

river of their blood, flowing through the riverbed: "The outpouring of the rivers when it veered to dwell at Ar..." (Bamidbar 21:15; see Rashi)

Reflect. Had Hashem not revealed this extraordinary miracle, the Jews would never have recognized the ominous danger from which they were rescued. Not only were they saved from death and suffering, they were also spared the agony and fear of looming peril. "Give praise to Hashem, for His kindness is infinite (Tehillim 118:1)!" Miracles of this type happen all the time, only we often fail to notice. "Praise Hashem, all nations; praise Him, all the states! For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of Hashem is eternal... (ibid. 117)." Why should the nations praise Hashem? Is that not our job? (Yehudim connotes those who acknowledge.)

I heard the following in the name of the Chasam Sofer. How many times throughout history have the nations plotted against us, only to be hindered before they ever began? Having had no knowledge of neither the threat nor the salvation, we are in no position to express gratitude. But the nations, whose every assault was miraculously thwarted, surely perceive the Divine intervention. They are therefore called upon to offer praise.

Case in point. Saddam's generals knew well what to aim at in the Gulf War. The Tel Aviv gas main was an opportunity not to squander. One Scud there, and most of the city would go up in flames. The residents of Tel Aviv slept soundly, blissfully ignorant of impending doom.

January 17, 1991. The first Iraqi missile attack. Entire buildings were razed to the ground. Sirens blared. Pandemonium reigned. Tel Avivians panicked. But the Iraqis were disappointed. What happened to the enormous explosion they had anticipated? Why was the damage so (relatively) minimal? Only after the war did it become known.

Nachman Shai, the non-observant army spokesman, appeared on national television. "It just so happened," he testified, "that in the week before the war, a leak in the central gas main had been detected. In order to repair the leak, all the gas had to be drained out." Nachman Shai deemed it appropriate to don a Kippa. The Divine intervention was manifest. Millions of chemical reactions take place within our cells every second. Minor malfunctions could result in major catastrophes, yet for the most part, we take a licking, but we keep on ticking. And life goes on... "Give praise to Hashem, for His kindness is infinite (Tehillim 118:1)!"

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand[SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org] "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Chukas/(Balak) - These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 245, Skin Grafts. Good Shabbos! Chukas/(Balak)

Miriam's Death: The Paradigm of "the Death of Righteous Atones" Parshas Chukas begins with the laws of the Parah Adumah [Red Heifer]. The Torah then tells us of the death of Miriam [Bamidbar 20:1], and then goes on to describe the incident where "There was no water for the Congregation, and they gathered against Moshe and Aharon." [Bamidbar 20:2] Our Rabbis explain the connection between the Parah Adumah and the death of Miriam, and between the death of Miriam and the loss of well water. The juxtaposition of the Parah Adumah and the death of Miriam teaches us that just as sacrifices atone, so too the death of the righteous atones. The juxtaposition of the death of Miriam and the lack of water teaches us that it was in the merit of Miriam that the nation of Israel merited to possess the miraculous rock-well that accompanied them during all the years of their wandering. These two statements of Chazal dovetail with each other -- there is a connection between them. When does the death of the righteous atone? The death of the righteous only atones when people realize what they have lost.

When the Jews first received the water from the rock, it was a big event. But they were in the desert for forty years, almost two generations, living with that rock every day. Imagine how the second generation viewed receiving water from the rock. A mother would tell her child, "Listen, I need

some water -- go get me some water from the rock." Today when we need water, we go to the tap and the tap gives us water. In those days, people went to the rock to get their water -- without giving it a second thought. People took life -- as they experienced it in the Wilderness -- for granted. When Miriam died and the water stopped, people realized that nothing should be taken for granted. Our very existence in this world is based on "Your miracles which are with us everyday". G-d gives us miracles every single day and we need merit in order to receive those miracles. Righteous individuals provide that merit. When Miriam died and the water stopped, people realized that a righteous person does a tremendous amount for his or her generation. They realized that they were hanging on in this world by a very tenuous string. We need tremendous mercy, tremendous support from Heaven (s'yata d'Shmaya) and tremendous miracles. It is the righteous of each generation that deserve all of the above. When a Tzaddik dies and we lose what we had, we need to look up to Heaven again -- maybe we can have that merit once more. The death of the righteous only serves as an atonement when it impresses people with the fact that we are here only by the Grace of G-d. But if a Tzaddik / Tzadekes dies and life "goes on" without anyone realizing what has been lost, and with no one realizing the benefit and merit that this person provided, then his or her death will not atone. The paradigm of the "death of the righteous atoning" was the death of Miriam.

The Only Calculation That Makes Any Difference: How Many Mitzvos? Towards the end of the parsha we read the story of how the Jewish people wanted to travel through the land of Sichon, King of the Emori. When Sichon refused to permit them to travel through his land, the Jewish people went to war against Emori, and defeated them [Bamidbar 21:21-24]. The Torah describes the land and the cities that they captured from Sichon. One of those cities was named "Cheshbon". The Torah then tells us that Cheshbon had a history. Originally, Cheshbon was in the territory of Moab. Sichon conquered it from Moab and now the Jewish people conquered it from Sichon [21:26]. Then, in stylistically uncharacteristic prose, the Torah continues "therefore the poets (moshlim) say 'come to Cheshbon -- let it be built and established as the city of Sichon' [21:28]". There is an allegory here. The Talmud explains [Bava Batra 78b] that the "Moshlim" refers to those who rule over themselves and say, "come let us make a calculation (Cheshbon)". Let us think about life and weigh the tradeoffs of the commandments and their rewards against the loss of not fulfilling these commandments. According to the Talmud, this is an ethical discourse (mussar shmooz). Why does the Torah use this whole story of Sichon and his conquered city, Cheshbon, as the vehicle to give us a mussar shmooz? The Talmud explains that Cheshbon was originally in the territory of Moab. As such, it was off limits to the Jewish people. The Jewish people were warned not to start up with Moab. Cheshbon would therefore have been untouchable. But what happened? Sichon attacked and conquered Cheshbon. Once Cheshbon was Sichon's territory, rather than Moab's, the Jewish people had a green light to attack and capture it. As the Talmud phrases it, "The land of Ammon and Moab became cleansed through Sichon" [Gittin 38a]. Rav Eliya Lopian offers a wonderful insight: When Sichon moved into Cheshbon and conquered it, he must have been imagining "I am a great general. I am a brilliant military strategist. I captured Cheshbon -- the premier city of Moab. Boy, am I great!" That is what Sichon was thinking. But what was really occurring? As always, in truth, people are just puppets on the stage of the world. G-d pulls the strings. G-d wanted Klal Yisroel to have Cheshbon; but there was a problem -- it belonged to Moab. So, G-d moved the pawns on the chessboard: Sichon conquered Cheshbon, giving the green light to the Jewish people. "A mensch tracht un Gut lacht." [A man has plans, and G-d laughs.] That is what all of history is about. There is great irony in history. Rabbi Berel Wein wrote a terrific article in the Summer 1991 issue of Jewish Action about some of the miracles and ironies of the Persian Gulf war. Isn't it ironic, Rabbi Wein wrote, that it was July of 1990 that the esteemed Secretary of State, James Baker III, appeared before the Senate foreign relations committee of Congress and told them about the intransigence of the Israelis -- that the Israelis were unwilling to make peace. And then in a most undiplomatic statement, he announced the phone number of the State

Department and told the Israelis "when you're ready, you call me". Then on January 17th, when Iraq fired the first Scud missile at Israel and the Israeli jets scrambled, the State Department panicked: "We've got to keep the Israelis out of the war, or the whole coalition will fall apart!" Who called whom? The man who announced his phone number and said, "you call me" is the one who had to come calling and begging. Another irony of history: When the Israelis bombed the nuclear reactor of Iraq and the entire world condemned this 'barbarous act' of the Israelis which put Saddam Hussein out of the nuclear business, who was the person who offered the motion in the United Nations condemning Israel? It was the ambassador of Kuwait who called for the condemnation of Israel for an act of aggression against their brothers -- the Iraqis. Sichon's plan "let's go and capture Cheshbon" represents the irony of history. That is why Chazal use this incident as the vehicle to tell us "Come make a reckoning of the soul (Cheshbon haNefesh)". Let us make the one and only calculation that makes any difference in the world -- the calculation of performing a mitzvah against its non-performance. No other calculation is worth an iota -- not the political calculations, not the military calculations, not the financial calculations, not all the other crazy calculations that we make. Because men calculate, and G-d laughs. As Solomon says, "All is vanity". "The bottom line after all is heard, is to fear G-d and to keep His Commandments, for this is all there is of man [Koheles 12:13].

