



Newsletter LITE: Parshat Chukat-Balak 5769

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Monday Night Chug at Camp Morasha!

Starting this Monday night, there will be a weekly "Netiv" chug with Chanan Bina, 10:00 PM at Camp Morasha. For more details please call Chanan 917-514-5438 (from Sunday).

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HaRav Nebenzahl asks that his Divrei Torah are not read during Tefillah or the Rabbi's sermon

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SELF-SACRIFICE FOR TORAH

"KILL" THE BODY AND RESUCITATE THE SOUL



We read in *Parshat Chukat*: "this is the teaching (lit. "the Torah") regarding a man who would die in a tent" (*Bamidbar* 19:14), to which Chazal comment: "The words of Torah are not retained except by one who kills himself over it" (*Shabbat* 83b). As nice a *drasha* as this may be, it does not appear to bear any relationship to the simple meaning of the *pasuk*. The *pasuk*, after all deals with contamination associated with coming in contact with the dead. How does this relate to "the words of Torah are not retained except by one who kills himself over it"?

I believe that we can relate this *drasha* to the simple understanding of the *pasuk*. What is the Torah teaching us here? When a person dies, as pure as he may have been during his lifetime, his body attains the ultimate level of *tumah* once his soul takes leave. This serves to teach us that the body on its own, in the absence of the soul, is the ultimate in impurity. It is only the soul, the spiritual component of the body, which imbues a person with sanctity and purity. In order to merit the Torah which is all sanctity and purity, we need to "kill" our body and "resuscitate" our soul, for holiness and sanctity can only be found in the soul. While it is true that the body

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contains a certain degree of sanctity, it is after all the image of Hashem and must be buried in a dignified manner, nonetheless, the body on its own is the ultimate in impurity.

It is precisely because a person must "kill" his body that the *Braita* teaches us: "This is the way of the Torah: eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground, live a life of deprivation - but toil in the Torah" (*Avot* 6:4). There are many who would be happy if the *Yeshivot* only provided their students with bread and salt and water in small measure! The truth is that today we would never be able to attain high levels of Torah learning while living under such conditions. This may have been fine for the Gr"a and others of his stature. For us, however, were we to sustain ourselves only on bread with salt and water in small measure we would not be able to fulfill the rest of the *Braita* to sleep on the ground - instead we would fall asleep on our "*shtender*". We could never learn under such austere conditions. We need to eat until we are satiated, all the while guarding ourselves against being ruled and guided by the physical world. Our soul must be the one to direct us not our body. In order to properly function, the body must be provided with its basic needs - we must not deprive ourselves of necessary sleep, and we must eat enough as well. Our goal in these physical activities must be, however, to enhance our Torah learning and mitzvah observance.

There is a particular *gadol* whose *chiddushei Torah* can be found in all of the *Yeshivot*. People say that it is evident from his writings that he was a very wealthy individual. He served Hashem and merited that his writings be studied throughout all of the *Yeshivot*, nevertheless had he learned under more difficult conditions, his *chiddushim* would have been that much greater. R' Shmelka of Niklesburg and his brother R' Pinchas author of the *Haflaa* were known to learn Torah day and night sleeping only when exhaustion overpowered them. The story is told that one of the brothers once reached his hand for a pillow to place under his head, at which point his brother remarked: "if you still have sufficient strength to reach for a pillow then you still have enough strength to continue learning!" Their mother used to say that she had two unusual sons - they rarely recited *Birkat HaMazon* (for they hardly ever ate) and they rarely recited *HaMapil* (for they hardly went to sleep) ... It was known that the Gr"a would learn twenty-two hours daily (see the introduction to the commentary of the Gr"a to the Shulchan Aruch written by his sons).

These are examples of people who "kill themselves over (the Torah)". This type of behavior, however, is not for us. For those on our level, we need to enjoy this world in

order to succeed in learning. I am referring not only to a "little finger's" worth of pleasure but a mouthful. Even so, we must not let our physical desires dictate our direction in life, they must only be used as needed to serve Hashem and not more.

We must not let our thoughts and decisions be influenced by this world. When we weigh the various factors required to render a decision we must not take into account what is good for our stomachs, like those people who "make their stomach into their gods" (*Chovot HaLevavot*). What must be exclusively on our mind is what the Torah wants from me, what Hashem wants from me, which decision would better spread Torah throughout *Am Yisrael*, what would better sanctify the Name of Heaven. Other factors are of no significance.

