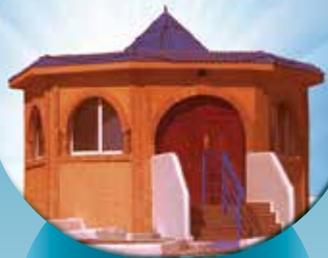


Balak

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16th of Tamuz 5781

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Hilula

16 - Rabbi Emanuel Mishali

17 - Rabbi Shimon Bitton, Av Beit Din
Marseille, France

18 - Rabbi Yosef Kapach

19 - Rabbi Ben Zion Abba Shaul, Rosh
Yeshiva 'Porat Yosef'

20 - Rabbi Avraham Chaim Na'eh

21 - Rabbi Rachamim Nahori, Av Beit
Din of Paris

22 - Rabbi Manoach Hendel, author of
'Chochmat Manoach'

Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"l



MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Acting as One Preaches

"How goodly are your tents, O Ya'akov, your dwelling places, O Israel" (Bamidbar 24:5)

Balak son of Tzipor was afraid of Am Yisrael so he sent messengers to Bilam, "the man with the open eye", asking him to come and curse them. The verse states clearly the reason for Balak's fear, "Moav became very frightened of the people, because it was numerous" (Bamidbar 22:3). Chazal expound on this that the king of Moav was afraid of Bnei Yisrael's power since they had an esteemed leader, Moshe Rabbeinu, who merited talking with the Almighty. This is why Balak sent messengers to Bilam, leader and prophet of the nations, thinking that he was fitting to stand up to Bnei Yisrael and their prophet.

It is interesting to understand why Hashem wanted Parshat Balak to be recorded in the Torah for all generations. At that time, Bnei Yisrael sojourned in the Wilderness and studied Torah, unaware of the covenant taking place between Balak son of Beor, king of Moav, and the wicked Bilam, the nation's prophet. If the Torah chose to write this section, it certainly contains a powerful lesson for all generations, as the Holy Zohar writes, "He looked in the Torah and created the world." Meaning, everything written in the Torah is meaningful advice for man.

When Bilam stood up intending to curse the Jewish people, his curses were transformed into blessings and he declared, "How goodly are your tents, O Ya'akov, your dwelling places, O Israel" (Bamidbar 24:5). This verse is recited by Am Yisrael every morning and is displayed by many Batei Knesset on a prominent sign on the wall. When the wicked Bilam noticed the entrances of Bnei Yisrael's tents did not face each other, he said: It is fitting for the Divine Presence to rest among these dwelling places. Apparently, the reason why the Torah mentions the whole debate between Balak and Bilam was for the sake of this verse said by Bilam, "How goodly are your tents, O Ya'akov, your dwelling places, O Israel."

The Or Torah, written by the Mezritcher Maggid zy"l, writes that the entrances of Yisrael's tents refers to the words of Torah that spout from their mouths as it says (Micha 7:5), "...the doorways of your mouth." When Bilam saw Bnei Yisrael arguing in learning, not meaning to contradict or attack each other but out of love and with the common goal of pursuing the truth, he understood that these people are fitting to have the Divine Presence rest among them, because their intention is to increase the glory of Torah. Bilam understood that what comes out of their mouths is not a show of power but rather for the sake of Heaven, aiming to reach the root of a Higher intellect.

Furthermore, the Gaon Rabbi Yehonatan Eibeshitz zy"l writes that right then Bilam understood that Am

Yisrael's Torah study is not just crucial for them but it sustains the entire world. So it follows that even the non-Jews are dependent on Am Yisrael's Torah study. Therefore, he blessed them "How goodly are your tents, O Ya'akov" which refers to Am Yisrael's Batei Midrashot which sustain the world.

Hashem wished that we too should realize what that defiled non-Jew realized, thereby bringing abundant blessing on ourselves, just as Bilam blessed Am Yisrael when he saw this. This is why the entire discussion between Balak and Bilam is included in the Torah, which concluded with Bilam blessing Bnei Yisrael.

We can ask why Bilam, who marveled at Am Yisrael's modesty and Torah study for the sake of Heaven, did not think to repent? He saw the truth and deep inside recognized it, especially since he was a prophet and merited the revelation of the Shechina. Chazal tell us (Sotah 11a) that Yitro and Iyov were both immersed in great impurity and served as advisors to Pharaoh, king of a land full of immorality. However, eventually they merited recognizing the truth and changed their ways. This makes it still harder to understand why Bilam, Pharaoh's third advisor, remained wicked and did not change his ways despite recognizing the qualities and distinctiveness of Am Yisrael. In addition, Chazal tell us (Zevachim 116a) that the nations of the world came to Bilam when they heard the noises at the time of the Giving of the Torah and asked him to explain these sounds. He answered them, "Hashem will give might to His nation, Hashem will bless His nation with peace" (Tehillim 29:11).

