך ה' אלהיך לך את הקללה לברכה' [דברים כג, ו]); ביקש לומר (הוא היה רוצה לקללם בכך) שלא יהו להם בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות (ולא נתן רשות) - (אמר): (במדבר כד, ה) מה טובו אהליך יעקב

לא תשרה שכינה עליהם - ומשכנותיך ישראל [סוף הפסוק];

לא תהא מלכותן נמשכת - (במדבר כד, ו) כנחלים נטיו;

לא יהא להם זיתים וכרמים - כגנות עלי נהר

לא יהא ריחן נודף (ממצות) פֶּאֶה לִים נטע ה' [אהל = סוג בושם, כמו משלי ז, יז: מר אהלים וקנמון]

לא יהיו להם מלכים בעלי קומה - כארזים עלי מים [סוף הפסוק];

לא יהיה להם מלך בן מלך - (במדבר כד, ז) יזל מים מדליו

לא תהא מלכותן שולטת באומות - וזרוע במים רבים

לא תהא עזה מלכותן - וירם מאגג מלכו (מתרגמיני: 'ותתקף מאגג': שתהא מלכותו עזה)

לא תהא אימת מלכותן - ותנשא מלכותו [סוף הפסוק];

אמר רבי אבא בר כהנא: כולם (כל הברכות של בלעם) חזרו לקללה (כמו שהיה כוונתו מתחילה) חוץ מבתי כנסיות ומבתי מדרשות (שלא יפסקו מישראל לעולם), שנאמר (דברים כג, ו) [ולא אבה ה' אלקיך לשמע אל בלעם] ויהפוך ה' אלהיך לך את הקללה לברכה כי אהבך ה' אלהיך; 'קללה' ('הקללה לברכה': אחת מן הקללות הפך לברכה שלא חזרה לעולם) - ולא 'קללות' (ולא כל הקללות לברכות, שחזרו).

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן: מאי דכתיב (משלי כו, ו) נאמנים פצעי אוהב ונערתות (נהפכות כמו עתר שמהפך התבואה) נשיקות שונא? - טובה קללה שקילל אחיה השילוני את ישראל - יותר מברכה שברכס בלעם הרשע (כלומר: נאמנים פצעי אוהב ונהפכות - מנאמנות נשיקות שונא): אחיה השילוני קילל את ישראל בקנה, שנאמר (מלכים א' יז, טו) והכה ה' את ישראל כאשר ינוד הקנה במים וגו' [ונתש את ישראל מעל האדמה הטובה הזאת אשר נתן לאבותיהם וזרם מעבר לנהר יען אשר עשו את אשריהם מכעיסים את ה']; מה קנה זה עומד במקום מים וגיזעו (סנהדרין קו, א)

מחליף (לאחר שנקצץ), ושרשיו מרובין, ואפילו כל רוחות שבעולם באות ונושבות בו אין מזיזות אותו ממקומו, אלא הוא הולך ובא עמהן - כיון שדוממו הרוחות עמד קנה במקומו; אבל בלעם הרשע ברכן בארז: מה ארז זה אינו עומד במקום מים (והאי דכתיב 'כארזים עלי מים' - שכינה היא דאמרה; איהו אמר 'כארזים', כלומר: שאין עומדין במקום מים - שכינה אמרה 'עלי מים'; וכן כוליהו מפרש באגדה בכהאי גוונא 'כנחלים נטיו': הוא אמר 'כנחלים' - פוסקין לפעמים, יצאה בת קול [אמרה] 'נטיו'; הוא אמר 'כגנות' אמרה בת קול 'עלי נהר' הוא אמר 'כאהלים' - יצאה בת קול ואמרה 'נטע ה'), ושרשיו מועטין, ואין גזעו מחליף, אפילו כל הרוחות שבעולם באות ונושבות בו אין מזיזות אותו ממקומו, כיון שנשבה בו רוח דרומית (קשה) - מיד עוקרתו והופכתו על פניו; ולא עוד אלא שזכה קנה ליטול ממנו קולמוס לכתוב ממנו ספר תורה נביאים וכתובים.