"HE WHO GUARDS THE FIG TREE SHALL EAT ITS FRUIT"

In *Parshat Pinchas* Moshe Rabenu requests from Hashem: "May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly" (Bamidbar 27:16). According to Rashi Moshe's request was far more detailed: "Once Moshe heard that the Omnipresent said to him: 'give Zelafchad's inheritance to his daughters', he said: 'the time has come that I should claim what I need - that my sons inherit my position'. The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to him: 'this is not what has entered My mind, Yehoshua is worthy of taking reward for his service: 'for he would not depart from within the tent'".

Clearly Moshe Rabenu would not request that his sons inherit his leadership position if they were not worthy of such a position. Moshe Rabenu is not like other people, who see in their children virtues that they do not possess(!) Moshe Rabenu weighs every detail with accurate holy scales. If he feels that his children are indeed worthy of leading the Jewish people, then clearly they are fit for the position. Why then did Hashem choose Yehoshua to succeed Moshe Rabenu rather than Gershom and Eliezer? Chazal tell us: "Hashem said to him: 'he who guards the fig tree shall eat its fruit' (*Mishle* 27:18). Yehoshua spent much time in your service ... he would rise early and remain late in your house of meeting, he would arrange the benches ... he is worthy of serving the Jewish people" (*Bamidbar Rabba* 21:14). (There is an inherent difficulty with this *midrash*, for why was there a need for benches in Moshe Rabenu's Beit Midrash, are we not told: "from the days of Moshe until Rabban Gamliel, they would not learn Torah any other way but standing. Once Rabban Gamliel died, feebleness descended to the world and they would learn Torah sitting" (*Megillah* 21a). Perhaps the benches were needed for the *tefillot*).

We find Yehoshua's devotion elsewhere as well. When Moshe Rabenu descended Har Sinai, Yehoshua was waiting for him at the foot of the mountain (see *Shmot* 32:17). Why did he wait there? Could he not have awaited his arrival in the camp? No! Moshe was returning from Har Sinai brimming with "*chiddushei Torah*"! Yehoshua cannot wait for Moshe Rabenu to return to the camp, he awaits his arrival at the foot of the mountain - imagine how many *chiddushei Torah* he can hear as he accompanies Moshe from the mountain to the encampment!

Yehoshua did not just go to the foot of the mountain on the fortieth day, he waited at the foot of Har Sinai for all forty days! (see Rashi *Shmot* 24:13). For what reason? Did Moshe not inform the people prior to ascending up the mountain that he would remain on top for a total of forty days? (see Rashi *Shmot* 32:1). Yehoshua therefore could have remained in the camp the entire time only returning to Har Sinai on the fortieth day to greet Moshe! This is not, however, what Yehoshua does. He feared that perhaps the Divine Plan would be altered, perhaps Hashem would decide that Moshe must return from the mountain prior to the forty days stipulated. If so, he did not wish to risk losing even one single moment. He therefore remained for forty days at the foot of Har Sinai awaiting Moshe's return.

As we mentioned, if Moshe requested that his sons inherit his position then clearly they too must have been men of stature in Torah, *Yirat Shamayim*, and in all other *middot*. They may even have surpassed Yehoshua's level in certain areas. Even so, there is at least one area in which Yehoshua was greater than Moshe's sons - in his self-sacrifice and thirst for words of Torah. It was for this reason that Hashem chose

Yehoshua to succeed Moshe rather than Gershom and Eliezer.

DID YOU STUDY TORAH IN CLOSE QUARTERS WITH PEOPLE WITH INFECTIOUS ILLNESSES?

We find a rare and unique reward for self-sacrifice for Torah during the time of the Amoraim as well. The Gemara relates: "when it was time for R' Yehoshua ben Levi to die, they said to the Angel of Death: 'go do for him whatever he wishes'. The Angel went and appeared to him, R' Yehoshua ben Levi said to it: 'take me to the Garden of Eden and show me my place there'. The Angel said: 'Fine'. R' Yehoshua ben Levi said to the Angel: 'give me your knife lest you frighten me along the way'. The Angel gave the knife to R' Yehoshua ben Levi. When he arrived there, the

Angel lifted R' Yehoshua ben Levi up and showed him his place in the Garden of Eden. R' Yehoshua ben Levi leaped and fell to the other side" (managing to evade the knife of the Angel of Death) (*Ketubot 77b*).