The answer is, although Bilam was impressed by the modesty and Torah study of Bnei Yisrael, since he did not observe the end of his words "your dwelling places, O Israel", meaning he himself did not sit down to study Torah, his amazement did not lead to deeds and a change in his ways. For a person to change he must practice what he preaches (Yevamot 63b). His words must not be mere words but accompanied by deeds. Since Bilam only spoke well but did not possess the aspect of fulfilling his words, the end was that he remained with his wickedness.

Unfortunately, I am accustomed to seeing many people leaving a Torah lecture greatly inspired by the words of mussar I delivered, but sometime later when I meet them I see that nothing has changed. This is because they lacked this aspect of putting what they learned into practice. They did not try to transform their enthusiasm into actual deeds, and therefore as time passed their passion cooled without a change for the better. One who tries to put his knowledge into practice will merit the earth's wicked being afraid of him and unable to defeat him.



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoan Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Standing Steadfast in Faith

A woman once came to me with her son in a wheelchair. With great anguish, she related that as a result of a terrible car accident, her son became paralyzed from the waist down. His doctors did not see any chance of recovery but she had faith in Hashem, the Healer of all flesh. She now asked for my blessing, in the merit of my holy ancestors, for a complete recovery for her child.

I thought of the Gemara (Berachot 5b) which relates that Rabbi Yochanan was sick and could not get up, and Rabbi Chanina came to visit him. "Do you like hardships?" asked Rabbi Chanina. "Not them and not their reward," responded Rabbi Yochanan. "Give me your hand," Rabbi Chanina said. Rabbi Yochanan placed his hand in the hands of Rabbi Chanina; miraculously he stood up and walked out.

I decided to try the same tactic. I told the boy to stand up and give me his hand. With tremendous effort, the boy tried to pull himself up and stretch out his hand to me. But then he fell back down into his wheelchair.

I instructed his mother to tell him the story of Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Yochanan every day and then tell him, in the language of the Gemara, "Hav li yadcha," meaning, "Give me your hand." She should force him to stand and, B'ezrat Hashem, would see salvation.

Three years went by. Imagine how stunned I was to see this woman together with her son, standing on his own two feet. She related, most excitedly, how she had spent the last three years saying "Hav li yadcha" on a daily basis. There were days when he flatly refused to comply. "See how the tzaddik's blessing is helping," he remarked sarcastically. "It's so difficult for me to stand up; why are you doing this to me?"

But the mother would not give up. She firmly believed the day would come when they would see a miracle. One morning, after she asked her son to stand, all were amazed to see him jump up easily and stand like a healthy person. He shocked himself as well and began dancing and prancing about the house.

I was impressed by the magnitude of the force of perfect faith, implanted in the heart of every Jew, no matter how simple and ordinary. Chazal (Sanhedrin 37a) comment on the verse in Shir Hashirim (4:3), "As many as a pomegranate's seeds are the merits of your least worthy." Even the unlearned of our nation are as full of mitzvot as the pomegranate.

There is no doubt that it was this woman's faith which stood by her to see her son's salvation. Although she did not see improvement for three full years, she maintained her faith that the day would come when her son would stand on his feet. And it did.

The Haftarah

"The remnant of Ya'akov will be" (Micha 5-6)

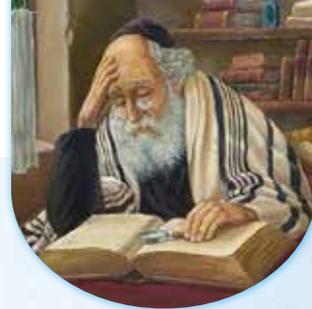
The connection to the Parshah: The Haftarah speaks about the kindness Hashem performed with Am Yisrael by directing Bilam's heart to bless the people. This is the same topic as the Parshah which tells us about the two wicked people, Balak king of Moav and Bilam, who intended to curse Am Yisrael. However, in the end, against his will, Bilam blessed them.

Guard Your Tongue

Judge Favorably or Rebuke with Respect

If one who is known to transgresses a certain sin from time to time performs a forbidden act, there is no obligation to judge him favorably. But, it is preferable nevertheless to try and find some merit and assume that this time he did not transgress. In this case it is not necessary to rebuke him.

If it is clear without any doubt that he indeed transgressed, the mitzvah of offering rebuke applies and one must help that person overcome his Yetzer Hara through rebuking him in a respectable and pleasant manner.



