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## COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

## BALAK

16<sup>th</sup> Tammuz 5776

Shabbat begins: 20:49

Shabbat ends: 22:01

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Leiluy Nishmat David ben Mesuda.  
Tihyeh Nishmato Betsurat Hachaim.



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL  
DIRECTOR, TAL

### How Beautiful Are Your Tent's Yakov!

The military general was under pressure he needed to attack soon. When would be the best time to attack? It must be when their defences are down. A time when their Big Brother is not watching.

This Kavyachol was the intention of Bilam Harasha. He knew the exact time in the day that G-d focuses His anger on the world, and he wished to channel that anger towards Am Yisrael.

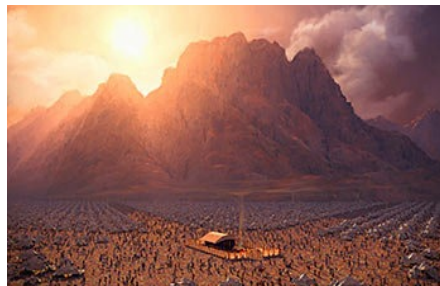
He waited for the opportune time, but he also needed to make sure that Hashem was not around. Of course, this is impossible, but if only he could find a way that the Shechina – Hashem's presence, was not felt amongst Am Yisrael, then Bilam's curses would hit the target.

To his detriment and our merit, he failed. He gazed towards the beautiful tents of Israel, seeing the tribes settled in an orderly format, each with their own flag surrounding the Holy Mishkan, and let out one of the

most famous statements -"Ma Tovv Ohalecha Yaakov Mishk'notecha Yisrael - How good are your tents, Yaakov, your dwellings, Israel. (24:5)"

What is the deeper meaning of his statement and how does it affect our outlook in life?

Rashi gives two explanations. Bilam saw that in their encampments that the Tents were not facing each other. This inspired him to say Mah Tovv – It is appropriate that the Shechina should rest upon them. They were living "B'Tzniut" – following a code of modesty. 'Tzanuah' means hidden. Their tents were positioned in a manner that would afford each family, privacy. They did not, nor did they desire to, look into each other's tents without permission.



The second explanation is that Bilam was focusing only on the Mishkan – the Holy Temple in the wilderness. We have two beautiful explanations from Rashi, the first is that Ohalecha refers to the tents and dwelling places of Am Yisrael, and the second is that it refers to our Holy Temple.

What makes a Jewish home? How do we bring Kedusha to our houses?

In fact we can suggest that these two explanations are intertwined, for we know that the Jewish home is a Mikdash MeAt – a small Temple.

Lets ponder that a second, - The Temple is parallel to the home!

Chazal teach us that there were three miracles that graced Sarah's home: her Shabbat candles burned all week; her challah was blessed with a Divine satiating quality; and the presence of G-d hung over her tent in the form of a cloud. When she passed away, these disappeared yet once Yitschak married Rachel and brought her into his tent, all these miracles returned.

The Shem Mishmuel explains that the Mishkan also had these three miracles. The candles of the menorah, the Lechem Hapanim – bread baked and left on the Shulchan from one Erev Shabbat to the next, and the cloud of Glory hovered above.

A person who acts in the right manner at home, is able to bring G-d's presence into that home!

The Gemara Shabbat (31a) states that any person who has Torah but does not have Yirat Shamayim is compared to a man that builds a gate, as a pathway up to a house, but there is no house at the end. What would it look like if you have a gate but no house to go into? Similarly, someone who has Torah but no Yirat Shamayim has a gate but he has nowhere to go into.

The Divrei Yoel explains this analogy refers to people who



### Living with Mitzvos

1. Which famous Jewish person descended from *Bolok* and why did he merit this?
2. What do we know about how *Bilom* looked?
3. If *Hashem* never got angry during the days when *Bilom* wanted to curse the Jews, how then could all *Bilom's* blessings, besides for one, switch to curses?
4. How was *Bilom* punished and killed?
5. *Hashem's* anger lasted a moment. What already could *Bilom* have said in such a short time to curse the Jews?
6. In most *Ashkenazi Siddurim*, after davening it brings six remembrances for every day. In the Siddur of the *Chida*, taken on by the *Sefardim*, there are ten remembrances one of which is in remembrance of *Parshas Bolok*. What is it?
7. How did the curses change to blessings?

