

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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Lehatslachat Hatinoket Rachel Ayelet Vechol Mishpacha

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



CONFUSED

Life, as we know, was much simpler when Apple and BlackBerry were just fruits!

Nowadays we are blessed with choice and innovation, but all of this leads to a great deal of added confusion. Walking into the supermarket we are faced with a challenge. First, we decide which product we actually need, and then it's the next decision; which one of the 4-5 same products (different brands) on the shelf should we choose.

Confusion plays a daily role in our lives. But confusion is not only isolated to our choices, it seems to take a deeper dimension within our very being.

In this week's Parsha we are taught the story of the wicked Bilam who wanted to curse the Bnei Yisrael. Balak King of Moav sent for Bilam to curse the Bnei Yisrael.

«Balak sent messengers to Bilam ben Be'or to city of Ptor which is by the river... to call him.» (22:5)

The Torah seems to go out of its way to tell us where Bilam was living. Is this not irrelevant?

Our Sages define 'The River' as referring to the Euphrates («Nhar Prat»), the main river flowing through Mesopotamia. We are shown that even though Bilam was so far away from the scene, he was more than happy to go out of his way

and travel the long distance in order to curse the Bnei Yisrael.

On a deeper note the Shira David (Rabbi Dovid Hecksher, Rosh Yeshiva Kol Torah ztsl) brings a famous Midrash Yalkut Shimoni (Ezra) that asks how is it possible that prophets prophesied outside of Israel.

The Midrash lists a few answers. It could be due to the merit of the fathers (Zechut Avot). Alternatively, if a prophet had already received prophecy once in Israel, then he was able to prophesise even outside of Israel. A further answer that the Shira David focuses on is that a prophet was able to receive prophecy outside Israel when he was by a river. The river flowing with fresh water represents purity and we find that Daniel (Daniel 10:4 – "And I was on the big river") and Ezekiel both prophesied by rivers.

When we want to purify ourselves, we go to the Mikveh. Bilam lived and made sure he was always close to a river, because he seemed to live a life of purity. The Torah tells us where Bilam lived in order to emphasise what kind of a person he was. He would make sure to Tovel every day in order to receive the word of Hashem. It seems he acted like a righteous prophet. Let's continue to delve into the story.

Bilam's donkey goes astray - out from the path and Bilam hits the donkey chastising him.

The Midrash Rabba explains that Bilam said to the donkey;

"Why are you going to eat in fields that are not ours? I am like Avraham. I don't want you to steal from other fields."

It seems Bilam aspired to be like our forefather the righteous Avraham. Eventually he arrives and is greeted by King Balak. They proceed to a nearby hilltop facing the Bnei Yisrael, where he can begin his curse. Bilam said to Balak, «Build me seven altars here, and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams.» He asks Balak to build him seven altars(23:1). ►

> MAZAL TOV TO

Yuval and Helene Hen
on the birth of their baby daughter Odellia



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Difficult roads often
lead to beautiful
destinations"

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DVAR TORAH

Confused
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

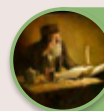
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Bilam offers up seven offerings to Hashem. He seems clear to Whom he is offering and quite specific in the number seven. Why seven?

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabah 20, 18) explains that the seven altars correspond to the seven altars built by the following seven Tsadikim—Adam, Hevel, Noach, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and Moshe. Bilam reasoned that Hashem favoured them because of their offerings to Him.

So, he appealed to Hashem: “Wouldn’t it be nicer for you to be served by seventy nations rather than by a single nation?”

Bilam was so sure of himself. He showed his righteousness by going to the Mikveh every day, ensuring his animals would not go off the path to steal, offering up sacrifices as did the previous Tsadikim and focusing his prayer to G-d. Ah! What a Tsadik!

Only one thing was wrong with that – this ‘Tsadik’ was confused! He was worried about

stealing and purification but at the same time wished to curse an entire nation!

The Gemara Sota 22b states that King Yanai told his wife: “You need not fear the true Perushim (righteous), nor those who are not Perushim;

“You need fear only the coloured (those who portray themselves to be Perushim) - They sin like Zimri, and anticipate reward like Pinchas.”

On the face of this, we find it difficult to understand what King Yanai was saying. How is it possible to have behaviour like Zimri (who performed a wicked act) and ask for the reward like Pinchas (who acted righteous)? The answer is that there are many tainted people out there. They think they are acting righteously, yet deep down they are the complete opposite.

Bilam was such a character. He thought he was righteous. He had visions with G-d Almighty. How could he go wrong? People of the world revered him. Yet the Torah wants to

state his true colours. Deep down he was not righteous, acting solely for his own honour and materialistic gain.

