



Ohr Yerushalayim News

א – ט"ז תמוז תשפ"א – בלק – 26th June 2021 - Volume 13 - Issue 49

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Moshe Hassan and his parents, Nissim and Laura Ann on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah this Shabbos.

Akiva and Nechama Stern invite the Kehilla to a Kiddush in honour of the recent birth of their daughter, Ashira Mindel, at 14 New Hall Avenue from 11.30am

Shivo Ossor b'Tammuz

The fast starts at 1.13 and one should ensure to finish Melave Malka by then. The fast ends at 10.48

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to the following who have Yahrtzeit this week Shabbos, 16th Tammuz - The Rov for his sister
Thurs, 21st Tammuz - Meir Possenheimer for his mother

A Message From The Rov שליט"א

As we seem בס"ד to be reaching the conclusion of all the restrictions of covid, it is a worthwhile opportunity to evaluate the positive and negative effects on our Kehilla.

The concept of קהילה is a gathering of people to be occupied in activities which enhance עבודת ה'.

תפילה as contrasted to תפילה בידוד enables שבקדושה, דברים, which require מנין to be said.

תפילה being lead by a בעל תפילה with a נוסח and ניגון enhance the תפילה.

A feeling of unity and connection with other מתפללים strengthen the feelings שכינה שריה בניהם.

Whereas the wearing of masks, (anti-) social distancing, no Kiddushim or קהילה activities for adults or children (excluded from Shul), shortage of space for ladies, all of these and more weaken the harmony of, and feeling for, one another.

In order to return to the vibrant קהילה of past requires active rather than passive participation of the whole community. A determined effort of each and everyone of us to reinstate all that has been lost. A strengthening of קהילה activity. Attending שיעורים and תפילה in person, using the בית המדרש for חברותא or individual learning by day and night, and revitalising the out of shul קהילה activities for which we were so well known.

תפילה next מול טוב שבת פירוש פינחס, marks the completion of the thirteen years of our weekly newsletter (and ישר כחך to Dan). It offers an ideal opportunity for everyone to write in some thoughts and/or דברי תורה for a bumper edition, something concrete to heal the cracks that have started to appear in the fabric of our קהילה.

בסייעתא דשמיא we will be blessed to revitalise the Kehilla and be זוכה to see the three weeks of mourning change into a period of שמחה ישראל for שלמה שמחה כלל.

Why Were Moav Out To Get Us?

Ben Cope

The king of Moav, Balak, targets the Bnei Yisroel through a curse, and to do so, he recruits Bilam's curse services. For what? Why all of a sudden does the random king of Moav decide to take a swing at Klal Yisroel?

Perhaps, because they were so scared of the Jewish people, as it says, "Moav was very intimidated", they took fright. But why? In the book of Devarim, we see that when we left Egypt, Hashem specifically warned against us taking a shortcut through the Moabite lands and also not to wage war against Moav. It is possible that Balak/Moav were oblivious to Hashem's rule, for us not to engage in warfare with them?

We could just assume that the Moabites were not aware of this, but the Shem Mishmuel gives an answer to this. The true aim of Balak was to make sure the Jewish nation never manages to enter Eretz Yisroel and instead, they would die out or get destroyed in the desert.

This was not because of an immediate threat but rather because of the future consequences to Balak and the whole of Moav.

When the Bnei Yisroel wandered around through the desert, Hashem took care of their every need. They were fed with Mon, protected with fire and cloud and their lives can be described as living in a "spiritual cocoon" Their closeness to Hashem's divinity was unimaginable and all their daily mundane needs were taken care of in a highly spiritual way.

However, after, when they leave the desert and enter Eretz Yisroel, Hashem will remain close with them but not like that. It seems a lot more behind the scenes. They will no longer have mon to sustain them and will need to set up farms and fields and a full agricultural system. Nor will they have close protection from the pillars of cloud by day and fire by night. Instead, they will need to set up military camps, an army and other strategic defences. The Bnei Yisroel will need to dig wells, set up a law system and build them self a nation that functions in the physical world.

In the desert the Bnei Yisroel were on a completely different level in regard to their way of living life, in the eyes of the Moabites the Jewish people are nothing like them. Whilst in the desert the Jewish nation are tremendously close to Hashem and none of their basic necessities of life are physical, the Moabites are all physical, their food, their entertainment, and their military. So, because of this huge difference in lifestyle, the Moabites did not care about the goodness and holiness of the Jewish people and thus did not see it as a reproach to them.

A comparable is - There was once a shopkeeper who was evil in business. He deceives, steals and charges interest. One day a man approaches him and asked the following, "Why can't your actions be like that great Talmid Chochom down the road?"

To this the shop owner says "This great man is not involved in business, he doesn't understand the physical world, and doesn't deal with real people, while I am living in a real world and society"

This is how the Moabites saw themselves compared to the Jewish people. Just like the wicked shopkeeper does not see criticism in the pure actions of the Talmid Chochom, so to the Moabites didn't see any reproof in the pious nation of the Bnei Yisroel.

This is true, but only while the Bnei Yisroel are travelling through the desert.

Davening Times

פרשת בלק

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.56pm-8.00pm
Shacharis - Hashkomo	7.30am
2nd Shacharis	9.30am
סוף זמן ק"ש	8.54am
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 9.55pm
Motzei Shabbos	11.00pm
Sun Shiva Ossor b'Tammuz	7.00am / 8.00am / 9.30am
Mincha & Maariv	7.30pm
Ta'anis Ends	10.48pm
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.50pm

Once the Jewish people leave their spiritual cocoon behind in the desert and enter the land of Eretz Yisroel, they are now beginning a new way of life. An entirely physical one, and one that compares a lot more to the Moabites. The Bnei Yisroel entering into the land of Israel is the same as if the Talmid Chochom in the story was to open up a shop.

Now just like the Moabites build farming systems, eat from their crops and build an army, so to with the Jewish people, but with an exception. Whilst we Jews toil in our mundane work, we still keep our humility, our kindness and most importantly, our belief in Hashem and in the Torah.

Our lives are now complete and utter reproaches to the Moabites, and they will not be able to excuse their evil ways "all because they live in the real, physical world" because now, so do the Jews.

The fact that the Jewish people can thrive in a Torah fuelled environment even once Hashem is seemingly more hidden from us, is a complete criticism to Moav society and their ways of life.

The fact that even in a Physical world, Hashem can still be served, this is what Balak wanted to stop early on, and this is why he asked Bilam to curse us.

This D'var Torah is based on a shiur given by R' Yitzchok Breitowitz

Sorry for Nothing Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

We are all fascinated by inanimate or animal objects that speak. The '60s had TV viewers kvelling over talking horses, even talking cars. And an entire industry was based on the concept of a talking mouse. But this week a talking animal is no joke. The Torah tells us about a talking animal that brought no laughs to its rider and teaches a serious lesson to us all.

Bilaam, the greatest prophet that the gentile world had seen, was hired by Balak, King of Moab, for one mission: curse the Jews. Bilaam's feigned reluctance was quickly turned to exuberance when offers of honors and great wealth were added as signing bonus, and first thing in the morning he saddled his trusted donkey and was on his way. He planned to travel to an overlook, where he would cast his spell on the Jewish Nation as they camped innocently beneath the wicked gaze of Balak and his employee, Bilaam, the prophet.

But Hashem had different plans. As Bilaam's donkey ambled toward a narrow passage, it saw a frightening sight. An angel, with a sword thrust forward, blocked its path. The beast turned off the road into a field, and Bilaam struck the animal to get it back on the road. But again the angel stood in the passageway and the poor donkey, in fear, squeezed tightly against a stone wall, pressing Bilaam's leg against the wall. The great prophet, who so haughtily straddled the donkey, did not see the angelic figure and reacted violently. Again he hit his donkey; this time harder. But the angel did not retreat. He began approaching the donkey and its rider. Suddenly the donkey crouched in panic, and Bilaam struck it again. But this time the donkey did not act like a mule. She spoke up. Miraculously, Hashem opened her mouth, and she asked Bilaam, "why did you hit me? Aren't I the same animal that you have ridden your entire life? Should not my strange behavior give cause for concern?" (Numbers 22:28)

When the angel, sword in hand, finally revealed himself, and chided Bilaam for striking the innocent animal, Bilaam was flabbergasted. He was left speechless save for one sentence. "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing opposite me on the road. And if you want, I shall return" (Numbers 22:34).

What is disturbing is Bilaam's immediate admission of sin. If he could not see the angel why did he admit guilt?

Many riders would hit a donkey that presses their foot against the wall or crouches down amidst a group of a king's officers. Bilaam should have simply stated to the angel, "I did not know you were there and thought my beast was acting in a manner that required discipline." Why the apology? If he truly did not know that the angel was there, why did he admit to sinning?

On one of the final days of the Six Day War the Israeli troops pierced through enemy fortifications and forged their way through the ancient passageways of Jerusalem. As if Divine gravitational force was pulling them, one group of soldiers dodged the Jordanian bullets and proceeded until there was no reason to continue. They had reached the Kotel HaMaravi, the Western Wall, the holiest place in Judaism, the site of both the First and Second Temples. The young men, some of whom had yeshiva education, others who came from traditional backgrounds, stood in awe and began to cry in unison. The Kotel had been liberated!

One young soldier, who grew up on a totally secular kibbutz in the northern portion of the state gazed at the sight of his comrades crying like children as they stared up at the ancient stones. Suddenly, he, too began to wail.

One of the religious soldiers, who had engaged in countless debates with him, put his arm around him and asked, "I don't understand. To us the Kotel

means so much. It is our link with the Temple and the holy service. This is the most moving experience of our lives. But why are you crying?"

The young soldier looked at his friend, and amidst the tears simply stated, "I am crying because I am not crying."

Bilaam, the greatest of gentile prophets, realized that something must be wrong. A simple donkey saw the revelation of an angel. He did not. He realized that there are experiences he should have been able to grasp and appreciate. If he didn't it was not a donkey's fault. It was not an angel's fault. It was his fault. He realized then and there that it was he who was lacking.

How often does G-d cry out to us in newspaper headlines, be it earthquakes, wildfires, or human tragedies? We should stare at the sight and see the divine figure standing with an outstretched sword. We do not. We flip the paper and strike at the donkeys who struck out.

We ought to cry at the tragedies of life, and if we do not realize that they are there, we ought to cry about that. Then one day we will all smile. Forever.

Our Hope

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

This is the (Torah) law of a man who dies in a tent, anyone entering the tent and anything in the tent shall be unclean for seven days. (Bamidbar 19:14)

We have here the laws of TUMA – the spiritual impurity associated with a dead body. Our sages see something else in these words as well. "This is the (Torah) law of a man who dies in a tent..." They say, "The Torah is only maintained by someone who kills himself over it." This statement is filled with riddles. The Torah is called by King Solomon, not less, "A Tree of Life to those who grasp!" We are admonished to multiple times and emphatically by the Torah itself to choose life, and live in the Mitzvos, and not we are being told to kill ourselves over the same Torah that tells us to live. What's the meaning here? Obviously, killing ourselves over Torah is not meant to be literal but then what is the expectation? There are many approaches but let us try one.

The flying instructors who taught the 911 terrorists how to fly a plane realized only afterwards that they should have realized that "something was up", when their students wanted to learn only how to fly a plane, and not how land one. Similarly Rabbeinu Yona in Sha'arei Teshuvah (Chapter 2) is thunderstruck and left with a big wonderment why when a person reaches the age of 35 he does not move automatically into the mode of doing Teshuvah. After all King David records in Tehillim that "the years of man's life are 70". So we may be cruising at an altitude of 30,000 feet now, but when the fuel gauge indicates that the tank is half full, then that is a major message. Perhaps, to avoid the "crash course" it might be worthwhile considering learning the art of how to land this life gracefully.

Rabbeinu Yona quotes a seemingly odd statement from Mishne Derech Eretz, "If your desire is not to die, then die until you do not die!" This one is an enigma, wrapped in a secret, and enveloped in a mystery. What could it possibly mean? Perhaps we already have enough information now to begin to unravel it.

Bilaam foolishly declared his longing, "Let my soul die the death of the righteous!" What's so great about dying the death of the righteous and what's so foolish about wanting it for himself? My father in law used to say over a joke about a fellow who enters a diner where they are advertising, "The Second Cup of Coffee Free" and he asks for the 2nd cup of coffee. Of course the waiter explains to him that he can only give him the 2nd cup after he has paid for the first. He would say that the same applies to being a grandparent. Somebody once whimsically and absurdly said, "If I only knew how great it was to be a grandparent, I would have skipped being a parent, and I would choose to become a grandparent right away." Silly! I know of a few ambitious businessmen who are working hard all the time on their 2nd million, but unfortunately they have not gotten their 1st million yet. Implicit in the order of the universe is that some things must come first and certain things can only come second.

I have been have struggled with the language of this Mishne in the 4th Perek of Pirke Avos for years and this past week in a Chabura, the fellow sitting next to me gave such a beautiful explanation, I was left wondering, "Where have I been all my life?" The Mishne states, Rabbi Chavitai says, "Be very-very humble because the "TIKVA" the hope of man is worms!" Who hopes for worms? He explained, "All of a person's material ambitions, dreams, and hopes, even if he achieves them eventually crumble and return to the earth." That's what happens to the HOPES! Later I saw that Rebbe Nachman says, "Either a person's possessions are taken from him or he is eventually taken from his possessions."

Place a man in a vault filled with treasures and challenge him to take out what he can in 24 hours. Would he, should he waste his time playing video games and lounging in the spa? No! Torah and Mitzvos are diamonds whose currency is only realized in the 2nd world that comes after laboring to collect them in the 1st world. In this we can place our hope!