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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON CHUKAS BALAK - 5783

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Fw From Hamelaket@gmail.com
from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to:
ravfrand@torah.org date: Jun 29, 2023, 9:20 AM subject: Rav
Frاند - Two Interpretations of Why Bilaam Could Not Curse
("Mah Ekov Lo Kabo Kel")

Rabbi Yissocher Frand Parshas Balak Two Interpretations of
Why Bilaam Could Not Curse ("Mah Ekov Lo Kabo Kel")
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of
Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the
weekly portion: ##1300 – Having Coffee in Starbucks: Is It
Mutar? Good Shabbos!

Balak hired Bilaam to curse the Jews. However, as much as
Bilaam tried, he just could not get the curses to come out of his
mouth. The pasuk says: "And Hashem placed words into the
mouth of Bilaam and He said 'return to Balak and thus you
shall say'". (Bamidbar 23:5) Bilaam indeed tells Balak what he
does not want to hear: "...From Aram, Balak, king of Moav
led me, from the mountains of the east, 'Come invoke curse
upon Yaakov for me, come bring anger upon Israel.' How can
I curse? G-d has not cursed. How can I anger, when Hashem
has not been angry?" (Bamidbar 23:7-8) Rashi writes
regarding the words "Mah Ekov Lo Kabo Kel" (How can I
curse? G-d has not cursed): Even when the Jews were

deserving Divine curses, we see that they couldn't be cursed.
Rashi cites three examples of this: (1) On Yaakov Avinu's
deathbed, when he addressed Shimon and Levi, telling them
that in their anger they killed someone, he only cursed their
anger – Arur Apam ki oz – (Bereshis 49:7) but he did not curse
them; (2) When Yaakov went to Yitzchak, trying to deceive
his father and deceitfully take the blessing intended for his
brother, he was himself worthy of being cursed. Nevertheless,
Yitzchak could not do so. "He too will be blessed." (Bereshis
27:33); (3) By Har Gerizim and Har Eival, the pasuk says
"these will stand to bless the people" (Devorim 27:12) in
connection with the recitations on Har Gerizim, but does not
use the parallel "these will stand to curse the people" when
talking about the recitations on Har Eival. Rashi explains
Bilaam's statement "How can I curse? G-d has not cursed" to
mean that this is not a curse-able people, even when it seems
that they should be cursed. The Kli Yakar however, has a
different interpretation. He interprets Bilaam's words: "How
can I curse the Jewish people who never curse G-d." (In other
words, the Jews are the subject rather than the object in the
expression "Lo Kabo Kel"). The Kli Yakar says that when
troubles befall the nations of the world, they curse their gods.
"Why are you doing this to me? This is not fair!" But even if
the Almighty comes upon Bnei Yisroel with strength and with
fierce attack – as indicated by the Divine Name 'Kel'
(indicating Hashem's attribute of justice) – and they suffer,
nevertheless they do not curse Him, but on the contrary, they
bless Him even upon receiving bad tidings. (They say 'Baruch
Dayan haEmes'.) Betting the Ranch on the Divine Promise In
the famous story of Bilaam riding his donkey to Moav, the
pasuk says, "And Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey,
and the donkey asked Bilaam 'What have I done to you that
you have smitten me three times (shalosh regalim)?"
(Bamidbar 22:28) This last expression jumps out at us because
the more conventional way to express 'three times' is 'shalosh
pe'amim'. What is meant by 'shalosh regalim'? Rashi says the
allusion here is that the donkey (so to speak) is critiquing
Bilaam for attempting to wipe out a nation who celebrates the
three annual pilgrimage festivals (known as 'regalim'). There
are 613 mitzvos in the Torah, including 248 positive
commands. If I would issue a challenge: Name the top three or
top five mitzvos that grant Klal Yisrael the greatest source of
merit and protection, I doubt anyone would suggest that the
fact they ascend three times a year to Yerushalayim
(Jerusalem) would make this list. It does not seem like this is
the hardest mitzvah to fulfill. And yet, it seems that this is the
zechus for which Bilaam's curse should not have an effect.
This Rashi demands explanation. The other strange thing about
this is a pasuk later on in the parsha: "For there is no nachash
(divination) in Yaakov and no kesem (sorcery) in Yisroel.
(There will be another time) like this time (when) it will be
said to Yaakov and Yisroel: 'What has G-d done?'" (Bamidbar

23:23) Rashi interjects: They are worthy of blessing because there is not to be found among them diviners or sorcerers. Bilaam was a sorcerer who based himself on the stars and times, etc. The Jews don't believe in any of that. This is difficult to understand for two reasons. First, Rashi says in the beginning of the parsha that the merit of Klal Yisrael was the three pilgrimage festivals. However, Rashi now says that their merit is that they have no sorcerers amongst them. Secondly, the same question exists – is this indeed the greatest merit of Klal Yisrael that they do not have in their midst diviners and sorcerers? The Ateres Dudaim (from the Rosh Kollal in Chicago) quotes a beautiful vort from Rav Yaakov Yosef (1840-1902, the first and only Chief Rabbi of New York City). The pasuk says in Shir HaShirim (7:2) “Mah yafu p'amayich b'nealim bas nadiv...” (How beautiful are your steps with shoes Klal Yisrael...) (Bas Nadiv refers to Klal Yisrael.) The Gemara (Chagiga 3a) says that this pasuk in Shir HaShirim is saying “How beautiful are the footsteps of the Jewish people at the time they ascend to the Beis Hamikdash three times a year for the pilgrimage holidays.” Consider the following: The Beis HaMikdash should be speedily rebuilt in our day and we will all ascend to Yerushalayim for the regalim. We will climb up to the Har HaBayis (Temple Mount). Are we going to be wearing shoes? No! The Gemara says explicitly (Berachos 62b) that a person may not enter the Har Habayis with his walking stick or with shoes. So how can the pasuk in Shir HaShirim that says “Mah Yafu p'amayich b'nealim...” – How beautiful are your steps wearing shoes... – be referring to Aliyah l'regel? Rav Yaakov Yosef gives a beautiful interpretation: This is not referring to once they are already in Yerushalayim. Rather, this pasuk in Shir HaShirim is praising the trip up from wherever they lived to the Har HaBayis. The trip up to the Har HaBayis was an act of tremendous faith. As the Torah itself mentions, the Jews left the borders open when everyone travelled up to Yerushalayim for the Yom Tov. Men, women, and children all ascended. Who is home watching the ranch? It is open season. If the enemy knows everyone is in Yerushalayim, they can just walk in and have a field day. Yet the Torah says: Don't worry. “No man will covet your land.” (Shemos 34:24) We have a Divine guarantee: You go up and no one will want your land. No person will come in, because that is what it says in the Torah. If we wonder if going up to Yerushalayim is really such a big mitzvah, the answer is that it is an incredible act of faith. I leave everything behind, open, unguarded – all on the basis of a pasuk in Chumash, a promise from G-d: “No man will covet your land.” The praise “How beautiful are your footsteps” is not referring to walking on the Har HaBayis. When I am on the Har HaBayis, I feel the Divine Presence. That is not a matter of faith. A person can intensely feel the holiness there. The pasuk in Shir HaShirim is praising the long and arduous travel from Dan or from Be'er Sheva to Yerushalayim. That is the amazing praiseworthy attribute of

Klal Yisrael: How beautiful are your steps IN SHOES, Bas Nadiv. You, Klal Yisrael, are walking with your shoes up to Yerushalayim. That is a source of great merit. It is an act of great faith to confidently leave all your possessions at home, unguarded for days on end, relying on the Torah's Divine promise. I literally and figuratively “bet the ranch” on Hashem's promise. I leave no one watching the ranch. Now we can understand the donkey's exclamation to Bilaam: You want to uproot the nation that goes up to Yerushalayim for Shalosh Regalim? Shalosh Regalim is all about Emunah. Now we also understand the pasuk “There is no Nachash in Yaakov or Kesem in Yisroel.” Rashi explains that their merit is that they don't believe in sorcerers. The reason they don't believe in sorcerers is because they believe in the Ribono shel Olam. As Rashi quotes (Devarim 18:13) “Tamim tiheyeh im Hashem Elokecha.” Just believe in the Ribono shel Olam. Don't ask any questions. “How is it going to happen?” Don't worry! The Ribono shel Olam says so, you can believe it. We should not try to figure out the future. A person only tries to figure out the future because he has doubts as to what will be in the future. The true believer that the Almighty is really in charge does not need to consult sorcerers and diviners or any such people to discern what will happen in the future. Therefore, these two things: The Shalosh Regalim and “Lo Nachash b'Yaakov” are really one and the same. They are both about Emunah. The message to Bilaam the sorcerer is that you will never be able to curse a nation that believes and puts their faith in the Ribono shel Olam. You will never be able to lay a finger on them because they are believers, as we see by the Shalosh Regalim and from the fact that there are no sorcerers in Yisroel!

from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org> date: Jun 29, 2023, 6:01 PM subject: **Tidbits for Parashas Chukas - Balak**
 Shiva Asar B'Tamuz The fast of Shiva Asar B'Tamuz is next Thursday, July 6th. Five tragedies occurred on Shiva Asar B'Tamuz: 1) The first Luchos were broken, 2) In the waning days of the First Bais Hamikdash, the daily tamid offering ceased being brought, 3) In the waning days of the Second Bais Hamikdash, the walls of Yerushalayim were breached, ultimately leading to its destruction, 4) Apostimos burned a Sefer Torah, and 5) An avodah zarah was placed in the Bais Hamikdash.