In Our Father's Path

A Person's Home is the Greatest Chesed Enterprise in the World

The wicked Bilam looked at the tents of Yisrael and was impressed by the way they conducted themselves in their homes; how each family member was concerned about the other and tried to help him. This led him to declare, "How goodly are your tents, O Ya'akov, your dwelling places, O Israel" (Bamidbar 24:5).

The Gaon Rabbi Reuven Elbaz shlita, in his sefer Mishkani Acharecha, quotes the Chazon Ish zt"l who would say: People think Hashem looks at Am Yisrael as a whole and judges them in this way. But we must know that it is not so. Hashem considers each individual and every single Jewish home. Therefore, each person must take care that his private 'tent', the house he is building, should be founded on foundations of chesed and modesty, so it can be said about him "How goodly are your tents, O Ya'akov."

The Holy Ba'al Shem Tov zt"l said it is worthwhile for a person to come to This World for eighty years just so he can merit performing even one act of chesed. And where is the best place a person can do chesed? In his own home.

A person's home is the biggest chesed corporation in the world; everything depends on how he behaves with his wife and children. One who sees the way the Gedolei Yisrael conduct themselves in their homes, merits the perception of how a Jewish home should be run.

The way Maran Rosh HaYeshiva, Chacham Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l, conducted himself with his family members, was remarkable. Although he was exceptionally great in Torah, yirat shamayim, the wisdom of Kabbalah and every good trait, one could not help being impressed by his simplicity and modesty.

Here is just one small story:

One day the Rav was about to travel with his Rabbanit in a taxi. It was already hard for the Rav to walk and half his body was paralyzed. The taxi arrived and waited. The Rabbanit was not ready yet but the Rav had already gone downstairs.

HaGaon Rabbi Reuven Elbaz relates: "I asked him: 'Why did Rabbeinu hurry down if the Rabbanit wasn't ready yet?'"

"He replied: 'It is an honor for her to show her I am waiting for her.' Is there greater honor than that which the Rav accorded his wife, that he should be the one waiting for her and not, G-d forbid, that she should have to wait for him? This is how he fulfilled the literal meaning of the Rambam's words (Ishut 15:19), 'Honor her more than yourself.'

"I merited spending time in his home and often saw how he would help his wife. He would put on an apron and prepare the fish. His talmidim would enter and see their esteemed Rav standing in the kitchen with an apron and cooking. Did this lower his esteem in their eyes? On the contrary, seeing a great Torah sage with exceptional yirat shamayim and middot, behaving with such simplicity, modesty and humility with his family members, only caused them to regard him with even greater respect.

"When the wives of some Torah scholars ask them for help, they claim it will disturb their learning. I am sure Rabbi Ben Tzion never replied in this way to his wife. He put her before everyone and treated her like his crown.

"This is how he lived his life and this is how he passed the message on to others, as they observed his behavior in his own home."



Pearls of the Parsha

Bilam's Name Shows His Essence

"So now, please come and curse this people for me, for it is too powerful for me" (Bamidbar 22:6)

This verse gives rise to two questions:

First of all, why did Balak ask Bilam to come and curse Yisrael and not ask for a blessing for his own success?

Furthermore, why did Balak say, "whomever you bless מבורך – is blessed and whomever you curse יואר – will be cursed" while he should have either said "whomever you curse, מואר – is cursed" using the same form as "מבורך – is blessed", or "whomever you bless יבורך – will be blessed", the same form as "יואר – will be cursed"?

Rabbeinu Chaim ben Attar zy" a, the Holy Ohr HaChaim (see also Kli Yakar) writes: "Bilam's blessing was like the blessing of a donkey." Bilam had no power to bless. He could only curse since he had an evil eye and knowledge of the most advantageous time to invoke G-d's wrath. If someone came to Bilam for a blessing, since he was a sorcerer he would consider the person's mazal. If it showed that in the future he would become rich, Bilam blessed him with wealth and the recipient of the blessing thought he became wealthy due to Bilam's blessing. He did the same to Balak when he blessed him with kingship; he simply saw in his mazal that he was destined to become king.

This answers the above questions. Since Balak knew that Bilam "blesses" in accordance with the person's mazal, he did not ask for a personal blessing. Rather he asked Bilam to come and curse the Jewish people since this was his power. He personified his name, Bilam, an expression of 'swallowing' and destruction.

This is the meaning of "For I know." ו, Balak, am aware of your strengths; "whomever you bless is blessed", "blessed" in the past tense for he is already blessed – in accordance with his mazal. Only "whomever you curse will be cursed", in the future tense, for in truth your singular power is to curse.