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From: Aish HaTorah[SMTP:aishlist@mail.netvision.net.il] Aish HaTorah:
 APPEL'S PARSHA PAGE PARSHAT CHUKAT-BALAK Numbers
 22:2-25:9 by Rabbi Yehuda Appel Aish HaTorah Cleveland

A recent study was undertaken to see how parents interact with their children. The study found that for every positive comment a parent makes to a child, there are on average 19 negative remarks. Of course, any teacher or office manager will tell you that people are for more productive in a positive than in a negative environment. Yet, somehow, this realization gets lost in the commute from work to home. A friend recently told me how his 10-year-old son had been acting difficult. After some painful self-examination, my friend realized that he'd been constantly chiding the boy. So he decided to change tactics; he began to focus on praising his son, and speaking about him in front of others as "my little tzaddik." The result? Overnight this child became a totally different person! Given his new title of "tzaddik," he gladly assumed the role.

This approach was pivotal to the moral development (mussar) methods of the famous European Yeshiva, Slobodka. Instead of focusing on what the students "were," the rabbis would focus on what the person "could become." The result was that the greatest Torah luminaries emerged from the Slobodka study hall.

This concept finds illustration in this week's Torah portion. A Moabite chieftain named Balak - fearful of Israelite attack - summons a non-Jewish spiritualist named Bilaam to curse the Jewish People. The Torah reports how Bilaam saddled up his donkey and embarked on a journey to curse the Jews. On the way, an angel came to block the way. Initially, only the donkey - not Bilaam himself - noticed the angel. Subsequently, when Bilaam realized the angel's presence, he acknowledged the humiliating reality that a donkey is more spiritually perceptive than he is!

But we must return to a more basic question. Why was Bilaam's military strategy a curse rather than bows and arrows? Because Bilaam reasoned that since the power of the Jewish People is in their mouth (i.e. through study of

Torah), the best way to counteract that power was with the mouth - a curse! There is much discussion in the commentaries as to the true nature of Bilaam. In the view of some he was a prophet, in the view of others a charlatan. Some say he was an astrologer, others a liar. Whatever the case may be, however, one thing is clear - he was a very evil man. For a high enough wage he was willing to curse an entire people.

At the completion of this episode, G-d smites the donkey. This, at first glance, appears counterproductive. Wouldn't G-d want to keep the donkey around as a reminder of this incredible incident? Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, the late dean of the Mir Yeshiva, explained that G-d was being solicitous of Bilaam's honor. How embarrassing it would be for Bilaam to have a constant reminder of his downfall. To preserve Bilaam's honor, the donkey needed to be killed. It is amazing that G-d would go to such great lengths to preserve the honor of a wicked character. Yet the Almighty wants to teach us a valuable lesson: If we need to be concerned about the dignity of Bilaam, then how much more so should we be sensitive to the dignity of our friends and neighbors. And, Rabbi Shmuelevitz adds, we must not forget to honor the higher nature within ourselves. May the lesson of our parsha inspire us to act in an exalted, dignified, and truly human way!

May the merit of learning this Devar Torah aid in the complete and speedy recovery of Harav Shmuel Yaakov ben Ayala Hinda. <http://www.aish.edu/learning/maillists/lists.htm> "Appel's Parsha Page" is a weekly email series that presents valuable insights into living, culled from the Torah portion of the week and based on sources from the Sages. It covers dynamic issues like Kabbalah, Free Will, Gossip, and Relationships. The author, Rabbi Yehuda Appel, is an American who studied and taught Torah for many years in Jerusalem. In 1990, he and his family moved to Cleveland where he now serves as Executive Director of Aish HaTorah. (C) 1999 Aish HaTorah International - All rights reserved. Email: yappel@aish.edu Home Page: <http://www.aish.edu> Live camera from the Western Wall: <http://www.thewall.org> <http://www.virtualjerusalem.com>

From: Yated USA[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com]

Kortz Un Sharf-Short and Sweet Parsha Vertlach by Shaya Gottlieb
 "Zos Chukas HaTorah"-this is the 'chok' of the Torah 19:2 The Targum interprets Chukas to mean gezeirah, or decree. Why a loshon of gezeirah? If there would be no mitzva of giving rebuke, every righteous person would remain secluded in his home, serving Hashem, without being punished for the sins of his generation. The wicked ones would be able to excuse their behavior by saying they did not have a role model or example to tell them how to live. Now that the mitzva of giving tochocha puts a responsibility both on the Tzaddik and his generation, there are no excuses. This is hinted in the possuk "Zos chukas haTorah asher tzivo Hashem laymor"-the decree that Hashem gave, laymor, to give others tochocho, tell them how to behave, is the main gezeira of the Torah. It is a gezeira both for the Tzaddikim who rebuke and the generation who accept the rebuke. -Chasam Sofer

Rashi: The umos haolam inquire about the poro adumo, wanting to know the rationale behind it. Therefore, the Torah wrote that it is a chok, and we may not debate its logic. Why do the nations inquire specifically about the poro adumo? There are many other mitzvos whose meaning is unknown. Rashi continues by quoting Rav Moshe Hadarshan, who says the poro adumo is an atonement for cheit hoegel. The goyim taunt Klal Yisroel about the poro adumo, to remind them of their sin of the golden calf. Therefore, the possuk clearly explains that it is a chok. -The Maggid of Zlotchov

Before a Jew does a mitzva, the yetzer hora tells him, "mah hamitzva hazos"? Why are you doing this mitzva. After the mitzva is done, the soton says, "Umah taam yesh boh," 'look how great the mitzva is,' in order to make him arrogant. Therefore, a person should constantly think, "gezeirah hi milfonai", before he does the mitzva, he should know that Hashem commanded us to fulfill it. After the mitzva, he should think, "vayn licho rishus l'harher acharehu"-and we have no permission to dwell on the greatness of the mitzva after it is done. -Rav Meir of Premishlan

The Torah possesses some of the same qualities of the Poro Adumo-Metaher Timayim Umetame Tihorim-It makes the impure ones pure and the pure ones impure. Those who seek to learn lishmo, for the right reasons, will find the Torah a medicine for life. Those who learn Torah without yiras shomayim will find it a 'sam hamoves' (deathly potion). -The Lelover Rebbe Therefore, the parsha begins with the words 'Zos Chukas

HaTorah", because just like the Poro Adumo is a chok, the Torah is also a chok.

"Vayaar Bolok Ben Tzipor" and Bolok the son of Tzipor saw 22:2 Why was the sedra given the name of the Jew-hater Bolok? Chazal-It is a halacha that Esav hates Yaakov-all gentiles hate the Jews. However, many goyim hide their hatred under a veneer of decency and politeness, and we are not wary of their motives. Bolok was unique. He was an 'ehrlicher goy', who expressed his hatred of the Jewish nation openly. For such a goy, it is fitting to name a parsha of the Torah. -Rav Meir of Premishlan

"UBolok Ben Tzipor Melech Lamoav Boeis Hahu"- and Bolok, son of Tzipor, was king of Moav during that time. 22:4 Why doesn't the previous possuk mention that Bolok was the king of Moav? Obviously, Bolok was promoted to the monarchy when the Jews became a threat. Earlier, he was a commoner who warned Moav of the danger, and when Moav was scared, they appointed him king. -Rav Chaim Soleveitchik

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Peninim Ahl HaTorah: Parshas Balak

by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

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.