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in synagogue and yeshiva learn well, perform Mitsvot and are treated by the public as Tsadikim. Yet when they arrive home, another story comes into play. Their attitude changes, their learning stops and is not implemented, impurity is allowed to enter the house and their treatment of their spouses and children is not up to the high standard they show when outside. These people have built a gate outside, they are learning in public, but when it comes to their home, there is no home – the Kedusha is lacking and therefore the Shechina does not rest there. A home without the Shechina is not a home.

The Kedushat Halevi brings the Gemara in Megila (29a) that states in the future all the

synagogues and learning centres will be uprooted and transferred to Israel.

Wow! But what about our homes? Will they go too, or will we have to build new ones in Israel?

He explains that the Gemara already took it for granted that our homes will also be transported to Israel. The Gemara was stating that *even* the synagogues will be transported.

He explains that the home can be an even more holy environment than the shul. For in the shul one is in the public eye and generally only learns there during the day, whereas the torah and Mitsvot that are performed in the house are hidden and both in day and night.

Hence in the future all our homes that have been filled with Kedusha will also be transported to Eretz Yisrael.

Bilam set out to destroy the Jewish Nation. Something stood in his path. Our unity on the outside, together with our unity on the inside. When we are united as a nation, no curse can befall upon us. Nevertheless, there is a higher level up. When we are united on the inside then we also merit Hashem's presence in our homes.

Let us live up to the words Ma Tovv Ohalecha Yakov and enhance our homes with Torah, Mitsvot, Kindness and patience towards all, and may we merit Hashem's presence with us always Amen.



RABBI BENJAMIN STONE

## Blind Determination

It is widely known that the key to the Israeli victory in the 1967 ("6-day") war was its decision to launch a pre-emptive strike on the air-forces of the Arab armies which had united to wage war against them. It is less widely known that an unforeseeable turn of events had occurred on the day of the air-strike which was to work to the Israeli's advantage. On the morning of 5 June 1967 Abdel Hakim Amer, Egyptian defence minister and General Sidki, commander of the air-force decided to carry out a pre-battle inspection of their army bases. Wishing to avoid becoming victims of "friendly fire" from their own troops, they instructed Egyptian anti-aircraft batteries not to fire on aeroplanes flying overhead until further notice. There is no evidence that the Israeli military was even aware of this order. The Israeli attack, commencing at 7:45 AM on the same day faced little defence and was for the most part complete by 11 AM with the Egyptian air-force laying in ruins.

Was this a chance happening? Those who at the time believed that the overall Israeli victory

was down to excellent military planning would probably argue that it was. However surely when this "stroke of luck" is viewed in the context of the curious history of the Jewish people, in the context of our possession of the Torah and in the context of the clear presence of *Hashem* in his complicated and wondrous world, it should simply be considered as another thread in the emerging tapestry of special *hashgacha pratit* (divine supervision) to which we are subject as a nation.

One of the most perplexing features of *Bilaam's* psyche is his clear belief in *Hashem* coupled with his insistence on having his own way, irrespective of any instructions to the contrary. *Hashem* instructed *Bilaam* clearly "You shall not curse this people because they are blessed" (*Bamidbar* 22:12) and nevertheless *Bilaam* prepared his own

in front of a *malach* (angel) bearing a sword, he could see neither the *malach* nor the sword. This confrontation is symbolic of *Hashem's* clear warning not to curse *klal yisroel* and *Bilam's* apparent inability to register that warning.

How can we explain *Bilam's* irrational betrayal of his own beliefs? How could he refuse to listen to the G-d he himself believed in?

The *gemarah* tells us (*Makot* 10a) "*bederech sheadam rotzeh lalech molichin oto*" ("A person is lead in the path which he chooses to follow"). The source of this truism, according to the *gemarah*, is *Hashem's* treatment of *Bilaam* in this *parasha*. At first *Hashem* told *Bilaam* not to go with *Balak's* princes. However when *Bilaam* asked *Hashem* a second time if he could travel with them he was granted permission, given his clear desire to go. How are we to understand this idea that a person is lead down the path they have chosen? Can it really be that once a person chooses the wrong path, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will positively orchestrate events so as to ensure that he sinks further?

How are we to understand this idea that a person is lead down the path they have chosen? Can it really be that once a person chooses the wrong path, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will positively orchestrate events so as to ensure that he sinks further?

