

| Candles (earliest) | BALAK | Havdala | Next week |
|--------------------|----------------|---------|------------------|
| 7:13pm (6:20) | Yerushalayim | 8:31pm | 7:13 (6:20) 8:31 |
| 7:29pm (6:22) | S'derot | 8:33pm | 7:30 (6:22) 8:32 |
| 7:28pm (6:20) | Gush Etzion | 8:31pm | 7:28 (6:20) 8:31 |
| 7:30pm (6:22) | Raanana | 8:34pm | 7:30 (6:22) 8:34 |
| 7:28pm (6:21) | Beit Shemesh | 8:32pm | 7:29 (6:21) 8:32 |
| 7:30pm (6:22) | Rehovot | 8:33pm | 7:30 (6:22) 8:33 |
| 7:31pm (6:22) | Netanya | 8:34pm | 7:31 (6:23) 8:34 |
| 7:26pm (6:20) | Be'er Sheva | 8:31pm | 7:26 (6:21) 8:31 |
| 7:29pm (6:21) | Modi'in | 8:32pm | 7:29 (6:21) 8:32 |
| 7:13pm (6:22) | Petach Tikva | 8:34pm | 7:13 (6:22) 8:33 |
| 7:13pm (6:19) | Maale Adumim | 8:31pm | 7:13 (6:20) 8:31 |
| 7:29pm (6:21) | Ginot Shomron | 8:33pm | 7:29 (6:22) 8:33 |
| 7:28pm (6:20) | Gush Shiloh | 8:32pm | 7:28 (6:20) 8:32 |
| 7:27pm (6:20) | K4 & Hevron | 8:31pm | 7:28 (6:20) 8:31 |
| 7:28pm (6:20) | Giv'at Ze'ev | 8:32pm | 7:28 (6:21) 8:32 |
| 7:29pm (6:21) | Yad Binyamin | 8:33pm | 7:30 (6:22) 8:33 |
| 7:30pm (6:22) | Ashkelon | 8:33pm | 7:30 (6:23) 8:33 |
| 7:30pm (6:21) | Tzfat | 8:34pm | 7:20 (6:22) 8:34 |
| 7:31pm (6:22) | Zichron Yaakov | 8:35pm | 7:31 (6:23) 8:35 |

Rabbeinu Tam havdala BALAK (J'lem) - 9:16pm

Ranges are 10 days. WED-FRI 11-20 Tamuz (June 30 - July 2)

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Earliest Talit & T'filin | 4:35-4:39am |
| Sunrise | 5:35-5:38am |
| Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma (Magen Avraham: 8:12-8:15am) | 9:08-9:10am |
| Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 9:41-9:44am) | 10:19-10:21am |
| Chatzot (halachic noon) | 12:41¼-12:43¼pm |
| Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha) | 1:17-1:19pm |
| Plag Mincha | 6:19-6:20pm |
| Sunset (based on sea level: 7:47-7:48pm) | 7:53-7:53pm |

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And a Bonus Set of Lessons

LEAD TIDBIT cont. from front page

not know that any of this was taking place.

And when Bilaam and Balak finally meet and start building altars and offering sacrifices in order to increase Bilamm's task of "attacking" Bnei Yisrael, we still didn't know what was happening.

They move from place to place to get a better view of the Israelite camp and they are going full swing in their attempt to vanquish the people of Israel. And we just went about our day-to-day lives without the knowledge that some very powerful men with potent powers were intent on our destruction.

G-d had three options as to how to "handle" the situation. He could have told Moshe about the threat and commanded (or suggested) that he form a strike force to deal with the situation. He didn't do that.

Or, He could have taken care of things on His own - which He did, in which case there are two options: Tell us or not tell us.

G-d "chose" to fight for us - which is an impressive display of His love for Bnei Yisrael. CHAVIVIN YISRAEL, beloved are Israel that G-d should confound the plot of Balakk and Bilaam and save us from harm.

CHIBA Y'TEIRA, as a gesture of special love, He tells us about the whole thing in

the major part of Parshat Balak.

This example might not be included in the mishna in Avot, but it fits well.

But now, there is more. The extra set of lessons referred to in the second title of this Lead Tidbit.

The details of the Balak-Bilaam affair are meant to teach us things about ourselves.

He wants us to share with Bilaam, the humbling lesson of the speaking donkey. Whether or not Bilaam himself was taken down a peg or two when he realized that a donkey was given the ability to see an angel and he, Bilaam was not - we must learn those lessons.

Insight is not a monopoly of those of higher intelligence; it is given - by G-d - to whomever He chooses to so endow.

Did Bilaam lean that he should not have gone in the first place, when he knew well what G-d wanted him to do? Maybe, maybe not. Irrelevant. But we must learn the lesson. There are things that G-d says, do and other things that He says, don't. But there are also things that we must perceive as R'TZON HASHEM, G-d's Will, and we should determine our paths in life accordingly.

"... Behold, it is a nation that will dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations." Not only is this so, but G-d chose to inform us of our unique (potential) status through the statements of Bilaam to Balak. Bi9l'am said these things to Balak; he didn't say them to us. We know them only because G-d choose to put these words in the Torah for us to read, ponder, and learn from. G-d is challenging us through Bilaam.

Balak stats

40th of 54 sedras; 7th of 10 in Bamidbar

Written on 177.8 lines in a Torah (ranks 35)

2 Parshiyot; 1 closed, 1 open

104 p'sukim - ranks 34th (8th Bamidbar)

1455 words - ranks 33rd (8th Bamidbar)

5357 letters - ranks 35th (8th Bamidbar)

Balak is close to average for the Torah's sedras but is on the small side for Bamidbar

MITZVOT

Balak is one of 17 (of 54) sedras with no mitzvot. Only one of two no-mitzva sedras in the book of Bamidbar. Here's the no-mitzva sedra count per book: 9/12, 3/11, 0/10, 2/10, 3/11

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya 11 p'sukim - 22:2-12

[S> 22:2 (95!)] Balak was a weaker king than his neighbors in the region. The defeat of the others (OG and SICHON) instilled fear in Balak's heart, and he realized that waging a "conven-

tional" war against Israel would be futile. His plan (following research of the matter) was to enlist Bil'am to curse the People of Israel. To this end, Balak sends a delegation to Bil'am in Midyan. Bil'am invites the envoys to spend the night so that he (Bil'am) can be spoken to by G-d. G-d does "appear" to Bil'am and asks him who these people are. Bil'am tells G-d and He warns Bil'am not to go with the delegation, nor to curse the people, because "they are blessed".

SDT: How come Balak, a sworn enemy of Israel, rates having a sedra named after him? Commentaries suggest that Balak was an "honest enemy" of Israel. His antagonism was based on his fear of Israel; his intentions and actions were clear-cut. We have been plagued by many enemies throughout history who have hidden behind a smile, a mask of friendship, or a hand-shake and photo-op only to try to stab us in the back (or worse). It's "nice" when an enemy is "up front" about it.

SDT: Commentaries point out that Moav and Midyan were bitter enemies. Nonetheless, they put their differences aside and united to fight against Israel. This shows the power of anti-Semitism in this world. See what our enemies are ready to do because they hate us so much.

But it also must teach us another lesson. We too must be prepared to set aside that which divides the Jewish People into fragments, so that we can fight our common enemy with greater strength. This is not to suggest that we must ignore, overlook, or forgive these differences. But

we have to know when we should put our religious-secular battles "on hold", in order to be united against the enemies of the Jewish People. We must all work together - Ashkenazim & S'faradim, National Religious and Haredi, left and right, religious and secular, to strengthen our position against those who would harm us, take parts of Eretz Yisrael from us, or divide our capital.

SDT: Rashi quotes a Midrash that explains why G-d asked Bil'am "who are these men with you?", when He first appeared to him at night. This, says Rashi, was to give Bil'am the false impression that there are times when G-d doesn't know something and needs to ask. Bil'am would then be hopeful that during one of those Divine "lapses, he would be able to "bless" the Jews, even though G-d told him that he shouldn't.

Levi - Second Aliya 8 p'sukim - 22:13-20

In the morning, Bil'am (reluctantly) dispatches Balak's messengers with his message of refusal. Balak sends a larger and more prestigious delegation to Bil'am, with offers of great honor and wealth if Bil'am would only agree to Balak's request. Bil'am again refuses, but does invite the new delegation to spend the night. This time G-d permits Bil'am to accompany the Moabites, but warns him not to do anything other than what G-d tells him. (Commentaries draw from this the notion: "In the direction a person is inclined, there he is lead" Also like, "giving

him enough rope to hang himself with".)

