



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

# SHABBOS DELIGHTS

## TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

### Open-mouthed and Closed-minded

**Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Kollel Scholar and Director of Special Projects**

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

Parshas Balak recounts Bilaam's attempt to curse the Jewish people and the many blessings and praises that he heaps upon them instead. Despite G-d's instruction not to try to curse the Jews, Bilaam travels to Moav in an attempt to do the bidding of Moav's king, Balak. On Bilaam's way there, his donkey sees an angel blocking the way and first, wanders off the road into a field, then rubs Bilaam's leg up against a wall, and finally crouches down unwilling to travel further – and each time receives a good whacking from Bilaam. Suddenly, G-d opens the mouth of the donkey, granting it the power of speech and it proceeds to lecture Bilaam over his conduct with it. Moments later, G-d opens Bilaam's eyes and reveals the presence of the angel obstructing their path.

It is axiomatic that G-d does not alter the course of nature for no reason. Why was it necessary for G-d to open the mouth of the donkey and miraculously grant it the power of speech? Would it not have sufficed to simply reveal the presence of the angel to Bilaam and he then would have recognized how he had mistreated his donkey?

The Sforno explains that the miracle of the talking donkey was intended to impart an important lesson to Bilaam so he would change his mind and return home. Bilaam had set out with the belief that even though it was against G-d's will that he curse the Jews, he could still do so if he pleased. The lesson he was supposed to take was that just as G-d can grant speech to something that was, until now, incapable of speech, so too He could take away or appropriate the power of speech of a talented orator like Bilaam.

Bilaam should have absorbed this message and made an about face – but he didn't. What prevented him from taking this lesson to heart? Perhaps Bilaam had simply gone too far down the path to turn back now. Having convinced himself of the validity of his plan and having already set out, he was too stubborn to hear the message that G-d was sending him and turn back.

This episode can be important for each of us to bear in mind. We too can become entrenched in a plan or in a position making it challenging to hear another perspective, no matter how sound it is. Bilaam's stubbornness can serve as reminder to remain open to fairly considering an alternative viewpoint.

**Wishing you a Good Shabbos!**

## SPONSOR

To sponsor an issue of Shabbos Delights, please contact [info@gwckollel.org](mailto:info@gwckollel.org).

## TABLE TALK

### Point to Ponder

#### **Who has counted the dust of Yaakov...? (23:10)**

The numerous mitzvos that they fulfill on the dust, as not plowing with an ox and donkey, not planting klayim (cross breeding), the ash of the Parah Adumah (Red Heifer)... (Rashi)

What is special about the mitzvos that are related to dust and ash that Bilaam made reference to them?

### Parsha Riddle

#### **Bilaam arose in the morning and saddled his she-donkey... (22:21)**

Hashem said, "Wicked one, Avraham preceded you, as it says "And Avraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey." (Rashi)

**Who else got his animals ready for riding, even though it should have been done by his servants?**

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

**Which three mountains were not flattened by the Ananei HaKovod (Clouds of Glory)?**

**Answer: Har Sinai, Hor Ha'har and Har Nevo**

## HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

### HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Toward the beginning of *parashas Balak* (22;16-18), the Torah relates that in the course of Balak's efforts to cajole Bilaam to curse Israel for him, he assured him that "I shall honor you greatly, and everything that you say to me I shall do," to which Bilaam responded: "If Balak will give me his houseful of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem, my G-d, to do anything small or great." Toward the end of the *parashah* (24:10-13), the Torah relates that after Hashem had repeatedly caused Bilaam to bless rather than curse Israel, Balak angrily exclaimed to Bilaam: "To curse my enemies did I summon you, and behold! Hashem has withheld you from honor," to which Bilaam responded by reminding him of his earlier warning.

We have previously discussed (*Balak* 5779) the question of whether Bilaam was entitled to compensation in light of his failure to perform the service for which he had been hired; we discuss here the question of whether he would have been entitled to compensation had he actually succeeded in cursing Israel.

Modern law (at least in the U.S. and the U.K.) contains the principle of *ex turpi causa non oritur actio* ("action does not arise from a dishonorable cause"), also known as the "illegality defense": a legal claim cannot be based on an illegal action. According to most authorities, however, *halachah* has no such doctrine, and so if an employer hires an employee to perform a prohibited act and the employee proceeds to do so, the employee is entitled to the agreed upon compensation (*Nesivos ha-Mishpat siman 9 s.k. 1*). There is an opinion that this only extends to the employee not being required to **return** compensation that he has already received, but **ab initio**, the employer need not and should not **pay** compensation to the employee, due to the principle that "the sinner should not profit" from his crime (see Mishnah *Challah* 2:7, Bavli *Yevamos* 92b and *Gittin* 55b – *Ma'archei Lev* 113), but the more widely held view is that the employer is liable to the employee for the agreed upon compensation even *ab initio*, and that this claim will be enforced by the court (*Imrei Binah Dayanim* 17; *Teshuras Shai kama* 7; R. Lavi Uriel, *Teviah le-Hachazir Tashlumei Sechar Limmud*, S/N 2026).

PRESENTED BY  
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

## KIDS KORNER

### Who Am I?

#### **#1 WHO AM I ?**

1. I am Mashiach's ride.
2. I was also Avraham's.
3. I am like Yissachar.
4. I got hit three Yomim Tovim.

#### **#2 WHO AM I ?**

1. I am for a moment.
2. I am daily.
3. Bilaam knew me.
4. For a few days I wasn't.

#### **Last Week's Answers**

**#1 Parah Adumah (Red Heifer)** (I am one of ten, I am not a book, but I am red, For the wisest I am a mystery, I was a reward for honor.)

**#2 Nachash (Serpent)** (I was hurt for words, I hurt for words, My replica was the salvation, Adding a 'saf makes me copper.)

## KOLLEL BULLETIN BOARD



### **Learn Gemara with GWCK !**

Join the movement and get

### **On the Same Page**

OTSP recently began Maseches Megillah.

Join now!

### Men's Programming

Learn an Amud (page) of Gemara each week with learning options that fit YOUR lifestyle:

- \* Attend weekly live classes in person or on Zoom
- \* Learn on your own schedule with uploaded audio/video lectures

For more info or to register visit:

[otsp.gwckollel.org](http://otsp.gwckollel.org)

or contact Rabbi Shaps:

[hshaps@gwckollel.org](mailto:hshaps@gwckollel.org), 347.869.9361