Rav Shimon Schwab zts"l (Ma'ain Bet Hashoeva) writes that if a person genuinely wants to achieve evil or deplorable goals then *Hashem* indeed will manipulate events to help him achieve goals. A example of this phenomenon is the project embarked upon by the *dor haflaga* (generation who built the Tower of Babel). *Hashem* did not intervene to cause the tower they were building to fall down. In fact he indicated that he would be of assistance: "Nothing will remain beyond their reach – whatever they already have in mind to accomplish" (*Bereishit* 11:6).

donkey for the journey in the zealous hope that he would get a chance to curse *klal yisroel*. The imagery set within the *parasha* is striking; *Bilam* really was blind in one eye (*Rashi*, 24:3) - with one eye he believed in *Hashem* and with the other he could see only his personal ambitions. When he stood

The *Be'er Yosef* (Rav Yosef Tzvi Salant zts"l) writes

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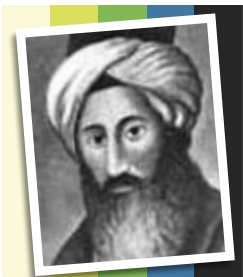
however that the rule stated in the *gemarah* should not be interpreted to mean that *Hashem* encourages a person further along the negative path they have chosen. The *gemarah* is in fact highlighting a frightening facet of the human condition. If a person strongly desires something, even something forbidden, he will interpret all events, experiences or conversations as concurring with his goal. He will continue in trying to achieve his ambition even where basic common sense dictates otherwise – by means of unlikely and irrational arguments. Matters can continue in this way until the person in question actually interprets events in manner which is the exact opposite of their true meaning.

*Bilaam* was a victim of this condition. After he had seen the statement "What I curse, *Hashem* has chosen not to curse" (23:8) planted in his mouth he nevertheless prepared animal offerings in the hope that *Hashem* would change his mind. In doing so *Bilaam* was making the most unlikely judgment call. The whole sequence of events up to that point clearly showed that there was no way that *hashem* would change his mind and yet *Bilaam* pursued that impossibility.

According to the *Be'er Yosef* it is not *Hashem* who leads a person further down the wrong path which he has chosen. It is events themselves - or rather a person's

interpretation of those events - which lead a person on.

Certainly blind determination can be destructive. However it does have a place. How often does it occur that we feel inspired to achieve something in our *avodat hashem* and suddenly we find ourselves facing an avalanche of reasons why we cannot achieve that goal. "I can't fit an extra ten minutes of learning into my day", "I can't take time out to learn in yeshiva".....We need to employ more of an irrational stubbornness when seeking to achieve spiritual goals. We need look for and see in every event or encounter a latent message of encouragement for our noble ambitions. If we do that then *Hashem* really will



## STORIES OF OUR CHACHAMIM

### Commemorating the Or Hachaim

On Motza'ei Shabbos 15 Tammuz 5503/1743 at the same time Rav Chaim ben Attar, better known by the name of his *peirush* on Chumash called *Ohr HaChaim*, was *niftar* in Yerushalayim, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* was washing for *Seudah Shlishit* and commented to his *talmidim*, "The *Ner Maaravi* has been extinguished." In Tiberius at that same time Rav Chaim Abulafia fainted. When he woke up, he said that he accompanied the *Ohr HaChaim* to the gates of Gan Eden.

When *Har HaZeitim* fell into the hands of the Jordanians after 1948, they started to build a road through the *Bet HaKvarot*. When the tractor came to the *kever* of the *Ohr Hachaim* it broke down and nothing could start it again. The next day they

brought in a new tractor to clear the path. As soon the tractor touched the *kever* it overturned and tumbled into the valley killing the driver. After that the plans were halted and a road was built higher on the mountain. The beginning of earlier road is still visible today.

The *Ohr HaChaim* was born in Sali, Morocco in 5456/1696 into a wealthy family. As he grew so did his Torah and *yirat shamayim* and he eventually opened up his own yeshiva. His life was not ideal as he was targeted by the government and thrown into jail on more than one occasion became accused falsely of things that he had no part in. One time he was even thrown into the lions den and came out unharmed.