SDT: Why was Bil'am to be punished for going with Balak's delegation, when G-d permitted him to go? Sort of told him to go. Certainly, a person is held accountable for violations of G-d's commands, but are we also responsible for things which are not specifically prohibited, although it is reasonable to assume that G-d does not want us to do them?

The answer is YES. This is one of the concepts we actually derive from the episode of Bil'am. The Torah gives us a very good idea of what HaShem wants of us. Many sins are spelled out very clearly - in fact, there is a notion of "one will not be punished unless expressly warned"; yet we are warned that G-d will be angry, so to speak, if we do things that we (should) know are contrary to His wishes.

This is something that exists in human relationships too. Parents, for example, expect children to behave a certain way, even without being specifically told. We are not programmed robots; we are human beings with the ability to reason. And G-d (and our parents, too - no L'HAVDIL here because of the Gemara in Kiddushin that teaches us that there are three partners in the human being - G-d, his father and his mother) wants us to make the right decision in areas He left "open", so to speak.

In the straight reading of the Chumash, it seems that Bil'am is truly a man of G-d who only wants to do what G-d wants him to do. Tradition describes him differently, as one who knows that he is totally in G-d's control but tries to fight it at every step of the way. What a blow to Bil'am's ego to be thought of so highly among

people, yet to know that G-d is in charge.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 18 p'sukim - 22:21-38

Bil'am arises in the morning, saddles his donkey (by himself), and goes with the Moav officers. (The implication in the pasuk is that Bil'am went with a great deal of enthusiasm to "hopefully" curse the People of Israel. Contrast this with Avraham's enthusiasm on his way to fulfill G-d's command with the Akeida.) G-d is "angry" with Bil'am for going (even though He permitted it) and sends an angel in an attempt to dissuade him from continuing. The Torah recounts that on three separate occasions - symbolically, it happened in increasingly narrower passages - the donkey sees the angel blocking the way, but Bil'am does not. Bil'am strikes the donkey each time, until G-d gives the power of speech to the donkey, who admonishes Bil'am for his deeds. Then G-d permits Bil'am to see the angel and Bil'am acknowledges his sin. He offers to return, but the angel allows him to proceed, with the warning not to say anything "unauthorized".

(In Pirkei Avot we are taught that the "mouth of the donkey" was one of ten special items that G-d created in the instant before He rested from further creation on the very first Shabbat. One of the lessons from this concept is SOF MA'ASEH B'MACHSHAVA T'CHILA, what happens in the end

was in G-d's thought and plan at the beginning. We should not think that the "mouth of the Earth" that swallowed Korach & Co. or the talking donkey, or No'ach's rainbow, et al, were "after-thoughts" of G-d. No such thing.)

Balak goes out to greet Bil'am, who tells Balak that he is powerless to act on his own and must say only what G-d "puts in his mouth". (This is the significance of the "mouth of the donkey" - viz. that it is G-d Who grants the gift of speech; one should not be arrogant about his ability to speak well. In the words of the beautiful prayer of the Shali'ach Tzibur on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, OCHILA LAKEIL, the human being thinks thoughts in his heart, but from G-d comes the ability to express them with his mouth and lips... or the lack of the ability.)

SDT: *The favored weapon of the nations of the world is the sword. The "weapon" of Israel is "the power of speech" (prayer, divrei Torah, kind words, etc.). Bil'am arrogantly lays "his weapon" aside and attempts to harm the People of Israel with their (our) weapon. G-d, so to speak, went against Bil'am with his abandoned weapon - the angel's drawn sword. And ultimately, the Torah tells us, Bil'am fell by the sword. - Rashi*

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya

15 p'sukim - 22:39-23:12

Balak makes sacrifices on the occasion, and Bil'am orders seven

altars to be built for the special offerings. (All that is done is highly significant - e.g. the Torah records that our three Patriarchs offered seven korbanot at various times. Bil'am hoped to "neutralize" the effect of those sacrifices in G-d's eyes by repeatedly offering seven sacrifices of his own.)

After meditation, Bil'am "speaks" about the People of Israel. He does not curse them, but rather beautifully describes the uniqueness of Israel. Balak is upset, but Bil'am reminds him that he (Bil'am) can only transmit that which G-d wants him to.

If we are unique among the nations of the world, it is because of the Torah and our commitment to it, not something genetic, nor a mere accident of birth. We must preserve that uniqueness by remaining true to Torah, faithful to HaShem, and distinct from the other nations. And, as Bil'am pointed out, our uniqueness depends upon being different from the other nations (not wanting to be just like everyone else.) We are different when we are different. And that is what we are supposed to be. When we are the same, we are not different.

Chamishi 5th Aliya

14 p'sukim - 23:13-26

Balak takes Bil'am to a different vantage point, in the hopes that he will be able to curse the People this time. Once again, seven altars are built and sacrifices

offered. Once again, Bil'am meditates and then utters magnificent descriptions of the Nation of Israel. Balak says his piece and Bil'am again explains his restrictions. (Difficult for someone who is considered the quintessence of arrogance.)

Rashi says that Balak chose Rosh HaPisga as a place from where Bil'am might succeed in cursing the people, because he foresaw that Moshe would die there. Rashi says that Balak knew this about the place but Bil'am didn't - that Balak was a more gifted prophet.

Twice we find, And Bil'am said to Balak, build for me "with this" seven altars and prepare for me "with this" seven bulls and seven rams (23:1 and 29). With this, BA'ZEH. We are taught that all the prophets of Israel prophesy with KOH (as in KO AMAR HASHEM), except Moshe, who prophesies with ZEH. Bil'am felt that he was on Moshe's level and kept throwing around the ZEH. G-d says to Bil'am, go back to Balak, and thus - KOH - you shall speak. Enough with the pretension to ZEH; you say KOH. Bil'am gets the message and switches to KOH when he speaks to Balak.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya

17 p'sukim - 23:27-24:13

Balak suggests yet a different vantage point from which to observe Israel; maybe G-d will permit them to be cursed. Bil'am again asks for seven altars to be

built, and a bull and a ram to be offered on each. This time, Bil'am does not meditate in his usual manner, expecting similar results, namely that blessings will emerge from him - and he really wants to curse Israel.

SDT: *Balak takes Bil'am to Rosh HaP'or. Having seen in a vision that Israel will soon fall at P'or, Balak mistakingly assumes that the cursing from there would be successful (Rashi).*

Targum Onkeles indicates that Bil'am was "reminding" G-d of the Golden Calf, so that He would allow the People to be cursed. However, when he saw the multitude encamped in such a special manner, he was endowed with "Ruach HaKodesh" and he blessed the People of Israel a third time. Balak had "had enough", spoke harshly to Bil'am, and "sent him packing".

We quote the words that emerged from Bil'am's mouth - MA TOVU... Sometimes it takes a non-Jew's observation for us to appreciate something we might not see.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya

21 p'sukim - 24:14-25:9

Before Bil'am takes leave of Balak, Bil'am prophesies about the other nations in the region... which was, in different words, a prophecy that each nation shall eventually perish, as will those who will bring about the earlier nations' destruction.

[P> 25:1 (9)] Bil'am's final advice, his attempts to curse the People having failed, is to entice the People to idolatry and immoral behavior which will turn G-d Himself against them. This plan works, as 24,000 perish in a plague following the immoral and idolatrous worship of Baal Pe'or. Only the bold action of Pinchas b. Elazar b. Aharon HaKohen in defending G-d's honor, stops the devastating plague.

SDT: *This final lesson of the sedra must be learned well by us today. What Balak and Bil'am discovered is that if Israel is in G-d's favor, it will be invincible from outside attack. No nation can succeed against Israel, when we are "on good terms" with G-d. That includes attacks by the sword or by words... If we, however, incur G-d's anger, by being unfaithful to Him, by disregarding Torah and mitzvot, then we are extremely vulnerable to our enemies. And they might not even have to actually fight against us (as in terror attacks) - we can, G-d forbid, destroy ourselves (as in road accidents, and more). This was true more than 3000 years ago; it is no less true today.*

On a certain level, Parshat Balak is extremely simple and straightforward, with an extremely powerful message - because of that simplicity. For 95 p'sukim, we feel the protection of G-d as Balak and Bil'am fail time and again in what almost looks like a comical farce. The Gemara says that Bil'am was in some ways superior to Moshe Rabeinu, that when he was around, G-d Himself was extra vigilant in protecting us. For those 95 p'sukim,

we beam with pride at the grudging admiration of a unique nation as expressed by Bil'am.