When you take the two names Bilam and Balak together – two words are created. From the first two letters of both names we get the Hebrew word Bilbul – confusion the remaining letters spell Amalek.

The irony is that Bilam and Balak wanted to infuse confusion amongst Am Yisrael, yet they themselves were confused – Balak in that he believed in Bilam, and Bilam in that he thought he was acting righteously.

In an advanced world full of choice, the biggest choices we make is who we are. May Hashem bless us with the clarity to know and understand ourselves and be of the students of Avraham Avinu and not of Bilam. ■

RABBI DOV LEVY - PORAT YOSEF SYNAGOGUE

DVAR
TORAH



OPEN YOUR EYES!

In this week’s Parasha we are told of a remarkable exchange between Bilam and an angel of Hashem. Bilam’s donkey stops in its tracks when an angel brandishing a sword blocks its way. Bilam doesn’t see the angel and so strikes his animal three times, to coerce it to continue on the journey. The angel rebukes Bilam, challenging him as to why he struck his donkey when he was blocking its way. Bilam admits his mistake but attempts to justify himself by explaining that he didn’t see the angel.

Bilam seems to have a point. Why was the angel criticising him for striking the donkey? Was the angel not aware that Bilam couldn’t see him? On the other hand, why does Bilam admit guilt for hitting the donkey?

The Netziv in his pirush on the Torah, ‘Haamek Davar, explains the exchange with an important insight into the ways of Hashem and a valuable life rule. Hashem tests us, by setting paths before us which lead to evil and sin and we are given absolute power to choose whether to take the route to oblivion. However He also helps us overcome the tests, to defeat the Yetzer Hara, He guides us and encourages us to choose the paths which will lead to success and accomplishment, avoiding the roads which lead to catastrophe.

Here Hashem sent an angel to block the donkey’s path. Bilam wasn’t allowed to see the angel because the sight of the angel would have forced him to stop. However the presence of the angel and the reaction of the donkey and those with him should have been enough to make him hesitate. He should have had an intuition; he should have sensed that his path was wrong.

This is what the angel castigates him for by saying: “גַּם אֶתְּכָה הָרִגְתִּי – I would have killed you”. Here the word אֶתְּכָה is spelled out in full, with the hidden ‘Heh’, usually implicit in the Kamatz of אֹתְךָ, from the word אָתָּה, appearing in the text. The Torah usually does this

to emphasise the second person, to say ‘particularly you, no one else!’. The donkey understood because it saw, the lads accompanying him understood and recoiled, only ‘you’, Bilam, didn’t get the message. The presence of the angel of Hashem should have been enough for a man of your stature to understand and desist. We now understand Bilam’s response: ‘I have sinned, I did not know you were there’ -the sin was the very fact he did not know. He was so enwrapped in the delusion that he could defy Hashem, so determined to curse the Jewish people, that he was oblivious to the thundering message Hashem had sent him.

We too are given tests at every juncture of our lives. Difficult dilemmas, which often require great *emunah*, determination and strength of character to choose the correct path. However Hashem helps us at every step of the way. We just need to open our eyes and see his helping hand, open our ears to hear his voice and pray to him for inspiration to make the correct decisions. May we always choose wisely and may Hashem overturn all decrees to blessing! ■

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI MOSHE BEN MACHIR

Rabbi Moshe ben Machir was among the great men of Sefat who lived some 400 years ago. He was a good friend of Rabbi Shemuel de Uceda, the author of Midrash Shemuel on Perkei Avoth. He is best known for his work Seder HaYom, printed for the first time in Venice in 5359 (1599). He also founded a yeshiva in the village of Ein Zeitoun, near Sefat.

For many years, Ein Zeitoun had been known as a place of Torah and holiness. The Tanna Rabbi Yehudah (the son of Rabbi Ilai), Rabbi Kruspedai, and Rabbi Yossef Sargossi (known as HaTzaddik HaLavan ["The White Tzaddik"]) are buried there. In his book Chachmei HaSefaradim B'Eretz Israel (Sephardic Sages in the Land of Israel), Rav Shraga Weiss recounts that the Arizal was particularly fond of Ein Zeitoun, and he would normally go there to pray by the gravesite of the Tanna Rabbi Yehudah. He also directed his disciples to go there and recite special kabbalistic prayers that he had taught them. Rabbi Eliezer Ezekri, the author of Sefer HaChareidim, would normally travel to Ein Zeitoun on the eve of Rosh Hashanah to shed tears over the exile of the Shechinah and to pray for the salvation of body and soul. In Sefer HaChareidim, in the chapter that deals with mitzvot connected to the land of Israel, he writes that the people of Ein Zeitoun had the custom of reciting Rabbi Yehudah Halevi's Shir Yedidot, which begins with the words: "The Holy Land will be called favored ... in beseeching G-d not to chase them out" from this holy place that was filled with ancient glory, where Jews had poured themselves out in prayer for hundreds of years. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir built a yeshiva there, which very quickly earned a great reputation throughout the Diaspora. There he also wrote his very specific work Seder HaYom. Written on the first edition's flyleaf, we read: "A work entitled Seder HaYom: An exquisite explanation of the prayers according to the four types of wisdom known by the acronym PARDES. Written by a man of G-d, entirely wise and pious, Rav Moshe ben Machir of Sefat."

