



BS"D

To: parsha@parsha.net
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **BALAK** - 5771

In our 16th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to subscribe@parsha.net Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored anonymously for a Refuah Shleimah for **Chaim Yissachor Ben Chaye Mushkit b'soch sha'ar cholei yisroel**

Sponsored anonymously for a Refuah Shleimah for **Henna Sara bat Fayga Malya b'soch sha'ar cholei yisroel**

To sponsor a parsha sheet (proceeds to tzedaka) contact cshulman@parsha.net

from TorahWeb torahweb@torahweb.org to
weeklydt@torahweb2.org date Thu, Jul 7, 2011 at
6:47 AM subject Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - Tents and Streams - the
Secret of our Survival

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky
Tents and Streams - the Secret of our Survival

"Mah tovu ohalecha Yaakov" (Bamidbar 24:5). The tents of Yaakov have always been the source of strength of the Jewish People. Chazal teach us that the content of Bilam's blessings to the Jewish People were the opposite of his original intention. Bilam understood that the only way to destroy the Jewish People was by attacking the tents of Yaakov. What are these tents of Yaakov and how can we strengthen them thereby protecting our nation?

In Parshas Toldos we read about Yaakov as the yoshev ohalim - the dweller of tents. Chazal interpret this to be referring to the tents of Torah, particularly the beis medrash of Shem and Ever. It is these tents of Torah that serve to protect his descendants throughout the generations. When Yitzchok blesses Yaakov, he declares, "hakol kol Yaakov v'hayodayim yedei Esav - the voice is of Yaakov yet the hands belong to Esav." Chazal saw in these words a prophecy that it is only through the voice of Yaakov in the beis medrash that we overcome the threat of the "hands of Esav" - those who wish to annihilate Yaakov.

"K'nechalim nitayu - like streams spread out" (Bamidbar 24:6). Bilam continues to describe these tents as being compared to streams of water. Chazal elaborate upon this comparison by explaining that just as a stream can purify, so too can these tents of Torah purify. Furthermore, the laws of immersion in a stream, i.e. a mikva, serve as a model for how we should approach Torah study. One who does not immerse oneself entirely in a mikva remains impure; if even one hair remains outside the mikva, the entire tevila is invalid. Similarly, Torah study requires a total commitment that our entire being be immersed in our learning when we

enter the tents of Yaakov. A person who immerses in a mikva yet is still holding onto the very same item that made him impure (tovel v'sheretz b'yado) has accomplished nothing. So too one who immerses in Torah and yet refuses to cast off those influences that are antithetical to Torah study will not be able to attain the purity of the tents of Yaakov.

"Ki mal'a ha'aretz da'as es Hashem kamayim layam mechasim - for the Earth will be filled of knowledge of Hashem as the waters cover the sea." Yeshayahu Hanavi speaks of a time when the world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem as the waters fill the ocean. What is the significance of the comparison of Torah specifically to the ocean waters?

"Kol hanechalim holchim el hayam - all the streams lead to the ocean" (Koheles 1:7). Water collects in areas where the ground level is lower, and the great depths of the ocean are able to receive all the water that flows into them. So too, the knowledge of Hashem can only collect within those make themselves into a "low area", i.e. are humble. One who is constantly focusing on oneself has no receptacle for the Torah knowledge to collect in. Chazal saw this concept alluded to by the Torah's description, "lo bashomayim he - the Torah is not in heaven" (Devarim 30:12). The Torah cannot be found within those who think too highly of themselves. It was not coincidental that Moshe Rabbeinu who was the greatest talmid Chachamever was also the most humble man who ever lived. Yeshayahu Hanavi speaks of a time in which man will humble himself, thus enabling the knowledge of Hashem to permeate the world as the water fills the ocean.

The tents of Torah which are compared to streams of water are the eternal source of strength for the Jewish People. These tents must be entered wholeheartedly, leaving behind the influences that have no place within them, and they must be entered with a spirit of humility. Only in this way can they continue to be a source of strength for our people.

Copyright © 2011 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

<http://www.stamtorah.info/>

FRIDAY, JULY 1, 2011

CHUKAS 5771 Download the original attachment

Rabbi Doniel Staum, LMSW

Rabbi, Kehillat New Hempstead

Social Worker, Yeshiva Bais Hachinuch

Sign up to receive Stam Torah via email each week at:

STAM TORAH CHUKAS 5771

"AT WHAT PRICE"

Rabbi Chaim Kreisworth zt'l, the beloved Chief Rabbi of Antwerp, related a story from his days as a yeshiva student in Lithuania. In those days the yeshivos lacked funding to provide food for their students so the students would eat their meals at different families in town.

Rabbi Kreisworth was physically weak and shy by nature. He also loved to learn and having to busy himself with those arrangements detracted precious time from learning.

One day a wealthy man built a beautiful house across the street from the Bais Medrash. He built a private room with a separate entrance at the side of his home which he designated for one student. The faculty decided that Rabbi Chaim was worthy of the convenience. Rabbi Chaim was thrilled with the room that possessed all the amenities available at that time which enabled him to learn as much as possible.

For two years he lived in that room with his learning virtually uninterrupted and worry-free. Then one semester as he settled back into his room, he noticed a blind boy among the new students. Rabbi Chaim went to greet him and asked him about his background. The boy explained that he had just arrived and had no arrangements, nor was he familiar with the system. In an act of supreme selflessness, Rabbi Chaim replied that there was an available room right across the street for him, which would have everything he would need, including three nourishing meals.

The blind boy's face lit up. He never dreamed he would be able to find such comfortable accommodations and so suited for his particular needs.

Rabbi Chaim himself however, had a very challenging time. After two years of being pampered it was extremely difficult for him to fend for himself. Nevertheless, he never regretted his decision.

Several weeks later the Nazis invaded and the world fell apart. They stormed into the yeshiva and demanded from the office staff a list of every student. As soon as they had it they began summoning each student to the office, one at a time. When the boy entered the office the Nazi asked his name and town of origin. Then he pointed his rifle at the student who barely had a chance to scream 'Shema Yisroel' before the officer pulled the trigger.

The remaining boys heard the cries and the shots and understood what was awaiting all 250 of them. The lifeless bodies were cast out the window like slaughtered chickens.

Then a voice rang out "Number 31, Kreisworth, Chaim". As he walked tremblingly to the office Rabbi Chaim begged G-d to help him in the merit of his sacrifice for the blind boy. As soon as he walked in the officer said to him, "Do you have a father?" He nodded. "Do you have a mother?" In a barely audible voice he replied that he did. In a surprisingly mild tone the Nazi continued, "Do your parents miss you?" Rabbi Chaim nodded again, "Of course they do."

The Nazi continued, "Do you miss them?"

"Most certainly."

"When the war ends will you return to your family?"

