



BS"D

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

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON **BALAK** - 5773

Collection of various diveri torah from prior editions
I will be sending out Efraim Goldstein's current edition by email.

BALAK

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland Parshas Balak

And Balak ben Tzipor saw. (22:2) Horav Ze'ev Weinberger, Shlita, writes that he once heard stated in the name of Horav Moshe M'Rozvandov, zl, an ambiguous statement regarding the relationship among Parshios Korach, Chukas, and Balak. He said that the letter "Kuf," "e" is found in all three parshios. Kuf begins one, is in the middle of the next, and ends the third parsha. Korach, begins with a kuf; Chukas has the letter kuf in the middle, and Balak has it at the end. Needless to say, this statement is enigmatic. What lesson is to be derived from the position of the kuf in the names of the three parshios? This question was presented to Horav Gedalyah Shorr, zl. After thinking for a few moments, he said, "The letter kuf alludes to kedushah, holiness, which begins with the letter kuf. Korach had kedushah in the beginning. His ancestors were great people. He descended from Shevet Levi. Parshas Chukas, which discusses the laws concerning the Parah Adumah, has a kuf in the middle, since the red cow is burned in the present. The kedushah is here and now. Balak has the kedushah in the end, in the future. Rus, a future Moavite descendant, after converting became the mother of royalty, the House of David Ha'Melech. We infer from this idea a valuable lesson. Kedushah is present at some point, either in the beginning, the middle, or the end. Holiness must be present in order to sustain the inherent value of a situation. This kedushah will not, however, protect the individuals involved. We see that Korach met a tragic end, despite his noble pedigree. Balak was a rasha until his demise, despite his virtuous descendants. What do we learn from here? We see that kedushah must be consistent; in the beginning, the middle, and the end. One cannot be inclined to holiness at his convenience. Selective virtue has no place in living a Jewish life

weekly-halacha@torah.org Parshas Balak-17th of Tammuz

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

One from Jacob will rule and destroy the remnant of the city (24:19) Israel will dominate Edom and destroy its most prominent city, Rome. (Rashi)

THE 17th DAY OF TAMMUZ

The three-week period know as Bein ha-Metzarim, the time of year when we mourn the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash, begins this Monday evening, the 17th of Tammuz. The Three Weeks begin with a fast day and end with a fast

day, Tishah B'av. In this issue, we will review the laws of 17th Day of Tammuz(1).

The fast begins 72 minutes before sunrise Tuesday morning (alos amud ha-shachar)(2) and ends 50 minutes after sunset Tuesday evening (tzeis ha-kochavim). Sunrise and sunset times are calculated by various government agencies and are readily available to the general public. Food and drink may be consumed any time Monday night - but only if one remains awake all night(3). Once a person retires for the evening - the fast begins, because people do not normally eat until breakfast the following morning which is well past alos amud ha-shachar. Retiring the evening before, therefore, is tantamount to starting the fast. Consequently: Unless one explicitly states(4) before going to sleep that he plans to wake up early to eat before the fast begins, he may not eat in the morning upon awakening, even before alos amud ha-shachar. For him, the fast has already begun(5). One who normally drinks coffee, juice, etc., in the morning upon arising, does not need to stipulate that he will drink this morning as well. One who normally does not drink anything in the morning should stipulate before retiring that he is planning to get up in the morning to drink. B'dieved, if he failed to do so, he may drink nevertheless(6). "Going to sleep" means deep sleep, whether in a bed or not. Napping or dozing does not mean that the individual has finished eating and begun the fast(7). Although, as stated, it is permitted to eat before alos amud ha-shachar [if one intended to do so the evening before the fast], one who eats then must contend with another halachic issue - the strict prohibition against eating before davening Shacharis(8). The rules are as follows: According to the Zohar(9), one who wakes up at any time during the night [after midnight] may not eat before davening - even though the time of davening is several hours off. Although there are special individuals who abide by the Zohar(10), the basic halachah is not like the Zohar and the prohibition does not begin until the earliest time for davening, which is alos amud ha-shachar(11). As stated, it is permitted to eat until alos amud ha-shachar. However, one who did not begin to eat until he was within half-an-hour of alos amud ha-shachar must do one of the following(12): Limit his food intake: Eat fruit (any amount)(13), eat any she'hakol type of food but without being koveia seudah (eating a regular scheduled meal)(14), or eat less than 2.2 fl. oz. of bread, cake, cereal, etc.(15). All drinks - except intoxicating beverages - are permitted in any amount(16). Eat any kind and any amount of food but appoint another person to remind him to recite Kerias Shema and Shemoneh Esrei(17). Once alos amud ha-shachar arrives, it is questionable if it is permitted to go back to sleep before davening. If he does go back to sleep, he should appoint another person to wake him up for davening(18). A reliable alarm clock may also be sufficient.

FAST-DAY ACTIVITIES Although it is permitted to bathe according to the basic law, it has become customary not to take a hot shower or bath on the 17th of Tammuz(19). It is also proper to refrain from swimming(20). The poskim differ as to whether it is permitted to rinse one's mouth with water on the 17th of Tammuz(21). Some permit rinsing the front part of the mouth, taking care that no water enters the throat area(22), while other poskim allow this only when in distress (tzaar)(23). According to the second view, then, one may not schedule a fast-day visit to a dentist [which will require him to rinse his mouth] unless he is in pain(24). Medically prescribed medication may be taken on the seventeenth of Tammuz. One who has difficulty swallowing pills without water may drink the amount of water required to swallow them. There is no need to ruin the taste of the water before drinking it(25). When suffering from a severe headache, etc., aspirin or Tylenol may be taken. The poskim, however, do not permit taking those medications with water(26).

DAVENING ON A FAST-DAY: During the reading of the Torah on a fast-day, the custom is that certain verses are read aloud by the congregation. The individual who is called up for that aliyah should not read the verses aloud with the congregation. Instead, he should wait until the reader says them aloud and read along with him(27). One who mistakenly ate on a fast day must resume and complete the fast(28), and he may recite aneinu at Minchah(29). One who is not fasting altogether should not say aneinu(30). One who is davening Shemoneh Esrei together with the Sheliach Tzibur should not say aneinu as a separate blessing like the Sheliach Tzibur does; he should say it as it said in private recitation, in Shema Koleinu(31). At the Minchah service, Avinu Malkeinu is recited - even when davening without a minyan(32).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Note that different fast days have different halachos. We are discussing the 17th of Tammuz only. 2 Some Jewish calendars list alos amud ha-shachar as 50 minutes before sunrise. There is no halachic basis for this calculation. 3 Some authorities maintain that it is improper to eat more than one normally does on the night before the fast, since that defeats the purpose of fasting (Eliyahu Rabbah 563:1). This stringency is quoted by some poskim but omitted by the Mishnah Berurah and many others (see Elef ha-Magen 602:6; Kaf ha-Chayim 563:11; Igros Moshe O.C. 3:80; B'tzail ha-Chachmah 2:48). 4 It is preferred to do so verbally, but it is valid as long as one had the condition in mind. 5 O.C. 564:1. 6 Mishnah Berurah 564:6 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 564:2 based on Rama, ibid. See, however, Mateh Efrayim 206:6 who is

