



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

Divergent Paths

Presented by Rabbi Moshe Sadwin, Kollel Adjunct

"He saw the Kenite and declaimed his parable and said, 'Strong is your dwelling, and set in a rock is your nest'" (24:21)

After failing in his attempt to curse the Jewish nation, the wicked Bilaam has a last prophecy where he foresees what will happen to the Jewish people and their surrounding nations. In his prophecy, he speaks about the Kenites, the family of Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law.

Bilaam, in fact, was very acquainted with Yisro. The Midrash tells us that Bilaam and Yisro were among the principal advisors to Pharaoh. Bilaam was actually the one who directed Pharaoh to enslave the Jewish people. Yisro, on the other hand, vociferously protested against the directive. Ultimately, Yisro fled Egypt, fearing Pharaoh's wrath for opposing the plan.

Bilaam sees how Yisro, his former colleague, has achieved prominence in the Jewish people. He prophesizes how Yisro's descendants will occupy seats in the great Sanhedrin (Jewish High Court) in the Beis Hamikdash. Yisro merited this distinction as a reward for his willingness to protest the plan to enslave the Jewish people. He was willing to give up his prestige in Egypt to make the correct and moral choice. He therefore earned true respect and great standing before Hashem.

Bilaam, on the other hand, was someone who looked for the easy way out. As he himself utters (Bamidbar 23:10), "May my soul die the death of the righteous." After living a life of immersion in depravity and hedonism, Bilaam wanted to *die* righteous, but was unable to live that way.

Our responsibility is to follow the path of Yisro and to strive to do what's ethical and proper in Hashem's eyes, and not to be led astray by the likes of Bilaam who find the seemingly easier way but who end up with nothing but jealousy.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Bilaam answered... *"If Balak would give me his house full of gold and silver, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem..." (22, 18)*

This shows us that he was greedy and coveted other people's money. He said, "He ought to give me all his silver and gold..." (Rashi)

Rav Yosi Ben Kisma said, "... He said to me, "Rebbi, please come live in our city... and I answered him, if you would give me all the money in the world, I would not move to a city that is lacking in Torah study. (Avos 6, 9)

Why does Bilaam's mention of money define him as one who desires money, while the statement of Rav Yossi Ben Kisma is an indication of his greatness?

Parsha Riddle

Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey and it said to Bilaam, "What have I done to you that you struck me these three times?" (22, 28)

When did Hashem open the mouth of a different animal?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

What was the most popular name at Aharon HaKohen's funeral?

Answer: Aharon

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

The end of parashas Balak contains the account of Pinchas's vigilante execution of Zimri for consorting with a Midianite woman. Although such extrajudicial killings to punish and avenge religious sins are not tolerated in modern Western democracies, the general idea of private vigilante action to enforce religious norms is well established in traditional Jewish law.

The Talmud (Bava Kama 28a) states that if subsequent to his emancipation, a Jewish slave continues to consort with the Canaanite maidservant (permitted to him for the duration of his servitude) previously provided to him by his master, his (erstwhile) master is permitted to use violence, if necessary, to prevent him from doing so (since an emancipated slave is prohibited under Torah law from consorting with a maidservant). Halachic authorities extrapolate from this the general rule that anyone who has "authority" over someone else may use force to prevent him from sinning, and need not refer the matter to the (rabbinic) court (Terumas ha-Deshen #218, Rema CM 421:13). Some later authorities understand that this authorization for the private use of force is indeed limited to one who has some sort of "authority" over the sinner, while others apparently do not consider this condition strictly necessary (see Erech Shai ibid.).

Later halachic authorities also disagree over whether the authorization to use force is limited to the case of an active violation of a negative commandment, such as the example above, or the wearing of shaatnez (Meshoveiv Nesivos siman 3 s.k. 3), or whether it extends even to the case of a passive flouting of a positive commandment, such as the failure to build a sukkah (Nesivos ha-Mishpat ibid. s.k. 1).

Some authorities, however, limit the authorization for the private use of force to extraordinary individuals of sterling character and unimpeachable reputation, since otherwise:

The situation would be intolerable, and every worthless person would go and strike his fellow on some matter of reproof, "For there is no man so wholly righteous on earth, that he [always] does good and never sins (Koheles 7:20)." The Torah grants authority, and the stick and the whip, only to a judge or to an important individual whose words are worthy of being obeyed ... (Yam Shel Shlomo Bava Kama 3:9, Shut Tzitz Eliezer 17:36:3)

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I ?

1. Don't confuse my father and Gershom's mother.
2. Ruled
3. Unscrambled, I am "to curse."
4. I was a foreigner.

#2 WHO AM I ?

1. I was Bilaam's end.
2. Unscrambled, I am a "friend."
3. I guard the garden.
4. Zeroa Netuya / Outstretched arm.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Og, King of Bashan (I got buck teeth, I am not the king of Embarassment, I was a refugee, I got stuck in the mountain.)

#2 Parah Adumah (Red Heifer) (I was unblemished, I can fix and defile, I clean up after my child, I am not a yoking matter.)

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a Virtual Lunch & Learn with Rabbi Yitzhak Grossman
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