"Certainly"

"Look, I too have parents and I miss them terribly. I can't wait for the war to end so I can go back home. I understand your plight and I won't kill you. But there are other officers here, so here's what I will do. I will shoot a bullet to the side of you. You will fall to the ground and then jump out the window. Make sure you are never seen here again."

249 young promising students were brutally murdered that day. But "number 31, Kreisworth, Chaim" survived. Rabbi Kreisworth was convinced that it was only in the merit of his sacrifice for the blind student.

The laws of the Parah Adumah (Red Heifer) are the ultimate Chukas HaTorah, laws of the Torah which are beyond the capacity of human comprehension. This particularly referred to the paradox involved in the offering of the Parah Adumah, in that its sprinkled ashes purified those who were impure yet rendered impure the sprinkler who had been pure. It was about this enigma that the wisest of men declared², "I said I would be wise, but it was far from me."

Rabbi Yitzchok of Vorki stated that the essence of Parah Adumah is the mitzvah that one must 'love your neighbor as yourself'³. His grandson, Rabbi Mendel, explained that the priest who undertook the sprinkling of the ashes understood that by doing so he was going to cause himself to become impure. He understood that he would have to undergo the whole purification process and would be prohibited from entering the Temple and eating the sacrificial foods until the process was done. When someone is willing to altruistically help others even at the cost of his own convenience, that is the greatest expression of love and kindness.

The Mishna⁴ quotes Rabbi Shimon who said "The world stands on three things: Torah, Avodah (Service), and gemilas chasadim (bestowing kindness)." It is noteworthy that the mishnah does not say 'gemilas chessed' in the singular but 'gemilas chasadim'.

The Me'am Loez explains that whenever one performs an act of kindness for another, the recipient is also helping the doer. Performing acts of kindness affords the doer tremendous merit and no one can know how much blessing he merits in his own life because of an act of kindness he did for someone else.

In addition, whenever we perform an act of chesed for another we are repaying our debt to G-d, as it were, for all of the chesed he does for us.

In truth, we are obligated to thank G-d for every breath we take. The way we express our gratitude to G-d is by doing acts of kindness with others. Every act of chesed we do corresponds to the myriad acts of chesed He does for us. For these two reasons, every act of chesed is really a double act of chesed and is so termed 'gemilas chasadim'.

In parshas Chukas the Torah records the death of Aharon. "When the entire assembly saw the Aharon had perished, they wept for Aharon for thirty days, the entire House of Israel⁵." Rashi notes that when the Torah records the death of Moshe it says that the nation mourned⁶, but it doesn't say "the entire assembly mourned" because they mourned Aharon even more than they did Moshe.

Aharon was the quintessential lover of his people. He was able to promote peace and unity because he spoke to everyone with pleasantness, respect, and love. It was for that reason that the Mishna⁷ exhorts us to be from the disciples of Aharon "who loved peace and pursued peace".

This week Klal Yisroel lost a true disciple of Aharon with the passing of Rabbi Michel Lefkowitz zt'l, the venerable Rosh Yeshiva of Ponovezh l'tzirim. Though he was 97 years old, his passing is a painful and tragic loss. Not only was the Rosh Yeshiva a noted scholar and author of many scholarly works on the Talmud (Minchas Yehuda) he also possessed a deep love for every Jew and made every person in his presence feel exalted and special.

I had the privilege to meet Reb Michel once and I will never forget the respect he accorded me and my friends, as well as his characteristic sweetness and pleasantness. May his memory be for a blessing and may we learn from his legendary example.

"The entire House of Israel"

"Loved peace and pursued peace"

1 This practice was known as 'teg' 2 Koheles 7:23 3 Vaykira 19:18 4 Avos 1:2 5 Bamidbar 20:29 6 Devorim 34:8 7 Avos 1:12

from **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** ryfrand@torah.org
genesis@torah.org date Thu, Jul 7, 2011 at 11:24 AM subject
Rabbi Frand on Parshas Balak
Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Balak

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #775, Wine at a Shul Kiddush. Good Shabbos!

Three Differences Between Bilaam and Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma

In this week's parsha, Bilaam makes the statement "Even if Balak will give me his house full of gold and silver I would not be able to transgress the Word of the Almighty." [Bamidbar 22:18] Rashi comments that we see from here that Bilaam was greedy and he coveted the property of others.

Many commentaries ask on this Rashi from a Mishneh, which relates the story of Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma: "Once I was walking on the road when a certain man met me. He greeted me and I returned his greeting. He said to me, 'Rabbi, from what place are you?' I said to him, 'I am from a great city of scholars and sages.' He said to me, 'Rabbi, would you be willing to live with us in our place? I would give you thousands upon thousands of golden dinars, precious stones and pearls.' I replied, 'Even if you were to give me all the silver and gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, I would dwell nowhere but in a place of Torah.'" [Avot 6:9]

The question is, why is Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma any different than Bilaam? If Rashi says that Bilaam's suggestion and rejection of the possibility that he receives an exorbitant salary shows that he is a greedy person, why don't we say the same thing about the apparently similar statement by Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma?

The Torah Temima raises this question and explains that in the case of Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma, someone already brought up the subject of an

exorbitant salary. In that case, it was proper for the rabbi to answer as he did. Once someone broached the subject of money, then the appropriate response is "even if you can give me all the money in the world, I will only live in a place of Torah!" The officers of Balak, on the other hand, only offered to give Bilaam "honor". Bilaam raised the issue of money and said, "even if you give me a million dollars, I am not going to transgress G-d's Word." This, Rashi says, proves he had his eye on the money the whole time.

The Chidah, in his Sefer Roshei Avos, writes a different answer to this question. Bilaam's words are "I am unable to transgress the Word of my G-d." This implies "between you and me, I would love to do it, but my hands are tied -- I am not able to violate Hashem's command." Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma made a blanket statement of principle: "I will only live in a place of Torah." That statement represented his personal inner desire, rather than a coerced course of action.

I also saw a third distinction. Bilaam's problem was that he wanted OTHER people's money. He does not state "If Balak will give me a house full of money..." He states "If Balak will give me HIS house full of money..." This indicates that beyond just wanting the money, he really wanted that someone else should NOT HAVE the money. He is like the person who is not really bothered by the fact that he has to drive a 10-year-old car. However, he is bothered that his neighbor has a new car. Rav Yosi ben Kisma merely refers to "all the money in the world." He does not hint that he wants other people's money.

I am sure that this does not exhaust the possibility of answers. Feel free to discuss this further and suggest other answers at your Shabbos table.

A Clash Between Torah and Secular Ethics:

In the dramatic confrontation between the Malach [angel] and Bilaam, after Bilaam's donkey speaks to him, the Malach tells Bilaam "Had she not turned away from me, I would now even have killed you and let her live!" [Bamidbar 22:33]. In other words, if I had my preference, I would have killed you and left the donkey alive. Rashi writes that, in fact, the Malach did kill the donkey, the reason being so that later people would not say about it "This is the donkey that put Bilaam in his place." This is an example of the Almighty being concerned about a person's dignity. We find the same idea with the mitzva to kill an animal involved in human-animal bestiality [Vayikra 20:15-16].