(במדבר כד, כא) וירא את הקניני וישא משלו [ויאמר איתן מושבך ושים בסלע קנן]; אמר לו בלעם ליתרו: קיני! לא היית עמנו באותה עצה (שגזר פרעה 'כל הבן הילוד היאורה' בתמיה)? (ודאי היית, כדלקמן); מי הושיבך אצל איתני עולם (שעתידיים בניך לישב בלשכת הגזית, והיינו דכתיב 'איתן מושבך': וכי בין איתני עולם אתה יושב? מי הזקיך לך)? והיינו דאמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי סימאי: שלשה היו באותה עצה, אלו הן: בלעם, איוב ויתרו; בלעם, שיעץ - נהרג; איוב, ששתק - נידון ביסורין; ויתרו, שברח - זכו בני בניו לישב בלשכת הגזית, שנאמר (דברי הימים א' ב, נה) ומשפחות סופרים יושבי יעבץ תרתיים שמעתיים סוכתיים המה הקנינים הבאים מחמת אבי בית רכב, וכתיב (שופטים א, טז) ובני קיני חותן משה עלו מעיר התמרים [את בני יהודה מדבר יהודה אשר בנגב ערד וילך וישב את העם].

(במדבר כד, כג) וישא משלו ויאמר אוי מי יחיה משמו אל;

אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: אוי מי שמחיה עצמו בשם אל (עושה עצמו אלוה, כמו פרעה וחירם; לשון אחר: מי שמחיה עצמו, כלומר: אוי להם לאותן בני אדם שמחייין ומעדינין עצמן בעוה"ז ופורקין עול תורה מעל צוארם, ומשמנין את עצמן; 'משמו אל': כשמישים הקב"ה פדיון לעצמו, ומשלם גמול לצדיקים לעתיד לבא; כך שמעתי).

אמר רבי יוחנן: אוי לה לאומה שתמצא בשעה שהקב"ה עושה פדיון לבניו (אוי לה לאומה שתהיה באותן הימים שיעלה על דעתה לעכב ישראל); מי מטיל כסותו בין לביא ללביאה בשעה שנוקקין זה עם זה (לעכבן שלא יזדקקו זה לזה, דמסוכן הוא, כלומר: מי הוא שיכול לעכב את ישראל והקב"ה מכניסם).

(במדבר כד, כד) וצים מיד כתיים [וענו אשור וענו עבר וגם הוא עדי אבד] ('ציים' = ספינות גדולות, כמו (ישעיה לג, כא) וצי אדיר לא יעברנו);

('כתיים' = רומים, כלומר: אותן אומות שהביא הקב"ה בציים - עתידין להרוג את כל הדימוס עד אשור, ומאשור ואילך - מניחין אותן, ומשעבדין בהם (ומניחין אותן); ולעתידין קא מיירי).

אמר רב: ליבון אספיר (דכתיים היינו מקום ששמו כך).

'וענו אשור וענו עבר' (וענו אשור דקטלי להו, וענו עבר דמשעבדי להו עד אשור) - עד אשור קטלי מיקטל, מכאן ואילך משעבדי שיעבודי.

(במדבר כד, יד) הנני הולך לעמי לכה איעצך אשר יעשה העם הזה לעמך [באחרית הימים]; 'עמך'?' 'לעם הזה' מיבעי ליה (שהשיא עצה לבלק שנכשלו בה ישראל!)?

אמר רבי אבא בר כהנא: כאדם שמקלל את עצמו ותולה קללתו באחרים (וכך בלעם לא רצה לתלות שפלותו זה בבלק, שיהא הוא צריך לבקש עצה היאך יכשלו בה ישראל, אלא בישראל תלה השפלות: לומר שהן צריכין לעצה שיכשלו בה בני מואב, שלא תתקוף ידי מואב על ישראל; והיינו דכתיב 'אשר יעשה העם הזה לעמך' [מ"ד]; לישנא אחרינא 'תולה קללתו בחברו' כלומר: שתלה הכתוב קללה במואב, ולא רצה לכתוב כלפי ישראל כמו שאמר בלעם הרשע): אמר להם: אלהיהם של אלו שונא זימה הוא, והם מתאווים לכלי פשתן; בוא ואשיאך עצה: עשה להן קלעים (אהלים של קלעים כמו שעושין בשוקים), והושיב בהן זונות: זקינה מבחוץ וילדה מבפנים, ומכרו להן כלי פשתן. עֶשָׂה להן קלעים מהר שלג (שניר) עד בית הישימות, והושיב בהן זונות: זקינה מבחוץ וילדה מבפנים, ובשעה שישראל אוכלין ושותין ושמחין ויוצאין לטייל בשוק - אומרת לו הזקינה: "אי אתה מבקש כלי