more stringent. 7 Mishnah Berurah 564:3. 8 O.C. 89:3. According to the Minchas Chinuch (#248), this may be a Biblical prohibition. 9 Quoted by the Magen Avraham 89:14 and by all the latter poskim. 10 Aruch ha-Shulchan 89:26. 11 Consensus of all the poskim, see Mishnah Berurah 89:28; Aruch Hashulchan 89:26; Yalkut Yosef pg. 12 Women are exempt from this procedure - Harav S.Z. Auerbach (written responsum published in Lev Avraham, vol. 2, pg. 20). 13 Based on Mishnah Berurah 232:34 and 286:9. 14 Based on Mishnah Berurah 639:15. 15 Mishnah Berurah 89:27. 16 Based on Mishnah Berurah 232:35. 17 Based on Mishnah Berurah 235:18. 18 See Siddur ha-Gr"a pg. 88 quoting Harav Y.L. Diskin and Binyan Olam 1. See Siach Halachah pg. 149. 19 Sha'ar ha-Tziyon 550:8; Aruch ha-Shulchan 550:3. 20 Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Moadei Yeshurun, pg. 108). See also Biur Halachah 551:2. Minors, however, may swim - Nitei Gavriel, pg. 34 quoting Poppa Rav. 21 O.C. 567:3. 22 Aruch ha-Shulchan 567:3 This seems to be the view of Be'er He'itev 567:5 and Da'as Torah 567:3 as well. See also Magen Avraham who allows rinsing the mouth as long as less than 3.3 fl. oz. of water are used at a time. 23 Mishnah Berurah 567:11 following the view of the Chayei Adam. Kaf ha-Chayim 567:13-14 also rules stringently. 24 Nishmas Avraham O.C. pg. 290. 25 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Nishmas Avraham, vol. 5, pg. 46). This is permitted on Tishah B'av as well - ibid.; Harav M. Stern (Debreiner Rav, written responsum in Nitei Gavriel, Bein ha-Metzarim, pg. 30). 26 See Nishmas Avraham O.C. pg. 282, concerning Tishah B'av. 27 Mishnah Berurah 566:3. 28 Mishnah Berurah 549:3. 29 Ibid. 568:3. 30 Biur Halachah 565:1. 31 Ibid. 565:1. 32 Sha'arei Teshuvah O.C. 584:2 quoting Shevus Yaakov and Kitzur Shalah; Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Mo'adei Yeshurun, pg. 112). See, however, Da'as Torah 584:1 who states that some have a custom that they do not recite Avinu Malkeinu when praying without a minyan.

Weekly-Halacha, Copyright (c) 1997 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Project Genesis, Inc. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Hayeled Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway learn@torah.org

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH
PROJECT(VBM) PARASHAT BALAK SICHA OF HARAV
LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

Summarized by Aviad Hacoen

"How Good Are Your Tents, Yaakov..." "How good are your tents, Yaakov; your dwelling places, Israel. Like winding brooks, like gardens by the riverside, like tents which God has planted, like cedars by the waterside..." (Bamidbar 24:5-6). The gemara, in Massekhet Berakhot (12b), teaches that "originally they wanted to institute parashat Balak as part of Keri'at Shema, and why did they not do so? Because of the inconvenience to the community [that would result from such a lengthy recitation]. And what is so special about parashat Balak that it was considered worthy of being included in Keri'at Shema? The fact that it contains the words, 'He crouched, he lay down like a lion (ari), and like a great lion (lavi) - who shall rouse him?'" A different version in the Mekhilta maintains that the key words of the blessing, making it worthy of inclusion in Keri'at Shema, are "The nation shall rise up like a great lion (lavi) and lift itself like a young lion (ari)." Bilam's words depict the tranquillity of the Israelite encampment: brooks, tents, gardens by the riverside. Imagine the scene: against the background of the barren desert, the peaceful and pastoral encampment of Bnei Yisrael - orderly rows of tents, trees and gardens, lawns and peaceful streams. The midrash teaches, "'How good are your tents, Yaakov' - that the entrance to one tent was never facing the entrance to another." Even in this idyllic setting, modesty is being maintained. As Bilam continues speaking, we witness a sudden and radical change of atmosphere: After all the water has dripped slowly out of the bucket (24:4), quietly and peacefully, there suddenly appears a powerful torrent, a crashing waterfall, and the storm grows ever more fierce: "He shall consume the nations, his enemies; and shall break their bones, and pierce them with his arrows." There is no peace here; instead there is unceasing war and turmoil. Does this not contradict our previous scene? It is as if the fifth and sixth symphonies of Beethoven are being featured together here, with no acknowledgment of the tremendous contrast between the peace and tranquillity which characterizes the one, and the storm and turmoil depicted by the other. One verse in particular stands out in its radical imagery: "The nation shall rise up like a great lion... he shall not lie down until he has eaten the prey and drunk the blood of the slain."

Here the lust for the flesh of the enemy and the thirst for their blood reach new heights. Rashi, to our amazement, ignores the harsh tone altogether and explains all the imagery on a completely different level: "When they arise from their sleep in the morning, they are strong like a lion and like a young lion to 'pounce' on the mitzvot, to wear the tallit, to recite the Shema and to don their tefillin. At night as they lie down to sleep they 'devour' and destroy any harmful thing that comes to attack them - how? By reciting the Shema while upon their beds, and surrendering their souls to God, and God strikes down their enemies."

Rashi "ignores" the literal meaning of the text. Instead of their drinking blood and devouring prey, Rashi depicts Israel eagerly donning tefillin, "conquering" their tzitzit, "devouring" Keri'at Shema with awe and fear. At the foundation of this wondrous combination - of war and the sword on one hand and observance of the mitzvot on the other - lies the strength of the Israelite camp. A military encampment, which by its very nature usually tramples any hint of shame, has become a holy camp where no tent entrance faces any other. There is a dual heroism here: the lion which devours, and the lion which lies down; i.e. knowing when to fight and when to overcome the temptation posed by the power to kill. The nations of the world cannot grasp such a combination. Tumult and war in the midst of gardens and tents by the waterside? On the other hand, they find it equally difficult to understand the presence of modesty within a military camp.

The exclamation of surprise is born of this wonder in the eyes of the gentile prophet: "How good are your tents, Yaakov" - tents wherein both aspects of heroism form a creative and fruitful combination. (Originally delivered on Shabbat Parashat Balak 5744. Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Balak - Was G-d Acting as Bilaam's Agent? This week's Parsha contains the well known story of Balak the King of Moab worrying about the imminent approach of the Jewish people. Moab correctly surmised that, given the fate of the other kings and nations that had challenged Bnei Yisrael with conventional military tactics, he would not stand a chance confronting them in traditional battle. Therefore, Balak devised a "secret weapon" -- the chemical weapon of his day. "And he sent messengers to Bilaam son of Beor..." [Bamidbar 22:5] who had the lethal ability to curse someone and have that curse take effect on its intended victim. Balak requested that Bilaam go out and curse the "nation that has gone out from Egypt and covered the face of the land." Bilaam asked the messengers to stay overnight so that he could answer Balak's request the next morning, based upon what G-d would tell him. G-d told Bilaam, "Do not go with them; do not curse the people, for they are Blessed" [22:12]. Bilaam relayed that message to Balak's messengers. When Balak heard that Bilaam would not come, he assumed that he "tried to get away too cheap." Balak then sent a more prestigious delegation promising Bilaam great reward and granting his every request. Bilaam, not being anyone's fool, casually mentioned to the messengers, "If Balak will give me his entire treasury filled with silver and gold (the old 'what is four hundred Shekel silver between you and me' [Bereshis 23:15] trick) my hands are tied -- I can only do what G-d permits me." Again, they proceeded through the whole process of waiting overnight. This time, G-d told Bilaam, "If these people are coming for your advantage (likra lecha), then go with them -- just only speak that which I tell you" [22:20]. If we can use such terminology, it appears that G-d changed his mind! When Bilaam first asked permission from the Ribono shel Olam, G-d said, "No. You can't go!" All of a sudden, He appears to change His mind. What changed? Rash"i says, on the words "Im Likra Lecha" -- if these people are coming to give you payment, go with them. In other words, if you stand to make profit out of this venture, then I have no objection to your going. That was the difference! The first time, when they asked Bilaam

to come, they didn't offer him anything -- neither money nor honor, they just said "Come." In that situation, G-d told Bilaam, "Don't go." The second time, Balak offered Bilaam wealth and honor. In that situation, G-d told him, "If you stand to gain from this, then you can go." What difference does that make? Is G-d worried about Bilaam's livelihood? Is He acting as Bilaam's agent? Pro bono, you cannot go. If you charge by the hour -- then you can?