I remember as a little kid, when I first heard this Rashi, I felt so bad for the donkey. This was an innocent donkey, a wondrous talking donkey. It had to die to preserve the honor of the wicked Bilaam so that later, people would not mock Bilaam and point to this donkey as the one who bested him in a debate!

The Torah is concerned about the dignity of a low-life, degenerate human being -- the wicked Bilaam. The donkey on the other hand, could have been a walking Kiddush Hashem. People would point to it and speak of the miracle that happened through it. Why kill this poor donkey to spare the honor of a low-life?

We clearly see that the Torah is more sensitive about the honor and dignity of man, albeit the worst of men, than it is about any animal, albeit the best and most glorious of animals. In ethics classes in the secular world, they always pose the following question: If a person has the choice of rescuing from a fire or from drowning or from some emergency scenario, only one individual -- the family's trustworthy dog who has been in the family for 15 years and saved countless people's lives etc., etc. or a homeless smelly person who is drunk one day and strung out on drugs the next day -- who should the person save, the dog or the drunk? In most classes, everyone says that we should save our dog rather than the homeless person. This is not the Torah's way of viewing things. Not only should we save the human being in such a scenario, but we should even kill the animal to save the dignity of a human being -- even a wicked human being!

Everyone Wants To Die Like a Tzadik

Among the blessings that Bilaam utters once he gets going with his attempt "to curse" the Jewish people is one in which he expresses the following very interesting prayer: "May my soul die the death of the upright, and may my end be like his." [Bamidbar 23:10]. Bilaam is inspired and against his will, he pronounces these Divinely inspired blessings about Israel. He expresses the wish that his death should be like theirs. The Gemara in Avodah Zarah says that Bilaam longed to expire in the same fashion as Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. The Talmud expounds there that the Book of Bereshis is called Sefer HaYashar [the book of the Just]. Similarly, the Mos Yesharim [death of the Just] mentioned by Bilaam refers to the death of the Patriarchs whose lives are portrayed in the Book of Bereshis.

The Or Hachaim haKadosh writes that Bilaam knew that he was a disgusting person. He was the most degenerate person of the nations of the world, a World Class Rasha. He knew, as the Talmud writes, that he had relations with his donkey day and night. However, he had one request -- that on his deathbed he would be able to do Teshuva and thus merit the World to Come -- the world that is entirely good. There is only one problem. A person cannot live like a wicked person his entire life and then figure "Well, at the end, I am going to pull it out!" It does not work like that.

The Or Hachaim haKadosh writes further, "I knew such wicked people who told me explicitly that were they to be guaranteed that immediately after they repented, they would die, they would definitely repent. If they could be certain that they would not need to face the trials and tribulations of living and would never again have to face their Yetzer HaRa, they would certainly do Teshuva. The problem is that they know they cannot live a righteous life for any length of time."

Everyone wants to go out like a Tzadik, but one cannot just go out like a Tzadik after he has lived the life of a degenerate person. In order to die the death of a Just Person, one has to live the life of a Just Person as well.

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic portions for this parsha from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are: Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD RavFrand, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

from Shabbat Shalom postmaster@ou.2dialog.com date Thu, Jul 7, 2011 at 6:48 PM subject Parshat Balak - Shabbat Shalom from the OU Shabbat Shalom OU.org July 06, 2011

Longing For Light By Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

As we enjoy the light of the summer sun, basking in its delightful warmth, it is possible to ask, "Have we gotten our calendar all wrong?"

Are our long, summer vacations misplaced? Shouldn't we refresh and relax more during those cold, hard months of winter?"

After all, who needs rest and relaxation during the summer? The streets fairly vibrate with energy.

And what does this have to do with the Jewish liturgical year?

Our point of departure is the verse in parshat Balak, "And the Lord opened the mouth of the aton [she donkey], and it said to Balaam, What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times [shalosh regalim]?" The p'shat of the verse is simple. The aton turned away three times because an Angel of the Lord appeared before her. But the deeper meaning is in the understanding that the aton was, in fact, conveying a powerful truth to Balaam, "Do you think you can destroy a people observing Shalosh Regalim?"

Rashi quotes the Midrash to make the connection between shalosh regalim and the three major Jewish festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot. The Midrash teaches that, for the Jews, the merits of observing the three festivals and their mitzvot bring protection from Balaam's curses.

Great joy indeed, when the curses of Balaam are instead transformed into praise. But it seems strange, perhaps even a bit off-kilter, to consider that all three of the great regalim take place during the Spring and Summer months.

Pesach, in particular, is commanded by Torah to take place during Chodesh HaAviv, in the springtime. Pesach, which in almost all ways anchors the liturgical year, precedes Shavuot by fifty days. So the summer begins. And then, as the summer concludes, but with days still long and delightful, we enter Yamim Noraim followed immediately after by Sukkot.

Only then, with the incredible festivals of the Jewish year receding in memory do we leave the summer and enter the long Fall and Winter months with their dearth of holidays!

Wouldn't it have made more sense to spread our holiday celebrations more evenly throughout the year, allowing us a more paced opportunity to observe these great festivals? It is almost unseemly to crowd them into seasons already bursting with light and warmth while leaving the colder, darker months without the illumination of our worship.

Maharal views this same lack of balance in the Jewish year but he brings to it a very different perspective. Maharal divides the calendar into two halves – half, from Pesach to Sukkot (that is, the Spring and the Summer) and half, the Fall and Winter months. Unlike the secular sun worshippers, he sees that first half as having the force of spiritual light as its primary power. Because of this great, spiritual force it is during this time that one is more able to tap into his spiritual energy. For Maharal, this explains why our great festivals and Holy Days fall during this half of the year.

For him, the Fall and Winter are a time of spiritual darkness. Like the very flowers of the field, our spirits remain more dormant during these months, awaiting the returning warmth of the Spring in order to blossom again.

Maharal goes so far as to place Winter "outside the realm of time" because it is barren, offering no growth – either agriculturally or spiritually. Being barren, it cannot be fully part of any true and "real existence." It lacks both physical and spiritual value.

Consider the truth of Maharal's perspective; those cold, harsh winter days. When even the hours of weak daylight are shortened. When tree limbs are bare of leaves and lawns are brown and hard. Rather than the symphony of the Spring and Summer, when the chirping of birds and the buzzing of insects harmonize in nature, Winter exists in cold silence.

The cold darkness. It sends us to difficult psychological places.

It is no accident that light is associated with joy, with inspiration, with knowledge and spirit. The darkness makes large our anxieties, our fears and insecurities. It is a time when death seems closer to us and joy farther from our grasp.

