



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

A Moment of Anger, A Moment of Love

Presented by Rabbi Zacharia Schwartz, Kollel Adjunct

**The word of the one who hears G-d's sayings and perceives the thoughts of the Most High...
(24:16)**

This week's Parsha, Parshas Balak, features Bilaam's attempt to curse the Jewish nation. What was Bilaam's secret that enabled him to be an effective curser? Rashi explains that Bilaam used his prophetic abilities to divine Hashem's moment of anger, thus enabling his curses to take effect.

Rabbi Fischel Schachter, based on the comments of the Ohr Hachaim, develops this idea a little bit further. When a person commits a sin against the Almighty, it would really be appropriate for that person to experience the consequence of his or her action immediately. Hashem in His great mercy, however, gives time to do Teshuva (repent). At the same time, Hashem gives that person some type of difficulty every day, in order to keep that person in check and remind them that Hashem is paying attention, and that he or she needs to do Teshuva. This is the "moment of anger," that Rashi described. This moment of anger is actually a great benefit for the person, as it helps to prevent the person from sinning further, and also encourages repentance thereby bypassing the need to receive the full consequence for his or her sin. If, however, during this moment of anger another person invokes the sinner's sin and asks that the sinner should receive the punishment immediately, such a curse has an effect. For this reason, Hashem did not manifest this moment of anger while Bilaam was trying to curse the Jews.

Rabbi Schachter explains further that it was for this very reason that Bilaam advised the Moavites to take the opportunity to cause the Jews to sin. With Hashem's daily moment of anger on temporary hiatus, they would not have that reminder to keep them in line and they would be more susceptible to temptation, which sadly ended up being the case.

From here we learn a fascinating perspective on the little and not-as-little adversities that we face each day. None of us is perfect; we all make mistakes. As difficult as it is, when we face tough situations, we have an opportunity to not only say "everything is for the best," but to recognize that what we are going through may be Hashem showing the utmost love for us by reminding us to improve ourselves and come back to Him.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Bilaam answered... "If Balak would give me his houseful of gold and silver, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem..." (22, 18)

This shows us that he was greedy and coveted other people's money. He said, "He ought to give me all his silver and gold..." (Rashi)

Rav Yosi Ben Kisma said, "... he said to me, "Rebbi, please come live in our city... and I answered him, if you would give me all the money in the world, I would not move to a city that is lacking in Torah study. (Avos 6, 9)

Why does Bilaam's mention of money define him as one who desires money, while the statement of Rav Yossi Ben Kisma is an indication of his greatness?

Parsha Riddle

Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey and it said to Bilaam, "What have I done to you that you struck me these three times?" (22, 28)
When did Hashem open the mouth of a different animal?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

What was the most popular name at Aharon HaKohen's funeral?
Answer: Aharon

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parshas Balak relates the hiring by Balak, king of Moav, of Bilaam to curse the Israelites, in the hope that this would enable him to "strike [the nation of Israel] and drive it away from the land." Although some *midrashim* condemn Balak as a villain (*Tanchuma 2*), others are more sympathetic and acknowledge that he was motivated by a well-grounded fear of Jewish depredation of his country. Rashi, in one explanation of Hashem's command in *parshas Pinchas* to attack the Midianites, but not the Moavites, distinguishes between the two as follows:

The Moavites entered into the matter out of fear, because they feared that they might plunder them, since about them it was stated only, (Devarim 2:9) "Do not contend with them in battle"; but the Midianites, however, had got excited (had interfered) in a quarrel that did not concern them (31:2).

In his comments to the cited verse in *Devarim*, Rashi asserts that Moav was afraid not just of what the Israelites **might** do, but of what they were already **actually** doing:

As regards Moav He forbade them (the Israelites) only war against them, but they may frighten them, appearing before them when equipped for war; therefore it is written, (Bamidbar 22:3) "And Moav was afraid because of the people", because they took plunder and loot from them.

According to this latter formulation, Balak acted in classic self-defense, something generally permitted by Jewish as well as secular law, on both the individual level as well as that of the state. According to the former formulation, however, Balak was engaged in the rather more controversial practice of **preemptive** self-defense.

The Torah's stance on preemptive self-defense is not entirely clear. The standard *halachic* framework of self-defense is the law of the pursuer (*rodef*), which allows the use of lethal force when necessary to forestall a lethal attack. The classic scenarios of *rodef*, however, typically involve actual self-defense, and there is little if any direct discussion of preemptive self-defense.

One possible precedent for the legitimacy of preemptive self-defense is a justification of Ralbag of Shimon and Levi's massacre of the inhabitants of (the city of) Shechem: although only Shechem (the person) had violated their sister, Ralbag suggests that it was nevertheless necessary for them to exterminate the entire city, since had they merely executed Shechem himself, his father and the rest of the inhabitants of the city would have subsequently attacked them in revenge.

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I was Bilaam's end.
2. I was for Yehoshua.
3. I guard the garden.
4. Zroa Netuya/Outstretched arm.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. Don't confuse my father with Gershom's mother.
2. Ruled.
3. Unscrambled, I am "to curse."
4. I was a foreigner.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Og king of Bashan (I got bucked teeth, I was not the King of Embarrassment, I was a refugee, I got stuck in the mountain.)

#2 Parah Adumah (I was far from "the wisest," I can fix and ruin, I clean up after my child, I am not a yoking matter.)

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