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Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Balak

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לעילוי נשמת ר' נחום בן הרב דוד ואשתו מרת חיה בת אריה לייב, זכרון כולם לברכה

Bilam and Avraham

Rabbi Josh Guttenberg

Among the many evil people the Jewish people encounter in Tanach, few are designated as being a *rasha* – a truly wicked person. Yet, in rabbinic literature Bilam is often called a *rasha*. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 106b) even says we may speak as much evil as we want about Bilam, which we may not do regarding other wicked people. However, what Bilam did to earn this title is unclear. Even though he wanted to curse the Jews, in the end he was unable to do so. And even though he advised the Moabites to send women to seduce the Jewish men, which ultimately led to a terrible plague in the Jewish camp, he didn't actively kill the men, as other kings succeeded in doing. Why is Bilam considered a *rasha*?

Two rabbinic statements contrast Avraham and Bilam:

1. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 105b) notes that after G-d granted Bilam permission to travel with Balak's servants, he hastily prepared for the trip. Surely, after being greeted by Balak's entourage and receiving word that Balak would fulfill any of his requests in exchange for cursing Bnei Yisrael, Bilam could have had someone else prepare his donkey for the trip to Moav. Yet, the Torah says that Bilam saddled his own donkey, enthusiastic to begin his journey to curse the Jews. The gemara then continues to say that Bilam was not the first dignitary to saddle his own donkey. When G-d commanded Avraham to sacrifice Yitzchak, not only did Avraham saddle his own donkey, but he woke up early to do so – "And Avraham rose *early* in the morning (Bereishit 22:3)." Even to

sacrifice his own son, Avraham was eager and ready to fulfill G-d's command.

2. These two personalities are also linked in Pirkei Avot. A mishnah (5:19) states: "Anyone who possesses these three attributes is among the disciples of Avraham, and anyone who possesses these three attributes is among the disciples of Bilam. The disciples of Avraham have a good eye, a meek spirit and a humble soul. The disciples of Bilam have an evil eye, a haughty spirit and a proud soul."

What emerges from these two teachings is that while Avraham and Bilam shared similar characteristics, Avraham was able to use them for good, and Bilam used them for bad.

- **Initiative.** Both of these men took the initiative to saddle their own donkeys. Avraham was proactive in fulfilling the word of G-d, while Bilam was eager to curse the Jewish people.

- **Good Eye vs. Evil Eye.** Avraham refused to take any spoils from the battle he fought against the four kings in order to save Lot. On the other hand, Bilam stated that even if Balak were to give him a house full of silver and gold, he would not travel to Balak, and Rashi (Bamidbar 22:18) notes that Bilam actually desired all of that money. Bilam thought he deserved the money, since 1) that would be the amount needed to hire soldiers to wage battle against the Jewish people, and 2) Bilam's curses were guaranteed to work, while the soldiers might lose in battle.

- **Meek Spirit vs. Haughty Spirit.** Avraham pleaded with G-d not to

destroy S'dom, but after G-d rejected his plea Avraham accepted G-d's word and ended the discussion. However, Bilam was determined to follow his heart, and when G-d didn't grant explicit permission to travel to Balak, Bilam still proceeded to travel to Balak.

- **Humble Soul vs. Proud Soul.** While Avraham pleaded with G-d concerning the fate of S'dom, he acknowledged that he was merely "dust and ashes (Breishit 18:27)". However, Bilam was concerned for his own honour. Sensing this, Balak sent his most respected servants to persuade Bilam to come, and promised to honour Bilam greatly.

Perhaps, the rabbis connect these two seemingly unrelated characters to highlight the sins that earned Bilam the title of *rasha*. Avraham was able to use his abilities not only to better himself, but also to inspire those around him. Bilam had the potential to be as great as Avraham, because they shared so many character traits. However, not only did Bilam fail to reach his potential, but he used those same attributes and skills for evil. Bilam poured his efforts into arguing with G-d and harming the Jewish people, instead of using them to better himself and inspire the nations around him.

May we strive to be among the disciples of Avraham, and use our character traits and potential to better ourselves, our community and the world at large.

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Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

Michah's heritage is not mentioned in Tanach. The prophet is identified as coming from a town called Moreshet, which some link with the Philistine city of Gat; others identify this town with a city named Maresha, near Beit Guvrin. Michah is one of the few biblical prophets to be mentioned beyond his own book; in Yirmiyahu 26, the warnings Michah delivered to Jewish kings are cited as part of a defense for the prophet Yirmiyahu.