The Gemara continues: "R Chanina bar Pappa was a close and constant friend of the Angel of Death. When it was time for him to die, they said to the Angel of Death: 'go do for him whatever he wishes'. The Angel went near him and appeared to him ... R' Chanina bar Pappa said to the Angel: 'show me my place in the Garden of Eden'. The Angel said: 'fine". R' Chanina bar Pappa said to the Angel: 'give me your knife lest you frighten me along the way'. The Angel replied to him: 'you want to do to me as your friend did?' R' Chanina did not have the merit to enter Gan Eden alive as did R' Yehoshua ben Levi. R' Chanina said to the Angel: 'bring a Torah scroll and see if there is anything that is written in it that I did not fulfill' ..." (*ibid.*). And indeed the Gemara reports that "when he died a column of fire appeared and stood as a separation between him and everyone else, and there is a tradition that a column of fire does not appear and stand as a separation except for one person in a generation or two persons in a generation" (*ibid.*).

R' Chanina bar Pappa was obviously a man of great stature, he was the *gadol* of his generation - or at least one of the two *gedolim* of his time. He was a *gadol* in no ordinary generation but in one of the generations of the holy *Amoraim* whose greatness we cannot begin to describe or measure. Yet, explained the Angel of Death to R' Chanina bar Pappa, there is one thing that R' Yehoshua ben Levi did that you did not: "did you stick close to people afflicted with *raatan* and engage in the study of Torah?" (*ibid.*). (*Raatan* was a very difficult and infectious disease.) Amoraim were in the habit of distancing themselves from those afflicted with this illness to avoid being infected by them. But R' Yehoshua ben Levi would come close to people afflicted with *raatan* and would sit and learn Torah with them. Perhaps he would give them their own private *shiur* as was the case, in our generation, with R' Aryeh Levin

zt"l who would visit a leper colony on a regular basis, for there was no one else willing to do so. R' Chanina bar Pappa certainly gave of all his resources for his own Torah study as well as for the disseminating of Torah to others. There is also no doubt that immediately after his death he arrived in Gan Eden. Yet he did not have that unique self-sacrifice we find in R' Yehoshua ben Levi - endangering his life by teaching Torah to people afflicted with *raatan*. This explains why he did not merit being saved from the sword of the Angel of Death and entering

Gan Eden while still alive, as did R' Yehoshua ben Levi.

I DID NOT BENEFIT FROM WORLDLY PLEASURES EVEN BY ONE BABY FINGER'S WORTH!

Chazal tell us: "from the days of Moshe until Rebbi we do not find Torah and authority preeminent in one place" (*Gittin* 59a). What special trait did Rebbi possess that was not found in anyone else from the period of Moshe Rabenu until his time? The Gemara relates: "at the time of Rebbi's passing, he extended his ten fingers heavenward and he said: 'Master of the Universe it is revealed and known before You that I toiled with my ten fingers in the study of Torah but I did not benefit from worldly pleasure even according to the toil of my little finger. May it be Your will that there be peace in my place of eternal rest'" (*Ketubot* 104a). Had Rebbi been a pauper this declaration would not have been such a big deal- OK, so he derived no worldly pleasures from this life. Rebbi, however, was no pauper, he was an extremely wealthy man. For a man of such means to avoid deriving any benefit from this world is something very great indeed. In his position, he surely had to host many dignitaries such as the Caesar, the Roman governor, and "*lehavdil*" many *gedolei Yisrael*. Without a doubt they were served the finest delicacies. In spite of all this, he personally did not enjoy even a little finger's worth of pleasure in this world. Rebbi was totally devoted to the Torah. This is probably what made him worthy of compiling the Oral Torah for us in the form of the six books of the Mishna.

We must attempt as best we can to overpower our negative traits: jealousy, desires, honor, and all the other negative traits. "This is the teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent" - we must live with the physical world within the "tent of the Torah" - not to die, G-d forbid. We must eat and sleep. The negative traits, however, must be "killed, for "the words of Torah are not retained except by one who kills himself over it".

Rav Nebenzahl on Parshat Balak

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BILAAM'S GREATNESS (?)

IT IS PERFECTLY NORMAL TO SPEAK TO A DONKEY

A wise man once pointed out to me that from a simple reading of *Parshat Balak* we can discover the greatness of Bilaam. Imagine if one of us were to walk down the street and come across a donkey that suddenly began talking. What would our reaction be? We would be so frightened that we would run away as fast as we could. Bilaam, however, was not afraid presumably because he



understood that just as Hashem could cause a human being to speak, he could make a donkey speak. This explains why he began arguing with the donkey so matter-of-factly as if a talking donkey were nothing out of the ordinary.