During chazaras hashatz of Shacharis, the sheliach tzibbur adds Aneinu as a stand-alone berachah (between Go'el Yisrael and Refa'einu). Selichos, Avinu Malkeinu, Tachanun, and Kerias haTorah follow chazaras hashatz. Tefillas Minchah includes Kerias haTorah with the haftarah of Dirshu Hashem. Those fasting add Aneinu (as part of Shema Koleinu). Bircas Kohanim is recited in chazaras hashatz. Even Nusach Ashkenaz says Sim Shalom (instead of Shalom Rav). Chazaras hashatz is followed by Avinu Malkeinu.

The Three Weeks The Y'mei Bein Hametzarim, the Three Weeks, begin at shekiya (sunset) on Wednesday evening, July 5th. The Three Weeks between the 17th of Tamuz and the 9th of Av, is a national period of mourning over the Churban of both Batei Mikdash. One should give focus to the churban and galus during this period. Activities restricted during this period include:

Music and Dancing: Children of chinuch age are included. Many poskim are lenient when the music is secondary in nature (e.g. background music on a story CD) or when the listening is not for enjoyment (e.g. to help one stay awake while driving). Many poskim are stringent regarding acappella "sefirah music". Playing and practicing music are permitted for the purpose of earning a livelihood (e.g. professional musician). Playing music to develop one's skill is a matter of dispute amongst the poskim. **Haircuts and Shaving:** Men, women and children are included in the prohibition. In cases of discomfort many permit women to tweeze and remove hair from areas other than the head. One should consult with a Rav in regards to a father, sandek and mohel at a bris, and in regard to an avel who finishes the sheloshim mourning period during this time. **Weddings:** Weddings are not held during this period. An engagement may be celebrated, although without dancing or music. A Sheva Berachos may be held without music, although dancing (and singing) is permitted. **Shehecheyanu:** We avoid situations that would necessitate reciting the berachah of shehecheyanu (e.g. eating new fruits, etc.). **Miscellaneous:** One should consult with a Rav regarding signing a contract on a new home, moving into a new home, house decorating and elective surgery.

Reminders

Eretz Yisrael will lein only Parashas Balak this week, having previously leined Parashas Chukas last week. From this point onward, Eretz Yisrael and Chutz La'aretz will be on the same schedule.

The final opportunity for Kiddush Levana is late Sunday night, July 2nd at 3:37 AM EDT (Monday morning).

Pirkei Avos: Chapter 5.

Daf Yomi - Friday: Bavli: Gittin 45 • Yerushalmi: Demai 62 • Mishnah Yomis: Succah 2:2-3.

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rabbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

Summary

CHUKAS: Laws of the Parah Adumah • Miriam dies, the be'er (well) stops producing water, and the people complain • Moshe and Aharon are told to bring water by speaking to the rock; Moshe eventually hits the rock instead • Moshe and Aharon are told of the punishment for their sin • Bnei Yisrael ask for passage through Edom and are rebuffed • Aharon passes away at Har Hahar • The Canaanites (really Amaleik) attack and are defeated at Chorma • The people complain about the Mon and

are attacked by snakes • The 'healing' copper snake • The great miracle of Nachal Arnon • Shiras Habe'er • The defeats of Sichon and Og

BALAK: Balak sends messengers to Bilaam • Bilaam refuses to come • Balak sends more distinguished messengers, Bilaam again refuses • Hashem appears to Bilaam and 'permits' him to go • An angel deters his donkey three times • After striking his donkey, the donkey speaks and Bilaam is forced to admit that he wronged her • Bilaam tells Balak that he will speak only that which Hashem will put in his mouth • Bilaam and Balak prepare sacrifices three times • Bilaam blesses the Bnei Yisrael three times • An angry Balak sends Bilaam on his way • Bilaam predicts future events • Bnei Yisrael sin with the daughters of Moav • 24,000 perish in a plague • The plague ceases when Pinchas kills Zimri and Kozbi

Haftarah: The haftarah of Parashas Balak is leined. Michah (5:6-6:8) encourages Klal Yisrael to remember Hashem's many great chasadim, among them that He prevented Bilaam from cursing them.

Taryag Weekly

Parashas Chukas: 87 Pesukim • 3 Obligations

1) Kohanim should oversee the preparation of the ashes of the parah adumah. 2) Observe the laws of tumas meis. 3) A Kohen shall purify someone who is tamei using the ashes of the parah adumah.

Mitzvah Highlight: Zos Chukas HaTorah - Parah adumah is the prime example of a mitzvah (chok) that we perform solely to fulfill Hashem's command, even though we do not understand it.

Parashas Balak: 104 Pesukim • No Mitzvos Listed

For the Shabbos Table

“וַיִּךְ אֶת-הַסֵּלַע בְּמַטְּהוֹ... וַיַּעַן לֹא-הֵאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי לְהַקְדִּי אֲשֶׁנִּי” “And he hit the rock with his stick...because you had not trusted in Me to sanctify Me” (Bamidbar 20:10-11)

Moshe Rabbeinu performed a great miracle of bringing forth water from the rock. However, Moshe was punished and barred from entering Eretz Yisrael because he hit the rock instead of speaking to it. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l states that this was a neis no matter what means was used to bring forth this supernatural occurrence. What was lacking by Moshe's failure to speak to the rock?

Rav Moshe explains that this event was intended to demonstrate the importance of delivering words of instruction even to one who may not be able to fully grasp the concept. For example, a young child who appears to a parent as not quite ready to understand a certain message. Hashem demonstrated that just as a Divine message can penetrate even a rock and compel it to serve Hashem, we must speak to and be mechaneich even someone with limited understanding, as eventually the lessons will penetrate.

from: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>
date: Jun 30, 2023, 1:10 AM subject: **Rabbi Reisman's
Weekly Chumash Shiur**

Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Chukas - Balak 5783

1 – Topic – Preparing to go to Eretz Yisrael and leaving
behind Chutz L'aretz

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Chukas – Balak catching
up so to speak to Eretz Yisrael. Speaking of Eretz Yisrael, I
was in Eretz Yisrael at the beginning of the week and I would
like to share with you a brief thought. In the Aderes Eliyahu,
the GR”A in Parshas Eikev 8:1, the Gaon writes (ולביאת הארץ)
(צריך ג' דברים) that to come to Eretz Yisrael you need three
things. 1) The first thing you need is that you have to prepare
yourself to leave Chutz L'aretz. (2. (א' הכנה לצאת מה"ל). You
have to know the road which you are traveling. (ב' הדרך אשר
3. (ג' הביאה לא"י). You have to come to Eretz Yisrael. (ילך). So
you have leaving, traveling and coming.

It is not really so. All you need is 2 and 3. You need a road to
go and you need to arrive in Eretz Yisrael. If you have a road
to go Mimeila you are leaving Chutz L'aretz. What does it
mean # 1 that you need a Hachana La'tzeis L'chutz L'aretz?
The GR”A here is Megaleh to us a Sod. He is telling us the
secret of being Matzlaich in a trip to Eretz Yisrael. There are
some who come to Eretz Yisrael and they never left Chutz
L'aretz, they are taking Chutz L'aretz along with them. Do me
a favor, leave it behind. You want to be able to come and be
Nichnas L'erezt Yisrael, then you need # 1 Hachana Latzeis
Chutz L'aretz. You got to understand that you are leaving
Chutz L'aretz and you are going out of Chutz L'aretz.

I came to Ohr Sameach this week and I met somebody who I
met for the first time last summer. Yoel from Norway. He had
just come and I met him with his father and they had a
Shabbos Seuda together with us. I asked his father to please
tell us what brought him and his son here. He said essentially
that he wants his son to know something about Judaism.
Therefore, he came with him there. A wonderful young man.
Yoel was in the Mechina, the beginners program and made his
first Siyum this week on Maseches Megillah and he is moving
up to the Beis Medrash program. A one year jumping up to the
regular Beis Medrash program. It is just absolutely incredible.
Incredible what the Ruach of Eretz Yisrael could do. Why did
he go to Eretz Yisrael? To know something about Judaism. We
think we know all that there is to know about Yiddishkeit. We
have much to learn. If we left Chutz L'aretz to go to Eretz
Yisrael to know more about Yiddishkeit then we would do
very well.

It is said that Rav Hutner once observed a Beis Medrash of
Bochurim learning on Shavuos. He admired them. He
commented to somebody, their faces are towards Har Sinai just
like by Mattan Torah. I am just not sure if their backs are to the
rest of the world. You need two things. You have to face Har

Sinai and you have to have your back towards the rest of the
world.

Yaakov when he left Lavan's house he said, as is found in
Rashi to Beraishis 32:5 (עם לבן גרתי ותרני"ג מצות שמרתי), that he
kept (or at least learned about) all 613 Mitzvos. (ולא למדתי
(ממעשיו הרעים) I didn't learn from his evil deeds. Ribbono Shel
Olam! Once you say (תרני"ג מצות שמרתי) that he kept every
single Mitzvah, what do you have to add (ולא למדתי ממעשיו
(הרעים)? You see from here that for some people it is not a
contradiction. You can do everything good and still have
yourself totally in Chutz L'aretz, totally in Beis Lavan. Get
involved in the pleasures and the overindulgences of Chutz
L'aretz.

When we go into a Sukkah we say a beautiful Tefillah. It says
(ובזכות צאתי מביתי החוצה ונרדף מצותיך ארוצה). We ask for a Zechus
for the fact that we go out of the house. Really the Ikkur is the
Zechus that we go into the Sukkah and not so much that we go
out of the house. No! Some people go into the Sukkah without
leaving their normal homes. They don't leave it at all. They are
sitting in their homes just now there is Schach on top of them.
It is the same thing with going to Eretz Yisrael. What a waste.
People go to Eretz Yisrael and they bring Chutz L'aretz with
them. They bring everything with them. They were once Bnei
Torah and now they are working people. They go to Eretz
Yisrael, you would think they would come to Eretz Yisrael that
you should dress like Bnei Torah, you should talk and walk
like Bnei Torah. Your interests should be in jeeping? That is
why you go to Eretz Yisrael to go jeeping? Imagine, someone
comes into a Beis Medrash and he is sitting in the Beis
Medrash and what is he doing in the Beis Medrash? He has the
ingredients and he is making himself some fancy desert sitting
in middle of the Beis Medrash. Nothing Treif, it is a Kosher
desert. In middle of the Beis Medrash? That is what you do,
you go jeeping in middle of the Ribbono Shel Olam's Eretz
Yisrael? Rachmana Litzlon! It is not what Eretz Yisrael is for.

