



# The Greater Washington Community Kollel

# SHABBOS DELIGHTS

## TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

### Our Sacred Home

***Rabbi Yisrael Glassberg, former Kollel Scholar and currently Director of Kollel Alumni***

In this week's Torah portion, Parshas Balak, we learn about the evil prophet and sorcerer Bilaam and his desire to place an eternal curse on the Jewish people. Bilaam's plans are thwarted through Divine intervention, and instead of curses, blessings and accolades are bestowed upon the Jewish nation. In perhaps one of the most famous verses, Bilaam declares "How good are your tents Yaakov, your dwelling places Yisrael" (24:5). What precisely are these tents and dwelling places to which Bilaam is referring and what is their eternal message?

Rashi's first explanation is that Bilaam is referring to the Jewish homes and their strategic encampment in the desert. Bilaam is praising the positioning of the Jewish tents, which were constructed in such a way that maximized the privacy and dignity of each family. The S'forno provides an alternative interpretation of the verse in light of the Talmud in Sanhedrin (105b). He suggests that the "tents" are the Jewish study halls and the "dwelling places" are the Synagogues. Bilaam saw the devotion and unwavering commitment to Torah study and fervent prayer as the secret of the Jewish people's success. In fact, some have the custom of reciting this verse immediately upon entering the synagogue for the morning *tefillah*.

Perhaps we can combine these two interpretations into one broader theme. The very creation of the sacred Jewish home that Bilaam witnessed is based on the successful integration of Torah study and prayer into the fabric of the Jewish people. By making these values paramount, we introduce the *kedusha* of the study halls and Synagogues directly into our homes. The majesty of our dwelling places through the ages is built on our connection to Torah study and communal prayer, and it is up to us to constantly deepen this bond. May we all merit a life that is infused with these values so we may be the recipients of Bilaam's blessing "מֵה טָבוּ אֶהְלִיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל".

***Have a wonderful Shabbos!***

## TABLE TALK

### POINTS TO PONDER

***Bilaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "If Balak will give me his houseful of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the Word of Hashem, my G-d, to do anything small or great" (22:18).***

Whoever has the following three traits is among the disciples of our forefather Avraham. Whoever has three other traits is among the disciples of the wicked Bilaam. Those who have a good eye, a humble spirit, and a meek soul are from the disciples of our forefather Avraham. Those who have an evil eye, an arrogant spirit, and a greedy soul are from the disciples of the wicked Bilaam (Avos 5, 22).

Are these three traits the only difference between the disciples of Avraham and Bilaam? Isn't belief in Hashem a more major difference?

Furthermore, the title 'students' is difficult to understand. One who was never taught by a specific teacher cannot be considered their student.

### PARSHA RIDDLE

***What is the connection between Bilaam and Korach?***

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

**Last week's riddle:**

***What are the meanings of the word with the letters "nun" and "samech"?***

**Answer:** Neis as a miracle, or neis as a pole on which they put the copper snake, or nos as to run.

## HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

### HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Balak*, Bilaam twice describes himself as "the man with the open eye" or "the man of acute vision" (24:3;15, following *Onkelos* and Rashi). The Torah also relates that Bilaam prepared for his attempts at harming the Jewish people by viewing them (23:13, 24:2), which Rashi understands to refer to an attempt to invoke the evil eye against them. R. Yehoshua ibn Shu'aib similarly explains that Bilaam's malevolent power operated via the gaze of his evil eye. In support of the dangers of eye beams, he cites a legend of Alexander the Great, who once vanquished some "beasts that kill with the gaze of their eyes" (basilisks) by instructing his soldiers to fashion mirrors, which reflected the beasts' lethal gaze back upon themselves, thereby killing them all.

Ibn Shu'aib also cites several statements of *Chazal* in support of the idea of the danger of an evil gaze, including the prohibition against constructing an entrance to a building facing another building's entrance. This prohibition is derived from the Bilaam narrative: "And Bilaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes" (24:2) - What did he see? He saw that the openings of their tents did not face each other. He said: "These are worthy that the Divine presence shall rest upon them" (*Bava Basra* 60a).

Another statement of *Chazal* cited by Ibn Shu'aib is the prohibition against "[standing] by one's fellow's field when it contains standing grain" (*Bava Basra* 2b), "so that he not injure it with the evil eye" (Rashi). The Rambam does not codify this prohibition, and in a responsum (#260) he explains that the concern for injury via the evil eye is merely pietistic (*midas chasidus*). The *Shulchan Aruch* (CM 378:5), however, does codify the prohibition, as an example of a general rule that gazing that causes harm is prohibited.

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

## KIDS KORNER

### WHO AM I?

#### #1 WHO AM I?

1. I was the opposite.
2. I praised openings.
3. You begin with me.
4. I caused anger.

#### #2 WHO AM I?

1. I was the response to Moshe.
2. I only had one eye.
3. I knew the moment.
4. My words are your prayer.

#### Last Week's Answers:

**#1 Parah Adumah, the red heifer** (I am one of ten; I'm not a book, but I am red; for the wisest I am a mystery; I was a reward for honor.)

**#2 Nachosh** (I was hurt for words; I hurt for words; my replica was the salvation; adding a 'saf' makes me copper.)

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

POPCORN POPPER 

The next raffle is September 6<sup>th</sup>.

*Congratulations to Moshe Gayer and others for answering last week's questions correctly!*

Visit [gwckollel.org](http://gwckollel.org) to submit your answers.

Answer as many as you can - each correct answer will entitle you to another raffle ticket and increase your chances of winning.

## KOLLEL BULLETIN BOARD

Greater Washington Community Kollel presents a community lecture:

### **"Faith vs. Personal Responsibility: The Torah's View on Financial Planning and Insurance"**

Sunday, July 31, 7:15pm at GWCK, 10900 Lockwood Drive

*presented by Rabbi Yosef Saltzman, Jewish educator and insurance professional.*