WAS BILAAM AS GREAT AS MOSHE?

Chazal derive from one of the concluding *psukim* of the Torah: "*velo kam navi od beYisrael keMoshe*" "Never again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moshe" (*Devarim* 34:10), that only in Israel has there not arisen a prophet like Moshe, in the other nations there has. They are referring to Bilaam. Can it truly be said that Bilaam was on the level of Moshe Rabenu? Moshe was the holiest man alive and Bilaam was the most impure! Moshe Rabenu's love for the Jewish people knew no bounds, while the same may be said for Bilaam's hatred for the nation! We are told: "Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth!" (*Bamidbar* 12:3), Chazal describe Bilaam as a person with "a haughty spirit and a proud soul" (*Avot* 5:19). How can we even begin to compare the two?

One of the explanations is that Bilaam was like Moshe in some aspects but not in all aspects. Chazal teach us that different prophets may see the same vision, but no two prophets will prophesy in the same fashion. Hashem's speaking to prophets is described as: "In a vision shall I make Myself known to him, in a dream shall I speak with him" (*Bamidbar* 12:6). The same vision may appear differently to different people. One may be enthralled by the greenery in the vision, another by the blue sky, yet another by the tall mountains. The *halacha* states that the testimony of two witnesses may be considered as having concurred if they relate what they saw differently, whereas were they to relate what happened in the identical fashion, we suspect they may be false witnesses who may have plotted among themselves what they would testify prior to their court appearance. This is because each witness is impressed with another aspect of what he saw. In a murder, for example, one witness may have been fascinated by the quick motion of the murderer's hands, the other by the size and sharpness of the knife. This may cause one to notice things that the other did not.

MILK IS MILK

Prophets are no different - two may see the same vision and describe it differently. The one exception to this rule is Moshe Rabenu: "All the prophets looked into a dim glass, but Moshe looked through a clear glass" (*Yevamot* 49b). Moshe Rabenu is spoken to directly: "Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles" (*Bamidbar* 12:8). Every word, every vowel, every note in the Torah is directly as Hashem dictated to Moshe. There can be no claim that Moshe transmitted the Torah improperly: the letters *chet*, *lamed bet* in "*lo tevashel gdi bachalev*

imo" "do not cook a kid in the milk of its mother" (*Shmot* 23:19), should not be read *chelev* meaning fat - if the Torah says milk, then milk it must be for Moshe wrote what Hashem dictated verbatim. Moshe's prophecy is not clouded with his own bias - "in My entire house he is the trusted one" (*Bamidbar* 12:7).

Other prophets did their utmost to transmit the word of Hashem, but it was filtered through their own perceptions. This can be compared to a ray of light shining on a colored glass, the ray on the other side will appear as the color of the glass - if the light shines on a blue pane, the light will appear blue while if the pane of glass is green then the light will appear green. Bilaam, however, was the opposite. The

vision he saw was totally black, whatever he said was his own interpretation. It is for this reason that Hashem had to dictate to Bilaam word for word: "go back to Balak and thus shall you say" (*Bamidbar* 23:5). No blessing could ever emerge if Bilaam were spoken to in riddles and permitted to interpret Hashem's words as he saw them. He must be told in no uncertain terms exactly what he should say. It was for this reason only that Bilaam received a prophecy on the level of Moshe Rabenu - his words are truly *ruach haKodesh*, with Divine Inspiration. While Moshe Rabenu was a completely clear pane of glass, Bilaam's glass was completely black. If Bilaam were to be spoken to in riddles, no blessings would have emerged for he would have interpreted any positive vision about the Jewish people as something negative. Bilaam had to be told what to say word-for-word.

BILAAM IS BILAAM

He may have had *ruach hakodesh*, yet his heart was still that of Bilaam. He may have been instructed what words to use, and in fact he did, yet his thoughts and feelings still managed to penetrate his prophecy. Chazal teach us that all of Bilaam's blessings were eventually transformed into curses, with the exception of "*ma tovu ohalecha Yaakov mishkenotecha Yisrael*" "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places O Israel" (*Bamidbar* 24:5) (see Sanhedrin 105b). His cursed heart affected all his blessings with this one exception. The blessing remains in our *shuls* and our *Batei Midrash*. Apparently the blessings for our *shuls* and *Batei Midrash* were so strong that even his evil thoughts could have no effect. When the Jewish people are not worthy, Bilaam's thoughts can indeed take effect. When the Jewish people are worthy, it is Bilaam's spoken words which take effect: "But Hashem your G-d refused to listen to Bilaam" (*Devarim* 23:6).