Hashem's wrath flowed because he was going. And an angel of Hashem stood on the road to impede him. ¶ The angel of Hashem stood in the path of the vineyards. (22:22,24) The Torah does not consistently use Hashem's Name. In the beginning, when it states that Hashem's wrath flared, the Torah uses the Name Elokim, which implies the attribute of din, justice. Afterwards, it says that Hashem dispatched an angel to save Bilaam from sin. The Torah now employs the Name Hashem which implies the attribute of rachamim, compassion. Why is there a change in Hashem's relationship to the situation? The Chofetz Chaim, zl, explains that Bilaam was ostensibly endowed with a special neshama, soul. He had the ability to attain very high levels of spiritual achievement. Alas, he used his G-d-given gift for the wrong purpose. Yet, Hashem attempted to reach him, to avail him of the opportunity to be saved from sin. Bilaam either did not see -or did not care. At first Hashem was angry. This explains the use of the Name Elokim, referring to the attribute of justice. Due to His awareness of Bilaam's lofty spiritual potential, Hashem compassionately sent an angel to dissuade him from sin. Hashem even altered the course of nature in order to prevent Bilaam from sinning. Bilaam regrettably saw what he wanted to see, and he

heard only what he chose to hear. Hashem sends us "little" messages. If we are cognizant, if we open our eyes, we will take note and realize the purpose of these communiques. The Chofetz Chaim claims that it was such a subtle message that motivated Rav Chaim Volozhiner, zl, to make his famous "yeshivah". The story goes that Rav Chaim, who was a businessman at the time, came to the city on the major market day to conduct business. Another merchant recognized Rav Chaim and came over to ask him, "Why are you here today, Reb Chaim? What business are you involved in here?" At the time, Rav Chaim responded that he was present as a money-changer. Later on, however, it dawned on him that perhaps there was a deeper meaning to the questions. The question's focus placed upon "you" -"Why are you here today? What business are you involved in today?" -glared down at him. Really, what was he doing there? Sure, he was "exchanging." Was it only money or Olam Habbah-the eternal world-for Olam Ha'zeh, this temporary world? Was he right in devoting his life to business when he could be devoting himself to Torah? Rav Chaim heard; he took note-and he founded what became the great Volozhiner Yeshivah. How did it all begin? It started with a simple question-but it was one directed to a person who did not take anything for granted. He felt that this question carried with it a message that was directed to him. He took immediate action. The results of that action are with us until this very day. We must realize that Hashem is always sending us little messages, encouraging us to live our lives in meaningful manner, intimating to us that we should be doing things differently on changing our focus in life. We just have to begin listening.

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il] * TORAH WEEKLY *
Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshas Chukas

Hocus Pocus "This is the decree of the Torah" (19:1) It always amazes me that people who claim to be agnostics will open up a newspaper and start reading their horoscopes. A non-Jew once quizzed Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai about the purification process of the para aduma (red heifer) in this week's Parsha: "This stuff you do looks like a bunch of hocus-pocus to me. You get a cow and burn it. You pulverize it and make it into dust. If one of you is impure from touching a cadaver, you sprinkle a couple of drops over him and say "You're pure!" Rabbi Yochanan asked him, "Have you ever seen someone who was possessed?" The non-Jew answered "Yes." "What do you do to him?" asked Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai. "Well, we put smoking roots underneath him, sprinkle him with water and the evil spirit runs away." Rabbi Yochanan said to him "Why don't you let your ears listen to what comes out of your mouth?" After the non-Jew had left, the students said to Rabbi Yochanan "You pushed this fellow off with a reed. But what do you say to us?" He answered them: "By your lives, the dead do not make impure. Neither does the cow purify, nor does the water. Rather the Holy One, Blessed be He says: `A statute I have instituted. A decree I have decreed. Yours is not to transgress my decrees, as it states `This is the decree of the Torah...' " People often say, "Look Rabbi, what is all this mumbo-jumbo, putting funny black boxes on your head, not wearing a mixture of wool and linen, not cooking milk and meat together, putting little metal cases on your door-posts. It's just a lot of hocus-pocus isn't it? So I say to them: "Have you ever used a cellular telephone?" "Yes." "Do you understand how it works." "Well, not really. It picks up radio signals that travel through the air." "How does it do that?" "Well, it's got a receiver inside it." "How does this receiver work?" "Well, it's on a chip. And there are thousands of miniature circuits on this chip and...well it receives the signal. You know what Rabbi, you're right, I don't really understand exactly how a cellular phone works." "Did that stop you using it?" "No." "It's the same thing with mitzvot. I don't have to know how a mitzvah works in order to do it. As long as G-d knows how it works, that's fine by me."

Porkie "This is the decree of the Torah" (19:1) It's a well-known fact that Jews don't eat pork. Why not? You might hear people saying that as the refrigerator companies hadn't got off the ground in the land of Canaan some

three thousand years ago, so the Torah forbade eating pork for health reasons. The corollary of that statement is that seeing as now we have wonderful refrigerators, we can all eat pork. Alternatively, you might hear some people expressing their revulsion at our little porcine friends thus: "The pig is a disgusting animal. It grovels around in the dirt. Its diet is from the most disgusting things that lay on the ground. Even if pig was kosher, I'd never eat it." The Torah's view is neither of the above. Our sages say quite clearly that "A person shouldn't say: I don't want to eat pig meat or wear shatnez (a forbidden mixture of wool and linen). Rather he should say: I could do these things, but what can I do -- my Father in Heaven ordered me not to do them." It is for this reason that the meal we eat on Shabbat afternoon is called colloquially shalosh seudos, which translates as "three meals." More accurately, it should be called seuda shlishit -- "the third meal." So why is this meal called "three meals?" (The answer is not because you're supposed to eat enough for three meals.) It becomes clear retroactively that the other two meals were not for the sake of our own stomachs but to honor Shabbat with our eating and drinking. Eating on Shabbat and non-eating of pig are for the same reason -- to fulfill the Will of the Creator. ...

Sources: * Hocus Pocus - Midrash Tanchuma, Rabbi Mordechai Perlman * Porkie - Devash V'Chalav in Iturei Torah...

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Eli Ballon Ohr Somayach International E-Mail: info@ohr.org.il Home Page: http://www.ohr.org.il (C) 1999 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

From: Rabbi Pinchas Winston[SMTP:winston@torah.org] Subject: Perceptions - Parashas Chukas: The Greatest "Choks" of the Century G-d spoke to Moshe and Aharon saying, "This is the statute of the Torah (chukas haTorah) which G-d has commanded you ..." (Bamidbar 19:1)

I would like to make a point, one, which I believe, is worthwhile to make in light of this week's parshah.

By now, many people are familiar with the "Bible Codes." For those who are unfamiliar with this term, it refers to hidden references in the Torah to either people or events that occurred outside the Torah's historical point of reference. If the references are in indeed what they are claimed to be, then the "author" of the Torah was very, very clever, and, he also knew the future. The implications of this statement are obvious, and, the reason why the Bible Codes are part of many outreach programs.

The truth is, some of these references were arrived at before the impact of the computer age, either as a result of tradition, or pure genius, or both. (For example, there is a reference to Hitler in the Plague of Darkness that was discovered shortly after World War II, exactly where one would expect to find it.) Many codes today, however, are quite sophisticated, and make use of modern computer technology to surface what often seem to be black-and-white references to people or historical occurrences that we would have assumed should not be there.

Unless, as we have already mentioned, one believes the Torah was Divinely written, and, as the Vilna Gaon emphasizes, all of history is embedded in the Torah on one level or another. The Bible Codes are therefore used to make this point, a point often taken seriously when the "odds" are considered about the possibility of such references existing as they do and in their context. If you can "prove" to a non-believer that the odds are too great to logically assume the references are random, then the mind obligates a person, at the very least, to check further into the Divine validity of Torah.

This has been a gross over-simplification of an important idea. However, it is enough of the discussion to mention that herein lies a major controversy, not just between the religious and non-religious "scientific" communities, but also within the Orthodox Community itself, amongst the mathematical and physics "experts" on the same side of the "line."

Simply put, some don't buy it--vehemently they don't buy it. And they worry out loud (often in publications) about the eventual damage to Torah's

credibility if the Codes continue to be used as a reason to believe in Torah from Sinai. They hold (as it was explained to me), that the testing of the "codes" to mathematically ascertain the odds of the results being "random" are neither accurate nor rigorous enough. They feel, therefore, that potential belief in Torah is being put at risk, because the results are just not absolute enough to be used as a basis to convince intelligent people about the Divine authorship of Torah.