And then comes the last 9 p'sukim of the sedra. Bil'am went back home. So did Balak. No danger anymore. WHAM! We did it to ourselves. G-d protected us from Bil'am by giving him his words. By not letting him speak on his own. And then we turned around and betrayed G-d. 24,000 fatalities. And the toll would have been greater, except for the bold action of Pinchas. The sedra is shouting its message to us. All we have to do is listen to it.

Last 3 p'sukim are reread for Maftir.

Note that the Pinchas episode is interrupted by the break between sedras. Zimri and Kozbi are not identified yet, G-d's reaction comes next week. Just for now - the plague stopped! The swiftness with which the plague struck is matched by the swift action of Pinchas. For now, that's the point. More next week.

Haftara 17 p'sukim Micha 5:6-6:8

Micha's prophecies include the state-of-affairs that finds Israel dispersed among the nations of the world, the promise of the end of war and restoration of Israel to its Land, and the "settling of accounts" between G-d and the other nations, and G-d and Israel. This portion contains a reference

to the advice of Balak and Bil'am's response to it - thus the appropriate choice of this portion as the haftara for Parshat Balak.

Note the "credit" to Balak for the advice that caused the failing of Israel as opposed to the implication from the Torah that it was Bil'am's idea.

Note the reference to the leaders of the People as Moshe, Aharon, and MIRIAM.

The haftara ends with the famous encapsulation of our responsibilities to G-d: "What does G-d demand of us, ONLY to behave justly, love chesed, and walk modestly (humbly) before G-d."

This is the formula for the greatest protection we can have from the Balaks and Bil'ams of the world. And its disregard makes us terribly vulnerable to them. What a contrast between the end of the sedra and the end of the haftara! Again, we have the simple but powerful point. This is how we are supposed to behave. This is how we behaved... and what happened to us. Lessons from the Torah and from the haftara.

A great beach!

Parshat Balak. Makes it worth the metal detector you bought on a whim.

Phil here - personal time. The Gimatriya seaches that I find most

satisfying are the ones that find two or more whole p'sukim that share a gimatriya. Gimatriya Matches or Gimatriya Twins, whichever name you prefer.

Based on many of the commentaries on the Bil'am-Balak partnership, we find a suggestion that G-d is extra diligent in watching over us, so to speak, when our enemy is as strong as Bil'am. The pasuk in T'hilim (121:4) that can describe G-d in that protective mode is

הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:
Behold, He who watches Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

This pasuk has a gimatriya of 1691. And so does this pasuk - the one most associated with Bil'am:

מִהֲטֹבוֹ אֲהַכֶּיךָ יַעֲקֹב מִשִּׁכְּנֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

• Bil'am's plan included the offering of many sacrifices to G-d. These were meant to find favor in G-d's eyes so that Bil'am would be able to curse Bnei Yisrael, and to weaken G-d's feelings for us, to further aid his plan.

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלָעַם אֶל-בָּלָק בְּנֵה-לִי בָזֶה שִׁבְעָה מִזְבֵּחוֹת וְהִבֵּן לִי בָזֶה שִׁבְעָה פָרִים וְשִׁבְעָה אֵילִים:

Seven altars, seven bulls, seven rams. But we have protection from Bil'am in the form of korbanot that we would be bringing in the Beit HaMikdash.

וַיֹּשְׁעֵר עֲזָיִם אֲזוּד לְנוֹשְׂאֹת קֶהָ:
עַל-עֹלֹת הַתָּמִיד יַעֲשֶׂה וְנִסְכּוֹ:

We will be offering in the Beit HaMikdash, daily T'midim and communal sin offerings on Rosh CHodesh and Chagim. That is our vaccine against Bil'am's sacrifices.

These two p'sukim are Gimatriya Twins.

• Bamidbar 22:6 contains Balak's request to Bil'm: "Come now therefore, I pray you, curse this people for me; for they are too mighty for me; perhaps I shall prevail, that we may defeat them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

Our antidote, our protection:

וְלִקְחוּ אֶת-הַבְּגָדִים וְהַלְבִּשְׁתֶּם אֶת-אֶהֱרָן
אֶת-הַכֹּהֲנֵת וְאֶת מַעֲלֵי הָאֲפֹד וְאֶת-הָאֲפֹד
וְאֶת-הַזֹּשֶׁן וְאֶפְדֶת לָו בְּזֹשֶׁם הָאֲפֹד:

Gimatriya twins. There are several other examples of GTs with p'sukim in Balak matching p'sukim which remind us that we have nothing to fear of Bil'am and Balak... if we only remain faithful to G-d.

Divrei Menachem

Parshat Balak recalls how the wicked Bilaam causes the Israelite men to commit harlotry with the Midianite women. This event occurs at the final stopping point in the desert, Shitim, prior to Bnei Yisrael's journey to Gilgal where, in contrast, the men would be circumcised.

In the Haftara, the prophet Micha

cites the former event to a backsliding people. Micha proclaims: "Oh my people! Remember what Balak King of Moav plotted and what Bilaam son of Be'or answered him, from the Shitim to the Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of Hashem" (Micha 6:5).

For G-d had still to settle affairs with a forgetful, sinful, and ungrateful Israel whom He had so mercifully sheltered during their protracted journey in the Wilderness. Yes - Micha reminds us of our unfortunate propensity to take things for granted. For how does a people who finally reached the border of Eretz Yisrael under Hashem's protective wing so easily succumb to Bilaam's shenanigans at the very last stage of their long-suffering journey?

Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column:

Parshat BALAK

Doing It My Way

Most of us have had occasions in our lives when we acted as supervisors over others. It might have been in our role as parents disciplining our children, it might have been as employers giving instructions to employees, or it might have been any number of other contexts in which we had to tell others what to do.

I sometimes reflect on the many times in my own personal and professional life when I suggested, counseled, or otherwise instructed others. And I often think of the diverse reactions I received to my attempts to influence or guide the behavior of another.

There were certainly those who rejected my instructions, sometimes passively, sometimes defiantly. My own children were quite creative in devising ways to ignore their father's commands. And I have had subordinates in various positions that I have held who sometimes stood up to me and simply said, "No!"

I have also experienced numerous occasions when my suggestions or commands were carried out to the letter. These were occasions when the individuals I supervised acted with commitment, with obedience

to my wishes. I must admit to my great preference to these individuals. Every supervisor likes commitment.

But there is a middle category. Here, the subordinates neither defy their orders, nor perfectly conform to them. Rather, the subordinate's response is, "Yes, but!" "I will listen to what you say," they respond, "but I will do it my way!"

When I received responses in this middle category I found myself in a quandary. On the one hand, I wanted my orders obeyed, but on the other hand, I didn't want to squelch the initiative and self-reliance of the person to whom I was assigning the task. I may have preferred total commitment, but I compromised. I allowed concession.

It is from these personal reflections that I can better understand the interaction between the major character of this week's Torah portion (Parshat Balak), Bilaam son of Be'or, and the Almighty.

Read the opening paragraphs of this week's Torah portion carefully. Bilaam begins as a very pious individual who dares not make a move without G-d's permission. He asks G-d whether he can accept the request he has received to curse the Israelites. G-d answers, "Do not go with them! You must not curse that people, for they are blessed." Bilaam accepts this response with commitment. He

tells Balak's dignitaries, "I cannot go with you."

But then Balak ups the ante and sends more numerous and more distinguished dignitaries to Bilaam. Again, Bilaam consults the Almighty. But this time, He responds, "You may go with them, but whatever I command you, you shall do." How do we understand this shift in the divine instructions?

Drawing upon our own personal human experiences in giving instructions to others, we can begin to understand this shift. At first, Bilaam responds with commitment. In his second consultation with G-d, that commitment has diminished. The second delegation of dignitaries has weakened Bilaam's resolve. So G-d, so to speak, has to adapt to Bilaam's "Yes, but!" And G-d offers a concession: "Obey me, but do it your way."

Our sages describe this concession with this adage: "On the road which man wishes to pursue, upon that road he is led." That is, G-d allows us to follow the paths we ourselves choose. Our free will is so important to Him that He concedes to our wishes, and allows us to "do it our way."