## Living with Mitzvos

1. *Rus* descended from him in the merit of his bringing 42 *korbonous*, sacrifices, for the right intentions. He was not looking to annihilate the Jews for who they were but rather was acting in self defense because they were threatening his country. (Gemora Sota 47a)
2. *Bilom* was blind in one eye and lame in one leg, crushed by his donkey into the wall when the *Malach*, Angel, was blocking the way.
3. Perhaps it was as if the curses were not removed only were placed on hold. Like the anger of *Hashem* that was held back during those days. This situation continued – the potential curses are switched to blessings. However, when the Jews are no longer worthy to merit this constant switch that it can revert back to the curses without the override to switch it to blessings.
4. The *Mishna* (Sanhedrin 90a) brings that *Bilom* has no portion in the world to come. *Bilom* also in constantly afflicted with passion that destroys his body and soul (See Gemora Gittin 57a when *Onkelos* the convert brings up *Bilom's* soul when asking him about becoming a Jew). How he was killed was by the sword. It is mentioned in two places: in *Parshas Matois* (31:8) it brings that he was killed with a sword. In *Sefer Yehoshua* (13:22) it brings again that he was killed with a sword. The Gemora (Sanhedrin 106b) learns from here that he was killed (not only with the sword) by the four deaths meted out by *Beis Din* – stoning, burning, beheading and strangulation. This begs the question how can you kill one person with all four deaths simultaneously and why does the *possuk*, verse, single out to mention his death by the sword? *Rashi* (ibid) brings that they first hang *Bilom* (strangulation), then burnt a fire below where they hung him. Then cut off his head (beheading) that fell (like stoning where throw down from height) into the fire (burning). *Maharsha* (ibid) does not like this explanation since it means that some of these deaths came after he had already died. Instead, he says that to begin with them stoned him a bit (stoning) while he was still a bit alive, then they put a bit of molten iron into his mouth (burning) and then strangled him a bit (strangulation) and while he still was a bit alive then they beheaded him (beheading). With this explanation of the *Maharsha* we understand why the *possuk* only mentions him dying by the sword since this was the last one that actually fully killed him.
5. Either he said the word "*kaleim*", destroy them. Or, as long as he started cursing in that moment of anger then it could be continued afterwards and would work. (Tosfas Brochos 7a)
6. The remembrance of the *tzedoka* and kindness of *Hashem* that during these days when *Bilom* was attempting to curse at the moment of *Hashem's* Anger, during these days there was no anger and therefore no curse. The impact from this effects all future generations and therefore is reason for a daily reminder.
7. The Gemora (Taanis 20a) brings that the curses of *Achiya Hashiloini* were better than the blessings of *Bilom* (cf there). *Rashi* (ibid) brings that *Bilom* said a word that could be interpreted as a curse and then the *Malach*, Angel, added more words that changed it into a blessing.

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His earliest works, chidushim on Shas called Chefetz Hashem, were published in Amsterdam in 1732. He fled Morocco forever in 1738 after hunger ravaged the population and the survivors all fled. It was at this time that Rav Chaim decided to emigrate to Eretz Yisrael and open a Yeshiva in Yerushalayim. The journey lasted a long time and took him through Italy where he published his famous work the Ohr HaChaim in 1741. Another famous work that he wrote is the Pri To'ar on Yoreh Dei'a.

In Elul 5501/1741 he reached the shores of Eretz Yisrael but could not travel to Yerushalayim because of a plague rampant the city. Only a full year later did the Ohr HaChaim realize his dream and open a yeshiva in the Ir HaKodesh. His happiness knew no bounds. In his yeshiva learned two future gedolim the Chida and the Maharit Algazi. Sadly this dream only lasted one year as the Ohr HaChaim was niftar on 15 Tammuz 5503/1743, at the young age of 47. Yehi Zichro Boruch!

While Rabbi Chaim was still a student in his grandfather's Yeshiva he learned the skills of a goldsmith, so that he would earn his livelihood without having to make his Torah knowledge "a spade to dig with." Later, when he had already become famous for his learning and saintliness and could have held an honoured position as a great Rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva, he declined to be paid for these services. He preferred to earn his money from the work of his hands, for he was a very skilled goldsmith.

Being an excellent goldsmith, Rabbi Chaim could have earned a lot of money. But he had no desire to earn any more money than was absolutely necessary for the modest needs of himself and his family. It was his custom, therefore, to take no more time out from his learning than was necessary. As long as he had money in his pocket for the day's needs, he did not work at all, and spent all his time in his saintly studies.