A Once in a Lifetime Opportunity

"Bilam's anger flared and he struck the donkey with the staff" (Bamidbar 22:27)

Why indeed did Bilam smite the donkey and not curse it, if it was his mouth that had power?

In the sefer Derech Sicha, Maran HaGaon Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita quotes the words of the Midrash: Had he cursed the donkey, he would have lost the power to curse Yisrael. This is the reason why Elisha's stick was unable to resurrect the son of the Shunamit, for on the way Gaichazi used its power to resurrect a dead dog. Since it had already been used for this purpose, its power terminated.

The following story is told about Rabbi Mordechai Banet zt"l. He once wished to show appreciation to someone so he told him to buy a lottery ticket and promised that he will win.

After the person bought the ticket, he picked lots in his house to see if he would really win, and indeed he drew his own number.

To his surprise, he did not win the lottery. He complained to Rabbi Mordechai Banet, who responded in disbelief, "It cannot be you didn't win!" Upon investigation, the person admitted that he had picked lots in his own home to see if the number would really win. Rabbi Mordechai said, "Aha! You made yourself lose! I prayed that your number should be drawn and indeed it was!"

His End Will Be by the Sword

"Now, flee" (Bamidbar 24:11)

As an allusion, Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim, in his sefer Aderet Eliyahu, writes that the word ברח – flee, can be re-arranged to spell חרב – sword.

This is a hint that in the end he would fall prey to the sword, and indeed he was killed as it says, "And Bilam son of Beor they slew with the sword."

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



Torah Protects and Saves from all Evil Mishaps

"He perceived no iniquity in Ya'akov, and saw no perversity in Israel" (Bamidbar 23:21)

When Balak came to hear Bilam cursing Bnei Yisrael, Bilam offered a parable and said, "He perceived no iniquity in Ya'akov, and saw no perversity in Israel. Hashem his G-d is with him, and the friendship of the King is in him." The meaning is, when "the friendship of the King is in him", when Bnei Yisrael study Torah and attain the level of "Who are the kings? The Sages" (Gittin 62b), they merit the beginning of the verse "He perceived no iniquity in Ya'akov, and saw no perversity in Israel"; no evil mishap will befall them even if the nation's greatest prophet will try to curse them.

One can add that the word תרועה – friendship can be re-arranged to spell ע תורה – Torah seventy, referring to the Holy Torah that is expounded in seventy ways. Bnei Yisrael merit crowning Hashem as King over them and being called princes when they engage in the Torah which is expounded in seventy ways. And then "Hashem his G-d is with him", they merit being saved from all mishaps. Similarly, the initials of the words "ותרועת מלך בו" – and the friendship of the King is in him" have a numerical value of 48, corresponding to the 48 attributes with which Torah is acquired (see Avot 6:6), while the final letters of "מלך בו – King is in him", have the value 26 which corresponds to numerical value of Hashem's Name, י-ו-ה.

Bilam came to ruin and ended up aiding, for he gave us wonderful advice as to how to merit protection from Hashem. But despite the truth emerging from his mouth, he himself remained wicked since he did not put into practice what he preached. Also because he possessed bad middot, including the ugly trait of pride, the root of all bad middot.

The Torah tells us that when Bilam was riding on his donkey, a Heavenly angel appeared in front of him and blocked his path. Since there was a fence on either side, the donkey turned off the path and squashed Bilam's leg against the fence. One can say that this contained a hint for Bilam: He was now going to curse Yisrael Bnei but they have a special fence which surrounds and protects them which comes from the power of the Torah and mitzvot they observe. Bnei Yisrael created fences and restrictions for the Torah and it is those fences that protect us from any evil.

Bilam did not want to put into practice what his intellect understood and continued on his way until the donkey squashed his leg by the fence and broke it. This was a hint that anyone who disturbs Torah scholars, those who observe the mitzvot and make fences and restrictions for themselves, will eventually be punished for this. The angel revealed himself to the donkey three times to hint to Bilam that Bnei Yisrael ascend to Yerushalayim three times a year and on these occasions draw upon fistfuls of holiness. This holiness accompanies them further and causes them to cleave to the Torah path, thereby affording them protection from any curse or damage he wishes to inflict on them.

The Kaf HaChaim, in his sefer Yismach Yisrael, offers the following explanation on the verse (Bamidbar 22:5), "He sent messengers to Bilam son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the River." The word "Pethor" hints to the mouth of Torah, while "nahar-River" hints to the waters of Torah that flow like a river. This teaches us that Bilam received a message from Heaven that he cannot curse Am Yisrael due to the power of their Torah, but due to his evil middot Bilam did not understand the message. That is why the donkey squashed his leg by the fence and broke it. But we can take a lesson from this that if we cleave to Torah with all our strength, all those who stand up against us will not succeed in overpowering us.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Who Has Counted the Dust of Ya'akov?