Doing It For 'The Cause' vs. Doing It for the Money I heard from Rav Schwab a fantastic insight -- a fantastic truth in what this means. The difference, says Rav Schwab, is that one of the most potent forces in the universe is the doing of something "Lishma," for its own sake. Doing something altruistically, for the sake of what one believes to be right, is a force beyond belief. However, when people do things not for the sake of a cause, but because they stand to make a dollar, that is a much weaker force. Rav Schwab said this in the context of explaining the rise and fall, during this century, of the Communist system. Communism was a very successful movement. Until very recently, there were more than a billion and a half people who lived under Communist domination - and yet in recent times we have seen Communism disintegrate. What made Communism so successful? Rav Schwab argued that what made Communism so successful was that there were "Lishma-niks." People like Lenin and Trotsky and Marx and all the other Jews, "nebech," (the Politburo in the 1930s was mostly Jewish until Stalin purged them) were people who wanted to give the world a better order. They wanted to give the world a new system to replace the bankruptcy of capitalism, in which some are fantastically wealthy and some beg on the street. It was a very noble movement. These were people who were -- for lack of a better word -- L'shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven)! They did it for the sake of Communism. They were Lishma! Rav Schwab relates that he remembers in his city in Germany there was a parade by the Communists in the 1920s and there was a Jewish kid who had rebelled against his parents and marched in the front line of this parade. He was despised amongst the Jews, the outcast of the entire community; but this did not faze him, because he did it Lishma. He believed in what he was doing, like so many of our Jewish brethren who believed in it. When we have people who are willing to give up their lives and souls for the sake of a cause, that is a very potent force. We look back now, 70 years later and try to discover what happened to the movement to cause it to collapse. We can say that to a large extent it is due to the fact that it lost this 'Lishma' element. When we see how all the leaders of the various "Iron Curtain" countries had stashed away Swiss bank accounts and we discover all the corruption and the graft we quickly recognize that the Lishma had been abandoned. And once they lost that, the potency of the force was gone. This is what G-d said to Bilaam: When Balak comes and says "Curse the Jews" without offering honor or money, then the reason why Bilaam is going is because he hates Jews. "We have to curse Jews!" I want to eradicate Jews. This is a philosophy. It is a CAUSE. In that case, "Watch Out! Don't go." G-d knows that a sincere CAUSE is a lethal and potent force. However, when Balak says, "I'll give you Honor. I'll give you Money..." then G-d tells Bilaam: If this is for your own benefit, if you are doing it for the money, then go. This is a different story. If you are in it for the money, for the honor, and not Lishma -- this is nothing to worry about, it is not the same force.

Speech Is A Miracle, Regardless of Who Does the Talking Inasmuch as this week will be the Rosh Yeshiva's Yahrzeit, I will offer a comment from the Sforno that Rav Ruderman, zt"l, always used to mention. The Sforno says something that sounds very strange on the verse, "And G-d opened the mouth of the donkey" [22:28]. Regarding this amazing miracle, when G-d gave the power of speech to the donkey, the Sforno says, "G-d allowed the donkey to speak, just like 'Hashem, Open my Lips and my mouth will speak your praises'" [Tehillim 51:17]. The Sforno says that the act of G-d opening up the mouth of the donkey

is just like G-d's gift of the power of speech to people. In other words, human speech is a miracle. The ability to communicate, to express, is an amazing miracle. Man is the only creature on earth which has this amazing capability. It is truly a miraculous capacity. Before we begin Shmoneh Esrei, which represents our communication with G-d, we must testify to Him that without this great Kindness on His part, we would be no different than a bird. Unfortunately, we take this for granted, not realizing that our very existence, the gift of speech, the gift of intelligence, the gift of life, are all just that, Gifts. There is no difference at all between a donkey talking and a human talking... except that G-d performs one miracle constantly and He rarely performs the other miracle. The Talmud says that the One who tells oil to ignite, will tell vinegar to ignite [Taanis 25a]. G-d places into nature the power that causes oil to burn. It is no more or less of a miracle for G-d to cause the vinegar of one of the Talmudic Sages to burn. There is no difference. So too, the Sforno reminds us, our own ability to speak is no less miraculous than the phenomenon mentioned in this week's Parsha in which Bilaam's donkey speaks.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington
twerskyd@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Balt. MD
dhoffman@clark.net RavFrاند, Copyright (c) 1997 by Rabbi Y. Frاند
and Project Genesis, Inc.

Shabbat-zomet@virtual.co.il Shabbat-B'Shabbato - Parshat Balak
TORAH AND ... PRAYER: Windows in a Synagogue by Rabbi Uri
Dasberg "How good are your tents, Yaacov, your dwellings, Yisrael"
[Bamidbar 24:5]. This verse quoting Bilam implies a reference both to
synagogues and to windows. There is a halachic link between the two,
as is written: "One should only pray in a house which has windows"
[Brachot 34a]. This is learned from Daniel, who risked his life to pray
facing the windows in his house, which were pointed towards
Jerusalem. What reason might there be for this requirement? According
to Rashi, looking at the heavens brings humility to a man's heart. The
problem with this is that specifically during prayer one is required to
look down and not up. The Beit Yosef writes that the purpose of the
windows is that if one happens to look upwards by mistake, his gaze
will fall on the sky. According to the Bach, on the other hand, one
should look at the sky before starting to pray, and then look down
during prayer. These halachot imply that the windows should be pointed
towards the sky and not towards the street, which might cause one to be
distracted. They can be made of glass and closed all the time, as long as
the sky is visible, and they must be in front of the congregation, facing
Jerusalem, as was true in Daniel's case. According to the students of
Rabbi Yona, the purpose of the windows is to air out the synagogue.
This would mean that the windows can be in any direction, but they
must be open to the outside air, implying that if there is proper air
conditioning there is no need for windows at all. The Kesef Mishne
quotes the Rambam, who writes that a window is required only for one
who is praying at home, as was the case with Daniel, but not in a
synagogue. This would explain why the Rambam quotes the halacha
about windows as part of the Laws of Individual Prayer (chapter 5) and
not in the Laws of Synagogues (chapter 11). In the Shulchan Aruch and
the accompanying commentaries, it is ruled that a synagogue must have
windows pointed towards Jerusalem. It is recommended that there be 12
windows in all (the number is based on the writings of the Zohar).
While it is not common to see this number of windows in a synagogue,
this may be because the windows are typically very large and divided
into several panes of glass, such that if all the glass is taken into account
there are more than 12 windows. It is permitted to have more than the
minimum required number. Reference: Rabbi Moshe Bigel, "Melilot,"
page 251

www.TorahWeb.org [From last year]

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN

Prerequisites for the Class

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

...