The other side, the "Presenters" of the Codes, obviously disagree, and they include big name people from the scientific community as well. They have also been successful with the Bible Codes to pique the interest of many people over the years, with varying ranges of intelligence. They also, it might be added, have leading rabbis on their side encouraging them to continue with their work and seminars.

Fine ... All that is very fine.

When I have person this is down to me to the Jewish meal of Shabbat on Friday night, it is a "my head between mountains" in order to discuss the merit or demerit of the Codes and the teaching of them as a basis for belief. Personally, I have found that the Torah, with all of its many facets is so awesome, so fantastic, that it is enough to convince any rational and intellectually-honest person about Torah being from Sinai. Simply put, Torah in its totality (or, at least as much of it as a person merits to grasp), is so godly that it is next to impossible to negate its divine connection. (As one rabbi once said, "If you knew what I knew, you would believe it too!")

Furthermore, when you consider the incredible gematrios (Kabbalistic-numerology, in short) found in the Arizal, and even just in the Ba'al HaTurim on the Chumash, many of the codes become more than credible--but not because of any odds or rigorous mathematical testing. Consider the following quote (not because this person is an expert-of-experts, but because he eloquently expresses a point that everyone should consider):

"... Among the causes of this scientific tunnel vision I would like to discuss two that result from the nature of scientific tradition. The first of these is the issue of methodology. In its laudable insistence upon experience, accurate observation and verifiability, science has placed great emphasis upon measurement. To measure something is to experience it in a certain dimension, a dimension in which we can make observations of great accuracy which are repeatable by others. The use of measurement has enabled science to make enormous strides in the understanding of the material universe. But by virtue of its success, measurement has become a scientific idol ..." (The Road Less Traveled, III Growth and Religion, Scientific Tunnel Vision; Simon and Schuster, 1978)

The author adds much more to this, also important and well-written. However, this is all I need to quote as a Torah-Jew to wonder out loud, "Are we making the mistake of measuring the validity of the codes according to the wrong standard of measurement? If the Talmud says that 'a finger does not go up in the air unless it is decreed in Heaven' (Chullin 7b), and, 'All is in the hands of Heaven except for fear of G-d' (Brochos 34b), can we not safely assume that if something happens--like the Codes--it is a matter of Divine Providence?"

In other words, if the odds of something happening are even one-in-two, that doesn't bother Torah-Jews, if the concept is true according to Torah, and it strengthens a Torah idea. And if the odds are two-billion-to-one that something bad could happen to you while engaging in an anti-Torah activity, then you have to worry about the one, because in a system of belief like that of Torah, the "one" becomes none other than the "One." After all, this is G-d's "game," and He can do whatever He wants, the way He wants to do it, and whenever He wants to do it. He usually does.

There is no such things as "odds" or "coincidences" when it comes to Torah and Divine Providence, which brings us to the connection (just as you probably gave up on one) between what we have just said, and this week's parshah. At the beginning of Parashas Chukas, Rashi defines a "chok" (Torah-statute) as a mitzvah for which ...

"... The Satan and the Nations-of-the-World taunt Israel, asking, 'What is this commandment and what reason is there for it?' On this account, it writes

"chukah," as if to say, it is an enactment before Me, and you are not allowed to wonder about it ..." (Rashi, Bamidbar 19:1)

The underpinning of this statement is not that there are some mitzvot that do not make sense at all, but that we Jews are good soldiers who blindly follow orders and do them anyhow. Every mitzvah, right down to the Red Heifer in this week's parshah--the ultimate Torah-statute--makes perfect sense, well, at least to G-d. Well, at least for now, for, as our tradition teaches, eventually, they will also make sense to us, when we finally come to view the world from G-d's supernatural perspective later in history.

And that's what we have to try to do everyday, and this is also the point of learning Torah: to develop a godly perception of reality, and to measure the events of daily life not by non-Jewish mathematical standards, but in terms of Hashgachah Pratis-standards. The Jewish people are not supposed to try to live within a world governed by nature (Shabbos 156a): "Ain mazel l'Yisroel" (Jews are not necessarily bound by a fixed destiny) is a standard to live up to, not into.

In fact, it has been brought forth many times, mathematically, Jewish survival should not have been. Even leaving Egypt was against all odds, and the only thing that was "rigorous" with respect to those odds was the slavery the Jewish people underwent before leaving. However, "Bris Avos" (Covenant of the Fathers) means that G-d deals with the Jewish people in a supernatural way, even in exile, and "speaks" to us through various different means and acts of Providence, and often works quietly behind the scenes instrumenting redemption.

You just have to know how to read the writing on the wall.

So, in conclusion (for now), let me reiterate that I have come to neither to defend or condemn the use of such outreach devices as the Bible Codes. That is not my job, nor am I qualified to do so. However, what I have come to express is a concern that, in the midst of the heated debate, the most important points to emerge from all of this is getting lost in a stream of equations, computer jargon, and plain old rhetoric.

The first point? That there is wonderful Divine Providence behind all that we have been able to uncover through Torah and in Torah throughout the generations, today including, including with the help computers. The second point? That we Jews celebrate and greatly rejoice in these discoveries, even when the rest of the world questions us for doing so, and their rules of logic dictate that we ought not to.

We celebrate the chukim as well as the mishpatim--no matter how odd it appears to others.

...

The princes dug the well, the nobles of the people hollowed it, by the law-giver, with their staffs. From the desert [they went] to Mattanah; from Mattanah to Nachliel; from Nachliel to Bamos. (Bamidbar 21:18-19)

When the Jewish people witness great miracles on their behalf, they like to sing about it. After the splitting of the sea (Parashas Beshallah), they sang shirah--song of the soul. Now, after the tremendous miracle of water from the well, the souls of the Jewish people could not contain themselves, and shirah and its vocalized praise of G-d's providence again was the result.

The rabbis ask in the Talmud:

Why does it say, "From the desert they went to Mattanah"? If a man makes himself like a desert, abandoning himself to all (Rashi: he teaches Torah to everyone free-of-charge), then Torah will be given to him as a gift (mattanah), as it says, "From the desert to Mattanah." Since it is given to him as a gift, he will inherit it from G-d (nachalo E"l), as it says, "from Mattanah to Nachliel." Since he inherited it from G-d, he will become elevated to greatness, as it says, "from Nachliel to Bamos (elevated places)." (Nedarim 55a)

Hence, according to the Talmud, the last part of the verses above are really speaking about Torah. However, according to the Vilna Gaon, the first part of the above paragraph is also speaking about Torah:

"... Because a well is the Torah, as it says, 'Drink water from your own cistern, and flowing water from your own well.' (Mishlei 5:16)."

The Gaon then adds:

"It is a trait of the Torah, as we see from the verse, 'For wisdom protects

as well as money ...' (Koheles 7:12), and, 'It is a tree of life for all those who grasp it' (Mishlei 3:18), that one who cannot learn Torah on his own, but 'grasps' it through those who can learn Torah, is rewarded as if he learned Torah on his own, because 'wisdom protects as well as money' ..."

In other words, the Zevulun-Yissachar relationship really works. The former were sea-merchants who lacked the ability to learn Torah like their fellow Jews, Yissachar, who only had a drive for Torah, and nothing else. Hence, Zevulun financially supported Yissachar, who learned on behalf of both of them.

(What a shame it is today that the attitude has changed so dramatically, and therefore, the opportunity as well. There are Torah scholars who have little desire but to learn Torah all day long, with tremendous self-sacrifice yet. On the other side of the "table," there are Jews who have tremendous financial resources, but little or no desire to learn Torah, or to financially support those who do. The "shidduch" is therefore not made, and the result is less Torah learned by the scholars, and less reward earned by the people who could support them! Then again, as the Zohar predicted, this is the result of the reduced respect for Torah just before Moshiach's arrival.)

The Gaon continues:

"And this is what it means: the well is the Torah 'dug by the princes,' that is, the 'princes' of Torah who learn it and 'dig' out and deepen their knowledge from learning it and its mysteries."