Celebrations that seem natural in the warmth of the sun seem impossible in the cold of winter. How winter makes us long for the coming Spring... R' Tzadok writes in agreement with Maharal. He notes that all holidays mentioned in Torah take place during spring and summer months because it is only then that the potential for profound spiritual growth exists. The intense power of the spiritual light is so strong during that time. He notes that the Torah set up the calendar's holidays during the Spring and Summer because to have such festivals during the winter would be counterproductive. It would be misguided to anticipate real growth during the Winter.

To attempt real spiritual growth in the Winter is difficult. It is as promising as planting flowers in the snow pack in December. There will be no bloom. Not until Spring and Summer, when God provides for all growth.

How can we hold out for spiritual nourishment during the long, harsh Winter? Perhaps, we could not and that is the reason that Chazal instituted the two additional holidays of Chanukah and Purim, to sustain our spirituality through the thickest of winters.

After all, both these holidays focus on light. Chanukah, most obviously with the miracle of maintaining the light of the Temple. That it occurs so close to the Winter solstice makes it like a small beacon, letting us know that we shall endure through the darkest and shortest day of the winter. And Purim, lay'hudim haysa orah – and for the Jews there was light – is the light that tells us that our long wait for that deep spiritual nourishment is almost over.

Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran serves as OU Kosher's vice president of communications and marketing.

Subscribe to Shabbat Shalom!

from genesis@torah.org reply-to genesis@torah.org to
weekly-halacha@torah.org date Thu, Jul 7, 2011 at
7:05 PM

Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt
Washing Dishes on Shabbos

As part of an overall strategy to minimize unnecessary work on Shabbos and to enhance the Shabbos day as a day of rest from all weekday chores and activities, the rabbis forbade washing dirty dishes on Shabbos unless they are needed for that very Shabbos. Moreover, all dishes that are to be used on Shabbos should be washed before Shabbos begins. One should not wait for Shabbos to begin to wash dirty dishes from Friday afternoon.

It is permitted to wash dishes after the Friday night meal if they will be used for the Shabbos morning or afternoon meal (seudah shelishis). But it is forbidden to wash the Friday night dishes if they will not be used for any of the Shabbos day meals.

It is permitted to wash dirty dishes that accumulated from the morning or midday meals if they will be needed for the third meal or for snacks that will be served later on in the day. It is also permitted to wash all types of dishes which are commonly used throughout the day, such as glasses, teaspoons, fruit plates, etc., unless one is sure that they will not be needed again.

It is permitted to wash all the dirty dishes that have accumulated even though only some of them will be needed later. Even if one plate or cup will be needed, it is permitted to wash all the plates or cups that are dirty.

Several poskim debate whether it is permitted to wash dirty dishes for Shabbos use even if there are other clean dishes readily available. While it is customary to be lenient, some poskim recommend that it is appropriate to be stringent when possible.

In the case of a family simchah, for example, when used dishes may pile up and create a dirty, unsightly mess, it is permitted to

wash the dishes [even if they not going to be used on Shabbos], since they are being washed for the sake of oneg Shabbos and not for a weekday need.

Dishes that may not be washed on Shabbos may still be stacked in the dishwasher. One may not sort different types of dishes or cutlery before placing them in the dishwasher, even if his intention is to make room for all of the dishes. It is permitted, however, to pick up a few similar dishes, e.g., a stack of fish plates or cups, and place each dish in its designated slot. If the dishes were improperly placed, they may not be rearranged according to size and type so that they will be ready for washing in the evening.

A dishwasher may not be operated on Shabbos, even if it was preset by a time clock. It is also strictly forbidden to instruct a non-Jew-on or before Shabbos-to operate a dishwasher on Shabbos.

Soaking Dishes

Just as it is forbidden to wash dishes that are not needed for Shabbos, so is it forbidden to rinse them in preparation for washing them after Shabbos. Soaking dishes in preparation for washing them after Shabbos is also prohibited. [Note: "soaking" is only prohibited when it entails a specific, additional act, such as filling a dirty pot with water to soak it, or filling a dishpan with water on Shabbos and then placing the dirty dishes in it. If, however, a dishpan was filled before Shabbos and the dishes are merely removed from the table and deposited therein, that is permitted.]

There are, however, a number of specific cases when rinsing or soaking is allowed. It is permitted, for instance, to rinse or soak dirty dishes which will otherwise become permanently stained, will attract insects or flies, or will emit a foul odor.

In addition, some poskim permit soaking dishes or pots to prevent leftover grease or soft food particles from hardening and becoming difficult to wash after Shabbos. Other poskim do not agree with this leniency. All poskim agree that once the residue has hardened and formed a crust, it is forbidden to rinse or soak dishes or pots to prepare them for washing after Shabbos.

When washing dishes on Shabbos it is prohibited . . .

to turn on the hot water tap. On Friday night, when the tank and the water it contains are still hot, it is strictly prohibited to turn on the hot water tap even if the boiler was turned off before Shabbos, since the tank and/or the hot water in the tank will cook the cold water which flows into it automatically.

to use a sponge, a wet cloth, a paper towel or any implement made of any other absorbent material.

to use steel wool or synthetic scouring pads which trap water between their fibers.

to use bar soap.

When washing dishes on Shabbos it is permitted . . .

to use hot or warm water that was heated and prepared in a basin before Shabbos. Hot water should not be poured directly over globs of fat in order to dissolve them.

to use liquid detergent. It is preferable to add water to the liquid soap in order to dilute it before Shabbos.

to use synthetic scouring pads whose fibers are widely spaced and cannot trap water (such as the round plastic "Shabbos sponges").

to use a nylon bottle brush.

to wear rubber or plastic gloves.

to plug the sink drain with a stopper.

to empty the refuse which accumulates in the drain into a garbage can. under extenuating circumstances, to plunge a blocked drain with a rubber plunger.

Weekly-Halacha, Weekly Halacha, Copyright © 2011 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. Rabbi Neustadt is the Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Harabbonim of Detroit and the Av Beis Din of

the Beis Din Tzedek of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com

Questions or comments? Email feedback@torah.org.

Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing.

Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page.

Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information.

from Rabbi Yitz Etshalom rebyitz@torah.org reply-to
rebyitz+@torah.org to mikra@torah.org

Mikra

by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

Parshat Balak Heroes and Villians VI

THE AKEDAH AND BILAM'S JOURNEY:

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

The pinnacle of Avraham's life - and the ultimate test of his greatness - is the tragi-heroic story of the Akedah (B'resheet 22:1-19). Since the Torah has already drawn these two personae dramatis together when we are introduced to each (via the "bless/curse" formula), let's see how these two journeys - Bil'am's trek to meet Balak and do his evil bidding and Avraham's pilgrimage to Mount Moriah - match up against each other:

And it came to pass after these things, that God tested Avraham, and said to him, Avraham; and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now your son, your only son Yitzchak, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you. And Avraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Yitzchak his son, and broke the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Avraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place far away. And Avraham said to his young men, Stay here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come back to you. And Avraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Yitzchak his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Yitzchak spoke to Avraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Avraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering; so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him; and Avraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Yitzchak his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Avraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of Hashem called to him from heaven, and said, Avraham, Avraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not your hand upon the lad, nor do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing that you did not withhold your son, your only son from me. And Avraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Avraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in place of his son. And Avraham called the name of that place Adonai-Yireh; as it is said to this day, In the Mount of Hashem it shall be seen. And the angel of Hashem called to Avraham from heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, said Hashem, for because you have done this thing, and have not withhold your son, your only son; That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as

the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice. So Avraham returned to his young men, and they rose up and went together to B'er-Sheva; and Avraham lived at B'er-Sheva. (B'resheet 22:1-19)

And God came to Bil'am at night, and said to him, If the men come to call you, rise up, and go with them; but only that word which I shall say to you, that shall you do. And Bil'am rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Mo'av. And God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of Hashem stood in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of Hashem standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field; and Bil'am struck the ass, to turn it to the way. But the angel of Hashem stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of Hashem, it pushed itself to the wall, and crushed Bil'am's foot against the wall; and he struck her again. And the angel of Hashem went further, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of Hashem, it fell down under Bil'am; and Bil'am's anger was kindled, and he struck the ass with a staff. And Hashem opened the mouth of the ass, and it said to Bil'am, What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times? And Bil'am said to the ass, Because you have mocked me; I wished there was a sword in my hand, for now would I kill you. And the ass said to Bil'am, Am not I your ass, upon which you have ridden ever since I was yours to this day? Was I ever wont to do so to you? And he said, No. Then Hashem opened the eyes of Bil'am, and he saw the angel of Hashem standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed down his head, and fell on his face. And the angel of Hashem said to him, Why did you strike your ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand you, because your way is perverse before me; And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times; if it had not turned aside from me, surely now also I would had slain you, and let her live. And Bil'am said to the angel of Hashem, I have sinned; for I knew not that you stood in the way against me; now therefore, if it displeases you, I will go back again. And the angel of Hashem said to Bil'am, Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak to you, that you shall speak. So Bil'am went with the princes of Balak. (Bamidbar 22:20-35)

These two narratives are clearly associated - the "arising early in the morning", the "saddling of the donkey", the entourage, made up of two lads, the encounters with the angel of Hashem, and so on.

This is, shall we say, the first step in utilizing Midrashic tools: Identifying the association between stories/personae/events etc.

Now that the association has been identified, let's take the next step: Noting how differently these two characters act - and react - within their given set of circumstances.

Avraham responds to God's initial call - terrifying though it may be - and arises early the next day to begin his pilgrimage; Bil'am, on the other hand, "comes back" to God a second time, to ask again for permission to go with the Moabite princes.

Avraham moves towards greater levels of isolation, first taking only Yitzchak and his two servants - then leaving the servant behind; Bil'am takes his two servants and then catches up with the entourage of princes before reaching Balak.

Avraham nearly slaughters his son, following the Divine command; Bil'am threatens to slaughter his donkey, who is the one responding to the Divine presence (the angel).

Avraham is praised by the angel; Bil'am is threatened with death by the angel.

Avraham says nothing to the angel, merely following the Divine command of "staying his hand"; Bil'am is cowed by the presence of the angel and offers to return home.

Most significantly -

Avraham sees everything whereas Bil'am sees nothing.

This last one requires some explanation. Parashiot of Tanakh usually feature a "Milah Manhah" - a guiding phrase or word. This is often an unusual word or phrase, or one that shows up in an inordinately high frequency. As is obvious, our own understanding of the significance of a narrative, prophecy, psalm etc. is enhanced if we can successfully identify the "Milah Manhah".

[An example of a Milah Manhah is the word "Et", meaning "time", as it appears in the prophecy of Haggai. Although the entire book of Haggai is 38 verses long, this relatively uncommon word shows up 7 times within those verses. This becomes a - or the - Milah Manhah and helps define the entire purpose and undercurrent of his message. See Haggai 1:2 against the background of Yirmiyah 29:10]

The "guide-word" in Parashat ha'Akedah is clearly a combination of the two roots: Y*R*A and R*A*H; the first meaning "fear" and the second relating to "vision". No less than seven occurrences of these roots can be found in this brief section of 19 verses. Indeed, the two names given to the place where Avraham ascends - Moriah (see Divrei haYamim II 3:1) and "Hashem Yir'eh" (see Sh'mot 23:17)

A central part of the message of the Akedah is Avraham's vision - his ability to see the place and all it implies - and to recognize the substitution ram for his son. His vision is closely tied in to his fear of God, as it his recognition of his place in this world that is driven by his awareness of God's grandeur and awe.

When this story is "played" against the apparently similar trek made by Bil'am, we see that Bil'am, the great visionary, the one who feels he can outfox the Ribbono shel Olam, sees absolutely nothing. His donkey sees more clearly than he and, when finally forced to face his angelic adversary, he retreats. The cowardice and blindness are as inextricably wound together, just as Avraham's vision and fear (very far, morally and spiritually, from "cowardice") are of one piece.

VII

BACK TO THE QUESTIONS

Earlier, we noted that three qualities are ascribed to students (i.e. followers of the path) of Avraham and three opposite qualities to the students of Bil'am.

We have answered the key question: Bil'am is "faced off" against Avraham by virtue of the many textual associations in these two key Parashiot. The Torah, beyond telling us about the trip a certain Petorite prophet made, in which his mission was turned upside-down by the Ribbono shel Olam, also tells us much about our beloved father Avraham. We appreciate his vision, his valor and his moral greatness much more when seen against the backdrop of the self-serving, morally blind and cowardly Bil'am.

How do we know that Avraham had a "good eye" and that Bil'am had an "evil eye"? We have already seen that clearly presented in these two Parashiot.

How do we know that Avraham had a humble spirit? "I am dust and ashes" is Avraham's stand in front of God (B'resheet 18:27); Bil'am, on the other hand, believes himself able to overrule the Divine decision of who should be blessed and who should be cursed - demonstrating his haughty spirit.

How do we know that Bil'am had an overambitious soul? Note that his willingness to challenge the Almighty grows as his potential reward - both financial and political - become greater. If Avraham is the epitome of everything that Bil'am is not - then Avraham is blessed with a "lowly soul", which is demonstrated by his willingness to sacrifice everything to fulfill the Divine command.

Bil'am went to become enriched and lost everything; Avraham went to lose everything and became enriched for generations.

Mikra, Copyright © 2011 by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom and Torah.org. The author is Educational Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Institute of the Yeshiva of Los Angeles.