But our Sages understand that it is not the speaking donkey - or even

the Divine Will - which succeeded in changing Balaam's mind. It is rather the deeds of the Israelites themselves which evoked the adulation

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

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

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

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

Shabbat Shalom

From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 01, 2004 6:59 AM To: Peninim Parsha Subject:
PENINIM ON THE TORAH
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM - Parshas Balak

Water will flow from their wells. (24:7)

In the Talmud Nedarim 81a, Chazal say, "Take heed with the sons of the poor, for from them Torah will go forth, as it is stated, "Water shall flow midalyo, 'from his wells,' which can alternatively be read mi dalav, 'from his poor.' The pasuk thus means: Torah, which is compared to water, shall flow from Klal Yisrael's poor. Horav Eliezer M. Shach, zl, would relate the story concerning a very wealthy and powerful man from a town near Kovno who sought a husband for his daughter. He was prepared to offer complete support, so that the young man could become a posek, halachic arbitrator, of such a calibre that he ascend to a distinguished pulpit.

He was presented with two young men, both brilliant and erudite, but from diverse backgrounds. One was descended from an illustrious lineage of famous rabbinic scholars. The other young scholar came from a simple home, simple pedigree and simple surroundings. Not knowing what to do, he went to the preeminent Torah scholar and rav of Kovno, Horav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, asking for guidance in this dilemma. He described both young men, adding that his personal choice was the one whose background was most impressive, despite the fact that this young man's parents insisted on receiving a very hefty dowry.

Rav Yitzchak Elchanan told him, "If you ask my opinion, I suggest that you select the young man who hails from a simple background. Why? Because the young man who descends from Torah elite grew up in a

home where Torah reigned paramount and its study and erudition was a way of life. His parents devoted their lives to raising him from day one to grow in Torah. It is no wonder that he is a Torah scholar. He simply followed in the manner of his breeding. If he were to be torn away from his parents' influence and would have to assume the yoke of family support on his own shoulders, would he be able to withstand the pressure? I do not know. The other young man, however, had to fight his entire life to overcome one obstacle after another, triumphing over life's challenges, in order to study Torah with proficiency and diligence. Such a young man is assured of a position.

Moshe Shimon and Tibor Rosenberg in memory of their father Pinchas ben Shimon Rosenberg zl Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com
http://mail.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim_shemayisrael.com

From: ohr@ohr.edu Sent: June 30, 2004 Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Balak
TORAH WEEKLY - For the week ending 3 July 2004 / 14 Tammuz 5764 - from
Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
Parshat Balak <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1752>
Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

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

- Safe From A Hostile World

"For from its origins, I see it rock-like, and from the hills do I see it. Behold! It is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations." (23:9)

Two people went into the forest to chop down trees. The less bright of the two started to lop of branches one at a time - a long and tedious job that did not address the root of the objective. The other reasoned thus: "If we can find the roots of the tree and sever them, then with one fell swoop we take care not only the tree but all its branches too."

Thus reasoned Bilaam in this week's Torah portion: "Rather than curse each of the Tribes of Israel separately, I will attack their roots. If I can find an impurity in their origin, with one curse, I can damage the entire people."

"For from its origins, I see it rock-like..." However, Bilaam saw that the Jewish People were the descendants of holy forefathers, "rocks", and holy mothers, "hills". Like their physical counterparts, the rocks and the hills that are the foundations of this world, so too are Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah the spiritual foundations of the world.

Bilaam realized that since the origin of the Jewish People was in holiness so their souls would always aspire to holiness. They might become misdirected and stray to the Far Eastern cult of asceticism or the Far Western cult of materialism, but they would never assimilate totally.

However "...it is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations." As long as the Jewish People maintain their distinctive lifestyle and beliefs, they live in safety. When they try to assimilate, however, they will not be accepted by the other nations. The reaction will then be anti-Semitism. And the virulence of that anti-Semitism will be in direct proportion to the attempt to assimilate.

When the Jewish People "dwell alone," when they do not intermarry, nor adopt the beliefs and cultural mores of their host culture; they will be protected by G-d.

The letters of the Hebrew alphabet contain many hidden secrets in the understanding of the Torah. We find a case in point in this very verse: The word Hain! meaning "Behold!" is ostensibly superfluous. Hain consists of two letters - Heh, and Nun. The gematria of Heh is 5. The gematria of Nun is 50. What do 5 and 50 share in common?

In the mystical sources, the decimal numbers symbolize the completion of an entire stage or level. To make the decimal number of ten, you could take 1 and 9, or 2 and 8, or 3 and 7 or 4 and 6. However there is only one number which when added to itself will make 10. That number is 5. Similarly, the only number which added to itself will make the decimal number of 100 is 50. - Hain.

Hain symbolizes the Jewish People.

When the Jewish People find completion by connecting only with their own kind, they are safe from a hostile world.

- Sources: Midrash Rabba, Hemek Davar

(C) 2004 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

www.vbm-torah.org/salt.htm
SALT!! ("Surf A Little Torah")

RABBI DAVID SILVERBERG

Motzaei Shabbat, June 26, 2004

The Gemara in Masekhet Bava Batra (14b) goes through each book of the Tanakh and identifies its author. While this list is generally straightforward, one sentence requires clarification: "Moshe wrote his book [the five books of the Torah] and the parasha of Bilam..." The Gemara here singles out Parashat Balak, the story of Balak and Bilam's attempt to curse Benei Yisrael, and appears to consider it separate from the rest of Chumash. What does the Gemara mean? If we are already told that Moshe wrote the entire Chumash, why does the Gemara add that he also wrote "the parasha of Bilam"?

The Ritva, in his commentary to Bava Batra, approvingly cites an explanation claiming that the Gemara here does not refer to the narrative of Parashat Balak. "Parashat Bilam" means not this parasha, but rather some other text. As Rav David Mandelbaum suggests in his *Pardes Yosef He-chadash*, the Ritva here probably refers to a theory that appears in a later work – the *Sefer Tziyoni* (by Rav Menachem Ben Meir Tziyoni). This theory claims that Moshe composed a lengthy work describing the entire episode of Balak and Bilam in greater detail, but this work was lost. Interestingly, Rav Mandelbaum notes that in the Munich edition of the Talmud, the text of the aforementioned Gemara reads, "sefer Bilam" rather than "parashat Bilam," perhaps implying that the Gemara refers to a book, rather than a section in the Chumash. This would certainly lend support to this theory cited by the Ritva. Furthermore, the Gemara in Masekhet Sanhedrin (106b) records that a certain heretic read in "the pinkas [ledger, booklet] of Bilam" a description of the events surrounding Bilam's death. Rav Mandelbaum speculates that this, too, might refer to the lost book composed by Moshe telling of the incident of Bilam and Balak. (However, in the commentary to Masekhet Avot attributed to Rashi (5:19), a different text of this Gemara appears, according to which the heretic read this information not in a book, but on Bilam's tombstone.)

A different approach is cited in the name of Rav Chayim of Brisk. The Sifrei in Parashat Vezot Heberakha, commenting on the verse, "There never again arose a prophet like Moshe" (Devarim 34:10), writes that only among Am Yisrael was there never a prophet of equal stature with Moshe. Among the gentiles, however, there indeed lived such a prophet – Bilam. Many writers have endeavored to explain this comparison between two seemingly incomparable men – Moshe and Bilam, and tomorrow we will *iy"H* present two such explanations. Rav Chayim, however, suggests that Chazal here compare not the two men, but the nature of their prophecies. Moshe's prophecy was unique in that it attained the formal status of "Torah," a status with its own, distinct

properties that set it apart from standard prophecy. (Rav Soloveitchik elaborated on this fundamental difference between Moshe's prophecies and those of other prophets in his famous eulogy for his uncle, Rav Yitzchak Zev; see "Divrei Hagot Ve-ha'arakha," pp. 65-68.) Similarly, Bilam's prophecies were incorporated into the Chumash with this same status. They did not remain mere prophecies; they became part of the actual body of Torah. Why was this the case? Why did Bilam earn this privilege of having his prophetic blessings to Am Yisrael become part of their Torah? Rashi, in his commentary to this parasha (22:5), cites from a Midrash that G-d granted prophecy to a gentile so that the other nations could not claim, "If we had prophets, we would have returned to proper conduct." G-d granted prophecy to a gentile to demonstrate that this would not improve the conduct of the pagan nations. Bilam's attempt to use his prophetic powers to bring about death and destruction showed that the pagans were undeserving of this gift. Rav Chayim claimed that in order to dispel this argument, G-d had to grant a gentile the same level of prophecy as Moshe; therefore, Bilam was given the opportunity to prophesy and have his prophecies included as part of Torah.