2 – Topic – The Chida's message about Tumah

In Parshas Chukas we learn of course about the Parah Aduma.
There is an incredible Chida in Nachal Kiddumim on Koheles
Perek Zayin. The Chida says Si'ba, the reason, She'ainenu
B'madreigas Hatorah, that we are not on the same Madreiga of
Torah is because Ain Lanu Parah Adumah, it is because we are
Tamei. Tamei is not just a ritual Tumah, something that is a
side Halacha. It affects the person. A person who is Tamei is
not the same as a person who is Tahor. His heart is not opened
the same way for Limud Hatorah. He says that that is why the
Posuk in Tehillim 12:7 says (אמרות ירנר, אמרות טהרות). (אמרות
(יְרֹר) when are the Imros Hashem fully Imros Hashem? It is
when they are Tehoros. When people are saying it in a
Tahor'dika Oifen. That is what is says in the Chida. We have
to realize, that Inyanei Tumah are not just a side Halacha of
Tumah, they are B'etzem Devarim that are Tamei because they
are Tamei.

The Rambam writes in the end of Hilchos Mikvaos 11:12 that (הטבילה תלוי בכוונת הלב). Tovelng to become Tahor is Talui in the Kavana of the heart. (ולפיכך אמרו חכמים טבל ולא הוזהקו כאילו) (לא טבל). You have to be thinking when you are Tovelng. That means becoming Tahor is more than just a ritual thing. It is something which has to do with the person himself. Which has to do with the person who is Tovelng and he is doing it for a reason to be an Ish Tahor.

Now we understand why Ezra was Misakein that even though today we are not Tahor and we can't eat Terumah and we can't Challah even if we are Kohanim, we can't go in the Beis Hamikdash. So if you are a Baal Keri and you have a certain type of Tumah, why go to the Mikvah, you are Tamei Meis anyway so it is not going to help you for other things?

The answer is because Tumah is something that affects the person. Tumah is something that is B'etzem. It is a Shod that people are not careful in Tevillas Ezra. Many people are careful, more people should be. To be careful to Tovel Tevillas Ezra. When someone is a Baal Keri to go to the Mikvah.

Rav Pam did not go to the Mikvah necessarily on Erev Shabbos. He didn't have a Minhag to go. He was a Litvishe. But Tevillas Ezra he told me he was always Zahir in.

It is very similar, there was a Chashuve Yid who had the Zechus of driving Rav Moshe to Shul every morning. His son was learning in Torah Vodaath and somebody asked his son does Rav Moshe go to the Mikvah before Shacharis? It is a funny thing, he goes Sundays and he doesn't go Fridays. He couldn't understand why. This is because Onah of a Talmid Chochom is Erev Shabbos to Erev Shabbos so Tevillas Ezra came up to him on Sunday. That is the important idea that we need to understand.

3 – Topic – A beautiful Maharal at the end of Parshas Chukas I want to mention to you the last Rashi in Chukas. He brings there the Medrash about Sichon Melech Og who picked up a mountain to throw it on Klal Yisrael and a worm made a hole in the mountain and it fell over his head and became like a necklace and he wanted to pull it off and his teeth grew long and it got stuck in the mountain and he couldn't pull it off. An incredible Medrash. It is a Gemara in Berachos Nun Daled and Rashi alludes to it and tells you to look it up in the last Rashi in the Parsha 21:35 (וַיִּכְנֹחַ אֶת־וּ).
I mention it because of the Maharal. There is a long Maharal on that last Rashi. That one Maharal is probably as long as all of the Maharals on the whole Parshas Chukas or nearly as long. I told you many times that there is a Machlokes Maharsha and Maharal. The Maharal Teitches Aggadata Gemaras B'derech Mashul and not literally. Maharsha says Ain Medrash Yotzei Midei Peshuto generally. There are some exceptions but generally. But the Maharal he Teitches it B'derech Remez.

There is a beautiful Maharal at the end of the Parsha and if you want to see it in the Gur Aryeh which just shows you the She'efes HaMaharal that I have mentioned on other occasions. And so, three thoughts. 1) Preparing to go to Eretz Yisrael and leaving behind Chutz L'aretz. When you go into a Shul you have to leave behind Chutz L'aretz. I wish people would use the lockers and leave their phones and especially their smartphones behind. 2) The Chida's message about Tumah. Tumah Biz'man Hazei is also M'akeiv a person's understanding of Torah. 3) This last Nekudah of the beautiful Maharal at the end of the Parsha. With that I want to wish everyone an absolutely wonderful Shabbos Kodesh!

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> date: Jun 29, 2023, 7:39 PM subject: Rabbi Daniel Stein - Partners in Chinuch

Rabbi Daniel Stein Partners in Chinuch

In a stifled attempt to curse the Jewish people, Bilam was compelled instead to confer blessings upon them, He begrudgingly acknowledged their admirable tents and dwellings, when he proclaimed, "How good are your tents, Yaakov, your dwelling places, Yisrael" (Bamidbar 24:5). In one place (Sanhedrin 105b), Chazal interpret the "tents" and "dwellings" as a reference to the beis hamedrash and beis haknesses. The Gemara states, "from the blessing of Bilam, you can ascertain what was in his heart, for Hashem transformed the curses that he planned into blessings. He intended to say that they should not have synagogues and study halls, and he said instead, 'How good are your tents, Yaakov' - a blessing on their synagogues ... He sought to say that the kingdom of Yisrael would not continue, and he said instead that it would continue." Bilam deliberately targeted the communal citadels of Torah and tefillah because he rightly understood that these institutional pillars are essential to the prospect of Jewish continuity.

However, on another occasion (Bava Basra 60a), Chazal attribute Bilam's coerced admiration of the Jewish "tents" and "dwellings" to their individual homes, whose entrance was obscured and uniquely designed in order to avoid attention and maximize privacy. Are these two perspectives proposed by Chazal at odds or perhaps related?

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Drash Moshe) suggests that Bilam sought to undermine the bedrock of Jewish survival by severing the connection between the Jewish home and the formal educational establishment, represented by the study hall and synagogue. Bilam maliciously accentuated the intensity and beauty of the Jewish home in an attempt to render the communal infrastructure superfluous. In thwarting this assault against the academy, and converting Bilam's aggression against the study hall and synagogue into a resentful approbation, Hashem was teaching that successful and lasting

chinuch demands a partnership between the home and the school. The individual Jewish home and the communal institutions of Torah learning are synonymous in the eyes of Chazal, because only when the two loci of education are aligned and operating in unison can Jewish continuity be ensured.

Similarly, prior to descending to Egypt, Yaakov dispatched Yehudah to prepare for their arrival in Goshen (Breishis 46:28). The Medrash offers two versions of the specific instructions given to Yehudah. Either he was charged with securing a neighborhood of private homes for domestic dwelling, or alternatively, he was tasked with consecrating a central location for communal learning and teaching Torah. Rav Mordechai Gifter (Pirkei Torah) proposes that these two objectives are in fact intertwined. Proper chinuch, which is the backbone of the community, requires that every individual home echo and reinforce the messages articulated by its educational system. The home must be a satellite and reflection of the house of study, as the Mishnah (Avos 1:4) advises, "your house should be a meeting place for the sages," and therefore, the obligation to establish one is dependent and bound up with the other.

Learning and teaching Torah, should not be an activity that is reserved for the beis hamedrash or local yeshiva. Rather the voice of Torah, and all that it implies, must reverberate in every Jewish home. The lasting impression created by regular Torah study in the home is irreplaceable and indispensable. All too often, we have grown accustomed to delegating and outsourcing critical aspects of chinuch to our communal institutions. Sometimes, we rely on the yeshivos to teach certain values and set difficult boundaries without taking the responsibility to embody and instill those same standards ourselves. Let us take the opportunity during the summer, when many children are not in school, to dispel any dissonance in the education of our precious children, because it is only through working in tandem with our yeshivos that we can safeguard the Jewish future.

From: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>
OU Torah תורת חיים: Torah as a Way of Life Chukas Three
Lessons from Mei Meriva

By **Rabbi Moshe Hauer**

There is an enormous amount of debate and commentary regarding the incident recorded in our Parsha that resulted in Moshe and Aaron being prevented from entering Eretz Yisrael, the story of the Mei Merivah, the Waters of Strife. Rambam's commentary – presented in the fourth chapter of his Shemona Perakim - focuses on the negative consequences of Moshe's display of anger. Every aspect of his commentary is richly instructive.

First, Moshe's demonstration of anger was a grievous failure of character given who he was. A lapse of this kind for

someone of Moshe's caliber – whose every action was watched and learned from as the standard which others sought to emulate – served, in Rambam's words, as a Chilul Hashem, a desecration of G-d's name, as defined by the Talmud (Yoma 86a) and codified in the Rambam's Mishneh Torah (Yesodei Hatorah 5:11):

“There are other things included in Chilul Hashem, although they are not of themselves either among the mandatory or prohibitive commandments, for example, when a great man, famed for his learning and piety, will do something that the public will suspect him of, even though such deeds are not transgressions, yet he has committed a Chilul Hashem. For example: if he makes a purchase and does not pay for it at once although he has the money and the vendors are claiming it and he delays them; or if he indulges in frivolity, or eats and drinks with and among the ignorant, or if his speech with his fellow men is not polite, or if he does not receive them pleasantly, but acts as one looking for strife and shows anger. In such and like matters, all measured by the standard of the greatness of such scholar, he must take particular care, and act exceedingly better than the law requires.”