פשתן? זקינה אומרת לו בשוה (דמי שוויו), וילדה אומרת לו בפחות (מכדי שוויו); (וכן עושין) שתיים ושלש פעמים, ואחר כך אומרת לו: "הרי את כבן בית, שב ברור לעצמך (כל תכשיטין שאתה רוצה)", וצרוצרי (נודות) של יין עמוני מונה אצלה; ועדיין לא נאסר יין של נכרים; אמרה לו: "רצונך שתשתה כוס של יין?" כיון ששתה - בער בו (שהיה משתכר, ובער בו יצר הרע); אמר לה: "השמיעי לי (הוי שומעת לתשמיש)"! הוציאה יראתה מתוך חיקה, אמרה לו: "עבוד לזה!" אמר לה: "הלא יהודי אני!" אמרה לו: "ומה איכפת לך? כלום מבקשים ממך אלא פיעור?" (כך היתה עבודתו של פעור: שמתרזין לפניו). (והוא אינו יודע שעבודתה בכך); (הכי גרסינן: והוא עושה ושוב אומרת לו): ולא עוד אלא שאיני מנחתך עד שתכפור בתורת משה רבך (והוא עושה), שנאמר (הושע טו), [קענבים במדבר מצאתי ישראל בככורה בתאנה בראשיתה ראיתי אבותיכם] המה באו בעל פעור וינזרו לבשת (סרו מדרכם והלכו אחר הבשת) ויהיו שקוצים באהבם (מתוך תאות אהבתם לזנות היו משקוצים שכופרין בהקב"ה).

(במדבר כה,א) וישב ישראל בשטים [ויחל העם לזנות אל בנות מואב];

רבי אליעזר אומר: שטים שמה; רבי יהושע אומר: שנתסקו בדברי שטות (במדבר כה,ב) ותקראן לעם לזבחי אלהיהן [ויאכל העם וישתחוו לאלהיהן]

רבי אליעזר אומר: ערומות פגעו בהן ('ותקראן' - בגרפן); רבי יהושע אומר: שנעשו כולן בעלי קריין (ותקראן [משמע] לשון מקרה [קרי, מקרה לילה]).

? (אידי דלעיל אפליגו ביה רבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע במשמעות ד'שטים' - נקיט נמי נמי 'רפידים' דפליגי בה בכי [1]מאי לשון 'רפידים' 1' האי גוונא.)

רבי אליעזר אומר: רפידים שמה; רבי יהושע אומר: שריפו עצמן מדברי תורה, שנאמר (ירמיהו מז,ג) [מקול שעטת פרסות אבירי מרעש לרכבו המון גלגליו] לא הפנו אבות אל בנים (להטיב להם) מרפיון ידים (של תורה ומצות); והכי נמי 'רפידים' - רפיון ידים הוא, כלומר: מפני שרפו ידים מן התורה בא עליהם עמלק).

אמר רבי יוחנן: כל מקום שנאמר וישב אינו אלא לשון צער, שנאמר:

(במדבר כה,א) וישב ישראל בשטים ויחל העם לזנות אל בנות מואב; (בראשית לז,א) וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו בארץ כנען - [פסוק ב] [אלה תלדות יעקב יוסף בן שבע עשרה שנה היה רעה את אחיו בצאן והוא נער את בני בלהה ואת בני זלפה נשי אביו] ויבא יוסף את דבתם רעה אל אביהם;

ונאמר (בראשית מז,כז) וישב ישראל [בארץ מצרים] בארץ גשן [ויאחזו בה ויפרו וירבו מאד] - [שם, פסוק כט] ויקרבו ימי ישראל למות [ויקרא לבנו ליוסף ויאמר לו אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך שים נא ידך תחת ירכי ועשית עמדי חסד ואמת אל נא תקברני במצרים]; (מלכים א,ה,ה) וישב יהודה וישראל לבטח איש תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו [מדן ועד באר שבע כל ימי שלמה] - (מלכים א,יא,יד) ויקם ה' שטן לשלמה את הדד האדומי מזרע המלך הוא באדום.