This, Rav Chayim suggests, explains why the Gemara singled out "parashat Bilam." The rest of Torah was written by Moshe, who thereby endowed it with the formal status of "Torah." Bilam's prophecies, however, possessed this quality and status even before Moshe wrote them down. Thus, his writing of "parashat Bilam" differs fundamentally from that of the rest of the Torah, and the Gemara therefore speaks of them separately.

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: July 01, 2004

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Balak

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher

Bilaam Lost His Shock Value

Our Sages tell us an astounding fact: that Bilaam had prophetic powers on par with Moshe Rabbeinu. The verse says, "There arose not in Israel another prophet equal to Moshe" [Devarim 34:10]. The Rabbis explain that there did not arise another such prophet specifically in Israel -- but in the nations of the world there did arise another such prophet. Who was he? Bilaam the son of Be'or. [Sifrei]

We are therefore dealing with an individual who had a relationship with G-d that we can only dream about. And yet we see that he had an attitude that is hard to fathom. When G-d asked Bilaam, "Who are these people with you?," Rashi explains that Bilaam answers G-d arrogantly: "Even though I am not important in your Eyes, I am important in the eyes of Kings."

Later, in one of the most mind-boggling incidents in the Torah, Bilaam does not appear to be at all phased by the fact that his donkey starts talking to him. He just answers back and begins a dialogue with his donkey as if it was an everyday occurrence.

How do we explain the paradoxical personality of Bilaam? Rav Schwab offers an interesting insight. G-d gave us with certain senses. Most of us are blessed with the senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. There is a sixth sense. That is the sense of being able to be impressed. G-d gave most human beings the ability to be impressed by certain phenomenon in this world.

This sense of being impressed ("nispael") is necessary for our service of G-d. The Ramba"m speaks of a person becoming impressed and overwhelmed with the awe of creation, and of the wisdom and beauty of nature. This is a sense that we need to develop within ourselves -- emotions of love and reverence towards the Creator.

However, just like the other senses can be deadened and destroyed if they are abused, so it is with the sixth sense. If a person listens to loud

music for long enough, he can lose his sense of hearing. If a person continuously eats very spicy foods, he can lose his sense of taste. Likewise, a person can lose his sense of being impressed. How does that happen? What costs a person his sense of being impressed?

Rav Schwab suggests that a person can lose his sense of being impressed through gluttonous indulgence in every passion and lust in the world. If a person is obsessed with enjoying, taking, eating, consuming, and all he ever thinks about is indulging in the most obscene and gluttonous fashion, then after awhile, nothing impresses him any more. He is so consumed with just enjoying himself that nothing gets him excited anymore.

If it seems hard to relate to this concept, all we need to do is to open our eyes and look at what is happening today in the western world. Nothing makes an impression anymore. Movies have become more and more violent and explicit. Music has become more and more outrageous. The way people talk and the words we hear have become more and more astounding, because nothing makes an impression anymore. As a society, we have lost our sense of wonder. We have become coarsened.

To quote a recent piece in the Op-Ed page of the Baltimore Sun, "America has lost its 'shock value'. Nothing shocks anymore."

This is what happened to Bilaam. Nothing shocked him. His animal spoke to him and he took it in stride.

Everyone recognizes the seriousness of losing a sense of sight or hearing, chas v'shalom (Heaven forbid). We need to recognize that losing the sense of being impressed is also very serious. Losing the sense of being impressed is a by-product of the gluttonous and indulgent life that Bilaam lived.

From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2005

Subject: Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger - Broadening Impact by Strengthening the Core

to subscribe, email weekly@torahweb.org to unsubscribe or for anything else, email: torahweb@torahweb.org the HTML version of this dvar Torah can be found at: <http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

RABBI YAAKOV NEUBURGER BROADENING IMPACT BY STRENGTHENING THE CORE

Undoubtedly Bilaam's everlasting contribution to our liturgy and the décor of our shuls is the divinely rephrased blessing - (24:5) "How good are your tents, Yaakov, your dwelling places, Yisrael." Clearly, Bilam understood all too well just how important every home and shul is in shaping the individuals and communities of our people. It is thus not surprising that this is the only of Bilam's statements that will weather all of time as a blessing; long after every other blessing will have to come to haunt us in the form of their intended curse (Sanhedrin 105b). Perhaps we too can weather whatever comes our way as long as we can take refuge and retreat in our homes and our shuls. That is why Bilam ultimately advised Balak to tear apart the Jewish home through decadence and infidelity, explaining how this will distance us from Hashem and His mission for us.

Exactly what quality did Bilam see in our tents which impressed him so?

Rashi explains that Bilam was not referring to our private homes but rather to the various places throughout time that would be set aside for the korbanos of kapara, services that would gain forgiveness for us. Apparently that ability to achieve forgiveness and its attendant qualities of new beginnings, would forever inspire us and bring to us strength and prosperity.

However, Rashi's first interpretation is that Bilaam was taken by our modesty and how out of respect for everyone's privacy we turned our tent flaps away from each other. To me this is all quite surprising that the values of privacy and confidentiality can be so important that we should

allude to them as we begin to daven every day, and that a person as decadent as Bilaam should find them so impressive.

However, Bilaam himself, in the following pasuk, reveals to us just what he did see. "[These tents] stretch out like rivers, like gardens alongside the river, planted like spices, like cedars along the water." What is the point of comparing our homes to the span of a river bed, spices, and well nourished gardens and cedars? Perhaps all four share the quality that the breadth and depth of their impact is determined by the strength of their source, without in turn weakening that source. The length and strength of the river flow will heavily depend on the strength of its water source without threatening the source's ability to bring ever fresh water. The cedar will impress itself upon viewers far beyond its immediate environs, without in any way being diminished; the spices will, if the source is potent and pleasant, be enjoyed by many without taking any scent away from any other. In this lies one of the great secrets of the home and the community. Our ability to impact on others will be far more dependant on the vibrancy of the core than on the calculated design of its reach.

Apparently, Bilaam was impressed not so much with the privacy per se but with the intensity of focus on one's own tent which was communicated by turning the entrances away from one another. We who are forever juggling our concern for the growth of the members of our own community with the concern for outreach can appreciate what intrigued Bilaam. Families, who are always balancing the energies we place into our own children as we extend ourselves beyond as well, understand that indeed Bilaam noted a magical event. He saw families so focused and so successful in creating an intensely fragrant lifestyle that it attracted effortlessly, from afar; shuls that stood so tall and strong with integrity and nobility that they readily impressed far beyond their immediate surroundings.