Second, as Rambam notes, G-d was not in fact angry with the Jewish people. Yes, when we were thirsty we became cranky and complained, but G-d did not indicate any real anger or frustration in response; He simply told Moshe to give us what we had asked for. Clearly, G-d understood that we truly needed water, and as the need was real and the request was reasonable G-d did not take us to task for expressing it in an irritating or obnoxious manner.

This is profoundly instructive. We often field complaints. Our response to those complaints should consider the issue itself more than the way it is expressed. And while when we are the ones doing the complaining we must take care to express ourselves carefully and respectfully, when we are on the receiving end, we should only focus on the issue raised rather than the way it is raised.

Finally, G-d describes Moshe as “merisem pi,” which Rambam renders as altering G-d's word and message. Given Moshe's stature, the Jewish people – who were themselves mature and spiritually sophisticated - assumed that whatever he expressed to them was an accurate reflection of G-d's feelings towards them. If Moshe displayed anger to the people, they assumed that it was because G-d was angry with them, when in fact in this case – as noted above - He was not. As such Moshe was misrepresenting G-d to His people.

The ramifications of this are exceptionally profound and practical as they are reenacted constantly in religious life. Any one of us – rabbi or rebbetzin, educator or parent - who stands as a religious figure or as one who encourages faith within his or her family, is seen to represent G-d. When we project love and encouragement, that is the way those around us visualize G-d. And if we instead project fury and frustration, that too is

attributed to G-d. We must represent G-d accurately, and we can only do that by doing our best to reflect His qualities – His attributes of mercy – to all for whom we serve as His representatives.

Each of these elements of Rambam’s understanding of the story is a profound lesson unto itself, guiding us towards greater personal refinement and worthiness as G-d’s representatives to those around us.

Previous Rabbi Moshe Hauer Rabbi Moshe Hauer joined the Orthodox Union (OU) as its Executive Vice President on May 1, 2020. In this role he serves as the organization’s rabbinic leader, heading its communal-oriented efforts and serving as its professional religious/policy leader and primary spokesman.

Prior to joining the OU, Rabbi Hauer served as the senior Rabbi of the Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation in Baltimore, MD for 26 years, where he was a active in local communal leadership in many areas, with an emphasis on education, children-at-risk, and social service organizations serving the Jewish community. Rabbi Hauer is an active teacher of Torah who led a leadership training program for rabbis and communal leaders, and was a founding editor of the online journal Klal Perspectives. Rabbi Hauer received his rabbinic ordination and doctor of Talmudic law from Ner Israel. He received his master’s of science from John Hopkins University.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com www.matzav.com or
www.torah.org/learning/drasha Parsha Parables By Rabbi
Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Balak When you are hit in the face, it is hard to help but notice. Unless, of course, you wear your ego as a face-guard. This week, the gentile prophet Bilaam, a man whom our sages say had prophetic vision equal to if not greater than Moshe, is hired by the Nation of Moav to curse the Jewish Nation. At first he is reluctant. Upon hearing the tremendous reward of storehouses filled with gold and silver, however, he acquiesces and sets out on his dastardly mission. Then a miracle occurs. An angel, who is seen only by Billam’s donkey, blocks the path. His ordinarily faithful she-donkey tries to squeeze by the Angel and inadvertently presses Bilaam’s foot against the wall. During this time, Bilaam, unaware of the metaphysical circumstances that brought about the shift in his donkey’s behavior, is incensed. He strikes the animal three times. Another miracle occurs! The donkey begins to talk. He carries on a brief conversation with his Master. “Why did you hit me three times?” asks the donkey “Because you mocked me! If only there were a sword in my hand I would kill you!” replies Bilaam. The donkey continues to plead her case. “Am I not your faithful donkey that you have ridden on all your life? Have I been accustomed to do this type

of thing to you?” Bilaam replies meekly in the negative. Hashem opens his eyes and he finally realizes that an Angel blocked the way. The human aspect of the incident is perhaps more astonishing than the miracle itself. How is it possible that the great seer who hears his donkey speak begins to threaten it with death? Doesn’t he realize that a supernatural event is occurring? Second, why would he threaten to kill the animal? By doing so he would never get to his destination. Wasn’t that a totally irrational threat? The episode reminds me of an old yarn by the writer Leo Rosten. Irving, a wealthy man, walked into a pet shop and inquired about a pet for his lonely grandmother. “I have the perfect gift,” exclaimed the proprietor. “It’s a myna bird that talks Yiddish. It can say up to fifty different phrases! It will keep you grandmother company and cheer her when she is lonely.” A week after the gift arrived, Irving, called his grandmother. “Bubbie, How did you like the bird?” “Delicious, Irving. I had the butcher fillet it.” “But, Bubbie, that bird spoke Yiddish!” Irving shrieked in horror. “So why didn’t it say something?” Billam was experiencing the event of a lifetime. He had an angel directly in his path, and his donkey was actually speaking to him. But he did not notice. He had his eye focused on one thing. His heart was set on cursing the Jew’s and collecting a handsome fee. Miracles were occurring all around him but he lost all rational control. He did not notice. He was only interested in his honor. He would have slaughtered his donkey on the spot. Often, events occur that should jar us into rethinking our current situations. But our minds are set, our hearts are pre-determined, and our conclusions are foregone. A talking donkey or even a bird for that matter could not get us to stop and think. The world around us is filled with miraculous events, some, perhaps, greater than a talking donkey. All we have to do is listen. Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller in Memory of Yoel Nosson Ben Reb Chaim HaLevi O”H

from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>
date: Jun 29, 2023, 3:27 AM subject: Rav Kook on Balak: An
Eternal People

Balak: An Eternal People

Together with Shema In the parashah of Balak, we find prophetic verses of exquisite beauty and an inspiring story of God’s vigilant watch over the Jewish people. But to truly appreciate this Torah portion, consider this remarkable teaching of the Sages.

The Talmud (Berachot 12b) relates that at one time the rabbis contemplated incorporating the parashah of Balak into the daily prayers, alongside the recitation of the Shema. This is truly astounding. What lesson is contained in the words of Balaam - a villainous prophet, steeped in blind hatred for the Jewish people — that could possibly compare to the Torah’s most fundamental beliefs, as delineated in the Shema, the centerpiece of Jewish prayer?

Fortunately, the Talmud clues us in to what makes this parashah so special. Its unique message may be found in the following verse, comparing the Jewish people to a fearsome lion:

“[Israel] crouches; he lies like a lion and a lioness. Who dares rouse him?” (Num. 24:9)

Yes, it is a beautiful metaphor describing the timeless strength and vitality of the Jewish people. But does this verse justify reading the entire portion of Balak twice a day, together with the Shema?

The Missing Link Clearly, the Sages saw an inner link between Balak and the Shema. In order to understand this connection, we must first analyze the principal themes of the Shema. The Sages taught (Berachot 13a) that the first passage of the Shema expresses God’s unity and our acceptance of His rule; and that the theme of the second passage is our acceptance of the mitzvot.

However, these two axioms of Judaism — accepting God’s reign and accepting His mitzvot — are missing a common link. What is it that combines them, leading to universal acceptance of God through the performance of mitzvot?

The missing link is the Jewish people.

The lofty aspirations expressed in the Shema necessitate the existence of a nation who, throughout the generations, observes the mitzvot and introduces the concept of God’s unity to the world. This is the mission of the Jewish people. In fact, they were created specifically for this purpose: “This people I created for Me, [so that] they will proclaim My praise” (Isaiah 43:21).

Now we can understand why the Sages wanted to add this particular verse to the recital of the Shema. Balaam poetically compared the Jewish people to a sleeping lion that none dare disturb. Everyone fears the formidable powers of this majestic creature, even when it sleeps. The latent power of the Jewish people is such that, even when ‘sleeping’ — even when they are exiled from their land and many of their unique national institutions (the Temple, Sanhedrin, kohanim, prophets, etc.) are dormant — nonetheless, their eternal nature is legendary. [1]

The survival of the Jewish people throughout the generations, despite all odds, and in violation of all laws of history, enables them to persist in their mission of proclaiming God’s unity. Their indestructible nature is in itself a sanctification of God’s Name.

Jewish Nationalism If the significance of the parashah of Balak can be reduced to this single verse, then why not just add that verse to the daily prayers? Why add the entire section?

The Talmud explains that we may not add the verse by itself, since the Torah should not be broken up arbitrarily. “Any section that Moses did not divide, we may not divide.”

This explanation is difficult to understand. We find many individual verses incorporated in the liturgy. Why not this one?

It appears that detaching this particular verse from the rest of Balaam’s prophecy poses a special danger. By itself, the verse could be construed as extolling nationalism for its own sake. The unique strength of the Jewish people is not meant to serve the goals of self-centered nationalism, military conquest, or national aggrandizement. The eternal nature of Israel must be understood within the context of their unique mission: to promulgate God’s Name in the world. Therefore we must take care not to separate this verse from the rest of the portion. Appreciating the Message of Balak In the end, the Sages did not add the parashah of Balak to the daily prayers. They felt that such a lengthy addition would be too great a burden for the people.