Of course, He prefers commitment, but He grants concession, hoping that, even in doing it our way, we will ultimately obey Him and conform, albeit imperfectly, to His will.

This approach to understanding one of the ways in which the Almighty deals with human weakness allows us to understand many other examples in the Bible of God's concessions to human willfulness.

Just a few short weeks ago, for example, we read in Bamidbar 13, of G-d's command to Moshe to send spies, *meraglim*, to scout out the Promised Land. The commentaries struggle with the account in D'varim 1 in which it is clear that it was the people's idea, indeed demand, that spies be sent, and not G-d's command. The rabbis resolved the problem of the differing texts by suggesting that G-d Himself did not think spies were necessary. He originally depended upon the people's commitment to rely unquestioningly upon His promise of the land to them. But the people wanted to "do it their way" by sending spies. G-d, as it were, relented, conceded. His command to send out spies was a concession He felt was necessary to grant in the absence of commitment.

This insight also helps us understand the questions which have been raised by students of the Bible for millennia about the desirability of a king in Israel. Is appointing a king a divine imperative, as some texts suggest? Or is it a concession by G-d to the will of the people? Here, too, our

approach is helpful. If He could depend upon the people's total commitment to His divine sovereignty, then there would be no necessity for a king. But the people wanted it "their way", and so we have G-d's concession, the *mitzva* of appointing a king.

This concept is particularly useful to apply to our own lives. Ideally, we all should act out of perfect commitment. But human nature often insists that we do it our way. The compassionate Lord of the universe "cuts us a bit of slack", and gives us some flexibility, but relies upon us not to veer too far from His expectations.

Vebbe Rebbe

QUESTION

Often on Shabbat programs for non-shomer Shabbat students, the resort does not have timers for the lights, and participants who turned on lights before Shabbat will certainly shut them before going to sleep. Participants are exposed to the concept of keeping Shabbat, and some decided to try to keep Shabbat while they are with us. Many of them believe that if they switch the lights off once, there is no point in keeping the rest of Shabbat. Are there are sources to allow us to either ask or hint to a non-Jew to turn off their bedroom lights to allow these Jewish kids a better chance at observing Shabbat?

ANSWER

There are a few circumstances in which a non-Jew can do work on a Jew's behalf on Shabbat. Some involve using hints, as you mention. One possibility is to use a hint in which you mention only the need and do not use any active verb. For example, you could say, "It is too light in many of the rooms for people to fall asleep," as opposed to, "It would be nice if someone shut the lights before people go to sleep" (based on Rama, Orach Chayim 307:22 and Mishna Berura 307:66). Also, one can use even the latter type of hint before Shabbat so that the non-Jew will do the action on Shabbat (Shulchan Aruch, OC 307:2).

Despite the fact that these distinctions are quite accepted, there are certain problems with their application. The Magen Avraham (252:9) says that one is not supposed to allow a non-Jew to do *melacha* for a Jew with the latter's property, even when he does so of his own volition. This can be remedied by KATZATZ, i.e., having the non-Jew receive money by the piece of work done. However, even the leniency of KATZATZ does not work on a Jew's property when people are apt to think that the Jew may have paid him according to time, and even if the non-Jew starts doing the work of his own volition on Shabbat, he should be stopped (Shulchan Aruch, OC 244:1). Why, then, does it help to do a special hint to the non-Jew if, when push comes to shove, he is doing the work

on the Jew's property? Acharonim struggle with this issue (see the Sanctity of Shabbos, p. 24), but in general the minhag is to allow this type of non-commercial activity.

Even when it is considered that the Jew did not tell the non-Jew to do the work, it is prohibited to receive positive, direct benefit until after Shabbat from that which a non-Jew did on a Jew's behalf on Shabbat (Shabbat 122a). However, not everything is considered such benefit, and a classic example the poskim discuss is creating darkness, which is considered just removing light and is permitted.

In addition, there is an over-arching heter for allowing telling (even directly) a non-Jew to shut the lights under the circumstances you describe. Shutting a light is a rabbinic prohibition (Mishna Berura 278:3). Under quite a few circumstances of need, it is permitted to ask a non-Jew to do a rabbinic prohibition, including shutting a light to allow a child to sleep (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 38:26). One of the examples is for a mitzva (Shulchan Aruch, OC 307:5) and here there is a double mitzva. One is the (albeit, small) chance that this act of the non-Jew will be a part of enabling your Jewish participant to embark upon a way of life of Shabbat/Torah observance. The other is the mitzva of afrushei me'isura (preventing one from sinning), even on a one-time basis. Although we do not usually say that one should perform a small sin to save someone else from a big sin (Shabbat 4a), the rules of

instructions to non-Jews have a special built-in leniency for such cases.

Therefore, in addition to permissibility through hints, it should be permitted because of your perceived need. This being said, we would caution that your plan, especially if not carried out properly, could have negative educational ramifications in addition to positive ones. Since you are in the field of working with this population, we leave such considerations to your discretion.

THE CHALLENGE OF MONEY: COMPETITION, PRICES AND PROFITS [part 6] by **Dr. Meir Tamari**

Markets are disrupted by natural phenomena, war or political and racial discrimination, creating scarcity, rising prices and hardship for the poor and weaker classes. Communal-state action including rationing and price-controls, to ensure social justice may be necessary; their nature and extent dependent only on society's social and moral framework. Here are two examples from Jewish history of controlled markets that distorted the free market through controlling prices and availability of certain scarce products. These may serve as blueprints for society's intervention, based on the Jewish value system.

RENT CONTROL

Throughout much of Jewish history in the galut, even down to the end of the

19th century, Jewish ownership of real estate was either forbidden or severely curtailed. European Jews were confined to ghettos or special streets, or were restricted to certain areas as Tsarist Russia's Pale of Settlement. In the Moslem world too, the Jew's ability to live where he liked was curtailed. The constant discrepancy between the limited supply and the demand caused by the natural increase in population and the periodic influx of refugees, created a spiraling increase in rents so the right of occupancy became a valuable economic asset. In consideration of the public good, we find enactments of the autonomous Jewish communities that frustrated the market forces to ensure 'fair' housing.

"The cherem of Rabbenu Gershon applies to those who try to rent houses already rented to other Jews. For three years after a Jew has been evicted, no Jew may offer to rent the house but, at the same time we confirm that legal protection of tenancy from competition only applies to the house in which one lives. In all other cases, every Jew is free to hire a house from the gentiles without fear of sin" (Pinkas Padua, 1580). "The parnassim have to prevent the rich from maintaining several empty houses... joining house to house... so that the number of houses available to the poor declines" (Pinkas HaKesheirim shel Kehilat Poznan, 1621-1835). The Responsa of Maharsdam (16th cent. Salonika), Ohel Yaakov (17th cent. Amsterdam) and Avnei Nezer 19th cent. Poland) are examples of halakhic backing for

such enactments.

COPYRIGHT

Copyright is merely a particular case of protecting intellectual property and non-physical assets like goodwill that will be dealt with later, but given the centrality of learning in Judaism and the importance of the printing and publication industries in Jewish economic history, it seems important to deal the specific problem of copyright separately. It should be noted that free entry of rabbis and scholars and the resultant competition against the veterans was early enshrined in halakha but the invention of printing and in our own time computer technology, have made the question of competition in Torah study and the restraining influence of copyright, more complicated. The publication and reproduction of Torah literature has become cheap and readily available, which is to the public's spiritual and religious good; "the jealousy [competition] of the scribes increases Torah knowledge" (Bava Batra 22a). However, there is constantly a moral choice between this public good and the rights of publishers and authors to a legitimate profit or royalties. However, if these rights are not limited in time, the public will be deprived of the benefits of competition.

"The halakhic haskamot [and the communal enactments such as the approximately 50 of the Va'ad Arba Aratzot prior to 1751] given to publishers preventing others from

publishing their books, is definitely binding. However, when the publisher has already sold the whole original edition, he may not prevent others reprinting the books and thus hindering the work of Heaven [the spread of learning], even if the period of the ban has not yet elapsed, since he is not losing thereby" (Pitchei T'shuva Yoreh De'ah 236). The same source also provides the opposing opinion which maintains that even if the whole edition has been sold, the ban is valid until its expiry; in effect giving the publisher extra profit at the expense of Torah study of the community.