Learning Torah, explains the Vilna Gaon, is comparable to digging an intellectual and spiritual well ...

"The nobles of the people hollowed it ..." refers to the people who give gifts and the wealthy people, who are constantly involved in business, acquire Torah with their money ... when they support Torah." (Kol Eliyahu, Chukas 94)

In the past, this may not have been easy to do because of the lack of wealthy Jews amongst the Jewish population as a whole. The willingness to financially support Torah institutions and Torah scholars might have been there, but the money just wasn't.

Ironically, as is often the case with Divine Providence, the situation has reversed itself: currently, the money is there; however, the willingness, as a result of assimilation and the times we live in, has become diminished, just as the angel had precipitated. For, as the Zohar points out, when the angel "grabbed" and damaged the leg of Ya'akov that fateful night he became "Yisroel," he was, in fact "attacking" the supporters of Torah, in the "End-of-Days."

This is something to think about next time you feel resistance to write that check to strengthen Torah, and all those who uphold it.

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From: Aish HaTorah[SMTP:aishlist@mail.netvision.net.il] Subject: Shraga's Weekly - Chukat Aish HaTorah: SHRAGA'S WEEKLY PARSHA CHUKAT Numbers 19:1 - 21:1

"MOSES HITS THE ROCK" This week's parsha features one of the most perplexing incidents in the entire Torah. The Jews have been wandering for 40 years in the desert and they're thirsty. So G-d tells Moses to speak to the rock and water will come forth (Numbers 20:8). The instruction to "speak" is in contrast to 40 years earlier, when Moses followed G-d's instruction to HIT the rock - and water gushed out (Exodus 17:6). This time, Moses is to speak. Yet he again HITS the rock. Nothing happens, so Moses hits the rock a second time before water comes out. G-d's response: "Since you HIT the rock rather than speaking to it, you will not lead the Jewish People into the Land of Israel" (Numbers 20:11-12).

We read this story and think: Here's the mighty Moses, who confronted Pharaoh, arranged the 10 plagues, split the Red Sea, brought the Torah down from Mount Sinai, and defended the people through trials and tribulations in the desert. Now he makes one little mistake and G-d takes away his dream of

entering Israel. The consequence seems inappropriately harsh! The first step in understanding this incident is to appreciate how the Jewish people were at the critical juncture of transitioning from desert life to Israel. At the rock, G-d's instructions to Moses are carefully chosen to reflect this transition. Forty years earlier, when Moses was told to HIT the rock, the people had just come out of brutal slavery in Egypt - and "hitting" was a language they understood. But this time, Moses was called upon to lead a generation who'd grown up in freedom; a generation which required the softer approach of "speaking." Notice how in our parsha, Moses hits the rock twice. First, Moses hit the rock and no water came out. At that moment he had the opportunity to reevaluate his approach and reflect more carefully on G-d's specific instruction to "speak." Tragically, Moses fails to adapt his approach. Instead he gets frustrated and hits the rock even harder! The commentators explain this as perhaps symptomatic of Moses' inability to fully relate to the new generation. Hence he is no longer suitable to lead them into Israel. The punishment is not harsh; it is simply a consequence of Moses' reality.

We learn from this a crucial lesson about education. King Solomon says: "Educate each child according to his own way." This means that the process of learning is different for everybody. The approach that's effective for one is often not effective for another. This defines the crucial difference between education and indoctrination. "Indoctrination" is when the teacher is concerned primarily with advancing his position; "education" is drawing out the student's own intuitive sense. This idea is elucidated in the Talmud (Tractate Pesachim), which says: "Even more than the baby calf wants to drink, the mother wants to nurse." The simple understanding is that of course the calf is hungry and needs to eat. But even more so "the mother wants to nurse" - meaning that the mother is full of milk and needs to get it out! However, I heard in the name of Rabbi Simcha Wasserman (20th century Los Angeles and Jerusalem) that the Talmud must be understood differently. Because if the mother's only concern is to get rid of her milk, then it would come out in one big gush. And we see instead that it comes out precisely in the right proportion to satisfy the specific needs of the calf. So when the Talmud says, "More than the baby calf wants to drink, the mother wants to nurse," it is saying that even more than the calf desires to eat, the mother wants that it should eat - not for the mother's sake, but because that's what's best for the calf! And that, said Rabbi Wasserman, is what good education is all about. Judaism stands for education because that's the only process which is real and will withstand the test of time. Jewish ideals have existed against all odds for 3,000 years - not because we've pounded people over the head, but because we've communicated those ideas in a rational, practical way. Anyone who says that yeshiva is a cult is woefully misinformed. Yeshiva is precisely the place to discuss the issues, ask questions, work it through, and make it your own.

It is interesting that the experience of Moses in the desert can be understood in light of the experience of Torah Judaism in the 20th century. In the shtetl of Europe, a rebbe could effectively communicate by hitting the knuckles with a ruler. It was a language that was accepted and understood. But when tens of thousands of Jews moved to America, those who sent their children to cheder found these same rabbis applying their European-style methods to children with American mentalities. These children, who were used to a more open and permissive approach, could not relate to Judaism as it was being presented. The result is that many of them shifted away from observance. It has only been in the last 20 years - with American-born rabbis now taking the helm and explaining Judaism in modern, relevant terms - that American Jewry has seen a resurgence back toward traditional observance. Like Moses and the rock, our ability to adjust and customize our educational approach will in large part determine how successfully we move our children, our students, our nation and ourselves forward into the "Land of Israel" - into the next exciting stage of personal and national destiny.

SHABBAT SHALOM, RABBI SHRAGA SIMMONS

May the merit of learning this Devar Torah aid in the complete and speedy recovery of Harav Shmuel Yaakov ben Ayala Hinda. <http://www.aish.edu/learning/maillists/lists.htm> Rabbi Shraga Simmons spent his childhood trekking through snow in Buffalo, New York. He has worked in the fields of journalism and public relations, and now manages the Aish HaTorah website in Jerusalem. Check out the new Shraga's Weekly web page at: <http://www.aish.edu/parsha/shragasweekly/current.htm> (C) 1998 Aish HaTorah International - All

From Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List[SMTP:parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] To: riskin@vjlists.com Shabbat Shalom: Chukat-Balak by Shlomo Riskin Efrat, Israel -

What is the sin of Moses? Various explanations have been given for Moses's punishment. According to Rashi, Moses' sin was that instead of speaking to the rock, he struck the rock.

According to Maimonides (Eight Chapters), Moses is punished because he is angry at the Israelites and speaks evil of them, calling them rebels. And as we've mentioned in the past, striking the rock may be a sublimated form of striking the people, hardly a strategy for an effective leader.

But what caused Moses to lose patience and lash out at his charges, the very Moses who was always the great defender of his nation, the Moses who asked the almighty to blot out his name from the Bible but not to destroy the people of Israel, the faithful shepherd who even after the sin of the Golden Calf successfully argued on Israel's behalf? (undoubtedly he had become tired, frustrated, bitterly disappointed by a nation which chose the evil report of the scouts rather than the Divine Will taught by Caleb, Joshua, Moses and Aaron, by an ungrateful people who remained deafeningly silent even during Korah's rebellion. But why couldn't he overcome this understandable vexation, rise above it and remain the patient and loving shepherd who had previously overcome every obstacle and stumbling block?)

A direction towards understanding is provided by Rav Jacob Harlap (1883-1951), close disciple and confidante of Rav A.Y.H. Kook, in his multi-volumed *Mei Marom*, wherein he, distinguishes between two Biblical descriptions of the Israelites which are usually taken for synonyms: *kehal* and *edah*, congregation and community. A congregation consists of the many individuals who congregate together, the separate and disparate persons who make up a crowd; a community is guided by a specific purpose which serves to unite (community), connotes an historic continuity from generation to generation. Indeed, *edah* really means witness, and the continued survival of the nation of Israel despite exile and persecution in accordance with the Divine covenant serves eloquent testimony to the reality and truth of G-d. The historic community of Israel stands as the most persuasive witness to G-d's presence in the world and in history.