We must not for a moment think that Bilaam was on par with Moshe Rabenu, yet he did possess some degree of greatness. Bilaam described himself as *veyode-a daat Elyon* "who knows the knowledge of the Supreme One" (*Bamidbar* 24:16). Chazal pose the following question: "if Bilaam did not know what was on the animal's mind, could he possibly know the mind of the Supreme One"? (Sanhedrin 105b). Chazal proceed to describe in great detail the interchange Bilaam had with the donkey and how the donkey was victorious every step of the way - yet he claimed to know "the knowledge of the Supreme One". Despite Bilaam's shortcomings, Chazal teach us that he indeed did have *daat Elyon* - he was aware of the precise moment when Hashem was angry and he planned to curse the Jewish people at precisely that moment.

Bilaam had tremendous secrets revealed to him - nothing short of our upcoming Redemption, may it arrive speedily in our day. His tremendous knowledge and vision, however, had no effect on his personality. He was aware of all of these great secrets yet his end was being killed in the war against Midian and he has no share in the World to Come. We find in the book of Yehoshua that Bilaam is referred to as a *kosem*, a sorcerer. The Gemara asks: "A sorcerer? Why he was a prophet! R' Yochanan said: at the beginning he was a prophet but at the end a sorcerer" (Sanhedrin 106a). He lost all his prophetic powers, for they were only external clothing and had no influence on him.

TORAH IS MORE THAN JUST WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

We find in the *midrash*: "if one were to tell you there is wisdom amongst the nations then believe them; if, however, one were to tell you there is Torah among the nations, do not believe them" (*Midrash Eicha*). There are many non-Jews who are well-versed in Bible, but Bible is not their Torah. The wisdom of their Torah is

simply wisdom rather than being their guiding force in life. We are forbidden from simply viewing the Torah as a source of wisdom - it is our guide (*moreh* is from the same root as Torah).

For Bilaam, the Torah is a tremendous source of knowledge. He knows what happened and what will happen in this world and the Next. We find that Bilaam is actually interested in a share in the Next World: "may my soul die the death of the upright and may my end be like this" (*Bamidbar* 23:10). Bilaam wished to die the deaths of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, but he had no interest in living like them. The Torah was not his guide for life.

As with Bilaam's blessings, there are many areas in which our thoughts influence what takes place. This is particularly pronounced in the laws relating to sacrifices. The Torah specifically states there: "you shall slaughter it to gain favor for yourselves" (*Vayikra* 22:29). This requirement of an offering having to be brought by our own desire prompts the Gemara to rule: "an act performed incidentally in connection with consecrated animals is invalid" (*Chullin* 31b). This means that if one slaughters an animal meeting every requirement down to the last detail, but did not realize that this was for the sake of an offering, the sacrifice is invalid. Furthermore, slaughtering an animal *shelo lishmo*, without the proper intent, invalidates the *korban*, as does one who has in mind during the slaughtering to partake of the meat beyond the permitted time (this not only renders the sacrifice invalid but is considered *pigul* - consumption of such meat is punishable by *karet*).

If an improper thought can destroy, a proper thought can have a tremendous positive effect, for: "a measure of good is greater than a measure of retribution" (*Sanhedrin* 100b). This does not mean that actual sinning can be nullified by proper thoughts, rather proper behavior coupled with positive thoughts and proper intention is better than one who performs the mitzvot without his heart and mind in the right place. This is irrespective of whether or not we rule: "*Mitzvot tzrichot kavana*" "commandments require intent" (*Brachot* 13a). Performance of a mitzvah with a lack of proper love and fear of Hashem, may be technically valid according to the opinion "*Mitzvot ein tzrichot kavana*", yet it is second rate work. In addition, such a person has not fulfilled the Torah's commandment of: "to serve Him with all your heart" (*Devarim* 10:12). In fact, in mitzvot from the Torah we rule that one who has performed the mitzvah without the proper *kavana*, intent must repeat the Mitzvah.