Price controls and rationing of these and other forms, inevitably lead to evasion and 'black markets'. However, where there is a consensus regarding the morality and justice of market distortions, controls will be effective and achieve their social and communal goals. Such consensus existed, for example, in Israel during the austerity years of the 1950s. In addition, the state apparatus is essential to ensure that price control and rationing during times of scarcity, are according to the Jewish concepts of equity and the public welfare. □

Praying with Passion

Giving more meaning to our T'fillah • One Week at a Time

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YIGDAL (part three)

13 Principles of Faith

...יְשֻׁלַח לְקֶץ הַיָּמִין מְשִׁיחֵנוּ, לְפָדוֹת מִחֲכֵי קֶץ יְשׁוּעָתוֹ. מֵתִים יִחְיֶה אֵל בְּרַב חֶסֶדוֹ, בְּרוּךְ עַדֵי עַד שֵׁם תְּהִלָּתוֹ.

Translation: (Koren/OU Siddur)

...At the end of days He will send our Mashiach to redeem those who await His final salvation. God will revive the dead in His great loving-kindness. Blessed for evermore is His glorious name!

Theme (of 12th line):

As noted two weeks ago, YIGDAL comprises the basic principles of Jewish faith as formulated by the Rambam. This includes (number 12), "I believe with complete faith in the coming of Moshiach. Though he tarry, nonetheless I await him every day that he will come."

Insight: Deeper meaning...

The Gemara states when a person arrives at his Day of Judgment, he is asked, TZIPITA LISHU'A? - Did you await salvation (i.e. the coming of the Moshiach)? SMAK reasons that we would not be asked whether we awaited salvation if we were never commanded to do so. He finds the source of this commandment woven inextricably into the first of the Ten Commandments, in the verse, "Anochi Hashem Elokecha" – I am Hashem, your God who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Hashem pledged that He would take us

out of Egypt, and He also pledged to redeem us from our current exile. The mitzva of "Anochi Hashem Elokecha" often identified as the mitzva of Emunah - faith - requires us to believe that Hashem redeemed us from the Egyptian exile. Our bedrock belief in that redemption, which comprises the living, pulsing heart of our faith, pumps constant life into our belief that He will eventually redeem us from our current exile. As certain as we are of the past redemption is how certain we can be of the coming redemption. In our eyes, the Geula is not just a hope, but a clear presence shining radiantly on the horizon, beckoning us to hurry and draw near. We do not just believe it is there; we yearn to reach it.

It is the word "Anochi" that creates the connection between the past and future redemptions: The Midrash states: "Anochi signifies the first redemption from Egypt and the last redemption through Moshiach." Anochi is the word by which G-d identifies Himself in both of those promises. "Anochi" is used when G-d answers Yaakov Avinu's objections to descending into Egypt and thereby risking the dissolution of his family and its unique Divine mission. G-d promised, "I ("Anochi") shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up..." Anochi also signifies the final redemption as the Prophet Malachi states, "Behold, I ("Anochi") send you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great awesome day of Hashem."

Visualize:

...bringing the prayer to life

A person might believe that the bus will

arrive at the corner bus stop at noon. He can harbor that belief while sitting in his office, sitting at his shtender learning, or sitting at the kitchen table eating lunch.

One who awaits the bus, however, is out at the bus stop. His ears are piqued for the sound of the engine; his eyes are focused on the approaching traffic. He is checking for his fare and checking his watch. At 12:05, he is already wondering, "What's taking so long?"

"To await" means an active and eager anticipation of the imminent arrival of the redemption. The Rambam's words, "I await him every day..." make it incumbent upon every Jew to await the coming of Moshiach every single day, all day long.

Take it with you:

Personal connection to the prayer

When you know something big is coming, you prepare for it. For instance, if you know you'll be visited by important guests, you make sure your house is clean and pleasant. You prepare food and drink. You make sure everyone in your household is dressed in a neat, respectful manner. You don't think, "If I hear the knock on the door, I'll quickly get everything ready."

Expecting Moshiach works the same way. If you're not preparing, you're not living with a firm belief that the time is imminent, and that it will be "something big" that demands more than a last-minute fix. Since the essence of redemption is that G-d's presence will be revealed and known, our task in preparing for that time is to start now,

using every possible opportunity to bring honor and recognition to G-d's name through our words, actions and interactions in daily life.

Parsha Points to Ponder

BALAK

1) Why did Bilaam specify that the messengers from Balak should sleep there **THAT NIGHT (HALAILA)**? What relevance did this have to the story (22:8)?

2) Why did G-D give Bilaam the respect of actually going to visit him (23:4) while Moshe always had to go to the Mishkan to communicate with G-D?

3) Why does Bilaam say I **SHOULD DIE THE DEATH OF THE UPRIGHT (YESHARIM)**, in plural but then say **AND MY END SHOULD BE LIKE HIM (KAMOHU)**, in the singular (23:10)?

Parsha Points to Ponder

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Answers are somewhere else in this issue. Look for them, but only after a good pondering

The Puah Institute

for Fertility and Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

Medical Secrets

A Rational Approach to Disclosure

Over the past few weeks we have demonstrated the opinion of the majority of poskim, that medical conditions that will influence the life of the person, their spouse and family must be revealed to prospective spouses. Contrastingly, we can also deduce that there is no obligation to disclose when the issue will have no impact on the lives of the people involved.

Consider for example, the case of a woman who suffered from an eating disorder. She has since been treated, it has been determined that there are no long term affects to her health and/or fertility and she is not considered to be at risk for a recurrence of the condition.

Since she is medically considered normal, the fact that she once had this illness is not relevant to the shidduch. It is true that a potential mother-in-law might be uncomfortable should she be told of the history. However, that does not make it relevant information, and the woman might very well receive a psak that she need not reveal this information.

In fact, there are poskim who have written that any condition that does

not affect or bother the couple is not considered a blemish that needs to be revealed, even if it would bother their parents. Most authorities would not advise such. They argue that couples are often too young or too romantically involved to comprehend the impact of a situation. They advise that parents should seek halachic guidance as to how much to interfere when it comes to such cases.

The Netziv, commenting on the issue of disclosure, writes that one need not make a disclosure of information that is immaterial and will never be publically known. In contrast, he infers that if the information is either significant or even if insignificant, it is something that the public will know about - disclosure is required. The Netziv's approach considers both the practical - requiring disclosure of any material fact - as well as the emotional - requiring the disclosure of any fact that may be misunderstood or tainting (even by mistake) if made public - in his opinion.

On a practical level, we follow the approach of the Netziv. We advise people who consult us to disclose information. While there are certainly medical issues that can be hidden, it seems disingenuous to us to advise people to begin their married life with deception. We do however, advise caution in determining when to make the disclosure.

If the information is offered before the couple meet, the person's character, personality and good nature may never be revealed. We prefer to allow

the couple to get to know each other and then make an informed decision.

For couples who have a significant disclosure to make, it must be made early in the relationship, before the couple can develop serious feelings for one another. In this way, the pain of a breakup will not be too much for either party, while the person with the medical issue has had a chance to present their personality and characteristics to be considered as part of the decision.

Contrastingly, when the issues are not significant, we do not set a timetable for when disclosure is made. So long as an engagement is entered into with the truth known, the family can decide exactly when disclosure is made. In these cases there is nothing wrong with allowing the couple to meet first and develop feelings for one another. The couple may decide to continue with the shidduch despite the medical condition since they recognize some wonderful qualities in the other person that make them a perfect spouse. A person is not the sum of their medical records, they are a human being as well and this must be taken into account when deciding when and how to reveal information.

Next week: We conclude the discussion

The Plot

Chazal [in the Midrash Tanchuma] identify Bilaam with Lavan. Why?

The Haggada states that Lavan tried to “uproot everything (kol)”. How?

At Gal-Ed, Lavan tries to tell Yaakov that his family and “all (kol) that you see is mine”. He further suggested that they be judged by the [pagan] gods of their mutual ancestors! He thus tries to uproot all of Bnei Yisrael and make it his.

What was Bilaam’s goal? Chazal [Bamidbar Rabba] point out that Balak and Bilaam’s sole purpose was to separate the Jewish People from the Land of Israel.

This is highlighted in one of the most moving texts in Tanach. In Micha (7:5), we are told to remember the counsel of Balak and Bilaam, “from Shitim to Gidal - in order to understand Hashem’s chesed”.

The meaning of this cryptic text is as follows: Their counsel was to keep the Jewish nation from Israel. Bilaam advised [as the Torah explicitly states in Parshat Matot] ensnaring them in sexual immorality and idolatry at Baal Peor. These took place at Shitim. The sins are amongst the three for which we are warned that we might be exiled, and certainly should have prevented our going into Eretz Yisrael in the first

place.