With this introduction, let us take a fresh look at our Torah reading. Immediately following Miriam's death, the desert wells dry up and the Israelites assemble (*Vayikhalu*) in complaint against Moses and Aaron. In response, G-d addresses Moses, "Take the staff and you and Aaron assemble the community (*hakhel eh ha'edah*). Speak to the rock in their presence and it will give forth its water. You will thus bring forth water from the cliff and allow the community (*ha'edah*) and their beasts to drink". (Num. 20:8). Moses is told by G-d to assemble the community (*edah*), however, "And Moses and Aaron assembled the congregation (*Vayakhelua haKahal*) in front of the rock" (Numbers 20:10).

G-d wanted Moses to look at the motley crew of complainers and see His Divine witnesses, appreciate the fact that standing before him were the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah and the parents of Ruth, David and the righteous Messiah. G-d expected Moses to see through the angry rabble and extract from deep within them the moments when they declared their willingness to be a kingdom of priests and that "the Lord shall be King for ever and ever". But Moses, disappointed and disgruntled, could only see a congregation of kvetching individuals, a *Datan* and an *Aviram* who even refused to meet with him, a disparate scout who frightened the masses into paralysis. And a leader who loses sight of the Community of Israel and can only see the congregation of Israel, who speaks to what is here in front of him instead of to the great moments and the noble individuals who comprise historic Israel, will be unable to speak with love and will only be able to strike in anger. Such an individual perforce cannot continue to lead the nation towards the fulfillment of its historical destiny.

Many years ago I had the unique pleasure and privilege of spending an unforgettable Sabbath with one of the great scholars of contemporary times.

Rav Charles Chavel. I could not resist asking him how, despite the fact that he was a Rabbi of a Jewish congregation, he nevertheless found the time to be so productive in Jewish scholarship, producing special editions of *Sefer HaChofetz Chaim* and commentaries on the Ramban and responses to difficult Talmudic questions asked by R. Akiva Eiger. "I always had small congregations", he told me, "small in number and sometimes even small in spirit. And after a difficult board meeting with Mrs. Goldberg and Mrs. Schwartz I yearned for the company of profound minds and deep perspectives. Who could be greater antidotes to petty concerns and small-minded and mean-spirited individuals than the Ramban and R. Akiva Eiger?" Rav Chavel looked beyond the congregation and related to the community. That's what Moses could not do at the end of his life, but it's what each of us must aspire to do!

Shabbat Shalom

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Dean Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean

Parshat Balak - 5758 - OU Torah Insights Project OU Torah Insights Project Parashat Balak July 11, 1998 Rabbi Aaron Gruman

When it comes to prophecy, our Sages compare Bilam to Moshe Rabbeinu: "Never again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moshe. But among the Babylonians one did arise. Who is this? Bilam, son of Ba'Eor." Regarding character traits, however, our Sages compare Bilam with Avraham Avinu: "A generous eye, a humble spirit and an undemanding soul, these are the characteristics of the disciples of Avraham; An evil eye, a haughty spirit and a demanding soul, these are the characteristics of the disciples of Bilam." Where did our sages see evidence of Bilam's haughty spirit? Under which similar circumstances did Avraham Avinu display a humble temperament? Rabbi Meir Bergman in his work, *Shaarei Orah*, points to a somewhat puzzling Gemara: "Whoever establishes a set place for prayer, the G-d of Avraham will come to his aid, and when he dies they will say about him, 'What a humble man, what a pious man. He is a disciple of Avraham Avinu.' "And from where do we know that Avraham Avinu had a set place for prayer? From the verse, 'And Avraham arose in the morning to the place that he had stood [prayed] earlier.' "Certainly maintaining a set place for prayer is admirable, but why heap such effusive praise on its practitioner? We return to Bilam. Balak enlists him to curse the Jewish people. Bilam's initial attempt fails. His reaction? Let's try again from somewhere else. Round two: same result. Bilam's reaction? Let's try yet another location. Does Bilam really think that his failure is caused by a particular site being unworthy? Does it not dawn on him that perhaps it is his prayer that is lacking, or that he himself is inadequate? Arrogance, the Mishnah in *Avos* teaches, is the source of Bilam's blindness. Not so Avraham Avinu. After his valiant efforts to rescind G-d's decree to destroy Sodom did not bear fruit, Avraham Avinu returns to pray. He returns to the very same spot where the previous prayer went unanswered. Perhaps the failure was mine, muses Avraham Avinu. Did I pray with enough *kavannah*? Was there sufficient depth and meaning to my words? Humility, the Mishnah teaches, allows for serious introspection. Can I do better next time? *Kevi'as makom*, establishing for oneself a place for prayer, refers to more than a physical seat in the synagogue. It represents a commitment to *tefillah* that states, "It is not the shul I attend or the spot I occupy that determines successful prayer. It is my ability to constantly dig deeper and sharpen my focus internally." Of such a person we can surely say, "What a humble man, what a pious man. He is a disciple of Avraham Avinu." Rabbi Aaron Gruman

Rabbi Gruman is rabbi of Congregation Toras Emes in East Windsor, New Jersey. OU Torah Insights Project

Parshat Chukas-Balak Rabbi Dr. Chaim Wakslak Young Israel of Long Beach, NY 12 Tammuz 5759 June 26, 1999 Daf Yomi: Beitza 31 (Presented in honor of the Chanukas HaBayis of the new Long Beach of NY

Mikvah)

Parshat Chukas-Balak serves as an introduction to the Three Weeks, which commence this week with the fast of the 17th of Tammuz and concludes with Tisha B'Av. It is during this time that we assess our current condition by reflecting upon the tragedies of the past while looking to the future with hope and anticipation. In the *Sefer Shemen HaTov* by Rabbi Bernard Weinberger, Rov of the Young Israel of Brooklyn, he relates hearing an interesting observation. The letter "kof" appears in each of the sedras of Korach, Chukas and Balak but shifts from the first position (Korach) to the second position (Chukas) to the last position (Balak). Rabbi Weinberger relates that although he did not understand the significance of this pattern, it was explained to him by a colleague (R' Shmelka Taubendfeld ZT"l) as they were driving home together from the funeral of HaRav Gedalia Schor ZT"l. The letter "kof" stands for kedusha - holiness. In Parshas Korach the kedusha was reflected in the past by virtue of Korach's Levite ancestry. In Parshat Chukas the kedusha is reflected in the present through the discussion of the purification process for the one that has been ritually defiled via contact with a corpse. In Parshat Balak the kedusha is reflected in the future for within Balak lies the seed of Ruth, the daughter of Eglon, the mother of Moshiach.

Parshat Chukas, which describes the procedure of the *parah adumah*, red heifer, reflects the importance that B'nei Yisroel place on potential. We find that whenever there is a loss or destruction of potential it is replaced by *tum'ah*, impurity. For example, when a woman becomes a *niddah* she is rendered *tameh* because the biological preparations for the sustenance of a fetus were not utilized. Similarly, when a man has a seminal emission he becomes *tameh* because the potential for procreation has not been actualized. However, the greatest and most devastating loss of potential is the death of a human being that can no longer perform *mitzvos* or serve HaShem. As a result it causes the strongest form of *tum'as mes* which requires the ashes of the red heifer to effectuate purification. This conceptualization of lost potential is reflected by the fact that we are specifically commanded to take a *parah adumah* upon whom a yoke had never been placed - the loss of potential to the extreme. It is further reflected in the fact that man stands above all other creations by virtue of his being a "medaber" - the power to speak which includes logic and reasoning. It is in this arena that he possesses his greatest potential. It, therefore, stands to reason that the *mitzvah* of *parah adumah* should be a "chok" which defies reasoning and logic for it is again consistent with the realization of the lost potential manifested by the *tum'as hames*. Many commentators have also recognized that the purification of the *tumas mes* through the ashes of the red heifer is distinct from the purification of all other types of *tumah*. In all other forms of ritual impurity the individual is exclusively in control of his own purification process, as he must simply immerse in the *mikvah* to be rendered pure. In contrast, *tumas mes* cannot be performed in isolation but it specifically requires that another individual sprinkle the water-ash mixture upon the ritually impure. This requirement may reflect that not only is there a lost potential for the departed individual but that the death of any given individual also reflects an extended loss of potential for those within his company and association. The deceased individual's strengths, talents and sphere of influence are lost forever to those with whom he would have come in contact.