The book was truly well named. It shows every Jew how to organize his day according to the ways of Torah and the fear of G-d. It is designed for every segment of the population, and it deals in particular with the course of the day, from morning till night, during the week and on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, and the holidays. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir wrote in his introduction: "This is why every man should push himself, day and night, at all times and at every instant, not to lose even a single moment of time with the vanities and charms of this world. From the time he arises in the morning until he goes to bed at night, a man should manage his time in such a way that he seeks only to accomplish G-d's will. As for his own desires, they should be the same as Heaven's: Correct and pure."

"This is why I felt the need - I, Moshe the son of Yehudah from the family of Machir - to write this book that I have named Seder HaYom [literally 'Order of the Day'], because in it I deal with how a man should manage his days and nights, his Shabbats and holidays, during the entire year - be it at home or away - when going to bed and when arising."

Seder HaYom spread throughout the entire Diaspora, and it has been cited by all the Poskim of previous generations that dealt with laws concerning daily life. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir made substantial promises to whomever studied his book and followed its advice in their daily life: "I am certain that by adopting this daily regimen, one will be loved by G-d and man. He will succeed in everything he undertakes, he will conduct himself faultlessly, he will attain an advanced age, he will see children and grandchildren, and he will succeed in accomplishing G-d's will. This is the right path for all to follow." ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

INFLATING A BALL ON SHABBAT

The Gemara in Masechet Shabbat (48) addresses the question of whether it is permissible to fill a pillow with feathers or other material on Shabbat. If the pillow had not been previously filled, the Gemara establishes, then filling it on Shabbat would constitute "Makke Ba'patish" - completing the process of making a functional item, one of the thirty-nine categories of Shabbat prohibitions. It appears from the Gemara that this would be forbidden on the level of Torah law ("Mi'de'orayta"). However, if the pillow was previously stuffed and the material had come out of the pillow, then returning the material inside the pillow would be permissible. (Of course, this assumes that one does not stitch the pillow, which would certainly be forbidden on Shabbat.) This Halacha is codified by the Shulhan Aruch (Orah Haim 340:8).

Rabbi Gedalya Felder (Toronto, 20th century), in his work Yesode Yeshurun, extends the Gemara's ruling to the contemporary issue of inflating balls on Shabbat. He rules that if the ball was already inflated before Shabbat, and subsequently became deflated, Halacha allows inflating it anew on Shabbat. If, however, the ball had not been inflated before Shabbat, then inflating it on Shabbat would be forbidden due to the prohibition of "Makke Be'patish," as discussed above.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Israel, 1910-1995), by contrast, as cited in the work "Shemirat Shabbat Ke'hilchata" (16:8), disagrees. In his view, one cannot compare the two cases of filling a pillow with feathers and filling a ball with air, and thus he maintains that Halacha allows inflating a ball even if it had not been previously inflated.

It should be noted that according to Sephardic practice, balls are in any event considered Mukse and may not be handled on Shabbat. For Sepharadim, then, this Halacha applies only in the case of a child, regarding whom Halacha is more lenient and allows handling and playing with a ball on Shabbat. Children are thus permitted to inflate a ball with which they wish to play on Shabbat, but adults should not inflate a ball or even handle it at all Shabbat.

Summary: It is permissible to inflate a ball on Shabbat. However, Sephardic custom forbids handling a ball in any event on Shabbat, except for children. ■

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TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- ❶ Why did Moav consult specifically with Midian regarding their strategy against the Jews?
- ❷ What was Balak's status before becoming Moav's king?
- ❸ What happens to a field where oxen graze?
- ❹ What were Bilaam's three main characteristics?
- ❺ Why did Balak think Bilaam's curse would work?

Answer

❶ 22:4 - Since Moshe grew up in Midian, the Moabites thought the Midianites might know wherein lay Moshe's power.
 ❷ 22:2-4 - He was a prince of Midian.
 ❸ 22:4 - It shows no sign of blessing.
 ❹ 24:2 - An evil eye, pride, and greed.
 ❺ 22:6 - Because Bilaam's curse had helped Sichon defeat Moav.

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