"If you ask me, I personally do not feel I have made any sacrifice in my efforts to observe the mitzvot in general, and in particular my observance of Shemittah," relates R' Oded Korakin from Ramat HaSharon. He regularly hosts delegations of Rabbanim from all over the world in his fields and each time anew succeeds in leaving them moved; proving to them that despite all the decrees and attempts to uproot Torah from Am Yisrael, the Jewish nation survives and exists and with all its heart and soul desires to maintain a true closeness to Hashem, even if this closeness involves self-sacrifice.

The mitzvah of Shemittah observed by residents of Eretz Yisrael, is referred to in Bilam's declaration "Who has counted the dust of Ya'akov." As Rashi explains, who can count the number of agricultural commandments that Jews fulfil with the dust of the earth? R' Odeds' story, publicized recently in the Kol Beramah magazine, serves as testimony:

"Hashem was so kind to me that one needs to be blind not to see the wonders and miracles." While he was blessed from Above, his friends, the local farmers of Kibbutz Yakum, also look delighted...

When the elderly farmer decided to harvest his hay fields at the beginning of Iyar, during the sixth year of the previous Shemittah cycle, his friends all laughed at him. "What are you doing? Why are you harvesting so early? Let the hay grow a little more!" The farmers chuckled derisively and thought he had lost his mind.

But Oded did not listen to them. He preferred to obey his sense of smell

that forewarned him, already at the beginning of Iyar, in the midst of the hot, dry weather, that rain was on the way. And so he harvested and went on to form the stacks of hay, storing them in his massive store house. All this while his friends had not even begun harvesting their huge hay fields. The final result astonished the farmers, no less the delegation of Rabbanim who visited his fields. What was clear above all doubt was that Oded's fields were the complete antithesis to the drought that was announced in the South and North. The proof was, Korakin immediately managed to sell all the hay stacked in his storehouse, something no other nearby farmer managed to do...

Although Oded Korakin and his brother Michael, his partner in his agricultural efforts, were born as Jews in the Holy Land and were exposed to a Jewish way of life, they went through many encounters until they achieved their lofty level of observing Shemittah, expressing complete readiness to stop all work in their fields, spread over more than 1,500 dunam in one of the most expensive zones in the Holy Land. "If not for the constant support we received from the Gedolei Yisrael, we would never have arrived at where we arrived," they say. The love that is heaped on them and the blessings they are showered with during the visits of the Gedolei Torah to their fields, is proof of their statement.

This past Shemittah, all those who entered their fields were astonished to see wheat stalks waving high in the air. How did such high, plump wheat stalks grow for the Shemittah observers in the seventh year? asked the visitors. The great miracle that occurred in these fields, next to Kibbutz Yakum, demonstrated the greatness of Hashem's goodness to "the strong warriors who do His bidding." You may ask, what is the connection between the months of Adar and Nissan of the sixth year, to what happened in the

seventh year in Korakin's wheat fields? And the answer will be: Since seemingly there should be no connection, this is the great miracle...

Probably all have already forgotten the strong rain that suddenly fell at the end of Adar of the previous sixth year. It was an open miracle, for if not for these rains, all the wheat that had been sown would have been completely lost.

While in the rest of the fields, the saving of the wheat of the sixth year was how this miracle was experienced, indeed a great salvation, for Oded Korakin the miracle swept over into the seventh year.

"The rain was so strong that even after this sixth year harvest, wheat remained in the fields. It sprouted already in the sixth year and grew to its best in the Shemittah year," relates Oded.

The rare sight of wheat standing tall in the middle of the winter was one of the open miracles of the previous Shemittah year. Korakin's tractor workers worked in the fields with great energy.

They took out all the water pipes so they wouldn't disturb the harvest... This harvest was, of course, used for animal feed, but let us make a calculation: We are talking about wheat that was not sown by the owners of the field. In addition, in contrast to the other Shemittah observers who sow wheat for animal feed, Oded did not touch this wheat that grew and sprouted by itself because of the rains of the sixth year. And now his fields were full of tall stalks of wheat, allowing him to sell the wheat as animal feed and earn a profit.

"Earn a profit?" the farmer, with his tzitzit showing, is shocked. "It was not my profit and I have no interest in personal profit. The main gain here was the sanctification of Heaven's Name that resulted from the miracle."