(במדבר לא,ח) ואת מלכי מדין הרגו על חלליהם [את אוי ואת רקם ואת צור ואת חור ואת רבע חמשת מלכי מדין] ואת בלעם בן בעור הרגו בחרב - בלעם מאי בעי התם?

אמר רבי יוחנן: שהלך ליטול (מבלק ומזקני מדין) שכר עשרים וארבעה אלף [שהפיל מישראל] (שהרגו בעצתו)

אמר רבי זוטרא בר טוביה אמר רב: היינו דאמרי אינשי: גמלא אזלא למיבעי קרני - אודני דהוו ליה גזיזן (חתכו) מיניה (כך בלעם שאל שכר ונהרג).

(יהושע יג,כב) ואת בלעם בן בעור הקוסם [הרגו בני ישראל בחרב אל חלליהם] (ההוא קרא ביהושע כתיב); 'קוסם' - נביא הוא?

אמר רבי יוחנן: בתחלה נביא, ולבסוף קוסם (שנתן עיניו לקלל את ישראל ניטלה ממנו נבואה ונעשה קוסם).
אמר רב פפא: היינו דאמרי אינשי: מסגני ושילטי הואי (אשת סגנים ושרים היתה) - אייזן (זינתה) לגברי נגרי (למושכי חבל ספינה; לישראל אחריו: אחר שים).

(סנהדרין קו,ב)

(יהושע יג,כב) [ואת בלעם בן בעור הקוסם] הרגו בני ישראל בחרב אל חלליהם; אמר רב: שקיימו בו ארבע מיתות ('הרגו אל חלליהם' מיתות הרבה משמע): שקילה ושריפה הרג וחנק (שתלאוהו והציתו אש תחת צליבה, וחתכו ראשו ונפל לתוך האש; תלייה - היינו חנק; חתיכת הראש - הרג; כשנפל - שקילה; כשנפל לאור - היינו שריפה).

אמר ליה ההוא מינא לרבי חנינא: מי שמיע לך בלעם בר כמה הוה?

אמר ליה: מיכתב לא כתיב; אלא מדכתיב (תהלים נה), אנשי דמים ומרמה לא יחצו ימיהם - בר תלתין ותלת שנין או בר תלתין וארבע

אמר ליה: שפיר קאמרת! לדידי חזי לי פנקסיה דבלעם והוה כתיב ביה 'בר תלתין ותלת שנין בלעם הגירא (תרגום של פסוק), כד קטיל יתיה פנחס ליסטא (שר צבא, ואפילו קטליה אחר - כל המלחמה נקראת על שמו)'.
(ורבי חנינא לית ליה דרבי סימאי, דאמר לעיל 'שלשה היו באותה עצה דפרעה בלעם ואיוב ויתרו'; דלרבי סימאי - בלעם חיה יותר מן מאתים ועשר שנים! דהא היה בעצת פרעה ד'כל הבן הילוד היאורה תשליכוהו': דלרבי סימאי - כל אותן מאתים ועשר שנים שהיו ישראל בגלות מצרים עד מלחמת מדין חיה בלעם).

אמר ליה מר בריה דרבינא לבריה: בכולהו (מלכים והדיוטות) לא תפיש למדרש (לגנאי) לבר מבלעם הרשע, דכמה (דכך מה) דמשכת ביה (לגנאי) - דרוש ביה.

Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 105b [Soncno translation]

And knoweth the mind² of the most High.³ Now, seeing that he did not even know the mind of his ass, could he know the mind of the most High! What [is this about] the mind of his ass? — For they [the elders] said to him, 'Why didst thou not ride upon thy horse?' He replied, 'I have put it [to graze] in the dewy pastures. But the ass said to him, 'Am I not thine ass?'⁴ — 'Merely for carrying loads', [he replied]. 'Upon which thou hast ridden.' — 'That was only by chance.' 'Ever since I was thine until this day,' [she added]. 'Moreover, I serve thee as a companion by night.' Here is written, Was I ever wont to do so unto thee;⁵ whilst elsewhere it is written, And let her be his companion.⁶ What then is meant by knowing the mind of the most High? — He knew how to gauge the exact moment when the Holy One, blessed be He, is angry; and that was what the prophet said to Israel: O thy people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.⁷ What is meant by that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord? — The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel:

Know now how many acts of charity I performed for you in that I did not become angry all that time, in the days of Balaam the Wicked; for had I waxed angry during that time none would have remained or been spared of Israel's enemies.⁸ And thus Balaam said to Balak, How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I rage, when the Lord hath not raged?⁹ This teaches that for the whole of that time the Lord had not been wrath.¹⁰ [But normally] God is angry every day.¹¹ ...