Nonetheless, we went directly from Shitim to Gilgal [the first stop in Israel]; due to Hashem’s great kindness towards us!

The Gemara [Ketubot (110b)] states that being outside of Israel is like idolatry. Thus, what Lavan (involving us in idolatry) and Bilaam (keeping us from Israel) tried to do to us is indeed parallel! This is one of the perspectives that Chazal allude to by equating Bilaam and Lavan.

Our enemies understand today, as then, that Israel is vital to Judaism. We Jews also need to understand this!

R. Yitzchak Twersky, Neve Daniel

The Antidote for Bilaam’s Evil Eye

Guest article by

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher

Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

“And Bilaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel” (Bamidbar 24:2). Rashi explains that Bilaam wanted to curse the Jewish People with the Evil Eye (Ayin Hara). What is the evil eye and how does it work? How can we shield ourselves from its effects?

The Evil Eye is a mysterious, powerful, negative, spiritual force that is unleashed by the gaze of jealous and envious onlookers. Colloquially, many Jews use the Hebrew expression "Bli

Ayin Hara" (without the Evil Eye) when speaking about their good fortune, to avoid arousing its wrath against their children, health and wealth.

In Kabbalistic sources, the eye frequently serves as a metaphor to describe G-d's metaphysical awareness as well as the interest people take in each other. The Bible depicts the watchful eye of G-d over the Jewish people (D'varim 11:12, T'hilim 33:18) and further demands that people not close their eyes to the needs of the less fortunate (D'varim 7:16, 15:9). It cautions us from being led astray by the wandering eye (Bamidbar 15:39), understanding that visual sensations cause the most sinful temptations (Sota 8a).

Within the Talmud the sages admonish one for possessing an Ayin Hara, clearly connoting the vice of an Evil Eye (Pirkei Avot 2:9,11). One should instead adopt the trait of an Ayin Tova (good eye), taking satisfaction with one's lot in life and wishing the best for one's friends and neighbors (Avot D'Rabi Natan 16).

Numerous Talmudic sources depict an "Evil Eye" with harmful and destructive spiritual powers. The sage Rav, for example, attributed many fatal illnesses to the Evil Eye, with the Talmud even contending that he could enter cemeteries and determine that 99 out of 100 people died prematurely from Ayin Hara causes (Bava Metzia 107b).

These sages affirmed that certain eyes

possessed natural baneful potencies, or alternatively believed that the envious glare of onlookers, even with no ill intended, could cause Divine negative repercussions.

These beliefs were widespread in both antiquity and medieval times, and extended to both the learned elite and the masses. Significantly, Rashi (1040-1150, France) and many other medieval scholars explained that the Bible prohibited directly counting the heads of population groups to avoid inflicting an "Evil Eye" (Sh'mot 30:12). Many medieval philosophers affirmed this power of Ayin Hara. Both Gersonides (1288-1344, France) and Rav Yitzhak Arama (15th century, Spain), for example, elaborately explain how eyes can emit certain vapors that wreak havoc on their objects. Others, like Rav Ovadia Seforno (1475-1550, Italy) adopt a more spiritual approach, contending that escalated individual attention causes G-d to examine the actions of the given person, increasing the possibility of divine reproach, since no one is without sin.







Rambam directly challenged the notion of an Evil Eye and other folklore beliefs by minimizing the impact these types of beliefs had in Halachic matters. The Talmud, for example, forbids one from overly admiring another's field crops, lest the Evil Eye damage the crops. While Rashi, Ramban, Rav Yosef Karo (Choshen Mishpat 378:5) affirmed this explanation, Rambam explained the prohibition as a protection of another's

privacy, and dismissed the Talmud's reasoning. Similarly, while the Talmud forbids caring for lost property while in the view of strangers, lest the Evil Eye destroy the property (Bava Metzia 30a), Rambam only mentions the second reason offered in the Talmud, that the onlookers might steal it.









Despite Rambam's opposition, many popular customs based on belief in the Evil Eye became part of Halacha, Jewish Law. Double weddings within families or congregations are not held to avoid the harm of noticeable celebration (Even Ha'ezer 62:3). Fathers and sons similarly refrained from reciting consecutive blessings over the Torah reading. While Rav Yechiel Michel HaLevi Epstein permitted one to forgo this custom if he was not concerned with the Evil Eye (Aruch HaShulchan 141:8), the majority of contemporary scholars believe that this custom should never be waived (Mishna B'rura 141:19).

Some contemporary scholars clearly continue to affirm the historic belief in the Ayin Hara. Rav Meshulam Roth (d. 1963) chastised another scholar for dismissing its significance and importance (Kol Mevaser 2:7). Rav Ovadia Yosef gave a fascinating dvar Torah detailing the measures one can take to avoid the Ayin Hara. The main precaution one can take to prevent the Evil Eye is to lead a modest lifestyle. This includes dressing and behaving with Tzniut (modesty), not showing off, and not boasting about one's accomplishments, achievements, and possessions.


ParshaPix explanations

-  In the upper left corner of the ParshaPix is part of one of the very first ParshaPixPuzzles of years ago. There is a BLOCK (sounds like BALAK) in a nest, which makes it BLOCK BEN TZIPOR
-  Globe wearing an eye patch. Balak said that Israel was so numerous that we covered EIN HAARETZ, the eye of the Earth (as does the patch in that graphic)
-  Messengers from Moav came to Bil'am with K'SAMIM B'YADAM, represented by the magic trick in the hand
-  Bil'am's donkey saw the sword drawn in the angel's hand; Bil'am did not see it at first (or second or third)
-  When the donkey talks to Bil'am, she asks him why he has hit her these three REGALIM, three times. Commentaries point out that it doesn't say P'AMIM, three times, but rather uses the word that refers to our cycle of holidays and to the People who observe them. The angel repeats the reference to SHALOSH REGALIM. The speech-bubble for the donkey contains the question (mark) about the three festivals, represented by the Lulav, Matza, and Torah
-  Chicago basketball player, one of the BULLS and a St. Louis football

player, one of the RAMS. Bulls and rams, 7 of each, (hence the large numeral 7) were repeatedly offered as sacrifices by Bil'am and Balak

-  Clapping hands - a representation of Balak striking his hands together in disgust at Bil'am's repeated failure to do as requested. VAYISPOK. A unique word in Tanach, appearing nowhere else
-  The Xed out snake is also from Bil'am's words, that there is no NACHASH in Yaakov. His meaning is that we do not rely on omens
-  A "house filled with money" - sort of what Balak told Bil'am that he missed out on by not uttering one teensy weeny curse
-  The shul in the lower-left corner reminds us of the famous MA TOVU OHALECHA YAAKOV...
-  Lying across the bottom of the ParshaPix is the ROMACH, the spear that Pinchas used to protect G-d's honor
-  The river of oil from the pitcher is mentioned in the haftara
-  On the reverse side of a US dollar bill is a picture of the Great Seal: A pyramid with an all-seeing eye on top. Sometimes called the enlightened eye. Bil'am calls himself the man with SH'TUM HA-AYIN. Living Torah offers these translations: enlightened, future- seeing, seeing, open, true-sighted, sleepless, evil, dislocated, blinded.
-  In the upper-right corner of the ParshaPix is a MEM, representing

the MEM that is at the upper-right corner of the column in the Torah that starts with MA TOVU OHALECHA YAAKOV... What is remarkable about this MEM is that there is a Scribal Tradition that six specific columns in the Torah (out of 245 or so) need to start at a specific point in the text. All other columns are flexible, in a sense, and the exact beginning of each column will vary from Sofer to Sofer. (Actually, today's Sifrei Torah are written by copying from photocopies of a small number of existing Sifrei Torah whose writing is considered particularly good. So there is more uniformity from Torah to Torah - more than would be expected from the Tradition we're talking about.) This Tradition clashes a bit with another Tradition that each column begin with a VAV. This is a standard feature of most Sifrei Torah today, although it is only six specific columns that "must" begin the same way. Of the six, one starts with a VAV anyway, leaving 5 of about 245 columns that do not start with a VAV. One is the first column, which starts with the big BET of B'REISHIT. The MEM in Balak is another. Two others are the columns that begin the two "song" portions - HABA'IM at the top of the AZ YASHIR column and V'AIDA at the top of the first of the two Haazinu columns.