Questions or comments? Email feedback@torah.org.

Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing.

Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page.

Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information.

Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208
<http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350
FAX: (410) 510-1053

from Yeshivat Har Etzion office@etzion.org.il reply-to Yeshivat Har Etzion <office@etzion.org.il> to yhe-sichot@etzion.org.il date Wed, Jul 6, 2011 at 6:09 AM subject VBM-SICHOT71 -40: Parashat Balak YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA For easy printing, go to:

www.vbm-torah.org/archive/sichot71/40-71balak.htm
PARASHAT BALAK
SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

Yemei Iyun beTanakh: July 31 – Aug 4 in Alon Shevut. 175 lectures in Hebrew, 30 in English! New: special program for high school students. To register: <http://www.herzog.ac.il>

NEW BOOK: By Faith Alone: The Story of Rabbi Yehuda Amital Available at a 27% discount [here](#).

Le'zecher nishmat Naftali Hertzke ben Mayer Eliezer v'Gittel z"l, Nathaniel H. Leiderman, whose yahrzeit will be observed on 11 Tammuz. Dedicated by Ira Leiderman & Mindy Smith and their children Eric & Cara of Englewood, NJ, USA.

The Daily Sacrifices Translated by Kaeren Fish

The month of Tammuz, which began this week, is a month of infamy. It includes two dates that commemorate terrible suffering that befell Am Yisrael – the 9th and the 17th. But unlike Av, in which the fasting and mourning over the destruction are followed by our celebration on the 15th of the month, in Tammuz there is not a single joyous day to balance the tragedy. The Mishna lists five catastrophes we commemorate on the 17th of Tammuz: Five things happened to our forefathers on the 17th of Tammuz... The Tablets were shattered, and the daily sacrifice (tamid) ceased, and the city (Jerusalem) was breached, and Apostamos burned the Torah, and placed an idol in the Temple. (Ta'anit 26a) It is exceedingly difficult to rank these five events in order of importance. Each was terrible in its own way, and had horrible effects in the long term. On the other hand, most people would have little difficulty in declaring the cessation of the daily sacrifice as the least terrible. After nearly two millennia we are used to living without the daily sacrifice and do not feel its absence. But even if we were to try to imagine ourselves in the situation of the people of Jerusalem at the time of the Destruction, there is no comparison between the cessation of the daily sacrifice – the

halting of a positive practice – and the other four tragedies. Indeed, according to some religious approaches, daily practices occupy a secondary position. These approaches emphasize special occasions and climactic moments in contrast to everyday routine. Judaism does not belong to this group of religions. The world of Judaism in general, and Halakha in particular, is based on the idea of the tamid. Judaism desires that we relate to the existence and presence of God at every time and in every place, and lays out specific commandments that pertain to a person every day, everywhere, and in every situation: the duties of the heart, the commandments of remembrance, etc. The daily sacrifice has a dual nature: it is a sacrifice which is brought every day, just as the musaf (additional) sacrifice for Shabbat is brought every week. At the same time, offering this sacrifice is part of the fixed routine of the Temple – like the lighting of the lamps and the offering of incense. Owing to its special nature, the tamid sacrifice sets down the framework for the sacrificial service in the Temple: all sacrifices are offered between the tamid of the morning and the tamid at twilight. The tamid therefore molds and guides the entire day within the Temple and outside of it. The centrality of the tamid sacrifice in Judaism is also manifest on the purely halakhic level: “Daily sacrifices take precedence over additional sacrifices” (Mishna Zevachim 89a). This precedence exists on two levels: there is chronological precedence, as well as precedence in terms of importance: if only one of them can be offered, it is the daily sacrifice.

The picture that arises from the Mishna, according to which the tamid paves the way and serves as the groundwork for the musaf, is a stark contrast to the conventional way of thinking. In general, people are attracted to that which is festive, special and exceptional; they disdain that which is routine, boring and everyday. The Mishna presents a revolutionary set of preferences: “The tamid [sacrifices] take precedence over the musaf [sacrifices].” If we examine the matter in depth, we will see that the Mishna is expressing more than merely the superiority of the tamid. It is making a profound statement: without the tamid, the musaf could not exist. It is inconceivable that the pyramid be inverted, with the musaf enjoying preference over the tamid. The Gemara discusses an instance of a clash between two sacrifices, one holier than the other, but the latter more regular than the first: It was asked: [In a choice between] that which is more frequent and that which is more sacred, which takes precedence? ... Come and hear: The tamid offerings take precedence over the musaf offerings, even though the musaf offerings are more sacred! Just as Shabbat affects the musaf offerings, does it not affect the tamid offerings?! (Zevachim 90b) The character of each day is deeply entrenched in the tamid sacrifice of that day. Just as the musaf of Shabbat draws from the holiness of Shabbat, so the tamid offered on Shabbat also draws from it. A one-time musaf can never take preference over the routine tamid. Hence, owing to the centrality of the concept of the tamid in our consciousness, we cannot remain impassive in the face of the cessation of this sacrifice. A Christian could manage easily without a daily sacrifice, but the entire world of a ben Torah is based on this daily routine, and the deeper significance behind its nullification should frighten us no less – perhaps even more – than the significance of the other tragedies associated with the 17th of Tammuz. The halting of the tamid by imperial decree was an acute loss, but today we face a danger that is far greater: the cessation of the tamid out of weariness and neglect, not as a result of some external force. We must realize that something is amiss when we begin to identify with the alien world-view that declares that only the special musaf offerings are important, while routine daily expressions and events pale into insignificance and lose their value in our eyes. A Jew has no prosaic moments! He or she must consistently value the prosaic and seek and discern its poetical aspect: “The entire Torah is referred to as ‘song.’” When the level of awareness of and commitment to the tamid becomes eroded, the situation is most dangerous. In our lives as bnei Torah, the concept of the tamid finds expression in three main areas. First,

“Be ravished always with its love” (Mishlei 5:19). Love of Torah, finding expression in daily study, is the clearest expression of the concept of the daily tamid. The daily study session is admittedly routine and hence appears from the outside to be no cause for excitement. However, for someone who connects himself and immerses himself in the world of Torah, there is no such thing as a routine day; he is “ravished with its love” constantly. It is not for nothing that a regular study session is called a seder (literally, ‘order’), like the seder ha-tamidim (order of the daily sacrifices); it frames and shapes the entire day. The second expression of the concept of tamid is hinted at by Chazal in their assertion that “the prayer services were instituted corresponding to the daily sacrifices” (Berachot 26b). While there is no danger of a complete cessation of the “tamid” of prayer, there is certainly a danger of erosion in the quality, intensity, concentration and depth of our prayer. Especially in light of the challenges and threats constantly facing the State of Israel, we must pray, cry out and shake the heavens in supplication. It is especially important at critical times of danger to emphasize and internalize the importance of the concept of the tamid in our prayer. The third area expressing “tamid” is Shabbat. Ramban understands the commandment to “Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it” as a perpetual command that applies not only to Shabbat but also to the rest of the week. As we have seen, the sanctity of Shabbat radiates to the tamid offerings of Shabbat just as it does to the musaf offerings. We must not belittle the uniqueness of every “routine” Shabbat just because there are also some special, especially festive ones.