Michah prophesied to the Jews of the southern kingdom of Yehudah about 100-150 years before the destruction of the first Beit haMikdash, a time when Yehudah's power was in decline. Amon, once under Yehudah's control, had successfully rebelled and freed itself. (Melachim II 15) Following this, the nation of Aram had conquered Yehudah. The Assyrians had then conquered Aram; they liberated Yehudah, but the result was that Yehudah was now beholden to Assyria. Like his contemporaries, Hosheia, Yeshayah and Amos, (see Pesachim 87a) Michah rebukes the Jews and speaks of an impending punishment and exile. In particular, Michah criticizes the nation for social sins, and he is harsh in his rebuke for Jews who inhabit the great city of Jerusalem.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah begins with a promise that we will thrive in our exile when we act righteously. We will be independent of the nations among whom we live, and a source of blessing to others. (Michah 5:6) Enemies will not be able to harm us; we will be like a young lion among sheep. (5:7-8) G-d will eliminate weapons, for we will have no need of them; we will not need the protection of cities, either. (5:9-10) Jews will cease their search for deities and sorcery to aid them in their battles, and G-d will fight on their behalf. (5:11-14)

The second half of our haftorah presents a different tactic on the part of Michah. Instead of presenting a carrot to entice the Jews into good behaviour, Michah, speaking for G-d, challenges the Jews to justify their straying. G-d declares that He has not asked the Jews for much, (6:3) in exchange for providing us with our freedom, giving us good leaders, and protecting us from evil foes like Bilam. (6:4-5) Even when we sinned at Shittim, (Bamidbar 25) on the cusp of our entry into Israel, G-d still forgave us and brought us into the land. (Ibn Ezra to Michah 6:5)

G-d declares that He has never wanted great volumes of sacrifices; (6:6-7) as

Rambam explains, G-d desires the closeness which is achieved through the korban, but the korban without the closeness is meaningless. (Moreh haNevuchim 3:32) What G-d wants from us is: Justice, generosity, and a private, personal (*tzanua*) relationship with Him. (Michah 6:8)

What is the connection to our parshah?

The blatant link between our parshah and our haftorah is in the appearance of Bilam in both. In our parshah, Bilam attempts to call upon G-d to harm the Jews, on behalf of the nations of Moav and Midian; G-d refuses to permit this. In our haftorah, Michah recounts the ways in which G-d protected the Jews in the wilderness, and he specifically cites the way G-d thwarted the plans of Bilam. (6:4-5)

An additional connection appears at the end of our haftorah, when the prophet Michah tells us that G-d wants to have a private relationship with us. (6:8) Bilam lacked this private relationship; at every turn, he reminded people that he could speak with G-d directly. (Bamidbar 22:8, 22:19 and 22:38, for example) The Jew is expected to be the un-Bilam, developing an internal religious life, a source of personal strength and inspiration.

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**613 Mitzvot: #394
The Song of the Levi****Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

In the aftermath of Korach's rebellion, the Torah spells out the responsibilities of Leviyyim [Levites] in the Mishkan and Beit haMikdash. (Bamidbar 18:6, 18:23) However, the Torah does not describe this service explicitly; it cannot refer to the Levi's duty to guard the Sanctuary, since that is listed separately. (Bamidbar 18:4) What, then, is this additional service that the Levi performs?

Later in the Torah (Devarim 18:7), we are told, "The Levi shall serve in the Name of Hashem, his G-d." Citing that verse, the Talmud (Arachin 11a) says, "What is a service which involves the Divine Name? This is the song." As the Talmud there teaches, the Levi's song is a requirement for the korban; if there is no song, then the entire service is disqualified. Ideally, at least twelve Leviyyim sing together, but in the absence of twelve, any number may sing. (Arachin 13b; Minchat Chinuch 394:10) Not every korban requires song; only the community's obligatory offerings require song. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Klei haMikdash 3:2) This song constitutes the 394th mitzvah in the Torah, by the count of Sefer haChinuch.

Rambam explains that the value of the Levi's song is in the way it stirs the listener's emotions. He writes, "The goal of the song is for the spirit to be moved thereby, for spirits are moved only by sweet voices and tunes, and by musical

instruments." (Moreh haNevuchim 3:45) Indeed, before his death Moshe warns the Jews that they will suffer Divine punishment if their service is rote rather than driven by joyous emotion (Devarim 28:47), and the Talmud explains, "What is service with joy and a good heart? This is song." (Arachin 11a)

Technically, the Levi's song may be his own composition. According to Minchat Chinuch (394:7), the mitzvah is for the Leviyyim "to sing and thank G-d upon the korban as they wish, according to their purity of tongue." However, once King David established psalms, those became the songs used by the Leviyyim. As a mishnah details (Tamid 7:4), each day of the week has a unique song. Further, each Yom Tov has its own song. (Minchat Chinuch 394:8)

The song of the Levi is accompanied by an array of musical instruments, including wind and string instruments, as well as percussion. The instruments are not part of the essential mitzvah of song, and so a non-Levi may play the instruments. (Arachin ibid.)