-  The lion cub is mentioned in Bil'am's description of the people of Israel - "Behold, the people will arise like a lion cub and raise itself

like a lion..." (Bamidbar 23:24) and "He crouched and lay down like a lion, and, like a lion cub - who can stand up to him?" (24:9)

🐾 ET is for ITI, with me. The occurs 52 times in Tanach and brings to mind the extraterrestrial who wanted to phone home. Balak asks Bil'am to go with him to another vantage point and see the Israelite camp.

🐾 The Shofar and crown go together and represent the pasuk, Bamidbar 23:21, in which Bil'am proclaims, "He has not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor has he seen perverseness in Israel; HaShem his God is with him, and the TRUMPET BLAST OF A KING (UTRU'AT MELECH) is among them."

🐾 Below the crown on the right side is CHEF-E, as in SHEFI, from 23:3. It has the meaning of He went alone (in order to meditate and hopefully be guided to curse the Jewish people as he wanted to and as he was hired to.

🐾 In the lower right is another BALAK, a ben TZIPOR, that is. A baby bird is a BEN TZIPOR; so was BALAK.

🐾 A company's logo and a Shrek character remain to be explained, which they won't - this week, anyway. That makes them each a ParshaPix Unexplained.

TTreader Feedback --- Towards better davening and Torah reading

In last week's Praying with Passion piece on YIGDAL, we tacked on a TBDATR box that pointed out that often, when singing a part of the davening (rather than just saying it), we sometimes pause in the wrong place within a sentence, thereby distorting the meaning of what we are saying, or simply saying something that doesn't make proper sense, in order to keep the beat of the song. The example we gave unintentionally opened an interesting issue. SP pointed this out, but his bandaged and slinged arm prevented his emailing the details, so here's what we put together from his comments (at a wedding with distracting background noise).

Remember that YIGDAL is a 13-line poem, each line of which is about one of the Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith. The line in question is the 5th one, HINO ADON OLAM... which corresponds to ANI MAAMIN... "that to the Creator, blessed be His Name, and to Him alone, it is right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being besides Him." It seems that there are two versions of the Hebrew line in Yigdal. Although the difference between the two versions is very slight, things change.

[1] הנו אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם לְכֹל נוֹצֵר, יוֹרֵה גְדֻלָּתוֹ וּמְלַכּוּתוֹ.

[2] הנו אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם, וְכֹל נוֹצֵר יוֹרֵה גְדֻלָּתוֹ וּמְלַכּוּתוֹ.

Note not only the L'CHOL vs.

V'CHOL, but the change in the position of the comma as a result.

[1] is translated as, "Lord of the Universe is He proclaimed, Teaching His power to all His hand has framed." This version fits the beat of the song but seems to have a major "flaw" - it does not reflect the 5th of Rambam's principles. Serious problem.

[2] is translated, "Behold He is Master of the Universe; and every creature shows His greatness and majesty." (OU/Koren/Sachs Siddur - Via prayer to Him - this is the implication.) Fits better with the Principles of Faith but has the singing pause in the wrong place. Much less of a problem.

Similarly for [2] we have the Birnbaum siddur. There, the Hebrew is V'CHOL (this in the time when all other Siddurim probably had L'CHOL). The English is "He is the eternal Lord [notice that Birnbaum takes OLAM as eternal (timewise) rather than universe or world (space-wise)], every creature (V'CHOL NOTZAR) must declare His greatness and His kingship. In a footnote, Birnbaum says that YOREH is taken in the sense of YAGID or Y'SAPEIR (will tell) and that in Gemara Eiruvim, the word YOREH has the connotation of YITPALEIL (will pray).

The point of last week's comment was about a melody sometimes breaking a line in the wrong place. There are many examples of this - we just happen to chose one that is a lot more complicated.

THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE OF JEWISH LAW

Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean

Lesson # 524

JURISDICTION OF THE BEIT DIN

In a case that was decided by the Beit Din of Haifa in February '08, the question arose as to which Beit Din has jurisdiction to judge the case. I have written about this in the past but this case was unique in its reasoning. The plaintiff was from a yishuv and the defendant was a resident of Haifa. The defendant when summoned to the Beit Din of the yishuv responded that he would appear before the Beit Din of Rabbi Karelitz of Bnei Braq. The Beit Din began its reasoning with the well know principle that the defendant's place of residence is the proper venue of a case to be judged. Furthermore the plaintiff must go to the city of the defendant if they reside in different cities. This, in spite of the fact that the Beit Din in the city of the plaintiff is superior to the Beit Din of the defendant. What made this case unique was that the foregoing was the halacha among the Ashkenazic Jews and there was a question whether the Sephardic Jews also had this tradition. The decision of the Beit Din cited various decisors who held that this is also the Sephardic tradition, although many Sephardic judges did not always see this as their tradition. He then quotes from Rabbi Ovadya Yosef that the law in this area is as cited by the Rama who cites mostly Ashkenazic sources to substantiate his position in the matter. There is a

notable exception: if there is a Beit Din that is so superior to the Beit Din of the city of the defendant, then the plaintiff can insist of having the case judged there. As to the question whether the Sephardim should also follow this tradition, he cites the opinion of the Gaon of Vilna that the opinion of the Rama is not a decree that was made by the Ashkenazic Jews but is the halacha without any decrees having been instituted to make it the halacha. This being so, the Sephardic Jews would also adhere to this halacha as a matter of halacha, not a decree made by Ashkenazic Jews. He also cites a ruling of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein who in writing on this matter writes that if a person is ill, he goes to the doctor rather than wait for the doctor to come to him. The plaintiff must go to the place of the defendant rather than insist that the defendant have the matter judged in the plaintiff's jurisdiction. The reason one goes to the doctor is that the doctor can better treat him in the doctor's office; so here too the judges of the local court of the defendant which will have more influence to have the defendant appear to answer the complaint in the local Beit Din. Also if the defendant loses the trial he will be more apt to abide by the decision of the Beit Din of his community. Also that neither party may say to the other party, the Beit Din I selected is superior to the one selected by you. Therefore these rules apply only if the defendant selects his local Beit Din that the plaintiff must go to that Beit Din. But if the defendant selects a Beit Din not from his own community, the plaintiff may object and say he wants to select his own Beit Din. □

TRIDDLES

Prizes for best solution sets are furnished by Noam Productions and/or Big Deal.

Last issue's (**CHUKAT**) TTriddles:

[1] Location in, same as Shimon's b'chor after

Parshat Chukat has 87 p'sukim. In some Chumashim (as we have told you on several occasions), there is a SIMAN (code) or two or three, printed at the end of the sedra - words or names whose gimatriya equals the number of p'sukim in the sedra. One of the SIMANIM for Chukat is L'MEI-D'VA, to MEI-D'VA. $30+40+10+4+2+1 = 87$. Location in - MEI-DVA is a location mention in the sedra. Shimon's firstborn is Y'MU-EIL is another SIMAN for Chukat. $10+40+6+1+30 = 87$. L'MEI-D'VA is the "same as Shimon's b'chor after" the sedra, that is, in the SIMANIM that are listed after the sedra.

[2] The white Bella and a booky moon each claim him

Chukat has three SIMANIM listed. The first two are explained in TTriddle [1] above. The third on is UZI, $70+7+10=87$. Of several UZIs in Tanach, two of them are UZI ben BELA, a grandson of Binyamin (UZI, that is, BELA was Binyamin's son) and UZI ben BUKI, a descendant of PINCHAS and ancestor of EZRA. Since Bella, as we spelled the name in the TTriddle, is a girl's name, the adjective "white" is L'VANA, with a gimatriya of

$30+2+50+5=87$. And spelling booky as we did, we made it seem to be an adjective describing moon, also L'VANA, also 87.

These first two triddles were all about the number of p'sukim in Chukat and the SIMANIM given for that number.

[3] Kashering vessels of Au, Ag, Cu, Fe, Sn, Pb (etc.)

The topic of kashering vessels can be found in Parshat Matot. The context is instructions from Elazar HaKohen (HaGadol) concerning the spoils of war from Midyan. Bamidbar 31:22 lists six metals from which vessels were made and instructs the kashing by fire for those vessels used with fire. This, in addition to being treated with the Para Aduma ashes potion. The presentation of the TTriddle used the chemical symbols for ZAHAV (gold), KESEF (silver), N'CHOSHET (copper), BARZEL (iron), B'DIL (tin), and OFERET (lead). This portion in Matot is introduced with the words ZOT CHUKAT HATORAH - the only other occurrence of that phrase is at the beginning of Parshat Chukat. The link between the two is the MEI NIDA, as the Para Aduma potion is called.