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass.¹⁹ A Tanna taught on the authority of R. Simeon b. Eleazar: Love disregards the rule of dignified conduct. [This is deduced] from Abraham, for it is written, And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass.²⁰ Hate likewise disregards the rule of dignified conduct: [this is deduced] from Balaam, for it is written, And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass.

Rab Judah said in Rab's name: One should always occupy himself with Torah and good deeds, though it be not for their own sake,²¹ for out of good work misapplied in purpose there comes [the desire to do it] for its own sake. For as a reward for the forty-two sacrifices offered up by Balak, he was privileged that Ruth should be his descendant;²² [as]²³ R. Jose b. Huna said: Ruth was the daughter of Eglon, the grandson of Balak, king of Moab.

Raba said to Rabbah b. Mari: It is written, [And moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying] God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne:²⁴ is it mannerly to speak thus to a king? — He replied: They meant, according to the nature of [thy throne etc.].²⁵ For should you not say thus, [consider:] Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.²⁶ Now who are the 'women in the tent'? — Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. Is it then meet to say thus? — But it means according to the nature of [their blessedness].²⁷ So here too, it bears the same meaning. Now, this conflicts with R. Jose b. Honi. For R. Jose b. Honi said: Of everyone a man is jealous, except his son and disciple. 'His son' — this is deduced from Solomon.²⁸ 'His disciple' — [is deduced] if you like, say, from Let a double quantity of thy spirit be upon me;²⁹ or if you like, say, from And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge.³⁰

And the Lord put a thing in the mouth of Balaam.³¹ R. Eleazar said, An angel;³² R. Jonathan said: a hook.

R. Johanan said: From the blessings of that wicked man you may learn his intentions:³³ Thus he wished to curse them that they [the Israelites] should possess no synagogues or school — houses — [this is deduced from] How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob;³⁴ that the Shechinah should not rest upon them — and thy tabernacles, O Israel;³⁵ that their kingdom should not endure — As the valleys are they spread forth;³⁶ that they might have no olive trees and vineyards — as gardens by the river's side; that their odour might not be fragrant — as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted; that their kings might not be tall — and as cedar trees beside the waters; that they might not have a king the son of a king —³⁷ He shall pour the water out of his buckets;³⁸ that their kingdom might not rule over other nations — and his seed shall be in many waters; that their kingdom might not be strong — and his king shall be higher than Agag; that their kingdom might not be awe-inspiring — and his kingdom shall be exalted. R. Abba b. Kahana said: All of them reverted to a curse,³⁹ excepting the synagogues and schoolhouses, for it is written, But the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing for thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee;⁴⁰ the curse, but not the curses.⁴¹ R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in R. Jonathan's name: What is meant by the verse, Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful?⁴² Better is the curse wherewith Ahijah the Shilonite cursed Israel than the blessing wherewith the wicked Balaam blessed them. Ahijah the Shilonite cursed Israel by a reed, as it is said, For the Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water;⁴³ just as a reed grows in well watered soil and its stem

Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 106a

is renewed¹ and its roots are numerous, and even if all the winds of the world come and blow upon it they cannot dislodge it from its place, but it sways in unison with them, and as soon as the winds subside, the reed still stands in its place, [so may Israel be]. But the wicked Balaam blessed them by the cedar:² just as the cedar does not stand in a watery place, and its roots are few and its stock is not renewed, and even if all the winds of the world come and blow upon it they cannot stir it from its place, but immediately the South wind blows upon it it uproots and overturns it on its face, [so may Israel be]. Nay, more, it was the reed's privilege that a quill thereof should be taken for the writing of the Scroll of the Torah, Prophets and Hagiographa. And he looked on the Kenite, and took up his parable.³ Balaam said to Jethro, 'Thou Kenite, wast thou not with us in that scheme?'⁴ Who then placed thee among the strong ones of the world!⁵ And that is what R. Hiyya b. Abba said in R. Simai's name: Three were involved in that scheme,⁶ viz., Balaam, Job, and Jethro. Balaam, who advised it, was slain; Job, who was silent,⁷ was punished through suffering; and Jethro, who fled — his descendants were privileged to sit in the Hall of Hewn Stones, as it is written, And the families of the scribes which dwell at Jabez, the Tirathites, the Shemeathites, and Suchathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab;⁸ whilst elsewhere it is written, And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees.⁹

And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!¹⁰ R. Simeon b. Lakish said: Woe unto him who maketh himself alive by the name of God,¹¹ R. Johanan said: Woe to the nation that may be found [attempting to hinder], when the Holy One, blessed be He, accomplishes the redemption of his children: who would throw his garment between a lion and a lioness when these are copulating!¹²

And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim.¹³ Rab said: This refers to the White Legion.¹⁴ And shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber:¹⁵ Until Asshur, they shall slay; after that, they shall throw into subjection.¹⁶

And now, behold I go unto my people; come, therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.¹⁷ But he should have said, What thy people shall do to this people?¹⁸ — R. Abba b. Kahana said: It is as one who, cursing himself, refers his malediction to others.¹⁹ He [Balaam] said thus to him [Balak]. 'The God of these hates lewdness, and they are very partial to linen.²⁰ Come, and I will advise thee. Erect for them tents enclosed by hangings, in which place harlots, old women without, young women within, to sell them linen garments.' So he erected curtained tents from the snowy mountain [Hermon] as far as Beth ha-Yeshimoth [i.e., right from north to south], and placed harlots in them — old women without, young women within. And when an Israelite ate, drank, and was merry, and issued forth for a stroll in the market place, the old woman would say to him, 'Dost thou not desire linen garments?' The old woman offered it at its current value, but the young one for less. This happened two or three times. After that she would say to him, 'Thou art now like one of the family; sit down and choose for thyself.' Gourds of Ammonite wine lay near her, and at that time Ammonite²¹ and heathen wine had not yet been forbidden. Said she to him, 'Wouldst thou like to drink a glass of wine?' Having drunk, [his passion] was inflamed, and he exclaimed to her, 'Yield to me!' Thereupon she brought forth an idol from her bosom and said to him, 'Worship this!' 'But I am a Jew', he protested. 'What does that concern thee?' she rejoined, 'nothing is required but that thou should uncover thyself' — whilst he did not know that such was its worship. 'Nay', [said she,] 'I will not leave thee ere thou hast denied the Torah of Moses thy teacher,' as it is written, They went into Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto that shame, and their abominations were according as they loved.²² ...

And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain . . . Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.³⁷ What business had Balaam there? — R. Jonathan said: He went to receive his reward for the twenty-four thousand Israelites whose destruction he had encompassed.³⁸ Mar Zutra b. Tobiah remarked in Rab's name: This is what men say, 'When the camel went to demand horns, they cut off the ears he had.'³⁹

Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, [did the children of Israel slay with the sword].⁴⁰ A soothsayer? But he was a prophet! — R. Johanan said: At first he was a prophet, but subsequently a soothsayer.⁴¹ R. Papa observed: This is what men say, 'She who was the descendant of princes and governors, played the harlot with carpenters.'⁴²

Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 106b

Did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them.¹ Rab said: They subjected him to four deaths, stoning, burning, decapitation and strangulation.²

A certain min³ said to R. Hanina: Hast thou heard how old Balaam was? — He replied: It is not actually stated, but since it is written, Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days,⁴ [it follows that] he was thirty-three or thirty-four years old.⁵ He rejoined: Thou hast said correctly; I personally have seen Balaam's Chronicle, in which it is stated, 'Balaam the lame was thirty years old when Phinehas the Robber killed him.'⁶ Mar, the son of Rabina, said to his sons: In the case of all [those mentioned as having no portion in the future world] you should not take [the Biblical passages dealing with them] to expound them [to their discredit], excepting in the case of the wicked Balaam: whatever you find [written] about him, lecture upon it [to his disadvantage]