Reading this portion would be a burden, since its message is not applicable to every generation. Not every generation is able to appreciate the role that Israel’s timeless vitality plays in achieving its spiritual goals. Yet the very fact that the Sages wanted to incorporate it in the prayers indicates that a time will come when this message will be accepted and internalized by the nation as a whole.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, pp. 67-68)

[1] Mark Twain wrote in 1898: “[The Jew] has made a marvelous fight in the world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?” (Concerning The Jews, Harper’s Magazine, March 1898).

from: **The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust**

<info@rabbisacks.org> subject: Covenant and Conversation COVENANT & CONVERSATION Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt”l

Healing the Trauma of Loss CHUKAT Rabbi Jonathan Sacks It took me two years to recover from the death of my father, of blessed memory. To this day, almost twenty years later, I am not sure why. He did not die suddenly or young. He was well into his eighties. In his last years he had to undergo five operations, each of which sapped his strength a little more. Besides which, as a Rabbi, I had to officiate at funerals and comfort the bereaved. I knew what grief looked like.

The Rabbis were critical of one who mourns too much too long.[1] They said that God Himself says of such a person, “Are you more compassionate than I am?” Maimonides rules, “A person should not become excessively broken-hearted because of a person’s death, as it says, ‘Do not weep for the dead nor bemoan him’ (Jer. 22:10). This means, ‘Do not weep excessively.’ For death is the way of the world, and one who grieves excessively at the way of the world is a fool.”[2] With rare exceptions, the outer limit of grief in Jewish law is a year, not more.

Yet knowing these things did not help. We are not always masters of our emotions. Nor does comforting others prepare you for your own experience of loss. Jewish law regulates outward conduct not inward feeling, and when it speaks of feelings, like the commands to love and not to hate, halachah generally translates this into behavioural terms, assuming, in the language of the Sefer haChinnuch, that “the heart follows the deed.”[3]

I felt an existential black hole, an emptiness at the core of being. It deadened my sensations, leaving me unable to sleep or focus, as if life was happening at a great distance and as if I were a spectator watching a film out of focus with the sound turned off. The mood eventually passed but while it lasted I made some of the worst mistakes of my life.

I mention these things because they are the connecting thread of parshat Chukat. The most striking episode is the moment when the people complain about the lack of water. Moses does something wrong, and though God sends water from a rock, he also sentences Moses to an almost unbearable punishment: “Because you did not have sufficient faith in Me to sanctify Me before the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land I have given you.”

The commentators debate exactly what he did wrong. Was it that he lost his temper with the people (“Listen now, you rebels”)? That he hit the rock instead of speaking to it? That he made it seem as if it was not God but he and Aaron who were responsible for the water (“Shall we bring water out of this rock for you”)?

What is more puzzling still is why he lost control at that moment. He had faced the same problem before, but he had never lost his temper before. In Exodus 15 the Israelites at Marah complained that the water was undrinkable because it was bitter. In Exodus 17 at Massa-and-Meriva they complained that there was no water. God then told Moses to take his staff and hit the rock, and water flowed from it. So when in our parsha God tells Moses, “Take the staff . . . and speak to the rock,” it was surely a forgivable mistake to assume that God meant him also to hit it. That is what He had said last time. Moses was following precedent. And if God did not mean him to hit the rock, why did He command him to take his staff?

What is even harder to understand is the order of events. God had already told Moses exactly what to do. Gather the people. Speak to the rock, and water will flow. This was before Moses made his ill-tempered speech, beginning, “Listen, now you rebels.” It is understandable if you lose your composure when you are faced with a problem that seems insoluble. This had happened to Moses earlier when the people complained about the lack of meat. But it makes no sense at all to do so when God has already told you, “Speak to the rock . . . It will pour forth its water, and you will bring water out of the rock for them, and so you will give the community and their livestock water to drink.” Moses had received the solution. Why then was he so agitated about the problem?

Only after I lost my father did I understand the passage. What had happened immediately before? The first verse of the chapter states: “The people stopped at Kadesh. There, Miriam died and was buried.” Only then does it state that the people had no water. An ancient tradition explains that the people had hitherto been blessed by a miraculous source of water in the merit of Miriam. When she died, the water ceased. However it seems to me that the deeper connection lies not between the death of Miriam and the lack of water but between her death and Moses’ loss of emotional equilibrium. Miriam was his elder sister. She had watched over his fate when, as a baby, he had been placed in a basket and floated down the Nile. She had had the courage and enterprise to speak to Pharaoh’s daughter and suggest that he be nursed by a Hebrew, thus reuniting Moses and his mother and ensuring that he grew up knowing who he was and to which people he belonged. He owed his sense of identity to her. Without Miriam, he could never have become the human face of God to the Israelites, law-giver, liberator and prophet. Losing her, he not only lost his sister. He lost the human foundation of his life.

Bereaved, you lose control of your emotions. You find yourself angry when the situation calls for calm. You hit when you should speak, and you speak when you should be silent. Even when God has told you what to do, you are only half-listening. You hear the words but they do not fully enter your mind. Maimonides asks the question, how was it that Jacob, a prophet, did not know that his son Joseph was still alive. He answers, because he was in a state of grief, and the Shechinah does not enter us when we are in a state of grief.[4] Moses at the rock was not so much a prophet as a man who had just lost his sister. He was inconsolable and not in control. He was the greatest of the prophets. But he was also human, rarely more so than here.

Our parsha is about mortality. That is the point. God is eternal, we are ephemeral. As we say in the Unetaneh token prayer on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we are “a fragment of pottery, a blade of grass, a flower that fades, a shadow, a cloud, a breath of wind.” We are dust and to dust we return, but God is life forever.

At one level, Moses-at-the-rock is a story about sin and punishment: “Because you did not have sufficient faith in me to sanctify Me ... therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land I have given you.” We may not be sure what the sin exactly was, or why it merited so severe a punishment, but at least we know the ball-park, the territory to which the story belongs.

Nonetheless it seems to me that – here as in so many other places in the Torah – there is a story beneath the story, and it is a different one altogether. Chukat is about death, loss and bereavement. Miriam dies. Aaron and Moses are told they will not live to enter the Promised Land. Aaron dies, and the people mourn for him for thirty days. Together they constituted the greatest leadership team the Jewish people has ever known, Moses the supreme prophet, Aaron the first High Priest, and Miriam perhaps the greatest of them all.[5] What the parsha is telling us is that for each of us there is a Jordan we will not cross, a promised land we will not enter. “It is not for you to complete the task.” Even the greatest are mortal.

That is why the parsha begins with the ritual of the Red Heifer, whose ashes, mixed with the ash of cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool and dissolved in “living water,” are sprinkled over one who has been in contact with the dead so that they may enter the Sanctuary.

This is one of the most fundamental principles of Judaism. Death defiles. For most religions throughout history, life-after-death has proved more real than life itself. That is where the gods live, thought the Egyptians. That is where our ancestors are alive, believed the Greeks and Romans and many primitive tribes. That is where you find justice, thought many Christians. That is where you find paradise, thought many Muslims. Life after death and the resurrection of the dead are fundamental, non-negotiable principles of Jewish faith, but Tanach is conspicuously quiet about them. It is focused on finding God in this life, on this planet, notwithstanding our mortality. “The dead do not praise God,” says the Psalm. God is to be found in life itself with all its hazards and dangers, bereavements and grief. We may be no more than “dust and ashes”, as Abraham said, but life itself is a never-ending stream, “living water”, and it is this that the rite of the Red Heifer symbolises.

With great subtlety the Torah mixes law and narrative together – the law before the narrative because God provides the cure before the disease. Miriam dies. Moses and Aaron are overwhelmed with grief. Moses, for a moment, loses control, and he and Aaron are reminded that they too are mortal and will die before entering the land. Yet this is, as Maimonides said, “the way of the world”. We are embodied souls. We are flesh and blood. We grow old. We lose those we love. Outwardly we struggle to maintain our composure but inwardly we weep. Yet life goes on, and what we began, others will continue.

Those we loved and lost live on in us, as we will live on in those we love. For love is as strong as death,[6] and the good we do never dies.[7]

[1] Moed Katan 27b. [2] Maimonides, Hilchot Avel 13:11. [3] Sefer ha-Hinnuch, command 16. [4] Maimonides, Eight Chapters, ch. 7, based on Pesachim 117a. [5] There are many midrashim on this theme about Miriam’s faith, courage and foresight. [6] Shir ha-Shirim 8:6. [7] See Mishlei 10:2, 11:4.

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from: Destiny Foundation/**Rabbi Berel Wein**

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subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Home Sabbath/ Holidays **CHUKAT** Rabbi Wein’s Weekly Blog

The series of disasters that befell the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai, as recorded for us in the previous parshiot of the book of Bamidbar, reaches its climax in this week’s parsha. Heaven decrees that neither Moshe nor Aharon or Miriam – the entire leadership team of the Jewish people – will be allowed to enter the Land of Israel. The treatment of Moshe individually seems rather harsh to our limited human understanding of these matters, in light of his seemingly minor transgression of smiting the rock instead of speaking to it. Because of this problem, some of the commentators and scholars – Rambam and Abarbanel for example – claim that the punishment was for an accumulation of previous minor transgressions that culminated with Moshe’s striking the rock – a straw that broke the camel’s back type of scenario. Most commentators however concentrate on attempting to explain the matter in light of the statement in the Torah itself, that Moshe’s punishment was due to the sole incident of his striking the rock instead of following God’s instruction to speak to it.

Be this matter as it is in all of its wondrous complexity and difficulty, the bottom line is that the Jewish people will not enjoy Moshe’s presence and leadership when they embark on their task of nation building upon entering the Land of Israel. All of Jewish history, in fact all of world history, would have been different had Moshe led Israel into its promised land. But it was not to be.