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Biography

Rabbi Yitzchak Abadi

Rabbi Adam Frieberg

Rabbi Yitzchak Abadi was born in Venezuela on March 12th, 1933. Together with his parents, he moved to Israel at the age of two; the family settled in Tiberias. He studied at Yeshivat Chevron, which was then located in the Geulah neighborhood of Jerusalem. At the young age of nineteen, he was sent by the world renowned Chazon Ish (Rabbi Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz) to study in the now huge, although then it was quite small, Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey. There he studied directly under Rabbi Aharon Kotler, the yeshiva's founder.

Although they only studied together for ten years before Rabbi Kotler's death in 1962, Rabbi Abadi gained tremendously from his mentor. Just a few years after Rabbi Kotler's death, Rabbi Yitzchak Abadi became a *posek* (halachic authority) in the Lakewood community. In 1980, Rabbi Abadi left the Lakewood Yeshiva to open his own kollel for the study of halachah. He served in that role until 1993, when he moved to Har Nof, Jerusalem where he opened another kollel and continued teaching. The kollel trained scholars in every area of Jewish law. In 2009, Rabbi Abadi moved back to Lakewood.

In addition to his teaching, Rabbi Abadi publishes a website, Kashrut.org. The site's self-description says that it was "established as a community service for the observant Jewish community throughout the world. Its purpose is to properly educate and provide the necessary information to assist others in conforming to Jewish Laws without unnecessary discomfort and confusion. The site is run by the children of Rabbi Yitzchak Abadi, and with his direct supervision."

Rabbi Abadi has issued hundreds of halachic decisions over his life time, some of them innovative and controversial. For instance, he rules that the writing of a sefer Torah through a silk screen process is permissible. [For more on that topic, see Toronto Torah Pekudei 5771 at <http://bit.ly/1nZ8ksw>.]

Rabbi Abadi has published his halachic responsa in two volumes (thus far) under the title of Responsa Or Yitzchak. He is also the author of a pamphlet on the laws of Niddah.

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Torah and Translation

Kashering Utensils After Bishul Akum

Rabbi Yitzchak Abadi

Or Yitzchak Yoreh Deah 16

Translated by Rabbi Adam Frieberg

עיינ בשו"ע הנ"ל שכתב המחבר, כלים שבישול בהם העכו"ם לפנינו דברים שיש בהם משום בשול עכו"ם צריכים הכשר, וי"א שאינם צריכים וכו', עכ"ל. הרי שסתם המחבר כדעת המצריכים הכשר. ועיינ במ"ב או"ח סי' שכ"ח [ס"ק ס"ג] שפסק להלכה כסתם זה של המחבר שצריכים הכשר, ולא סמך על הי"א להקל אלא במקום שבשלו לחולה בשבת מפני שיש צרופים אחרים.

ולענ"ד נראה להלכה שאינם צריכים הכשר אף לכתחילה בכל אופן של בשול עכו"ם, דהא פסק המחבר בשו"ע יו"ד סי' צ"ט סעי' ז' ונשנה בסי' קכ"ב סעי' ה' שאם איסור מועט נבלע בכלי שדרכו להשתמש בשפע הרי זה מותר להשתמש בו לכתחילה, לפי שא"א לבא לידי נתינת טעם. וא"כ בבשול עכו"ם הא איתא בש"ך סי' קי"ג [ס"ק כ"א] דבשול עכו"ם בטל ברוב, ולא צריך ביטול עד שלא יהיה נותן טעם כשאר איסורים], והוכיח כן מהרמ"א עיי"ש. ולפי זה הא תמיד כשמבשלים בכלי הבלוע מבשול עכו"ם יהיה רוב בתבשיל שמבשלים בו עכשיו כנגד הבלוע. וזה דבר שהחוש מעיד עליו שאם תבשל תפוח אדמה בקדירה הבלועה מכל מיני דברים, ואף אם שבעה הרבה מבלוע, בודאי שהתפוח"א יסאר ממשו העיקר, ורק יקבל טעם ואולי אפ"י גם טעם חשוב מהבליעות, אבל אין ספק שהדבר המתבשל בו עכשיו הוא תמיד הרוב. (הארכת בזה מפני שהיה מי שהתעקש ד' ירחם עליו).

ואע"פ שהש"ך שם כתב בלשון כמסתפק אם יש רוב בתבשיל כנגד מה שבלוע, ז"ל: ואם נתבשלה בהן בדיעבד ונש' רוב בתבשיל שרי וכו', ע"כ. לענ"ד אין לשוננו מדויק והוא פשוט ואין צריך לפנינו, ואע"פ שגם המ"ב [בסי' שכ"ח ס"ק ס"ג] העתיקו בלשון הנ"ל אינו מדויק.