Rabbi Chaim made sure that he would not be bothered by wealthy customers. He simply opened no workshop of his own. Instead he hired himself out to the best known local non-Jewish goldsmith for several hours a day, or whenever he chose to work in accordance with his needs.

Now, the goldsmith for whom Rabbi Chaim worked was no friend of the Jews, but he valued Rabbi Chaim's work so much, that

he let him work whenever he wanted. Rabbi Chaim never argued about his wages. He was satisfied with whatever his employer paid him. Indeed, once the goldsmith tried to tempt Rabbi Chaim by paying him more than before. He found out, however, that far from being tempted, Rabbi Chaim was now able to stay away from work even longer, so he reduced his pay as much as he could without driving him to his competitor.

It came to pass that the Sultan was getting ready to marry off his daughter. He sent for the goldsmith and placed a large order for very fancy jewellery, to be ready before the wedding.

It so happened that Rabbi Chaim still had some money left from his previous earnings and did not come in to the goldsmith for work. When the day came for the royal order to be delivered, the goldsmith had not completed it. The Sultan became very angry and threatened to have the goldsmith thrown to his lions. But the sly goldsmith put the whole blame on Rabbi Chaim, saying that it was his Jewish assistant that had let the Sultan down by not coming to work. So the Sultan ordered that Rabbi Chaim be thrown to the lions, to be devoured alive.

The Sultan had a beautiful park behind his palace. In the park there was a special area surrounded by high walls, where the Sultan kept his man-eating lions and tigers. Anyone who was sentenced by the Sultan to die, would be thrown to these ferocious beasts. This, the Sultan decreed, was to be also the fate of Rabbi Chaim.

When the Sultan's guards came to fetch Rabbi Chaim, he asked them only to be allowed to take some of his sacred books with him, and his Tallit and Tefillin. The guards laughed, and said, "Are you going to teach the big cats the wisdom of these books?" Nevertheless they granted his request.

As Rabbi Chaim was led through the streets, Jews closed their shops and stalls and accompanied him. They wept bitterly to see their beloved Rabbi being led to his horrible death, while some of the local Arab populace jeered and made merry. Rabbi Chaim took no notice of the jeering crowd, but he consoled his grieving brethren, saying to them: "It is G-d Who takes life and gives life; He redeems and saves in time of distress. I am confident that He will spare me from the lions' teeth. Trust in G-d."

The procession came to the gates of the Royal Palace. Rabbi Chaim was led away behind the gates, and taken to the lions' den. Here he was placed in the hands of the keepers to carry out the Sultan's sentence.

The keepers put a rope around Rabbi Chaim's waist and lowered him down into the den, while he was clinging tightly to his precious books and Tallit bag which contained also his Tefillin and Siddur. The keepers knew what to expect: Blood-chilling shrieks, roars and snarls of the beasts, and then deathly silence. They had done such jobs many times. It was always the same, or so they thought.

This time, however, it was different, very strangely different! There were no screams, and no roars and no snarls. The lions and tigers remained in their places, and made no attempt to attack their "meal." The keepers decided that the beasts were not hungry, and walked away.

Three days later, the keepers came to feed the beasts, expecting to find only the broken bones of the Rabbi. They could not believe their eyes when they saw the Rabbi sitting in the centre of the den, wrapped in his Tallit and Tefillin, and studying his holy books. The wild beasts were crouching all around him, keeping a respectful silence, as if they were listening to his melodious voice.

The keepers rushed to tell the Sultan what they saw. In utter disbelief, the Sultan went to see for himself, and he, too, was amazed and terrified at the awesome sight.

The Sultan ordered that a rope ladder be lowered for the saintly Rabbi, to climb out of the den. When Rabbi Chaim came up, the Sultan humbly begged his forgiveness. "Now I know that there is a G-d, the Guardian of Israel!" the Sultan exclaimed. He asked the saintly Rabbi to be his friend and adviser, and promised that the gates of the palace would always be open for him.

It was a day of light, gladness, joy and honour for the Jews, while the enemies of the Jews no longer dared lift a hand, or even speak an insult, against any Jew. As for Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar, he returned home with deep gratitude to G-d, and with even greater humility in his heart.

MAZAL TOV TO: Richard and Samara Levicki on their Brit Mila on their son Shlomo



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