TORAH IMPROVES OUR MIDDOT

Observing the Torah should not only bring about an improvement in our actions but in our character traits as well. If learning and observing the Torah does not accomplish this, then there is something amiss with the way we are learning. Perhaps we are viewing the Torah as knowledge and wisdom rather than as Torah - a guide to life.

Kollel Dvar Torah

by Rav Tal Eisenberg on Parshat Chukat

THE FORTIETH YEAR IN THE DESERT

The Netziv, in his introduction to the book of *Bamidbar*, writes that *Sefer Bamidbar* may be viewed as the transition between Hashem's Guiding Hand in the desert and His Providence as they prepare to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem's Guidance

throughout the forty year sojourn in the desert can be described as miraculous - with their bread raining down from the sky and with a well full of water following them around in the desert. Their arrival in *Eretz Yisrael* marked the beginning of Providence through more natural means while Heavenly Providence was less apparent. During this fortieth year, Hashem guided the nation in the manner in which a mother cares for her young whom she is slowly weaning. She tries to get the child accustomed to eating other foods but is ready to nurse when needed. As time goes on, the incidents of nursing become fewer and much further between until finally the child becomes completely weaned off his mother's milk. In a similar manner, Hashem slowly weaned the Jewish nation off the tremendous miracles they had become accustomed to in the desert.

The Jewish nation arrived at Kadesh at the beginning of their fortieth year in the desert, whereupon Miriam had died. For thirty-nine years they were followed by a well whose existence they owed to her merit. Suddenly there was no water to drink - this was not a punishment but rather simply a new form of Divine Providence. Moshe and Aharon's reaction to the people's complaint of: "why have you brought the congregation of Hashem to this wilderness to die there, we and our animals?" (*Bamidbar* 20:4), was "they fell on their faces" (*ibid.* 6). This is in complete contrast to their crying out to Hashem when the Jewish nation had previously cried for water upon first leaving Egypt. Moshe and Aharon had anticipated that after forty years of being schooled in what trust in Hashem means, the people would be on a higher level.

Even in the realm of self-defense we find the fortieth year different from the others. Messengers needed to be sent to the king of Edom to relate the entire history to the king and to make a special request to allow the Jewish nation to pass through his land promising not only not to destroy or ruin anything, but even to purchase from and thereby sustain the local population. This was all to no avail, as the king of Edom refused to allow the nation to pass through. Suddenly they realized that Hashem was guiding them through natural means in the area of waging war as well.

A few months later, on the first day of the month of Av, their beloved Aharon HaKohen the *ohav shalom verodef shalom*, died. Suddenly the *ananei hakavod* disappeared and Hashem began guiding them through natural means. They then met up with the Canaanites (Amalekites disguised as Canaanites) who tried to attack the Jewish people. The nation learned that in order for them to manage in future wars as they enter *Eretz Yisrael* they would have to pray to Hashem and take additional vows upon themselves.

Even the fiery serpents which Hashem sent as a result of their complaining about the manna and the lack of water in the desert are a great lesson in *emunah*. They were taught to look at what the desert looks like naturally - snakes the size of beams. Hashem in His great mercy continues to intervene with Divine Providence through miracles. Hashem commanded Moshe to place a serpent made of copper upon a pole and "anyone who was bitten will look at it and live" (*Bamidbar* 21:8). Chazal comment: "does a serpent kill or does a serpent restore life? Rather, when Israel gazed upward and subjugated their heart to their Father in Heaven, they were healed but if not, they perished" (*Rosh Hashana* 29a). This is the lesson which they must take to heart and take with them as they continue their journey towards *Eretz Yisrael*.

I would like to conclude with a profound message I heard from my Rebbe HaRav Yaakov Katz Shlit"a. The Jewish nation was about to receive Hashem's Providence

through natural means. It is incumbent upon them to discover Hashem's Presence. Hashem sees and knows all that is happening. Hashem informs them during this fortieth year that He wishes to teach them that even if it may appear otherwise, His Divine Presence is always there. To teach this lesson, there was an incident in which His Presence was at first hidden and then revealed. What are we referring to? Let us begin by trying to understand a few difficult *psukim* which appear towards the end of the *parsha*: "therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of Hashem: the gift of the Reeds and the rivers of Arnon" (Bamidbar 21:14).