Copyright © 2005 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved. Leil Iyun MP3 and CDs - [http://www.TorahWeb.org/audio/Shiurim of Rav Soloveitchik zt"l](http://www.TorahWeb.org/audio/Shiurim%20of%20Rav%20Soloveitchik%201) - <http://www.torahweb.org/ravSet.html> Palm Pilot TorahWeb Archive - [http://www.TorahWeb.org/palm Dvar Torah archive](http://www.TorahWeb.org/palm%20Dvar%20Torah%20archive) - <http://www.torahweb.org/dvarTorahIndex.html>

From: kolhakollel-owner@torah.org on behalf of RABBI PINCHAS AVRUCH [pavruch@torah.org] Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2005 12:05 PM To: kolhakollel@torah.org Subject: Kol HaKollel - Parshas Balak - Hear What You Want

Kol HaKollel The Voice of the Milwaukee Kollel A Weekly Torah Publication

PARSHAS BALAK - 9 TAMMUZ 5765 HEAR WHAT YOU WANT
by RABBI MOSHE PERETZ GILDEN

As the Jews camped in the desert near the border of Moav a sinister plan was unfolding. Balak, King of Moav, sent messengers to Balaam asking him to curse the Jewish people, enabling him to then defeat them. Balaam received a command from G-d in a dream that he should not go with these people. Whenthey arrived, Balaam said "G-d refused to let me go with you" (Numbers 22:13). Rashi comments that he was really sending a subtle message that G- dsaid, "I cannot go with you, but I may go with dignitaries of greater stature than you."

How could it be that G-d explicitly said not to go and yet he went? Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz (1) observes that although Balaam was a prophet, he interpreted the prophecy to fit his own designs. The root cause of error is that people ultimately hear what they want to hear.

The Talmud (Gittin 45a) relates a time that Rav Ilish was taken captive. One day a man who knew the language of birds sat next to him. A raven came and called to Rav Ilish who asked the man, "What is the bird saying?" The man answered, "Ilish run, Ilish run!" Rav Ilish said, "Ravens lie so I will not rely on him." Meanwhile, a dove came and called out. Rav Ilish againasked the man, "What is the bird saying?" The man answered, "Ilish run,Ilish run!" Rav Ilish knew that the dove would not lie and so he escaped successfully.

Just as Rav Ilish did not want to trust the raven, why would he trust this stranger and risk his life by attempting to escape? Did he not need to be concerned that this stranger was misinterpreting, or even lying about, the bird's message? We may conclude that Rav Ilish knew bird language himself. Nevertheless, he consulted with the stranger to make sure that he heard correctly. He was afraid that perhaps he was hearing what he wanted to hear.

Throughout our lives we receive many messages that can help us improve. They may come from parents, teachers, mentors, and even from the environment in which we live. Most essential is to strip ourselves of our own personal agendas, so that we hear what they say, not what we want them to have said.

Have a Good Shabbos!

This issue of Kol HaKollel is dedicated in memory of Rebbetzin Devorah Rennert, Devorah Rivkah bas Shlomo haLevi

(1) Rosh Yeshiva/Dean of the Mir Yeshiva, who led his students from the ashes of the European Holocaust to the glory of Jerusalem

Please forward your questions for Rabbi Gilden to

RabbiGilden@MilwaukeeKollel.org Kol HaKollel is a publication of Milwaukee Kollel-Center for Jewish Studies 5007 West Keefe Avenue; Milwaukee, WI 53216; 414-447-7999 North Shore Center - 6789 N. Green Bay Rd.; Glendale, WI 53209; 414-228-7870 KolHaKollel, Copyright © 2004 by The Milwaukee Kollel and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

From: Avi Lieberman <AteresHaShavua@aol.com>

Subject: ATERES HASHAVUA

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

EMES LIYAAKOV

Weekly Insights from MOREINU

HORAV YAAKOV KAMENETZKY zt"l

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

It is well known that the magic that Billam was capable of performing is totally unrelated to today's entertainers that can create illusions of magic by using hands that move quicker than the eyes. In the times of Moshe, and even later on, there was such a concept of witchcraft and black magic that was practiced by various members of other nations, and that was outlawed by the Torah.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l offers an explanation as to why in our days, there is no longer such a reality of this type of magic. There is a concept that Hakadosh Buruch Hu created the world in the fashion of, "This corresponding to that." This means that for everything in the world that will compel a person to believe in Hashem, there must be some sort of equivalent force that will induce a person not to believe, should he actively choose to do so. The Ramban writes that for this reason, at krias Yam Suf, Hashem caused a wind to blow throughout the night, so that if Pharaoh would choose not to recognize the hand of God, he could attribute the miracle to the wind. Even though such reasoning defies all logic, in order for bechira to exist, there must be something that allows a rasha to deny the existence of God. Similarly, we know that Billam had powers of nevuah that were at least as great as those of Moshe. This was done for the same reason; to afford every person the choice between good and evil. For the same reason, during the time that Moshe and the neviim that followed him were performing miracles, there had to be some other way for miracles to be preformed, as without this Pharaoh, and the reshaim of all generations would have had no choice but to believe that Moshe and the rest of the neviim were messengers of God. As such, the power of kishuf had to be introduced. Now that we are no longer zocheh to see open miracles, the power of black magic has also ceased, for that is the way in which the world is run. The stronger

the power of kedushah is, the stronger the power of tumah must be, and vice versa.

Rav Yaakov uses this idea to explain a very difficult shita of the Rambam. The Rambam maintains that the sheidim, or so called demons that the Gemara discusses have no place in reality, and do not exist altogether. This is extremely hard to understand, as we find many places where the Gemara relates detailed stories about sheidim. How then does the Rambam understand these Gemaras?

Rav Yaakov answers this dilemma based on the aforementioned explanation, that in the time of the Gemara, when some of the Amoraim were capable of performing techiyas hameisim, there were indeed negative spiritual forces capable of performing miracles, in order to detract from the authenticity of the Amoraim. However, the Rambam was talking about his generation, at which time the power to perform miracles had already ceased. As such, according to the Rambam, there are no more sheidim, as their existence now would tip the scales in favor of the negative, and would ruin the balance on which the world is based.

Rav Yaakov concludes by relating that during the time that he was learning in the Yeshiva of Kelm, he saw that HaRav Elchonon Wasserman zt"l had written in the name of the Chofetz Chaim zt"l that the story of the dybbuk that happened in Radin during his lifetime would presumably be the last of its type, for as the power of Torah is reduced, the power of tumah decreases at the same rate. As such, Rav Yaakov concludes that even in our generation, in places where there are people living that are complete in their emunah and in their actions, the power of tumah has increased power, as the world was created

From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com]

Sent: July 14, 2005 To: Peninim Parsha

PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY

RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM

Balak

In this week's parashah, we read of King Balak's disappointment in Bil'am, the prophet of the Nations. Balak thought that Bil'am could curse the Jews, and Hashem would be obligated to comply. However, Bil'am explained to him that he is only a servant of the Almighty and can only say what Hashem puts into his mouth. Consequently, although Balak had offered to pay him very handsomely, not only wasn't he able to curse the Jews, but he was even forced by Hashem to bless them instead. At first thought, Balak's wish seems silly indeed. Did he actually think that a human being, a mortal man, had so much influence on Hashem? In reality, though, he was quite right. It says in Iyov (22:28); "You shall decree something and it shall be established to you; and the light shall shine upon your ways." The Gemara (Ta'anis 23a) applies this to Choni Hameagel who was able to cause Hashem to send rains according to his request. Similarly, the Gemara says (Bava Metzia 85a), "One who teaches Torah to the son of a boor, even if Hashem decrees a decree, he can abolish it, as it says, (Yirmiyahu 15:19), 'If you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as my mouth.'" From this we see that Tzaddikim (Saints) actually do have the power to "bind Hashem" by their words. Balak's mistake was in thinking that Bil'am was of that stature.