I think that among the many lessons and nuances present in this Torah lesson there is one that bears great relevance to understanding the pattern of Jewish history itself. And that lesson is that a leader, no matter how great he is individually – even if he is Moshe who is able, so to speak, to relate to God directly and at will – is still only a product of his time and circumstances. If Moshe’s generation, the generation that left Egypt and stood at Sinai to receive the Torah is not going to enter the Land of Israel, then Moshe himself will also not enter it. The leader is bound to the fate and occurrences of his

generation and times. A great leader of one time is not necessarily the great leader of another period. The Talmud points this out in many different ways: “Yiftach is the great leader for his generation just as Shmuel was the great leader for his time.” Individually speaking, the two may not be on the same plane and level of spiritual greatness, but Shmuel is not the suited for leadership of Yiftach’s generation just as Yiftach is not the right person to lead the generation of Shmuel. Moshe is inextricably bound to his generation and cannot enter the Land of Israel. The rabbis also taught us: “The rule over the people of one time cannot impinge for even a hair’s breadth over the rule over the people of the next generation.” These ideas and axioms bound Moshe as well and they precluded him from entering the Land of Israel no matter his spiritual greatness and quality.
Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: Rabbi Yochanan Zweig <genesis@torah.org> to: rabbizweig@torah.org subject: Rabbi Zweig

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig This week’s Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Faiga bas Rav Nachum z”l. Sponsored by Mrs. Channah Finkel & Family. “May her Neshama have an Aliya!”

A Giant Debt [...] Og, king of Bashan, went out against them, he and his entire people, to do battle in Edrei. Hashem said to Moshe, “Do not fear him, for into your hand I have given him [...]” (21:33-34).

This week’s parsha ends with the tale of the remarkable encounter between Moshe Rabbeinu and Og, the giant-king of Bashan. Og had been one of the Nephilim (those that fell or “fallen angels” see Rashi on Bereishis 6:4); a race of giants from the time before the great flood. He was known as “the escapee” because he survived the destruction of the flood (see Rashi on Bereishis 14:13). The possuk tells us that Moshe was worried about meeting Og in a war.

At first glance, this seems a little odd. Bnei Yisroel had just soundly decimated Sichon king of Cheshbon, who had a reputation as one of the mightiest warriors in the world. Why was Moshe suddenly worried about fighting Og? Rashi (21:34) explains that almost 500 years prior Og had done a favor for Avraham Avinu. Moshe was afraid that the merit of this kindness to Avraham Avinu would stand for him and, perhaps, render him invulnerable.

What kindness had Og done for Avraham? In Parshas Lech Lecha (Bereishis 14:1-12), the Torah relates some of the details of the epic war that embroiled nine kingdoms. Four kings went to war against five kings and soundly defeated them and many other nations that were in their path. One of the nations that was utterly destroyed was the Rephaim, a nation of giants, and Og was the lone survivor (“fugitive”). In addition, one of the five kings who was defeated was the king of Sodom,

where Avraham’s nephew, Lot, resided. Og came to Avraham to inform him that his nephew had been taken captive by the four kings. This was the kindness that Og did for Avraham Avinu, which had Moshe concerned about meeting Og in battle.

However, this is difficult to comprehend. Rashi (Bereishis 14:13) very clearly states that the reason Og came to inform Avraham what had happened to Lot was for his own selfish reasons. He wanted to marry Sarah, who according to the Gemara (Megillah 15a) was one of the most beautiful women to have ever lived. Og hoped that Avraham would feel impelled to enter the war and in the course of the fighting he would be killed; thereby clearing a path for Og to be with Sarah. Thus, Og had very selfish reasons for giving Avraham Avinu news about his nephew; so how is this act considered such a great merit for him?

Imagine for a moment that someone is attacked by a mugger and struck upon the head. Following this unfortunate event, the victim heads to the nearest hospital to be examined. The doctors decide to perform a CT scan of his head to be sure that there isn’t any more extensive damage. Miraculously, the CT scan reveals that while there is no permanent damage from the mugger’s blow, there is a tumor that is slowly growing inside the skull that must be removed. This tumor would have very likely killed this person and probably wouldn’t have been caught in time had he not been mugged. Does this victim now owe a debt of gratitude to the mugger?

Of course not. In the case of the mugger, the victim never wanted to suffer a severe blow to the head. That it, providentially, happened to work out is really just the hand of Hashem. However, in the case of Og, Avraham was well aware of risks he was taking by entering a war with the four kings. Yet, Avraham desired to have the information that Og was providing. The fact that Og had his own agenda doesn’t lessen the kindness to Avraham; Og was providing Avraham a service that he wanted. Doing a kindness for someone as great as Avraham Avinu was reason enough to give Moshe pause. Therefore, Hashem had to reassure him.

The Torah is teaching us a remarkable lesson in hakaras hatov, and something most of us strive hard to avoid. We see from this story that we must feel indebted to someone who does us a kindness even if he has his own reason for doing it. Often, we work very hard to try to ascribe a motivation to a benefactor that would seem to paint them as self-serving, or in the very least as not totally altruistic. Naturally, we do this to lessen our feeling of obligation to this person. This is wrong. The Torah is teaching us that we must appreciate any kindness that is done for us, irrespective of the benefactor’s motivation.

Ignoring the Pain He sees no iniquity in Yaakov, nor does He see transgressions in Yisroel, Hashem his God is with him and the friendship of the king is with them (23:21).

Rashi (ad loc) explains this to mean that Hashem is not exacting in His judgement of Bnei Yisroel; in His great love for them, he disregards their transgressions even when they sin. This possuk's reassuring expression of Hashem's kindness in judgement readily explains why it was chosen to be included in our liturgy on Rosh Hashanah, notwithstanding that the evil Bilaam is the source of this observation.

Yet, this verse doesn't seem to conform to normative Jewish thinking. On the contrary, we are taught that Hashem is extremely critical of the Jewish people; the Talmud (Bava Kama 50a) states that Hashem is exacting to a hairbreadth in His judgement of the righteous, and that anyone who says that Hashem disregards sin is forfeiting his life. How can Rashi then say that Hashem simply disregards our sins?

There are two dimensions to every sin. When a person sins, his actions represent a defect in his character, a flaw that must be repaired in order for him to perfect himself. With regard to this aspect of sin, Hashem is infinitely exacting; He allows no imperfection to be ignored, after all, that is why we were created and put on this earth – to perfect ourselves. Hashem, therefore, judges His people with the greatest strictness in order for us to cleanse ourselves of all flaws.

However, there is another dimension to sin, one that Hashem does disregard: The pain and insult that we cause Him, so to speak, by rebelling against Him and ignoring His demands of us. In truth, of course, Hashem is never affected by us, our mitzvos do not add to Him and our sins do not detract from Him. But as R' Chaim Volozhin explains (Nefesh Hachaim 1:3); our actions have very real affects in the myriads of worlds that have been created. We add "light and holiness" and sustain these worlds by doing righteous acts. The whole construct of creation is an expression of Hashem's desire to have a relationship with mankind. The nature of this relationship is what is affected by our transgressions. Thus, when Chazal say that on Rosh Hashanah Hashem ignores our sins, this is referring to the pain and hurt we have inflicted on our relationship with Him. He absolutely disregards the hurt from the pain that we have inflicted on the relationship by flouting His authority and rebelling against Him. He only judges us on the flaws in our character that have led to these transgressions; this is because He desires to see us perfect ourselves.

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Tarshish, Canals and Divrei Hayamim

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Where was Tarshish? Was Tarshish west or east of Eretz Yisrael?

Question #2: Route Canal Was the ancient spice route accessible via canal?

Question #3: Ezra's Error Could Ezra have made a mistake that crept into Divrei Hayamim?

Foreword We will soon discover that attempting to identify "Tarshish," mentioned numerous times in Tanach, will lead us to a fascinating search! Let us start with the most basic of questions: Was Tarshish a person, place, or thing?

The answer is "yes." The word appears in Tanach dozens of times, sometimes as someone's name (Bereishis 10:4; Esther 1:14; Divrei Hayamim I 7:10), often as the name of a place (Yonah 1:3; Yechezkel 38:13; Tehillim 72:10) and, occasionally, as the name of a precious stone (Shemos 28:20; 39:13; Yechezkel 10:9, 28:13; Shir Hashirim 5:14), Introduction Since we know that Yonah went to Yafo, on the Mediterranean Sea, to hire a ship to go to Tarshish, it would appear that this ancient city was located along the Mediterranean basin, or perhaps somewhere along the Atlantic coast of either northern Africa or Western Europe. Yet, from other sources in Tanach, we have evidence that Tarshish was accessible from the Red Sea, an inlet of the Indian Ocean. How could this ancient port have been accessible to both the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian ocean, in an era when rounding Cape Point and the Cape of Good Hope on the southern tips of Africa was unknown? The Suez Canal, which connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, was not constructed until the 19th century!

Let me begin from the basics, so that we can see whether our question is because we overlooked some fundamental information. Yonah has a prophetic vision to go to Nineveh, which we know is in Mesopotamia, an overland trip from where Yonah is in Eretz Yisrael. Although the sefer bearing his name never tells us why, Yonah resists carrying out the word of Hashem, certainly knowing that this jeopardizes his hard-earned reward in olam haba, and instead decides to leave Eretz Yisrael, presumably so that he can no longer receive Hashem's prophecy. He travels to the major port servicing Eretz Yisrael, Yafo, and leaves by ship to Tarshish.

I know of numerous suggestions as to the identity of Tarshish, including places in Asia Minor, North Africa or Iberia whose name might have been Hebraized to Tarshish, various locations in Italy or on the island of Sardinia, and even suggestions that it might be in Britain, which is also accessible from Eretz Yisrael via the Mediterranean Sea. We will soon see that some commentaries suggest that Tarshish might be cognate to Carthage, on the northern coast of Africa not far from where Tunis is today, which was, at one point, the most powerful port city on the Mediterranean. The word Tarshish may be related to the Hebrew root שרש, to crush, break into bits or impoverish, and thus might be a play on words referring to the city which was home to a sea-based empire and crushed its opposition.