In contrast, Parshas Balak introduces us to an archenemy of B'nei Yisroel, Bilam, and we come to realize the meaning of abandoned potential and a complete disregard for lack of fulfillment. The reality is that in uncharacteristic fashion, HaShem bestowed prophetic vision upon this unworthy individual in order to obviate any arguments by the nations of the world that they too would follow in the footsteps of G-d if they had a suitable prophet such as Moshe. All of the commentaries debate the exact nature of Bilam's prophecy. However, on the simplest level we are taught that "there never arose in Israel a prophet of the stature of Moshe" (*Devarim* 34). The implication being that in Israel there was never as great a prophet but amongst the nations of the world there was a prophet as great ... namely Bilam (*Sifrei*). Bilam, with this tremendous gift of divine vision, could have

used his powers to be a positive influence amongst the nations of the world. Instead, he abandoned his potential for greatness by abandoning the will of HaShem by first attempting to curse and then to entice the children of Israel towards sinful behavior.

It is interesting to note that there is always a repetition of history with the forces and competing factors constantly reappearing in different ways and forms. In the sedra of Balak we find three primary competing personalities, Moshe and B'nei Yisroel; Balak, the king of Moav; and Bilam, the prophet of the nations of the world. These three personalities find their antecedents in the time of Abraham when three brothers, the sons of Terach, are introduced, Haran, Nachor and Avraham. Avraham is the forbearer of Moshe and the children of Israel. Haran, who died at an early age left a son Lot whose incestuous relationship gave rise to the nation of Moav and its' favorite son, Balak. Nachor is the father of Laban who, Chachomim tell us, is actually Bilam (Targum Yonasan). The struggle of competing forces is once again being played out, many generations after Avrohom. (A similar notion is found in the story of Ruth and Arpah who choose very different paths only to have the consequences of the choices played out years later in the confrontation between David, the descendent of Ruth, and Goliath, the descendent of Arpah).

As we the people of Israel stand before the Three Weeks, we need to recognize that the repetition of history affords each generation a unique challenge and opportunity to bring about the redemption/geulah. But first we must value our potential and recognize that as good as galus, exile, may superficially appear it pales by comparison to what awaits us in the time of redemption.

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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Subject :weekly-halacha - Parshas Chukas - Blessings over Fruit
By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

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

A fig, or grape, or a pomegranate (19:5)

THE PROPER BLESSING OVER FRUIT DURING A MEAL While the laws governing the blessings over fruit are complex, they become even more so when fruits are eaten right before a meal, or during a meal as an appetizer or a dessert. There are many details and different views to consider on the subject, but we will attempt to review these halachos in as concise and organized a manner as possible. There is one basic rule to bear in mind: The blessing of ha-Motzi, recited over bread at the beginning of the meal, includes anything in the meal which is normally eaten with bread - even though it is not actually being eaten with bread at this particular moment. Meat, fish, eggs, vegetables, cheese, and other foods eaten to satisfy one's hunger are all foods normally eaten with bread, and are therefore included in the ha-Motzi blessing. Fruit, on the other hand, is not normally eaten with bread. It is eaten as a separate food within the meal and therefore requires its own blessing. This basic principle is agreed upon by practically all the early authorities and is recorded in the Shulchan Aruch. What remains unclear and in dispute is the exact classification of certain fruits - cooked or raw - which are eaten either as an appetizer or as a dessert. These can be classified either as aiding in the digestion of the meal, which would exempt them from a blessing, or as an independent part of the meal, which would require that a blessing be recited over them. In many cases the poskim differ and no clear consensus emerges. We must, however, establish some basic guidelines: Note: Although the ha-Motzi exempts all other foods which are normally eaten with bread, this holds true only if at least a k'zayis of bread (approximately 1 fl. oz.) is eaten within 3-4 minutes at one point during the meal. If a k'zayis is not eaten within that time span, each food eaten during the meal requires its own blessing. One must, therefore, decide at the

beginning of the meal if he is going to eat a k'zayis of bread or not(1).

FRUIT EATEN BEFORE THE MEAL: One who eats fruit before a meal and plans to eat fruit during the meal as well [a common occurrence on Rosh Hashanah night], should recite the proper blessing over the fruit before the meal begins, while intending to exempt the fruits which will be eaten later. No berachah acharonah is made over the fruits eaten before starting the meal - the Birkas ha-Mazon recited at the end of the meal includes them. If, however, one has no intention of eating fruit during the meal, then a berachah acharonah must be recited over the fruit eaten before the meal began. The Birkas ha-Mazon after the meal does not include that fruit(2), and a berachah acharonah will have to be recited over them even after Birkas ha-Mazon was said.

FRUITS EATEN DURING THE MEAL BUT BEFORE THE MAIN COURSE IS SERVED: Grapefruit - usually eaten to whet the appetite(3). The Rishonim differ as to whether or not such an appetizer is an intrinsic part of the meal, since it is served as an "introduction" to the meal. The commonly accepted practice is not to recite a blessing over fruits served as appetizers(4). The same applies to olives and pickles served before the actual meal. Cantaloupe - and other such fruits, e.g., fruit salad, honeydew. Contemporary poskim debate the halachah concerning these fruits. Some consider them appetizers just like grapefruit, which - according to our custom - exempts them from a blessing(5). Other poskim, however, consider these fruits as a first course of a meal. In their opinion, these fruits do not merely whet the appetite; they are full-fledged first courses. Since, as explained, fruits are not normally eaten with bread, the ha-Motzi blessing does not exempt them and a separate blessing is required(6). Thus the proper blessing remains questionable and problematic. It is recommended that one follow either of the following two methods: 1) Before washing, recite the proper blessing over a small piece [less than a k'zayis(7)] of fruit, then wash for the bread, and continue eating the fruit(8); 2) Eat the fruit while eating bread along with each bite of fruit(9).

DURING THE MEAL: Fruit soup - no blessing is recited(10). Cooked fruits as a side dish - no blessing is recited(11). Applesauce with a latke - no blessing is recited(12). Fruit eaten as the main course of the meal - most poskim hold that no blessing is required. Since there is a minority opinion that requires a blessing, it is best to eat a sizable amount of bread with the fruit before partaking of the fruit alone(13). Fruit-filled blintzes, etc. - no blessing is recited(14). Fruit eaten as a snack between courses - requires a blessing.

DESSERT: Raw fruit (apples, grapes, etc.) - the correct blessing is recited(15). Cooked fruit - there are conflicting views. Most poskim hold that a blessing should be recited(16), while a minority opinion holds that no blessing is recited(17). One who wants to avoid a questionable situation should eat cooked fruit only with bread(18) or recite a blessing over a raw fruit before eating the cooked fruit(19). Popcorn - the correct blessing (ha-adamah) is recited. Peanuts - the correct blessing (ha-adamah) is recited. Chocolate - the correct blessing (shehakol) is recited.

GENERAL RULE: No fruits eaten during a meal, whether a blessing was recited over them or not, require a berachah acharonah. The Birkas ha-Mazon will exempt them all(20).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:41. 2 With the exception of dates, which are covered by the Birkas ha-Mazon. 3 When the grapefruit is eaten for the sake of the grapefruit itself and is considered one of the courses at the meal (e.g., when a grapefruit is eaten on a diet), the blessing should be recited. 4 Mishnah Berurah 174:39; Aruch ha-Shulchan 174:12. One who would like to satisfy the other view should recite the blessing and eat part of the grapefruit before washing his hands. 5 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Vesain Berachah, pg. 93). 6 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesain Berachah, pg. 93); Ohr l'Tzayon 46:15. 7 Mishnah Berurah 174:37. See also 473:53. 8 Based on Mishnah Berurah 174:39 and 176:2 (Alef). 9 Based on Mishnah Berurah 177:8 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 13. 10 Be'ur Halachah 177:1; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 76). 11 Be'ur Halachah 177:1; Aruch ha-Shulchan 177:10. There is a minority view which requires a blessing, so it is better to eat the cooked fruit with bread or recite a blessing on raw fruit. 12 Ibid. 13 O.C. 177:3 and Be'ur Halachah. 14 Mishnah Berurah 177:10. 15 O.C. 177:1. 16 Mishnah Berurah 177:4; Chazon Ish (Dinim v'Hanhagos 6:7); Orchos Rabbeinu 66; Yalkut Yosef, pg. 196; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 78 and Vesain Berachah, pg. 87). 17 Several sources report that the Chafetz Chayim eventually changed his ruling and exempted cooked fruits served for dessert from a blessing; see Orchos Rabbeinu 66 and Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 78. Others dispute that the Chafetz Chayim changed his ruling. 18 Custom of the Brisker Rav (quoted in Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:177). 19 Harav A. Kotler (reported by several disciples); Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted

in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 78). 20 Mishnah Berurah 177:7.