Rashi explains that the gift of Reeds refers to the miracles which took place at the Sea of Reeds - just as we must relate the miracles Hashem did for the nation at Yam Suf we must relate the miracles of the Valley of Arnon. What miracles took place at the Valley of Arnon? "The outpouring of the valleys when it veered to dwell at Ar, and leaned against the border of Moav" (ibid. 15).

"The mountains were high and the valley deep and narrow, and the mountains near one another. A person can stand on the mountain on one side, and speak with his friend on the mountain on the other side. The road upon which the Israelites were to travel passes through the valleys. The Amorites said: 'when Israel will enter into the valley, in order to pass through, we will come out of the caves that are in the mountains above them and we will kill them with arrows and catapult stones'. Those caves in which the Amorites hid were on the mountain on the Moabite side and on the mountain on the side of the Amorites there were opposite those hollows, hornlike and breast-like projections protruding outwards. Once Israel came to pass through the valley the mountain of the Land of Israel trembled like a slavewoman who goes out to greet her mistress and came close to the side of the mountain of Moab, and those breast-like projections entered into those hollows and killed the Amorites" (Rashi).

This is the meaning of "when it veered to dwell at Ar" - the mountain had

veered from its place and saved them. The Jewish people walked past those mountains without being aware of the miracles which took place there. Only later on, "after Israel passed through, the mountains went back to their places and the well went down into the valley and brought up from there the blood of those who were killed and arms and limbs and took them around the camp. Israel saw and sang song in appreciation of the miracle" (Rashi). They were taught that Hashem at times conceals His Providence but it is definitely there.

The song which the Jewish nation sang to Hashem included the words:

"From the heights of the ravine that is in the field of Moav, at the top of the peak, and it is seen over the surface of the Yeshimon" (ibid. 20)

Rashi offers a few interpretations, the latter of which is: "the well is 'seen from the surface of the Yeshimon,' for it was hidden away in the Sea of Tiberias, and one who stands on the Yeshimon can look out and see a sieve-like shape in the sea and that is the well."

HaRav Katz Shlit"א explains the deep meaning behind Rashi's comment: Whoever looks closely at the Kinneret, the source of our drinking water, will see the well - he will discover Hashem's miracles behind what appears to be natural Providence. Hashem is present there just as He appeared miraculously in the well which moved about from place to place in the desert. This is the school of *emunah* which the

entire nation attended during this fortieth year in the desert. The Jewish people were now ready to enter the Land, with the understanding that: "Behold! He was standing behind our wall, observing through the windows, peering through the lattices" (*Shir HaShirim* 2:9)."

May it be the Will of Hashem that we hear only good tidings and that "as in the days when you left the land of Egypt I will show it wonders" (Micha 7:15).

Shabbat Shalom uMevorach

Kollel Dvar Torah
by Rav Lior Yadger on Parshat Balak

"For from its origins, I see it rock-like, and from hills do I see it. Behold! It is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations" (Bamidbar 23:9).

The midrash comments that "from its origins I see it rock-like" refers to the forefathers and "from hills" refers to the matriarchs. Rashi adds his interpretation: "I look at their origin and at the beginning of their roots and I see them entrenched and strong as these rocks and hills by means of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs." The Yalkut Shimoni explains (768) explains that the *pasuk* means that they are different from idol worshippers in many respects - their clothing, the food they eat, their bodies.

HaRav Robman zt"l explains why the wicked Bilaam was so surprised at the separateness of the Jewish people. The Rambam writes (*Hilchot Deot*) that man was created in such a way that his opinions, ideas, and acts are the sum influence of his surroundings." In other words, man by nature mimics those around him. Bilaam could not believe that the Jewish people, the lone lamb surrounded by seventy wolves, was able to withstand the strong influence of foreign culture and protect its uniqueness by not mixing with the other nations.

They inherited this strength from their holy ancestors. The Torah describes Avraham as being an Ivri (see Bereishit 14:13). Chazal explain: What is the meaning of the description "Ivri"? The midrash tells us: "that the entire world is one side (*me-ever echad*) and he is on the other side" (*Bereishit Rabba* 42:8). Avraham Avinu stood alone against the entire idolatrous world, steadfast in his belief in the Creator of the World. His belief was so strong that he worked tirelessly to teach other others and bring them closer to belief in Hashem.

The Netziv (Haamek Davar) offers a fascinating comment on the uniqueness of the Jewish people. When most people leave their country of origin and mix in with their new nation and surroundings, they are greeted with open arms, showered with love, and given positions of importance. This is not so with the Jewish people. The more separate they are the greater respect they receive from the other nations. We can read the above-quoted *pasuk* as follows: when they are in solitude, then they will be able to dwell in peace and respect. However when they try to be "among the nations" - to mix in and assimilate, then "they shall be reckoned" - they will not be treated with any respect.