From the words of the prophet Yechezkel (27:12), we know that Tarshish was a source of many valuable metals, although

Yirmiyahu Hanavi (10:9) singles out silver as its valuable export. Assuming that Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel are describing the same place, we can assume that it was located either near an area where many metals, but particularly silver, could be mined, or as a distribution point for them.

Having established from the pasuk in Yonah that Tarshish was a port somewhere in, or accessible from, the Mediterranean basin, we then discover that Shelomoh Hamelech conquered Etzyon Gever, which is a port on the Red Sea (Melachim I, 9, 26; Divrei Hayamim II, 8, 17), an inlet of the Indian Ocean. There (Melachim I, 9, 28), it describes how the merchant ships of Shelomoh Hamelech's fleet travelled to Ophir to acquire massive amounts of gold, and, later, it describes how Shelomoh Hamelech's fleet returned from their three years' journey to Tarshish laden with gold, silver, ivory, and other valuables (Melachim I, 10, 22, see Abarbanel; Divrei Hayamim II, 9, 21). It is easy to understand the commercial, political and military value of Shelomoh Hamelech establishing a port with access to the Indian Ocean. Eretz Yisrael is located where the massive Eurasian land mass touches slightly on the continent of Africa. This small touch, which we refer to as the Sinai Peninsula, is what preempts Africa from being the largest island on the planet, and, instead, it forms the southern border of the Mediterranean Sea and the western border of the Indian Ocean. Even in ancient times, spices and other valuable goods were shipped from the Far East, especially from India and the Spice Islands, today part of Indonesia, either via ship to Arabian ports, or overland through the Silk Road. Shelomoh Hamelech, with his ally, Hiram, sought to cut out the middlemen along this shipping route and, thus, be able to import these valuables directly from the source. For this reason, he established a port so that he could do business directly with the sources of these valuables on the Indian Ocean and beyond, and control this massive import-export business himself.

By the way, it is curious to note that the early stages of the empire-building and colony- seizing of the European powers in the 15th to 19th centuries were essentially for the same purpose -- to import directly from the Far East and to establish a monopoly over these trade routes. This is why de Gama, Cabral, Columbus, Magellan and Hudson wanted to discover a sea route to Asia, and why Spain, Portugal, England, Holland and France sought and fought to create worldwide empires and trading posts.

Returning to the topic of Tarshish: Ships left from the new port of Etzyon Gever that Shelomoh Hamelech conquered and established, with access to the Indian Ocean, and traveled to Tarshish, as is also implied by a pasuk later in Melachim (I, 22:49). This leaves us with a major predicament: Where was Tarshish? Was it in or near the Mediterranean Basin, as implied by the pasuk in Yonah, or was it somewhere in the Indian Ocean or beyond, since it took three years to travel by

ship from Etzyon Gever there and back, including the time used for trading at its various ports of call?

There are several ways to attempt to resolve this conundrum. I will first share with you those suggested by the Abarbanel and the Malbim. The Abarbanel explains that Tarshish ships, mentioned in the book of Melachim, are not ships traveling to Tarshish, but describe the large, deep-sea vessels capable of making an extensive voyage. These ships left Eretz Yisrael's western ports, on the Mediterranean, for Tarshish, which he identifies as Carthage, which is what gave these ships their name, but they also left from Etzyon Gever for journeys to the Far East, which was called Ophir. This is the way Abarbanel explains the pasuk that uses Tarshish as a pronoun, "Yehoshofat made ten Tarshish ships to travel to Ophir...that were smashed in Etzyon Gever" (Melachim I, 22:49); Yehoshofat had his shipbuilders manufacture ten large oceangoing vessels to travel to the Far East, but they never made it out of port.

The difficulty that Abarbanel then faces is the verse in Divrei Hayamim (20:36) that recounts this same event, and says that Yehoshofat had manufactured ships in Etzyon Gever to ship to Tarshish, which, according to Abarbanel's opinion that Tarshish is Carthage, was seemingly impossible at the time. The problem is that the pasuk in Divrei Hayamim is not describing a type of large merchant ship, but a destination. To answer this question, the Abarbanel presents an approach that most of us, and also the Malbim, find unacceptable: "Perhaps Ezra (the author of Divrei Hayamim, see Bava Basra 15a) erred -- he found it written that Yehoshofat manufactured Tarshish ships, and he thought that this meant ships to sail to Tarshish, but this is not accurate." Abarbanel then suggests that, because of a war with Phoenicia, perhaps Yehoshofat was unable to manufacture ships at his Mediterranean coast ports, but had to manufacture them in Etzyon Gever. He then planned to have them travel to the Mediterranean, probably via some canal that connected the Red Sea with the Nile River, but the ships were destroyed en route (as to be expected for an ocean going vessel attempted such a route). I researched and discovered that there had been an ancient canal dug to connect the Nile with the Red Sea, but its purpose was to import and export into Egypt, not to provide a method of transporting goods from Asia to Europe. I presume that, similar to the Erie Canal, it was basically a ditch, suitable for barges and other small craft, but certainly not deep enough for oceangoing vessels.

Let me explain how the Abarbanel can say that Ezra erred, which we consider to be an unacceptable, and perhaps sacrilegious, approach. The Abarbanel wrote extensive annotations to the Rambam's Moreh Nevuchim, which some consider its most vital commentary. In his remarks, he is in the forefront of explaining the Rambam's philosophic positions,

whenever the Ramban (in his commentary on the Torah) or other rishonim take issue with the Rambam's approaches. Abarbanel, clearly, is following the Rambam's position that the works of Kesuvim (as opposed to those of Nevi'im) are written with ruach hakodesh (Moreh Nevuchim 2:45), but not with prophecy. In the Rambam's opinion, ruach hakodesh is Divine inspiration allowing someone to understand and accomplish more than he otherwise would be able (Moreh Nevuchim 2:45); however, there is no reason to assume that it precludes an error in decision making, fact gathering, or even in interpretation of halacha. For example, Rambam includes David Hamelech, Shelomoh Hamelech and Shimshon as having ruach hakodesh, although we know that each of them made severe errors of judgment and that both Shelomoh Hamelech and his father David made halachic errors, notwithstanding their ruach hakodesh.

Malbim (Commentary to Melachim I 10, 22) finds Abarbanel's approach to be unacceptable. Instead, he suggests that Yehoshofat's ships left Etzyon Gever for Tarshish, which he identifies with a port city on the Atlantic coast of Spain. This approach has the advantage that there was only one Tarshish and it was accessible from the Mediterranean. The Malbim understands that ships from any of Eretz Yisrael's ports could access Tarshish by way of the open ocean, implying that ships left Etzyon Gever for Tarshish by circumnavigating the African continent.

However, this approach does not satisfy me. Eretz Yisrael had ports, at the time, in both Yafo and Akko, which have easy access to the Mediterranean. The vitality of a port at Etzyon Gever was that it has easy access, via the Gulf of Eilat, to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

I am surprised that neither Abarbanel or Malbim even mention what I consider the obvious answer, one that the Gemara and the rishonim mention in several other contexts regarding place names – that there are two places with the same name (Arachin 32b; Tosafos, Gittin 2a s.v. VeAshkelon). It is obvious, for example, that Har Hahar describes two different places in chumash; the place where Aharon is buried is somewhere on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Bamidbar, Chapters 20 and 33), and the Har Hahar mentioned as the northwest border of Eretz Yisrael (Bamidbar 34:7,8) is, obviously, along the Mediterranean coast, somewhere to the north of contemporary Israel. I am aware of at least six opinions exactly which seaside mountain should be identified with Har Hahar on the Mediterranean, but none of them is the burial place of Aharon. Thus, the obvious answer to the question is that more than one place was called Tarshish. Since the word tarshish is also the name of a precious stone, as in one of the stones that the kohein gadol wore on his breastplate, it could be that Tarshish, the port, was a name given to any place where this precious stone could be acquired, similar to the diamond exchanges in New York, Antwerp or Ramat Gan.

Another possibility, which I suggested above, is that the word Tarshish, based on the root **רשש**, came to mean any power that impoverishes and dispossesses those that oppose it, or that the place name was borrowed to refer to another maritime superpower that vanquished and subjugated its enemies and established control of its trade routes. Certainly, there were sea powers along the Indian Ocean route, between Shelomoh and Hiram's Levant and the far distant Spice Islands, that met this description. Thus, either of our approaches explains why the name Tarshish applied to two trade powers, one in the days of Yonah in the Mediterranean Basin, and the other in the days of Shelomoh. Since Shelomoh was earlier, it could be that the original Tarshish was off the Indian Ocean and Carthage's name was borrowed from the original Tarshish. And, of course, none of these approaches is mutually exclusive: One Tarshish may have been named for its power, another for its valuable stone or precious metals trade, and a third borrowed its name from the original source.

from: **Michael Hoenig** <MHOenig@herzfeld-rubin.com>
 The following is a Mitzvah Connection from Parshas Balak (25:7) and Parshas Pinchas (25:11) regarding the extraordinary Kano'ii (zealot) who slew Kozbi and Zimri while they engaged in an act of blatant debauchery . This act of impulsive justice was fraught with danger for Pinchas since Zimri was an elite member of Shevet Shimon . The slaying had remedial consequences far beyond terminating the fornication . The deviant behavior of the pair was part of a broader picture in which large numbers of Yisrael were seduced by the B'nos Midian using sexual promiscuity to get the Jews TO WORSHIP BAAL IDOLS and, notably, involved the decadent practices of worshipping BAAL PEOR . Indeed, Kozbi's assignment was to seduce Moshe himself but, eventually settled on Zimri when he persuaded her of his leadership status and the preeminence (according to ancestral order of birth) of his tribe, Shimon, over Moshe's tribe, Laivi. Hashem's anger flared at the Jews' en-masse-misbehavior and a horrible plague broke out infecting tens of thousands -- many from Shevet Shimon . The bravery and zealotry of PINCHAS brought a halt to the devastating plague and spared Yisrael even deeper losses. Hashem rewards Pinchas with deep spiritual qualities and the Kehuna (priesthood) as the Torah describes .