Note: The following is not offered here as a halachic ruling; please see your Rabbi for practical guidance.

See the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 113:16), "Utensils in which non-Jews cooked before us items that are subject to the prohibition against *bishul akum* [eating food being cooked by non-Jews] must be *kashered*. And there are those who say that they do not need to be *kashered*." The Shulchan Aruch concludes that they do need to be *kashered*. The Mishnah Berurah rules with the first view, and does not rely on the latter opinion to be lenient, except when the cooking was done for a sick person on Shabbat, as in that case there are other factors for leniency.

In my humble opinion it seems that one need not *kasher* utensils in any case in which non-Jews cooked food, even initially, for the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 99:7; 122:5) rules that if a tiny amount of prohibited food is absorbed into a utensil that is used with large quantities of food, it is absolutely permissible to use this utensil, for it is impossible that the prohibited taste will affect the kosher food. Regarding *bishul akum*, the Shach (113:21) writes that the prohibited taste resulting from *bishul akum* is nullified if there is a majority of kosher food, which he proves from the Rama. Based on this [we can say the following]: Whenever one cooks in a utensil that has absorbed *bishul akum*, there will be a majority of other food against the absorbed [*bishul akum*] taste. This is something that one's sense bears witness to, for if you were to cook a potato in a pot that had all sorts of tastes absorbed into it, then even if the pot were full of all these absorbed tastes, certainly the potato itself would remain the main item and just receive some taste, even if it was a significant taste, from the absorbed particles. But there is no doubt that the item currently being cooked is always the majority. (I have elaborated on this for there is someone who was stubborn, may G-d have mercy on him.)

And despite the fact that the Shach wrote that he is uncertain whether the item being cooked is the majority compared to what is absorbed, and these are his words, "and if it was already cooked in the pot, and there is a majority of food," in my humble opinion, his language is not precise. This is obvious and it does not require examination. Even though the Mishneh Berurah quoted this language, it is not precise.

The 9th of Tammuz is Monday

The fifty-second chapter of Yirmiyahu tells us the following: “And it was in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon came, he and his entire army, against Jerusalem and encamped against it, and they built works of siege around it... In the fourth month, on the ninth of the month, the famine became severe in the city, and the people of the land had no food. The city was broken into, and all the men of war fled and emerged from the city at night...”

From the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 18b) it appears that after the destruction of the first Beit haMikdash the fast was indeed set for the 9th of Tammuz. The date was changed to the 17th after the destruction of the second Beit haMikdash. (Taanit 28b, but see Tosafot there for a different opinion)

Although the breaching of the walls did happen twice, and we will commemorate the second breaching in a couple of weeks, there is a unique element on the ninth of Tammuz.

The breaching of the walls, together with the flight of the surviving warriors, brought with it the end of the monarchy of the House of King David. Although in seventy years some of the exiles would yield to the Divine to return to their ancestral land, they would not be granted an independent kingdom. Thus, Zerubavel, one of the people’s leaders and an heir to the House of King David was never crowned as king, and neither was anyone else. Coronation would come to be only centuries later, by the Chashmonaim, and they would crown themselves rather than the descendants of King David’s descendants. (Ramban voiced strong criticism against this; see Ramban to Bereishit 49:10.)

Today, we do not fast on the 9th of Tammuz, but it can be used as a day to reflect on this additional element of the destruction, and on our hopes for its restoration.

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Highlights for July 5 – July 11 / 7 Tammuz – 13 Tammuz
Many of our shiurim are now on summer hiatus, but opportunities remain!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
SHABBAT JULY 5				
Before minchah	R' Josh Gutenberg	The Origin of Yom Tov Sheni	Zichron Yisroel	
Before minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Honey, Musk and Gelatin	BAYT	
SUNDAY JULY 6				
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah: Prisoner Swaps	BAYT	
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	With light breakfast
7:30 PM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Contemporary Halachah in Israel: Can a Corporation be Jewish? On-line shiur in Hebrew: http://www.torontotorah.com/online		
MONDAY JULY 7				
10:15 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Chabura: Times of Davening	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
TUESDAY JULY 8				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Talmud Yerushalmi: Sheviit	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
WED. JULY 9				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Origins of Prayer, Week 2	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
7:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Business Ethics: Lending	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
THU. JULY 10				
10:15 AM	R' Aaron Greenberg	Laws of Shabbat	Yeshivat Or Chaim	University students
FRI. JULY 11				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Contemporary Halachah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

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