



Greater Washington Community Kollel
**SHABBOS
 DELIGHTS**

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

Pure Intentions

Presented by Rabbi Yisrael Glassberg

Director of Kollel Alumni

Although the evil sorcerer Bilaam is unsuccessful at cursing the Jewish people, he devises a plan that ensnares them in sins of immorality and idolatry with *Baal Peor*. In response to the incident, Hashem commands Moshe to kill the individuals involved. Moshe in turn instructs *Shoftei Yisrael*, the judges of the nation, to carry out the decree.

The *Meshech Chochma* notes a fascinating difference between Moshe's response to the *Baal Peor* incident and a similar episode involving the Jewish people and idol worship: the sin of the golden calf. In response to the golden calf incident, Moshe commands the tribe of *Levi* to carry out the punishment. Why does Moshe not similarly instruct the *Levi'im* to lead the charge against the *Baal Peor* idolaters?

The *Meshech Chochma* explains: At the time of the sin of the golden calf, the Mishkan (Tabernacle) was not yet constructed. As such, the *Levi'im* were not yet participating in the daily divine service of the Mishkan. It was therefore clear that their motivation for killing the idolaters was purely for the sake of heaven and resulted from no other personal agenda. At the time of the *Baal Peor* incident, however, the *Levi'im* were already serving in the Mishkan, and their involvement in punishing the idolaters could be misconstrued as advancing their own self-interests. After all, when the Jews worship idols, they are no longer dependent on the Mishkan; should the Mishkan cease to exist as a place of worship, the livelihood of the *Levi'im* could be jeopardized. Understanding this subtlety, Moshe ensures that Hashem's commandment is carried out in a manner that would make clear to all that it was performed with the right motivation.

The highest level of mitzvah performance and Torah study is known as "*lishma*" — for its own sake. The Mishna in Pirkei Avos says that the entire Creation was worthwhile for even one person who learns Torah "*lishma*." May Hashem grant us the strength and clarity to always serve Him with the right intentions and with the purest of hearts.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

TABLE TALK

POINT TO PONDER

"... And now, you too, stay here for the night, and I will know if Hashem will speak with me more." Hashem came to Bilaam at night and said to him... (22:19 - 20)

There was never a prophet among Bnei Yisrael like Moshe (Devarim 32:10).

Among Bnei Yisrael there was never another prophet like Moshe. However, the non-Jews did have a prophet like Moshe - Bilaam (Sifrei).

Since Moshe could receive prophecies all the time and Bilaam was limited to night visions, in what way were their prophecies similar?

PARSHA RIDDLE

What connection is there between Bilaam and Yisro?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

What lesson was learned from the beginning of this parsha?

Answer: Due to the complex subject at the beginning of the parsha - Parah Aduma, Shlomo HaMelech said, "I thought I could understand the entire Torah and I realized that it is beyond me."

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Balak*, Balaam is hired by Balak to curse Israel, but is thwarted by Hashem, out of His love for us (Devarim 23:6). The Talmud maintains that Balaam's curses did in general have the power to harm their targets, and it provides the particular theological mechanism behind this power (*Berachos 7a*). A number of rationalistically minded medieval commentators, however, deny that his curses could have had any effect, and are therefore forced to address the question of why Hashem intervened to thwart his attempts at cursing Israel. They offer a variety of suggestions:

- For the honor of Israel, so that when the nation was eventually punished for the sins of Peor, people would not attribute the plague to Balaam's curse (*Ibn Ezra Bemidbar 22:9,28*).

- In order that Israel should correctly interpret its eventual punishment as retribution for its sins and engage in the appropriate repentance, rather than attributing it to Balaam's curse and consequently neglecting such repentance (*Ralbag Balak Toeles #3*).

- Had Balaam cursed Israel, the other nations would have been emboldened to wage war against it due to their belief in the efficacy of Balaam's curses. When they heard, instead, of Hashem's intervention to prevent Balaam's curses, they realized that Israel possessed His favor, and their courage to attack Israel failed them (*Abarbanel to Balak*).

A similar debate exists over the rationale behind the Torah's prohibition against cursing one's fellow Jew, even if he is deaf and will not hear the curse. Some maintain that a curse does indeed have the paranormal power to harm (*Sefer Ha'Chinuch #231*), whereas others take for granted that it has no such power, and is forbidden only because it is a vicious indulgence of the spirit of vengeance and anger, evil-heartedness and hatred of one's fellow (*Sefer Ha'Mitzvos Le'Ha'Rambam, Lo Saaseh #317; Urim Ve'Tumim siman 27 Tumim s.k. 4*).

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

#1 WHO AM I?

- I am Mashiach's ride.
- I was also Avraham's.
- I am like Yissachar.
- I got hit three Yomim Tovi.

#2 WHO AM I?

- I was curse replacement.
- I was privately caused.
- Daily recital.
- I am not mother Tovu.

Last Week's Answers:

#1 The copper snake (I am a medical sign; the attacker healed; my end was powder; I made them look up.)

#2 Parah Aduma (I am similar to Esav; I confused King Shlomo; there have been 9; there will be a 10th.)

All children 13 and under who answer a "Who Am I?" correctly will be entered into a raffle to

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