At our daughter Shevy's wedding, Rabbi Eliezer Rosner told me the following story.

"After our grandson had been married for several years, he and his wife visited me. They told me that since they had not succeeded in having a child yet, they were planning to begin a series of treatments. I asked them to wait a while and to meet me at the Aperiion Hall in Jerusalem, at a designated time, when I knew that Rabbi Yitzchak Dovid Grossman, shlita, Founder and Dean of Migdal Ohr, would be there attending a bris (circumcision ceremony).

"Once we were all there, I brought them over to the Rabbi and asked him to give them his blessing. Without hesitation, the Rabbi agreed and began to bless them: 'May Hashem help that....' To the Rabbi's surprise, I interrupted him and said, 'Honorable Rabbi. That is not the kind of blessing I had in mind. I don't want you merely to wish them that Hashem should help them. I have done so much to help you make Migdal Ohr the tremendous institution it is today, serving over six thousand underprivileged students from Israel and around the world. I believe I have the right to ask you to say the following: "I, Yitzchak Dovid Grossman, hereby decree that by one year from today, you will be pregnant!"' The Rabbi was taken aback, but he knew that I meant business. After giving it some thought, he acquiesced and said what I had requested of him.

"Ten months later, the couple returned to me. She had not yet become pregnant, they said, and they were going to begin the treatments immediately. I asked them why in the world they would want to begin a complicated process, when there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that within two months she would be naturally pregnant. Why didn't they have the patience to wait a little longer, I asked. But they were adamant. They said that they would wait only one more week, and would begin the treatments the following Monday.

"The following Sunday, my granddaughter was informed that she was, thank G-d, pregnant; and my newest great-granddaughter was born today."

Replying, I told Rabbi Rosner that I would like to explain his own story to him.

Chassidim tell of a great Rebbe who was once asked by a couple for a blessing for a child. The Rabbi gave them his blessing and they immediately went out and bought a baby carriage, a crib and other necessities for the blessed event they expected. Before the year's end, the woman gave birth to a child.

Everyone was thrilled with the good tidings, but the Rebbe's personal attendant was very upset. He approached the Rebbe and complained. "Holy Rabbi," he said. "I have been serving you faithfully for over twenty years. Over this period of time, I have asked you often to bless me and my wife with children. And you, indeed, gave us your blessing. Yet we are still childless. How can it be that to a couple off the street you gave such a strong blessing that worked instantly, and to me you apparently gave a much weaker one which still has not worked to this very day?"

The Rebbe listened compassionately to his Chossid's complaint against him. Then he replied. "The difference, my dear son, does not lie in me or in my blessings. The difference lies in you and them. Tell me, after I blessed you and your wife, did you ever go out and buy a baby carriage like they did? It is their absolute belief in the power of the one who blessed them which gave my blessing the power to be successful."

"Similarly," I told Rabbi Rosner, "it was because you had absolutely no doubt that Rav Grossman could make such a decree, that he, the great Tzaddik that he is, was able to help you and your grandchildren."

Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com
http://mail.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim_shemayisrael.com

Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> to ravfrand
Dedicated in memory of William Mazel by Mark Mazel, David Mazel, and Joel Mazel.

To sponsor an edition of the Rabbi Yissocher Frand e-mail list, go to www.capalon.com/secure/torah/listDedicate.php?class1=35-
"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Balak

His Plan Will Become Established

The end of the Parsha contains the incident in which Zimri, the Prince of the Tribe of Shimon, had relations with a Moabite woman in the presence of Moshe and in the presence of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel. What was the reaction of those who observed this blasphemous act? "They were crying at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting." [Bamidbar 25:6]

Rashi comments on Moshe's passivity and the people's reaction: "The applicable law was concealed from Moshe." He forgot that one who publicly cohabits with a non-Jewish woman may be slain on the spot by zealots. The people were weeping because in contrast to the incident with the Golden Calf, where Moshe stood up against 600,000 people, this time his hands became weak.

It is indeed amazing. Moshe Rabbeinu was not a person who was faint of heart. He has been confronting these types of challenges for the last 40 years. He stood up to Pharaoh. He stood up to the Jewish people time and again. The reason that G-d made Moshe forget this law, explains Rashi, is "so that Pinchas might arise and take that which was fit for him."

Pinchas became a Kohen because of this act of heroism and zealotry. Rav Simche Zissel Broide, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Chevron Yeshiva, says that this incident is a moral lesson for us all. When the Almighty wants to give someone a position, a job, an opportunity, He will pull the strings and make it happen.

Logically, by the natural turn of events, Pinchas would never have become a Priest. But G-d had a plan to ensure that Pinchas would become a Priest. He made a miracle, that the great Moshe forgot a law known to any Yeshiva student!

Rav Simcha Zissel notes how comical and pathetic it is, how people trouble themselves so much to maneuver and scheme and worry to achieve a certain outcome, or to try getting to where they think they need to get. The Almighty provides the sustenance and the appropriate position for each and every person. When He wants it to happen, it will happen. He may have to make miracles, but in the final analysis "the plan of Hashem will become established." [Mishlei 19:21]

from Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>
hide details Jun 28 (21 hours ago) to Peninim
<peninim@shemayisrael.com> date Jun 28, 2007 3:25 AM
Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Balak mailed-by shemayisrael.com

Behold! The people will arise like a lion cub and raise itself like a lion. (23:24)

Horav David Moshe Rosenbaum, zl, the Admor m'Kretchnif, once remarked, "He who arises early in the morning to study Torah has arichas yamim, longevity." He explained that by arising early, he adds those extra hours to his day, making his day longer than he whose day begins later. This is much more than an anecdote. When we think about it, the time that we spend sleeping, reading and whatever else we might do in our past time is the time that Hashem allots to us - to live, to do, to achieve. When we use this time in a positive manner, we lengthen our days. When we waste it, we are wasting the most precious gift that Hashem has granted us.

Arising early in the morning is not "senior citizen" behavior, as some might suggest. Chassidic literature devotes a special place to this endeavor. Indeed, the Bais Yisrael, zl, would encourage his talmidim, students, to make use of the early morning hours to study Torah and prepare for Tefillas Shacharis, Morning Prayer service. He would often invite them to his home to join him in a cup of tea and words of Torah. Today, throughout the world, thousands of Jews have a morning seder, study session, prior to Tefillas Shacharis. Certainly, this preface to the

morning prayers transforms their character and ultimately affects their development.

This unique Jewish quality did not escape Bilaam. When he was enumerating Klal Yisrael's enviable virtues, he made a point to praise their efforts in arising early in the morning with great alacrity and enthusiasm to greet the Almighty with their daily prayer. "They arise like a lion to grab mitzvos, to don the Tallis, recite the Krias Shema and to put on their Tefillin" (Rashi ibid 23:24). The Maharasha writes (Berachos 12b) that this pasuk is the source from which we derive the significance of arising early in the morning, taking great care not to be late in reciting Krias Shema.

How does one ensure that he arises "like a lion"? Many of us go to sleep with good intentions, but, in the morning when a warm bed is beckoning, it is difficult to leave. Horav Meir, zl, m'Premishlan, cites the Rema in the beginning of the Shulchan Aruch, who writes: "He should gather the strength to overcome and arise in the morning to serve his Creator." The Rema then adds a statement that is enigmatic: "When he retires, he should be aware before Whom he lies." We are discussing getting up in the morning - not going to sleep at night. Why does the Rema add how one should lie down?

Rav Meir explains that Rema was explaining how a person can arise in the morning like "a lion." It all depends on how and with what attitude one goes to sleep. One who goes to bed like a horse will not get up like a lion! If one retires like a lion, however, knowing full well before Whom he lies and what his goals are, he will be able to arise the next morning with alacrity and enthusiasm to serve the Almighty. How one wakes up depends on how he goes to sleep.

