



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

It is an honor to present this week's Torah Minute from our archives. The following was penned by our founder, Rabbi Kalman Winter zt"l, in 2011.

One of the most intriguing and complex personalities in all of Parshas Balak is the prophet Balaam. He was a man of great intellect and knowledge, an international figure, respected and admired by kings and leaders alike. Balaam possessed a particularly frightening talent: the ability to divine the moment in time when his malicious curses would descend upon his adversaries. Such is the introduction to this week's Torah portion of Balak. Balak, king of Moab, fears the Nation of Israel. He imagines they will attack his people, so he hires Balaam to curse the Jewish people. Balaam, the wicked, joins forces with Balak to curse the Jews for no other purpose than fame and fortune.

The Rabbis comment: why did G-d place His spirit and wisdom on such a cruel and evil man? They answer that G-d had an historical mission in conferring such grandeur upon Balaam. Had the nations of the world been denied a prophet of such comparable stature and capacity as the prophet Moshe, they could argue throughout history that their own fortunes and moral behavior could have been altered and enhanced with more stellar leadership. G-d, therefore, gave the nations of the world Balaam, the prophet, with all his divine capacity and brilliance.

However, as we continue to read in our portion, there was a disconnect between Balaam's intellect and his character. His towering wisdom was G-d given, but his character was his to develop and perfect. His intelligence was not an asset but a liability. He was a man full of conceit and pride, devoid of any trait of humility. Rather than bringing his followers and his admirers into the light, he plunged them into darkness and immorality. G-d demonstrated through Balaam that sheer intellect, knowledge, and wisdom are no guarantees of moral rectitude. The nations of the world were given their prophet, yet he failed them miserably.

Without the presence of G-d in one's life to guide his path and his footsteps, man can only stumble and ultimately fall. Humanism, without the fabric of G-d woven in, is doomed to fail. The difference between Moshe and Balaam was one verse in the Torah: "And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth!" (Bamidbar, chapter 12, verse 3). I always remind my congregants that ninety nine percent of our mistaken decisions are not a failure of intellect, but rather a failure of character.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Kalman Winter

TABLE TALK

POINT TO PONDER

The words of the one who hears the sayings of G-d, who sees the visions of Sha-dai, while fallen... (24:4)

When Hashem appeared to Balaam, he did not have the ability to stand on his feet, so he fell on his face... (Rashi)

Never again has there risen in Israel a prophet liken Moshe (Vzos Haberacha 34:10).

In Klal Yisrael there has not been a prophet like Moshe, but amongst the non-Jews there has been, namely Balaam (Sifrei, Vzos Habrocho 39).

From Rashi it seems that Balaam's prophecy was not as great as Moshe's. Moshe did not fall on his face when Hashem spoke to him, and yet Balaam did. How do we reconcile Rashi with the Sifrei?

PARSHA RIDDLE

"If Balak would give me his houseful of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem my G-d..." (22:18)

Where in Sha"s do we find a similar response?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last issue's riddle:

What other name is attributed to Parsha Chukas?

Answer: Parah

TIMELESS WISDOM

And Balak sent to Balaam... (22:5)

Balaam said to Balak, "I am ungrateful and you also show no gratefulness. I am a descendant of Lavan, who only merited to have children because of the presence of Yaakov. You are a descendant of Lot, who was saved from the overturning of Sodom on account of Avraham. We both owe our existence to the forefathers of the Jewish people, and yet we want to destroy them" (Batei Medrashim 1:491).

Avraham was grateful to Lot for not revealing the true relationship between Avraham and Sarah when they stood before Pharaoh. Therefore, Avraham went to fight in the war of the four and five kings (Bereishis Rabba 51:6).

The Ri M'Gash once fell ill and needed to relax to recoup his strength. A wealthy individual invited the Ri M'Gash into his home and let him use his personal bathhouse. A little while later this wealthy individual lost a lot of money and needed to sell this bathhouse. The Ri M'gash was asked to be part of the Bais Din that would evaluate the property and transfer the ownership of the property. The Ri M'Gash refused, stating, "I was a personal beneficiary from this bathhouse and the hospitality of this wealthy individual. Accordingly, I cannot sit on a Bais Din that will cause pain to this man. My feelings of gratitude do not allow me to do it."

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

All children 13 and under who answer a "Who Am I?" correctly will be entered into a raffle to



Please visit www.gwckollel.org to submit your answers.

The next raffle will be held on July 22nd!

Answer as many as you can because each correct answer will entitle you to another raffle ticket and increase your chance of winning!

#1 WHO AM I?

1. My father did not fly.
2. I ruled a land I did not belong to.
3. I am not a block.
4. I feared Bnei Yisrael.

#2 WHO AM I?

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

LAST ISSUE'S ANSWERS

#1 Annanei HaKavod/Clouds of Glory (I am celebrated after Yom Kippur; the attack came upon my departure; I was for Aaron & for Moshe.)

#2 B'eiro shel Miryan/Miriam's Rock that Produced Water (I was a well, but you did not draw from me; I was for the sister; I rolled along with Bnei Yisrael; I looked like a sieve, but I was not used for sifting.)

Please see next week's issue for the answers to this week's questions.

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