[4] Yaakov, Yosef, Yaakov to Yosef, and what nation?

VAYMA-EIN, and he refused, occurs 9 times in the Tanach, four of which are in the Chumash. Yaakov refused to be comforted, not willing to accept that Yosef was really dead. Yosef refused the advances of Potifar's wife. The third occurrence is when Yaakov refuses to switch his hands back on the heads of

Menashe and Efrayim at Yosef's objection. The fourth occurrence is in Parshat Chukat, when the nation-state of Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through its territory.

[5] (02) 624-0504

This is the phone number of the OU restaurant off King George in Jerusalem known as the RED HEIFER STEAKHOUSE, as in PARA ADUMA.

[6] Between Bogie and Birdie bad not RH, Boston's state

In golf, each hole is designated with the number of strokes that a good golfer should take on average, to make the hole. This number is called PAR. A BOGIE is a score for the whole of one more than par. A BIRDIE is one less than par. Therefore, between BGIE and BIRDIE is PAR. Bad is RA. Not RH refers to the days of the week that Rosh HaShana cannot fall on - Sunday, Wednesday, Friday. The three days form the acronym ADU. Boston's state is Massachusetts, abbreviation, MA. All together: PARA ADUMA.

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WISDOM & WIT
 by Shmuel Himelstein

R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld was the head of the Old Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael, and was a very great Torah authority. Yet he never considered himself to be anything special. In a haskama - endorsement - which he wrote to a sefer, he said: "It pains me that I am referred to with titles of

which I am undeserving, even in the slightest way. I am a simple, old, frail man ... while in reality I have neither Torah nor wisdom. I do not know of any virtue that I have, except that, through the mercy of Hashem, I was able to settle in the Holy City.” □

Just before R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld was married, he went in to his Rebbe, the Kesav Sofer, to bid him goodbye. The Kesav Sofer handed him a letter of recommendation, which praised R' Yosef Chaim greatly for his Torah learning and personal attributes.

R' Yosef Chaim took the letter but did not even open it to read its contents.

When R' Yosef Chaim turned forty and was convinced that nothing in the letter would lead him to be conceited, he finally took out the envelope and read the letter.

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R' Menachem Mendel of Kotsk said... The greatest thief is the rote performance of one's obligations. Nothing poses a greater danger to the person.

Portion from the Portion **BALAK OR BALAAM**

The sedra that we read this week is called BALAK because that is the first significant word in the first verse of the portion. But doesn't it seem strange to refer to a section of the Torah read in shul by the name of one of Israel's enemies? Couldn't we find a better way to refer to this

section than by the name of someone who only wanted us cursed? What can we learn from the name of this week's portion?

First of all, the Rabbis referred to this weeks portion as Bilaam, rather than Balak, because of the beauty of the poetic verses that came out of Bilaam's mouth as blessings. The Rabbis even wanted to include it as one of the sections we would recite every day in our Sh'ma prayers. But in order not to burden the congregation they didn't require everyone to recite so many verses every day.

The Rav from Permishelin says that all goyim hate Jews - some just try to hide it. They make us think that they like us. We can get confused by this and trust them and don't realize we must guard ourselves against them. Balak was an 'honest goy' who made his hatred of the Jewish nation public knowledge. There was no way of mistaking it. He put so much effort into having us cursed and hurt - he didn't give up. When it comes to non-Jews it is something to be thankful for when they express their true beliefs towards us. We know where we stand with them and can try to protect ourselves accordingly. It's those who pretend to be our friends who are a lot worse. Balak was honest with his intentions towards us so we have a portion named after him. There is something positive to be said about enemies like Iran, Hamas, and Hizballah who make it clear what they think of us.

Something interesting to note about our portion. Some Sephardi Jews (i.e. those from Aleppo) base the songs of the services each Shabbat on the

content of that week's sedra. These tunes are called the Maqam. There are various Maqam tunes to portray different emotions depicted in the weekly portion or special events of the year. There are tunes for happy occasions (such as holidays) or to express the beauty of something (when reading the 10 Commandments) or when there is a tragedy in the portion (the death of someone - Chayei Sara, V'yechi and Acharei). The Maqam used for the portion of Balak is called Mahour, and portrays emotional instability and anger. This maqam is used twice a year - for the portion of Toldot and in Balak. In Toldot it is used because Eisav is upset. In our portion it is appropriate, because Balak became angered as the curses of Bilaam were turning into blessings. We must pray that it be Hashem's Will that all our enemies curses be turned into blessings.

Balak was king of Moav. Moav was located near the Dead Sea which is known for its salts. Usually our recipe is for something ingested through the mouth. For a change the recipe is for something absorbed through the skin (like on Yom Kippur we don't anoint ourselves because it is a type of "eating". It is for a recipe with bath salts from the Dead Sea which have medicinal and soothing effects. One can add aromatherapy oils or just regular scents to the salts to increase their therapeutic effects and enjoyment. I haven't tried this specific recipe but brought it here with the link to its source because it contains another ingredient from the area of Moav, lime. www.deadseamaterial.com/DeadSeaSalt-BasilLimeBath

DEAD SEA SALT BASIL & LIME BATH RECIPE

The ingredients are:

- 5 cups of Dead Sea Salt
- 1 Tsp. of Baking Powder
- 2 Tsp. of Almond Oil
- 5 drops Lime Scented Oil
- 4 drops Basil Oil

Mix the sea salt and the baking powder in a bowl.

In another smaller bowl mix together all liquids and add to salts, stirring well. Let sit so they can soak up the scent all of the way through. After they have sat for about two hours take them and place them in jars with cork stoppers. To create a good seal dip the cork in melted wax and put cork into bottle.

Correction:

Last week it was brought to my attention that there were a few mistakes in my column of two weeks ago, on the Gifts of the Kohein.

Third category should have read "10 gifts are given in GVULIN – anywhere in Israel.

24th gift should have said EZEL HAGER - the repayment of something stolen from a ger together with the penalty - if and only if the ger has died.

TERUMA & CHALLA don't need to be eaten in Jerusalem.

Although they repeatedly offered PAR VA-AYIL BAMIZBEI'ACH, their real weapon was the TONGUE

Famous anagramic questions from sedra and its haftara

Squab, gosling, eaglet, keet, eyas, cygnet

Curtiss JN-4H

More SOCCER: In the four corners of the field are corner arcs and corner flags -

קִשְׁתֵּי הַקֶּרֶן, דְּגִלּוֹן הַקֶּרֶן

More SOCCER (wonder why?)

Center forward and center back

בְּלֵם and חֲלוּץ מְרַכְזֵי

L'havdil, M52519 and Bamboo Harvester

Monkey's weekly: win, place, show

The tenth month, Sara the daughter, Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak, Rivka - mother of Yaakov and Eisav, on the Efrata road, 1500, the leaders of Israel, covered the eye of the Earth, you - your son and your daughter

☞ The evil inclination abhors a vacuum.

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What Israel did to its Gemara scholars?

Bil'am:Balak::Asa:whom?

31°40'1.49"N, 35°7'32.5"E

Male donkey = JACK; Female donkey = JENNY

עֵיזָר ♦ אֶתוֹן

He follows Naso and Balak

Parsha Points to Ponder

Suggested answers

1) The Ohr HaChayim suggests that this demonstrates Bilaam's wickedness. He was only willing to offer them a place to sleep for THAT NIGHT and specified that the offer was for that night and that night only.

2) Daat Zekainim MiBaalei HaTosfot answer that G-D did not want Bilaam with his impurity to come to His domain and, therefore, G-D went to Bilaam's location. Moshe, however, was holy and pure and was welcome in G-D's domain.

3) The Kli Yakar explains that when referring to death, Bilaam was asking for his death to be like all the righteous people who have died. However, when referring to what will happen to him after death, his hope was to live a spiritual life which meant to be similar to G-D. Thus, switched to the singular, LIKE HIM, referring to G-D and his desire to be connected to G-D after death.

The 48th (of 48) quality associated with the acquisition of Torah is saying something in the name of the one who said it. As it says in Esther...

But who said, KOL HA-OMEIR DAVAR B'SHEIM OMRO...? It does not say who in Avot 6. But it does in the gemara:

ואמר רבי אלעזר אמר רבי חנינא: כל האומר...