The Jewish people are compared to olive oil, and just as if you try to mix the oil

with other liquids it always remains separate, so too the Jewish nation when they try to mix in with the other nations, the other nations remind them again and again that we are Jewish.

We must be wary when the other nations approach us with love and friendship, for it is often empty in content, lacking the basic Jewish traits of humility, modesty, and sanctity.

The following example has been cited to describe the relationship between the Jewish people and the rest of the world. The sun and the westerly wind argued over who would be able to cause a man walking by to take off his coat. The wind began by blowing gusts over and over again. Not only did the man not remove his coat but he held on to it tighter trying to keep warm. It was then the sun's turn - the sun simply shone her hot rays on the man who after a very short time took off his coat.

The meaning behind this is that the greatest danger a Jew faces is that of outside influences, especially from those with foreign ideas packaged with an illusion of warmth and love which often leads to, G-d forbid, throwing off the yoke of Torah and mitzvot. May it be the will of Hashem that we always remain: "a nation that dwells in solitude" by increasing our Torah learning and mitzvah observance.

"vehivdilanu min hato-im venatan lanu Torat emet"

"He has separated us from those who stray and given us the Torah of truth"

Visitor Log, Mazal Tov's, Tehillim List Announcements from the Yeshiva

Visitors:

The following people have visited/learned in the Yeshiva:

- Mark Weber (5766-67)
- Rabbi Arie Friedner (5765-66)
- Darren Levin (5761-62)
- Chaim Fedida (5767-68)
- Danny Schilo (5752)
- Richie Grossman (5746) and Family
- Stuart Litwack (5759-60) and Family
- Brian Khunovich (5762-63)
- Jonny Skolnick (5761-62, 67)

Baruch Dayan Emet:

Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh regrets to inform you of the passing of:

- the well-known and popular singer, performer, and composer Chazzan Jo Amar, who maintained the Sephardic tradition and uplifted the Sephardic community; grandfather of Schachar Amar (5758-59) and Adam Amar (5764), and father of Dr. David Amar and Ouri Amar.
- Rabbi Nosson Goodman, grandfather of Rafi Goodman (5769).

Hamakom Yenachem Otam B'toch Sha'ar Aveilei Tzion V'Yerushalayaim.

Tehillim List

The following members of our extended YNA family need our tefilot:

- Taube Yehudit bat Temma Gasia
- Yitzchak ben Shayna Ita
- Zev Eliezer ben Chaya Shayndel
- Rueven ben Tova Chaya
- Fruma bat Eeta
- Moshe Zanvel ben Breindel
- Sima Rivkah bat Eidel
- Leah bat Eidel
- Chaim Shmuel Moshe ben Golda
- Aryeh Rephael ben Sarah
- Chaya Sarah bat Fanya Luna
- Yitzchak ben Tova
- Fraida Rachel bat Sarah Milcha
- Lea bat Bracha
- Miriam Rivka bat Adina Leah
- Dina Sarah bat Shaindel Mira
- Tali bat D'vorah Bina
- Tobah Pessal bat Esther
- Lottie Adina bat Claudia
- Orly bat Yaerah
- Miriam Naomi bat Sarah
- Yehudis Sara bas Esther
- Dov Eliyahu ben Mindel Hudis
- Rahamim ben Miriam
- Hinda bat Sara Leah
- Rivka Zelda bat Bracha
- Dovid Ben Miriam
- Yaackov Chaim Meir ben Miriam
- Avraham ben Leah
- Chaim Naftali Yaakov ben Shifra Shaulah
- Michael Yosef ben Tzipora
- Gidon Shlommo ben Esther
- Haya Rebecca Rivka bat Jeanne Yaffa
- Temima Adina bat Keren Ronit
- Avraham ben Meela
- Bracha Sara bat Rivka Zelda
- Ita Blima bat Malka Fraidel

Please, if you have any smachot or chas v'shalom, less happy occasions, [let our office know](#) so we can keep everybody updated. Are you visiting Israel? - [let us know!](#) We'd love to host you for a shabbat meal, davening, a shiur and would love for you to stop by.

Shabbat Shalom,

HaRav Aharon Bina, Netiv Aryeh
Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh