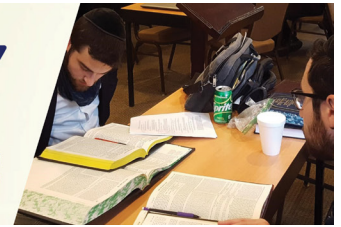




TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Balak

June 25, 2021

A Taste of Torah Where There's a Will There's a Way

by Rabbi Nesanel Kipper

This week's parsha begins with Balak's brazen attempt to destroy the Jewish People. He enlists the help of the powerful non-Jewish prophet, Bilam, to curse the Jews. When the messengers of Balak approach Bilam to persuade him to join them, Hashem tells Bilam to refuse. Bilam therefore responds to the messengers, "Even if you will give me a house full of silver and gold, I still will not be able to transgress the word of G-d" (Balak 22:18).

At first glance, Bilam's reply seems proper - he says that he will not ignore G-d's commandment. Nonetheless, our Sages teach that Bilam did not act appropriately in his interactions with G-d. How is this to be understood in light of Bilam's apparent willingness to obey G-d's command?

Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman (1874-1941) explains by first posing another question. The Gemara (Yevamos 62a) tells us that Moshe took three halachic actions of his own accord, and Hashem approved all three. This idea is puzzling; if Hashem did not command Moshe to do these things, how could Moshe decide on his own that they should be done?

This question can be further expanded by pondering what obligates the Jewish People to adhere to the words and laws enacted by the Sages.

The prophet Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) admonishes Klal Yisrael for offering sacrifices to idols. While relaying G-d's message, he rebukes them for doing that "Which I (G-d) have not commanded you, nor spoken to you, nor considered in My heart." The verse gives three expressions to convey the same idea - "not commanded you," "nor spoken to you," and "nor considered in My heart." What is the need for this apparent redundancy?

Rabbi Wasserman notes that the Targum translates these three terms as "I did not command in my Torah, nor sent in the hand of My servants the prophets, nor is it the will before Me." He explains that this refers to three elements of Torah: 1) The direct commandment of G-d through the Torah. 2) The word of G-d conveyed by the prophets. 3) Beneath the actual word of G-d, there is an additional, nuanced expression of G-d's will, which, while not explicitly instructed, can be understood by those who are truly committed to doing His will. This kind of service is more difficult than following the direct commandments of Hashem. It requires a much greater commitment to the service of Hashem, and a heightened awareness and connection to what Hashem wants from us at any given moment.

The Torah Sages throughout history, from Moshe Rabbeinu until today, possess a heightened sensitivity to the true will of Hashem. Therefore, when Moshe decided to take action of his own initiative, it was only superficially his own, as Hashem did not explicitly state those mitzvos. Nonetheless, Moshe, with his keen sense of Hashem's will, was really conveying what he understood Hashem's will to be. This is the reality of the mitzvos and enactments which our Sages institute, as well, for they are conveying Hashem's will to us.

With this idea in mind, we can now understand what Bilam did wrong. By responding that he cannot transgress the "word of G-d," he indicated that he was only concerned about Hashem's explicit command to him not to join the messengers. He knew that joining the campaign to destroy the Jewish Nation would be going against Hashem's will, but the only thing that was really holding him back was his fear of transgressing Hashem's direct commandment to him.

continued on back

Stories for the Soul

Publishing Deadline

based on a story on achim.org

Rabbi Yoel Sirkis (1561-1640) had completed writing a massive commentary on the Tur, which he titled Bayis Chadash, better known by its acronym, the Bach. So famous would this work become that Rabbi Sirkis would become eponymously known as the Bach.

Before publishing his work, Rabbi Sirkis gave the manuscript to a young colleague of his whom he knew to be a very righteous and accomplished Torah scholar, asking him to review it and give his opinion.

Sometime later, Rabbi Sirkis asked the man if he had completed his perusal of the manuscript and if he was ready to return it.

"I won't want to return it to you, even in twenty years' time," said the young man.

"Why so?" asked Rabbi Sirkis. "If the book does not meet with your approval, then please tell me, for did I not give it to you in order to hear your critical comments?"

"Your book is good and does good," the young man assured him. "However, as soon as you publish it and distribute it around the world, you will have completed your life's mission, and you will be taken from this world. And that is precisely why I want to delay its publication - so that you should continue living with us here."

"If that is what is holding you back," said Rabbi Sirkis, "then I hereby commit my soul to my Creator, and will not delay the publication of the book for the reason you give, because the world needs it."

The young man had no option but to

continued on back

Kollel Happenings

LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING ON JULY 4TH

The Kollel's in-person Legal Holiday Learning returns on July 4th! Breakfast following 7:30 shacharis at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center and at EDOS; details for the Southeast Kollel Torah Center TBD. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

SUMMER NIGHT SEDER FOR BACHURIM CONTINUES

The Kollel's Summer Night Seder for Bachurim is in full swing at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center. Boys join the Kollel's night seder. Refreshments and raffles nightly. A weekly stipend is available for those who attend consistently. Contact Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, rmf@denverkollel.org, for more details.

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. The month of Tammuz is sponsored by Reb Moshe Berkowitz in memory of his father, Reb Shlomo ben Reb Aryeh Leib. Thank you, as well, to Denver Human Services for their partnership in this program. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: How can the recitation of one blessing prevent the recitation of four blessings?

Answer: If a person failed to recite the additional *ritzei* prayer during *Birkas Hamazon* on Shabbos, he must repeat *Birkas Hamazon* (for the first two Shabbos meals, but not at the Third Meal).

Once the third blessing of *Birkas Hamazon* is completed with the completion of the final part of *uvinei Yerushalayim*, one cannot go back and recite *ritzei*. However, if one completed

the third blessing and did not yet begin the fourth blessing, there is a special blessing that should be recited in lieu of *ritzei*. Thus, this one blessing prevents the need to repeat the four blessings of *Birkas Hamazon*. (This special blessing exists for one who omitted *yaale viyavo* on holidays and Rosh Chodesh, as well.) (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 188:6 with Mishna Berura 22-23).

This week's question: When would the need to repeat *Birkas Hamazon* vary based on one's gender?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part V

Other Torah luminaries who recognized the great potential of the young Rabbi Meir Shapiro included Rabbi Yitzchak Shmelkes of Lemberg (Lvov), a major halachic authority and author of *Bais Yitzchak* (a halachic commentary on

Shulchan Aruch), from whom he received *semicha*; Rabbi Yisrael of Vizhnitz, a major chassidic leader; Rabbi Aryeh Leib Horowitz, rabbi of Stanislav; and Rabbi Meir Arik, another major halachic authority of the time.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

He was not concerned about truly serving Hashem and fulfilling His will, whether specifically commanded or not. Through a subtle choice of words, we can see his disregard for following the true will of G-d. And as the story of the parsha continues, this attempt to sidestep G-d's will while still obeying the letter of His law sends Bilam further and further into the abyss.

Throughout life, we are constantly faced with *nisyonos* (trials). From direct confrontations to more subtle challenges, we must constantly keep our eyes and our hearts open to pay attention to what Hashem wants of us.

Will we move ahead with our personal agenda, even though we know it does not align with true Torah values, so long as the Torah doesn't explicitly forbid it? Or will we try to understand what Hashem really *wants* from us, and make that our guiding force for each decision we make?

We beseech Hashem every morning that we should not come to sin, and we constantly need His assistance in guiding us to do the right thing. If we put in our best effort to understand and follow Hashem's will, we can be confident that Hashem will guide us to truly fulfill His will and serve Him properly.

Stories for the Soul

continued from front

return the manuscript to its author, who proceeded to have it published, volume by volume, beginning in 1631. And in 1640, soon after the appearance of the final volume, Rabbi Yoel Sirkis passed away.

In this week's parsha, Bilam expresses his wish to die the death of the righteous. Bilam failed to realize however, that one must live righteously in order to die the death of the righteous.

To sponsor Torah Weekly, delivered weekly in print and via email to thousands of Jews worldwide, email info@denverkollel.org
Denver Community Kollel | 5080 W. 14th Ave., Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855
info@denverkollel.org | www.denverkollel.org

To receive Torah Weekly by email, email to info@denverkollel.org