The difficult month ahead of us may be transformed into a month of elevation. To counter the cessation of the tamid on the 17th of Tammuz, it is up to us to renew and strengthen the tamid, specifically during this month, through engaging in Torah, prayer and enhancement of Shabbat. The responsibility rests with each one of us; we must not leave it to others. Our task is to act, to start the momentum towards renewing our ancient glory, “to restore the order of the daily sacrifices and the practice of the additional offerings.” (This sicha was delivered on Rosh Chodesh Tamuz 5760 [2000].)

From genesis@torah.org to rabbiwein@torah.org date Thu, Jul 7, 2011 at 2:05 PM subject Rabbi Wein - Parshas Balak

Parshas Balak

Remember Balak's Role

Although Bilaam is the major villain of the piece in this week's parsha, we should not overlook Balak's nefarious role in the events described therein. Balak is the instigator of the whole plot to curse and destroy the Jewish people. He finances Bilaam and is most persistent in pursuing his evil goal. Even when Bilaam apparently despairs of the success of his mission and so informs Balak,

Balak nevertheless insists that he continue, for perhaps he will yet be able to curse the people of Israel. Often in Jewish history we find this scenario repeated, with those behind the scenes persistently encouraging the masses to destroy the Jews while they stay a pious distance behind, causing, but somehow apparently not participating in, the murderous mayhem.

As hate filled as Bilaam is he cannot operate alone. He needs financial and social backing for him to do his worst. Bilaam is eventually killed by the very people he attempted to destroy. But Balak always lives on to try again to accomplish the destruction of the Jewish nation. Balak never makes peace with the idea that the Lord does not allow him his goal. His tenacity for hatred and evil behavior is his true hallmark of his identity.

Centuries later the prophet reminds us of Balak's scheme and advice to Bilaam and warns us somehow not to overlook Balak's role in this story of aggression and unreasoned hatred. Through remembering the original

Balak, the prophet informs us that we will be better able to identify and deal with his successors in deceit and hatred throughout the ages.

It is not the suicide bomber – Bilaam – that is the only guilty party in terrorist attacks. It is the Balaks who send them and support them that are certainly equally as guilty. The pious human rights organizations that promote only hatred and violence under the guise of doing good deeds are also responsible for the loss of the precious lives of innocents caused by those whom they so nurture and support.

The Talmud stated this reality by coining the famous Jewish aphorism: “It is not the mouse alone that is the thief. It is rather the hole in the wall that allows the mouse entry into the house that is the real thief.” It is the persistence of those that are determined to undermine the Jewish people and the State of Israel that places them as direct immoral descendants of Balak.

In the Pesach Hagadah we read that in every generation we face this challenge. No matter how many Bilaams we are able to dispose of, Balak somehow survives to continue to try again. The words of the prophet in this week's haftorah - to remember Balak's role in the story of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai - are addressed to us and our times as well.

We should not be shocked, though our sadness over this fact is understandable, that the malevolence against Jews of the 1930's can repeat itself in 2011. As long as Balak still remains a force in the world the Jewish problem will not go away.

Shabat shalom, Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbi Berel Wein, Copyright © 2011 by Rabbi Berel Wein and Torah.org

Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com

Questions or comments? Email feedback@torah.org.

Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing.

Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page.

Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information.

Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208

<http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350 FAX: (410) 510-1053

From: Kaganoff <y mkaganoff@gmail.com>

To: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

Subject: attached article on berachos for balak

Important Eating – The Halachos of Ikar and Tafel

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: You made a bracha on a cup of tea and sipped it, and then decided it needed more sugar. Do you need to make a bracha on the extra sugar?

Question #2: You cooked a delicious vegetable-barley soup. What bracha do you recite before eating it? Does it make any difference whether you want to eat the barley?

Question #3: I eat my potato latkes with apple sauce. How many brachos and which ones do I recite before eating them? Does it make a difference if I finish the latkes but am still eating the apple sauce?

The main theme of this week's parsha, Balak, is mankind's ability to recite berachos, and the opposite, and creating proper priorities in how we use this ability. This is certainly an opportune time to examine the complicated rules governing how we prioritize the brachos on what we eat. We apply the rules governing ikar and tafeil, literally the "primary" item and the "secondary" one, numerous times throughout the day. Whether we are eating cereal, fruit and milk for breakfast, macaroni and cheese for lunch, chicken with rice for supper, or snacking on an ice cream cone, these halachos apply. It definitely behooves us to be sure we are applying the halachos correctly.

First an introduction: The Mishnah (Berachos 44a) which discusses brachos recited before eating states, "This is the rule: Whatever is primary and is accompanied by something secondary, one recites the bracha on the primary and absolves the secondary item." Thus, the secondary item does not receive its own bracha, but is included in the bracha of the primary item.

WHAT CONSTITUTES AN IKAR-TAFEIL SITUATION?

There are two general categories of situations included in the halachos of ikar and tafeil; (1) when the ikar is an enhancer and (2) when the two items are combined in a mixture.

(1) Enhancers: This category includes food items where the tafeil food makes the ikar food tastier. Some common examples include: Cereal with fruit and milk; eating latkes with apple sauce; stirring herbal tea with a cinnamon stick; breaded fish or meat (schnitzel). In all of these cases, one recites the bracha for the ikar; that is, the cereal, latkes, tea, or meat; and the tafeil is included – that is, the tafeil item loses its bracha.

The category of enhancers also includes cases where the ikar is too spicy or sharp to eat alone. Thus, eating a cracker or piece of bread with a very sharp food to make it edible is a case of ikar and tafeil and one recites the bracha only on the sharp food (Mishnah Berachos 44a).

We should note, however, that the tafeil item loses its bracha only when one eats it together with the ikar or afterwards. But if one eats the tafeil before one eats the ikar, one does recite a bracha on the tafeil. Thus, food eaten before schnapps to soften its "bite" requires a bracha since one is eating it before the schnapps. When this situation occurs, the poskim debate what bracha one recites on the tafeil.

(2) Mixtures: This category includes cases where one food is not specifically enhancing the other, but both foods are important. For example, someone eating macaroni and cheese, blintzes (they always contain a filling), cholent, kugel, or stew is interested in eating all the different foods that comprise the dish. The same halacha applies when eating soups, which may contain vegetables, meat, noodles, barley, or flour. In these cases, all the food items eaten are important and none of these ingredients serve only to enhance the rest. However, the food in these cases are mixtures they are considered one complete food item and therefore only recites one bracha for the entire food, although it contains items that eaten separately would require separate brachos. Thus, the concept of ikar and tafeil is very different here - it is the rule used to determine which bracha we recite on this food. In this case, the bracha of the ikar is the bracha on the entire item.