The Small Yud ---
 PINCHAS is written with a smaller letter Yud that draws Chazal's attention . For example, Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch (at Balak 25:11) comments : " Pinchas -- the Yud has to be written ze'rah, small. It is not impossible that his name was originally Pinchas (without yud) but that the Yud was added after his energetic stepping forward to make it sound as Pi Nechas; Nechas being the same as nechatz, to urge on, to say thereby " my mouth, the mouth of God urged me to it . "

Also of interest, R' Munk's Commentary (Kol HaTorah, Pinchas, 25:11) explains that the Gematria of his name, PINCHAS -- 208 -- is the same as the Patriarch YITZCHAK . Says Rav Munk : " The numerical values of their names are equal (208) and they were alike not only physically but spiritually . Like Yitzchak, Pinchas had the same predilection for Midas HaDin, the principle of strict justice . " Rav Munk adds, " Pinchas, like Yitzchak was a zealot but he went further than his predecessor, and filled a void that Yitzchak had left. To be sure, Pinchas too was ready to be sacrificed on the holy altar, but what is more, he did not hesitate to kill out of love for Hashem . " (25:11).

Rav Munk also notes that some of the Sages declare PINCHAS to be ELIYAHU HaNAVI (" Pinchas Hu Eliyahu ") -- the meaning of which is a deep topic beyond the scope of this essay . Suffice to say, both PINCHAS and ELIYAHU exhibited zealotry (Kano'us) in the love of Hashem .

Pinchas and Yitzchak -- A Keshet ---

In an earlier Mitzvah Connection on the name YITZCHAK , which equals 208, it was observed that Mitzvah Number 208 forbids giving over one's offspring to pass through the fire of SACRIFICE TO THE IDOL MOLOCH , a barbaric form of idol worship . In the case of Yitzchak's name (equaling 208), the Mitzvah Connection was a strong Keshet (link) and a " direct hit " since YITZCHAK was the designated Korban Temimah in the Akeidah episode, initially and ostensibly a command to sacrifice Avraham's offspring .

The Mitzvah's Remez and Connection to YITZCHAK heightens the devotional love and reverence for Hashem that Avraham possessed in order to be willing to perform the sacrifice of his beloved son despite the odiousness of child sacrifice .

Now that the name PINCHAS has the very same numerical value as YITZCHAK and Mitzvah Number 208 is the very same prohibition of worship of the IDOL MOLOCH , in what way does the Mitzvah Connection clue help to explain the link to PINCHAS ?

Well, one has to look at the broader picture of the events of which the Kozbi/Zimri episode was a part . The Midianites were seducing B'nai Yisrael TO IDOL WORSHIP through sexual enticement. This was the sordid episode of BAAL PEOR , a disgusting form of BAAL IDOL WORSHIP , for which the plague ensued and ravaged the Shevet of Shimon plus others .

PINCHAS' zealotry stopped the plague and ended the headlong rush of many towards IDOLATRY . Mitzvah Number 208, AN ANTI-IDOLATRY STATUTE , is connected to PINCHAS because he was Hashem's forceful instrument against IDOLATRY .

Pinchas and Eliyahu ---

When Chazal say " Pinchas Hu Eliyahu " (Pinchas is Eliyahu), the Mitzvah Connection also seems to resonate as a Remez,

clue, against IDOL WORSHIP once again -- since one of the transcendent acts of Eliyahu HaNavi occurred when the Prophet challenged the Priests of BAAL on Har (Mount) Carmel . Eliyahu's sensational victory over the BAAL priests caused a temporary return of Yisrael to the worship of Hashem . This, in general respects , is akin to PINCHAS' causing a halt to the headlong rush of many towards BAAL PEOR worship induced by the Midianite women .

Above, we noted that the letter Yud in PINCHAS is written smaller . Rav Hirsch , in his expert parsing of word meanings sees it as a letter added after the zealotry to give further explanation of the hero's act . Others see deeper meaning in the later addition of the Yud since that letter " represents the essence of who we are, the spiritual force that makes each and every one of us unique, and which drives us to accomplish in life . " (See Rabbi Pinchas Winston, " The ' Leftover ' Yud, Parshas Pinchas ", July 10, 2009 (5769), in Perceptions, available at Torah.org) .

The Yud had been audible , phonetically-speaking, but not visible . As a result of Pinchas' heroic act of zealousness, it became revealed as well . R' Winston cites a number of sources explaining the depth and meaning of the letters Yud and Heh (e.g., Menachos 29b, the Maharal, , etc.) and the " four levels " that were in Pinchas (citing, e.g., the Zohar, Sha'ar HaGilgulim, etc.) . As these deep but intriguing discussions are beyond the scope of this Connection , interested readers can refer to the entire essay by R' Winston and his cited sources .

The fact that the smaller Yud was added to Pinchas' name after his act of Kano'us, does, however, seem to have some impact from the Mitzvah Connection standpoint . Why ? Because , while the numerical value of PINCHAS with the Yud is 208, the name WITHOUT THE YUD equals 198 .

Mitzvah Number 198 forbids an " Ervah " (prohibited sexual acts with women forbidden in marriage) , specifically with one's mother's sister . Mitzvah Number 198 sits amidst a cluster of Prohibitive Commandments -- from Mitzvah Number 189 to Mitzvah Number 207 -- all dealing with prohibited sexual and marital relationships .

Note that the Mitzvah immediately following the cluster of anti-Ervah statutes is Mitzvah Number 208 -- the one linked to the names Yitzchak and Pinchas !

The significance of Pinchas' name value without the Yud -- and hence a Mitzvah Connection regarding Ervah practices -- would seem to be a Remez, clue, to his status before the Kozbi/Zimri travesty (AN ERVAH of gargantuan proportions given the location of the sinners, their public debacle, and its intimate link to the goal of leading Yisrael into IDOL WORSHIP) .

Because of PINCHAS' heroic act of zealousness, seemingly, a Yud was added to his name reflecting that his bravery not only

halted Ervah misdeeds but also stopped Avodah Zarah --
BAAL IDOL WORSHIP -- in its tracks !
PINCHAS, YITZCHAK, Eliyahu are names that amply reflect
Mitzvah Connection Kesharim or Remozim that enhance the
Gadlus and complex aura of PINCHAS -- as well as the
reasons a Yud was " added " to his name M.H.

from: **Usher Smith** <osherhachaim@gmail.com> date: Jun 28,
2023, 9:50 AM subject: Osher Hachaim for this week

אושר החיים לע"נ ר' חיים יוסף ליב בן ר' שאול יצחק ז"ל בס"ד
Dear reader, this paper is not intended to be used during
davening. Please feel free to take it with you!

שבעה עשר בתמוז, תשפ"ג

Living to Honor Hashem The Chachomim teach us (Taanis
26a) that on Shiva Asar BiTamuz, five great misfortunes
occurred. The first of those mentioned, is that the luchos were
broken.¹ We might wish to understand, what lesson could we
derive from the shivrei haluchos? The gemara (Shekalim 6:1)
tells us in the name of Rabbi Yehudah ben Lakish, that there
were two arks that accompanied Klal Yisroel in the midbar.
One held the Torah which stayed in the Ohel Moed. The other,
held the shivrei luchos and accompanied B'nei Yisroel
wherever they went – even in war.² One might wonder, if the
luchos represented such a catastrophic event amongst our
people, why would they be chosen to accompany the yidden
throughout their journeys? In what way could this be
considered a merit for them, through which they would be
protected? If anything, it would seem only to be an accusation
against them?! We may understand this better through the
following account. The Chidushei HaRim would often review
his writings, while making any necessary corrections or
improvements to them. Once, his grandson saw him going
through his kesavim, while from time to time throwing some
of them into a fire! His grandson asked: “Why is the zaide
burning some of his Torah writings, of which so much effort
went into being mechaber them?!” The Chidushei HaRim
answered, “You should always remember that the most
integral point of one’s learning and being mechadesh, is to
bring about a greater honor to Hashem, thereby bringing Him a
greater nachas ruach. Therefore, if it appears to me while I am
going through my writings of Torah, that some of them were
not written, or even learned over, in the way that I have just
described, I will destroy them in the fire.” (Ma’or Hagolah,
chapter 13, Sar HaTorah)

The gemara (Brachos 8b) states regarding the shivrei luchos,
“Be careful with the honor of an elderly Talmid Chochom that
forgot what he had learned due to compulsory reasons (i.e., he
became ill, or overburdened with making a living – Rashi),
since we have learned, that both the luchos and the shivrei
luchos were put in the Aron.”⁴ Thus, it may be inferred from
here that when Moshe Rabeinu threw down the luchos, it was
clearly done in a compulsory manner; he did not have any

other choice but to break them. This was so, because when
Moshe saw the immense cheit that was done, he possibly
realized that this must have been caused because of some
degree of a lack of l'sheim Shomayim in their keeping of the
initial Torah which they accepted. Therefore, it was necessary
for him to break those luchos, so that they would receive the
Torah once again, this time in as pure unadulterated a fashion
as possible. This may now explain why Klal Yisroel took the
shivrei luchos with them throughout their journeys. This was
because they needed a constant reminder of the importance of
serving Hashem with absolute sincerity - with no other purpose
other than to bring honor to His Name. It was specifically this
orientation of Klal Yisroel, to remember to always act
completely for the sake of Hashem, which would give them the
zechus needed to protect them wherever they went, even in
war.