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From: [torahweb\[SMTP:torahweb@torahweb.org\]](mailto:torahweb[SMTP:torahweb@torahweb.org]) To: weeklydvar Torah@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Sobolofsky - Parsha Balak
Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky To See and To Be Seen

The fascinating conversation between Bilaam and his donkey occurs after the donkey sees an angel that Bilaam can not. Angry at his donkey for not continuing on his way, Bilaam strikes his donkey. God grants the donkey the ability to speak and it immediately criticizes Bilaam for striking it three times.

When saying that Bilaam hit the donkey three times, the Torah uses the phrase "shalosh regalim" rather than the more popular phrase, "shalosh peanim". Rashi comments that there was a hidden message to Bilaam in the words of the donkey: How can you attempt to curse a nation that will celebrate the shalosh regalim (Passover, Shavuot, and Succot), that will visit the Beit Ha-Mikdash three times a year? Is this merely a play on words or is there a deeper message to be found in this interpretation of the donkey's rebuke?

Bilaam is described throughout the parsha as one who has the ability "to see". He boasts of his visions of prophecy and prides himself in his ability to see what others cannot. Yet, while he is able to witness exalted visions, he fails to understand that being able to glimpse the Divine is accompanied by an awesome responsibility. One who sees the Glory of God must live up to being carefully scrutinized by Him as well. Although Bilaam reached a high level of prophecy, his conduct in his personal life was abominable. Chazal teach us that Bilaam was involved in horrible acts of immorality and did not perceive his lifestyle to be contradictory to his unique status as a prophet.

The Jewish people were chosen to have a unique relationship with God. This closeness between God and His people peaked three times a year when each Jew visited the Beit Ha-Mikdash on the shalosh regalim. The mitzvah of visiting the Beit Ha-Mikdash is described by the Torah as "reiyah ba-azarah", appearing in the courtyard of the Beit Ha-Mikdash. The word "yeirah" which means to be seen is spelled the same as the word "yireh" which means to see. Based on the etymology of this word Chazal teach us that there are two parts of the mitzvah of coming to the Beit Ha-Mikdash. Each Jew comes to see God as well as to be seen by Him. One sees God by viewing the miracles that occurred in the Beit Ha-Mikdash which demonstrated His presence in the midst of the Jewish people. Upon coming to the Beit Ha-Mikdash and witnessing the Divine Presence a person's life must become transformed. He is being seen by God and must act accordingly.

The dual experiences that take place when a Jew visits the Beit Ha-Mikdash on the shalosh regalim are the antithesis of Bilaam's life experience. Bilaam had the ability to see what others could not, yet he refused to live a life worthy of being seen by God. One who doesn't achieve the standards set for one who "sees" ultimately loses that special gift. Bilaam was unable to see the angel that a donkey could. It is the donkey who rebukes Bilaam: How can you Bilaam dare to try to curse a nation that understands the secret of being seen by God?

May we soon be able to visit God in His Beit Ha-Mikdash, see His Presence, and elevate our lives so that we are worthy of being seen

From: Mordecai Kornfeld[SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il] Subject: Insights to the Daf: Beitzah 27-28 INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim daf@dafyomi.co.il, <http://www.dafyomi.co.il>

BEITZAH 26, 27, 28, 29 - dedicated by Yitzchak Gross of Brooklyn, NY, Iluy Nishmas his father, Menashe Yehudah ben Matsiyahu, and his mother, Dina bas Yisroel.

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Beitzah 28 TAKING SOMETHING WITHOUT PERMISSION QUESTION: Seven servings of fish were placed on the table in the house of Rabbi, and five of them ended up in the possession of Rabbi Chiya, while only two found themselves in the hands of Rabbi Shimon b'Rebbi. RASHI explains that Rabbi Chiya took five to his house without asking for explicit permission. Rabbi Shimon b'Rebbi was not upset that Rabbi Chiya took most of the fish, because he and Rabbi Chiya were friends.

TOSFOS in Bava Metzia (22a DH Mar Zutra, cited by the SHACH, Choshen Mishpat 358:1) writes that one is not allowed to take something from someone else without explicit permission, even when he knows that the other person will not mind. (It is considered like "Yi'ush she'Lo mi'Da'as," which is not considered Yi'ush.) If so, why was Rabbi Chiya permitted to take the five fish without permission? (TAL TORAH)

ANSWERS: (a) The TAL TORAH suggests that this Gemara supports the view of the SHACH (ibid.) who argues with the Tosfos and the other Rishonim who rule as he does, and says that this case is not similar to "Yi'ush she'Lo mi'Da'as." The Shach says that if one knows that another person does not mind, then one may take his belongings without asking for permission.

(b) RASHI implies only that Rabbi did not specifically give the fish to Rabbi Chiya. However, Rabbi might have left the fish in a place where he normally left things for any of the Talmidim to take. As such, Rabbi Chiya had permission to take it from Rabbi even though Rabbi did not specifically give it to *him*, because he was one of the Talmidim.

From: Mordecai Kornfeld[SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il] To: Kollel Iyun Hadaf's Dafyomi discussion group Subject: Beitzah 015b: Why are there scholarships for Talmud Torah THE DAFYOMI DISCUSSION LIST brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim Rosh Kollel: Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld daf@dafyomi.co.il

Beitzah 015b: Why are there scholarships for Talmud Torah
<LK115@aol.com> asked: why would yeshivos grant scholarships for parents who can not pay full tuition if HaShem repays the full amount spent? The Kollel replied: Good question, There seem to be several approaches that we could suggest. (1) The Gemara says that Hashem repays the full amount borrowed in order to send one's child to learn, but it is still very uncomfortable to have to borrow the money in the first place. And then there are those who do not have the option to borrow (for instance, if they've already received a mortgage for their house, and nobody will lend them any more money) -- as Tosfos (15b, DH Levu Alai) mentions. A scholar offers them a way to avoid the shame of having to beg for money in order to send their children to learn Torah. By the way, even when the scholarship is granted someone may still be repaid. When the Gemara says that one who spends money for Talmud Torah will be repaid, it can also be referring to someone other than the parent. That is, the benefactor who contributes money to the scholarship fund will be repaid for that contribution! Even though the Gemara mentions that it is for "his sons," the Gemara in Sanhedrin (19b) says that anyone who teaches Torah to his friend's sons (and so, too, one who enables his friend's sons to learn Torah by financing their education) is considered to be their father.

(2) The religious schools may feel it is their responsibility to attract even those parents whose Emunah in the words of Chazal is somewhat lacking, and who will not borrow money based on this Gemara's promise that the money will be returned. Of course, if that is the case then the believing parent should not accept a scholarship, so that it may be granted to one who is less believing than he.

(3) Perhaps the schools are offering the scholarships in their own interests; they don't want parents to send their children to the competition (perhaps because they feel that their own school will do a better job), so they offer scholarships as incentives.

Do you have any other suggestions? Be well, -The Kollel
David Twersky <TwerskyD@aol.com> answers: It would seem to me that the scholarships -- and in turn the tuition -- are not for the price of teaching Torah. One is not allowed to charge for teaching Torah (mah Ani b'chinom...). Perhaps whatever the Yeshivos are allowed to charge tuition for is not covered by the guarantee of Beitzah 15b -- and hence scholarships are granted for those costs. David Twersky Seattle, Washington

The Kollel comments: Yasher Kochach! (But I wonder what costs the Gemara was referring to when it gave its coverage -- illegitimate costs?)

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