WHAT DETERMINES THE BRACHA ON A MIXTURE?

There are three rules that determine which bracha to recite on a mixture.

1. If one of the items in the mixture is clearly the most important, then that item determines the bracha (Pri Megadim, Pesicha Koleles, Hilchos Brachos s.v. HaTenai; Mishnah Berurah 212:1). For example, the bracha on chicken soup with vegetables is shehakol since the chicken is the most important flavor component in the soup. However, if it is a vegetable soup with some meat added for flavor, the bracha would be ha'adamah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 205:2 and commentaries).

2. When there is no most important ingredient, the bracha is usually determined by the majority item in the product. Thus, the bracha on a peanut bar containing peanuts, honey, and sugar is ha'adamah since

peanuts are the major ingredient, and the bracha on a tzimmes consisting of prunes and sweet potatoes depends on which item is the major ingredient.

3. However, when the mixture contains one of the five grains (wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye) then the bracha is usually mezonos, unless the flour or grain product is included only to hold the food together (Shulchan Aruch 204:12; 208:2,3). Because these grains are important, they are the ikar of the mixture even if they are a minority component.

However, when the flour's purpose is only to hold the item together or to provide texture, then it is not the ikar of the food because its purpose is clearly to function as a subsidiary. (In this instance, the flour is being used to enhance the other food item, and thus it categorically becomes a tafeil.)

Therefore, the bracha on a trifle containing cakes and ice cream is mezonos even if there is more ice cream than cake, since the cake is a grain product; whereas the bracha on potato kugel that contains flour, bread crumbs, and/or matzoh meal to provide texture is ha'adamah. Since the grain product here functions only to hold the kugel together, it is tafeil and does not affect the bracha. Similarly, flour added to thicken soup is tafeil (Mishnah Berurah 212:1). When the flour provides taste or makes the product satisfying, then the flour is the ikar and the bracha is mezonos (Shulchan Aruch 204:12; 208:3). Similarly, the bracha on vegetable-barley soup is mezonos. However, if the barley is completely dissolved, the bracha on the soup is usually ha'adamah. Similarly, if you do not want to eat the barley but a few pieces ended up in your portion anyway, the bracha is ha'adamah.

The same rules apply in the case of licorice candy whose bracha is shehakol even though it contains a significant amount of flour, since the flour is there only to give it a stiff texture. On the other hand, the bracha on kishka is mezonos, since the main ingredient is the flour.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Until now we have been discussing situations when you are eating the ikar and tafeil together. What do you do if you are eating the tafeil item either before or after you eat the ikar?

A TAFEIL EATEN BEFORE

A tafeil loses a bracha only when it is eaten together with the ikar or afterwards, but not when it is eaten before. Again, the reason for this becomes fairly clear once we think about it. A tafeil's bracha is subsumed by the bracha on the ikar. This helps us as long as one has already recited the bracha on the ikar. However, if one has not yet recited the bracha on the ikar, how can one eat the tafeil without reciting any bracha at all since we are forbidden to benefit from the world without first reciting a bracha? Thus, it must be that we recite a bracha on the tafeil when eating it before the ikar.

However, this does not tell us whether the bracha on the tafeil is the same bracha one would usually recite on it, or whether it is automatically reduced to a shehakol. Let us say that someone is going to drink a powerful beverage or a very spicy pepper, and in order to tolerate it, he is first going to eat some bread or crackers. What bracha does he recite on the bread or cracker?

The Rama (212:1) rules that one recites a shehakol on the bread or cracker!

WHY DOES THE CRACKER LOSE ITS BRACHA?

The Rama's ruling is based on an earlier psak of the Terumas HaDeshen, who discusses a case of someone who wants to drink wine, but can not drink the wine on an empty stomach. Therefore he eats some seeds whose bracha is usually ha'eitz before imbibing the wine. The Terumas HaDeshen rules that he recites a shehakol on the seeds since he is not getting his primary benefit from the fruit (Darchei Moshe 212:2). However, the Beis Yosef disagrees and rules that he should make ha'eitz on the seeds.

On what concept is this dispute dependent? One could explain that this dispute reflects two different ways of explaining why one does not recite

a bracha on a tafeil. The Terumas HaDeshen contends that a tafeil is unimportant and therefore does not warrant a bracha, however, one cannot benefit from this world without a bracha -- therefore one recites shehakol. On the other hand, the Beis Yosef holds that the bracha on the ikar counts as the bracha on the tafeil and therefore one does not need to make a bracha on it- but if the tafeil were to require a bracha, it does not lose its status or its bracha.

EATING A TAFEIL AFTER THE IKAR

What do you do if you finished eating the ikar, but you have not yet completed the tafeil. Do you recite a bracha on the tafeil since you are no longer eating the ikar, or do we say that the bracha on the ikar still suffices? For example, you finished your cereal, but there is still some milk left, or you finished the barley of the soup, but there is still more soup to eat. Do you recite a new bracha on the rest of the soup?

The halacha is that if you finished the ikar first, and a small amount of tafeil remains, one does not recite a bracha on the remaining tafeil. However, if a large amount remains, one does recite a bracha (Mishnah Berurah 168:46).

At the beginning of the article I asked the following shaylah, "You made a bracha on a cup of tea and sipped it and then decided it needed more sugar. Do you need to make a bracha on the extra sugar?"

The question here is that the sugar is tafeil to the tea, but can it be a tafeil when it was not in front of you when you made the bracha?

The halacha is that if you begin eating something and afterwards decide to eat a tafeil food alongside, the tafeil requires a bracha- but only shehakol (Mishnah Berurah 212:4). This is true only if the tafeil is an enhancer (see our category above). However, if it is a tafeil because it is a mixture, it receives its regular bracha. Thus, if after making a bracha on cereal, someone decided to add milk and fruit, he recites ha'eitz on the fruit and shehakol on the milk. On the other hand, if he knew he would add fruit and milk when he recited the bracha on the cereal, then they are tafeil to the cereal and he does not recite a bracha on them even though they were not present when he recited the bracha.

What should you do if someone brought you a cup of tea and you then decided to add sugar? Do you need to recite a bracha on the sugar?

If you usually add sugar to your tea, you do not need to recite a new bracha. However, if you do not, then you will need to recite a bracha on the sugar.

Not everything we do in life qualifies as our ikar purpose in life- often we must do things that are tafeil to the more important things in life. However, paying attention to the halachos of ikar and tafeil should encourage us to focus on our priorities in life- and not allow the tafeil things we must do become more important than they are.