The idea of lying down to sleep in the presence of the Almighty Whose Presence fills the entire world is a point of discussion in the chassidic sefarim. The Rizhiner Rebbe, zl, cites the Arizal who changes the tefillah of Hashkiveinu, "Lay us down," in Maariv, from Hashkiveinu Hashem Elokeinu, l'shalom, "Lay us down Hashem, our G-d, to peace" to, Hashkiveinu Avinu, our Father, l'shalom. He feels this is due to the enormous trepidation one should have in "lying down" in front of the King of Kings. When we view Hashem as our loving Father Who cares for us as His children, there is room for a dispensation to lie down. After all is said and done, however, the best advice for waking up in a timely fashion with the proper attitude is to prepare oneself for this moment when he goes to bed.

from Shlomo Katz <skatz@torah.org> hide details Jun 28 (13 hours ago) reply-to skatz@torah.org, genesis@torah.org to hamaayan@torah.org date Jun 28, 2007 11:05 AM subject HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Balak mailed-by torah.org

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring **Edited by Shlomo Katz**

The most famous verse in our parashah is undoubtedly Bemidbar 24:5, "Ma tovu" / "How good are your tents, O Yaakov, your dwelling places, O Israel." The midrash state that the "dwelling places" referred to are the batei knaisiyot / shuls and batei midrashot / study halls where Torah is studied.

Accordingly, writes R' Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor z"l (1816-1896; rabbi of Kovno, Lithuania), we can interpret our verse as follows: In what merit will our tents be good, i.e., in what merit will we dwell in G-d's "tent" in Olam Haba forever? In the merit of our dwelling places, i.e., in the merit of the Torah we study in this world.

R' Spektor continues: Those who give financial support to Torah study can reach the highest levels in the World-to-Come. This is alluded to in Kohelet (7:12), "To sit in the shelter of wisdom is to sit in the shelter of money." They are one and the same.

The next verse in our parashah states: "Stretching out like brooks, like gardens alongside a river, like aloes planted Hashem, like cedars near water." This refers to the ability of a Torah scholar's words to spread quickly throughout the world like flowing water or like the scent of aloes. Fortunate are the ones who study Torah and those who facilitate that Torah study and the spread of Torah through their financial means, observes R' Spektor. (Ma'amar Al Ha'Torah reprinted in Ma'ayan Yitzchak p.122)

from **Rabbi Aryeh Striks** <striks@vths.org> reply-to striks@vths.org to internetparshasheet@gmail.com date Jul 10, 2008 4:40 PM subject Mussar HaTorah - Parashas Balak

Mussar HaTorah Torah insights into human nature from the weekly parasha. **Based on the talks of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l** (Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim - RSA) and dedicated in his memory.

"How goodly are your tents, Yaakov" (Bamidbar 24:5)

A simplistic reading of Parashas Balak might give the impression that Bilaam's attempt to curse the Jewish people was completely foiled by Hashem's intervention, and once he was rebuked, he tried to act righteously and blessed them wholeheartedly instead. A deeper reading, using the powerful searchlights of our Sages, reveals a different picture.

The Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 1:2, see also Rashi on Mishlei 28:23) tells us that while Bilaam was praising B'nei Yisrael, he was using these very same praises as a method to bring about their downfall. "Ma tovu ohalecha Yaakov...", Bilaam told the Jews that they were great – their tents were aligned in such a holy manner, modestly arranged to safeguard privacy so that no Jew would be able to look out the door of his tent and into the door of his neighbor. While on the surface this statement seemed to be sincere, our Sages teach us that Bilaam treacherously used this statement to inject the poison of haughtiness into B'nei Yisrael. Bilaam understood that feelings of conceit could bring the Jews to sin, and in fact his plan succeeded, when the Jews fell prey to the entrapment of immorality with the daughters of Moav.

How could praise of the B'nei Yisrael's tzniyus lead to a failing in the exact same area of modesty and morality? One would think that praise of this beautiful midah would reinforce their awareness of its importance and cause a greater focus on its observance. Imagine praising someone for their careful and safe driving technique. Would you expect that person to respond to such praise by driving without a seat-belt fastened and by running through red lights and stop signs? How then, could taking pride in their spiritual achievements, especially in matters of modesty, trigger such a terrible downfall of immoral behavior?

Arrogance is a spiritual illness that can have drastic and far-reaching effects on one's neshama. Among them, the Orchos Tzaddikim teaches us in Shaar Ha Ga'ava, "And furthermore, ga'ava leads to ta'ava, because one who is arrogant, his heart is wide and he desires all types of things." Simply put, an arrogant person has a greater lust and desire. It makes sense logically that feelings of self-importance should increase one's desire for forbidden activities: "I am great and I deserve to have all my desires fulfilled!" Despite their superior accomplishments in morality and purity, the conceit that Bilaam planted in the hearts of B'nei Yisrael took root, and ignited the fires of desire, immorality and sin.

It is certainly proper and even important to recognize our own accomplishments as well as those of our family members and students. We all need reinforcement and a feeling of progress to motivate us to strive further. At the same time, let us beware of the dangers of arrogance. Pride, even from positive achievements, can lead to heinous sins if not kept in the proper perspective. As we walk the tightrope of life, we can avoid slipping into complacency and conceit by keeping our eyes focused on the goal, on how much more we have to accomplish.

True, we must acknowledge our progress and be grateful to Hashem for helping us succeed thus far, but we must also feel the continued responsibility to go further and use the gifts He has granted us to achieve higher levels of perfection. May we protect ourselves and our families from negative influences, from messages of arrogance and self-indulgence, and may we nurture and cultivate feelings of humility, self-control and constant spiritual growth.

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

RavFrand, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

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 to 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 who 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://ohr.edu/holidays/tisha_bav/law_and_ritual/1146

Laws of the Three Weeks

by **Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman** - www.rabbiullman.com

Based on "**A Summary of Halachos of the Three Weeks**" by **Rabbi Shimon D. Eider**

During the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz until after Tisha B'Av, the custom is to observe some aspects of mourning over the destruction of the Holy Temple. The observance intensifies as Tisha B'Av approaches.

(The following is according to the Ashkenazic custom, for the Sephardic custom please consult an appropriate rabbi.)

Weddings should not be performed during this period.

Engagements may take place with a meal until the 1st of Av. From the 1st of Av until after Tisha B'Av they may take place with refreshments only.

Dancing and playing or listening to music is prohibited. A musician who earns his living by playing for non-Jews may do so until the 1st of Av.

The custom is to refrain from reciting the blessing "sh'hecheyanu" on new garments or fruit, except on Shabbat. Pregnant women or ill people who need the fruit may eat it normally. New garments that don't require this blessing may be purchased and worn until the 1st of Av.

The custom is to refrain from taking a haircut, including the beard. An adult may not even give a haircut to a child.

Trimming the mustache is permitted if it interferes with eating. Combing and brushing the hair is permitted.

A person who usually shaves daily (in a permitted manner) and would suffer business or financial loss by not shaving, may do so until the 1st of Av, or at most until the Friday before Tisha B'Av. In any case, one should consult a competent rabbi.

A married woman may remove hair that protrudes from under her hair covering, and facial or bodily hair that may be unattractive to her husband.

Cutting the nails is permitted until the Friday before Tisha B'Av. Even then it is permitted for a woman before immersion, or for a man as well, in honor of the Shabbat (for example if Tisha B'Av is on Shabbat and postponed to Sunday, or if it is on Sunday itself).
