



The Greater Washington Community Kollel
**SHABBOS
 DELIGHTS**
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TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

Hidden Kindnesses

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Director

In Parshas Balak, Balak, King of Moav, hires Bilaam to curse the Jewish people. Bilaam's attempts, however, are unsuccessful and instead Hashem compels him to bless and praise the Jewish people. In the Haftorah for Parshas Balak, the prophet Micha bids the people to remember how Hashem took them out of Egypt and sent them Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. He then declares, "Remember now what Balak king of Moav plotted and what Bilaam son of Beor answered him... that you may know the righteous acts of Hashem." (Micha 6:4-5) While this episode is certainly of great significance, why does it get singled out over the many other great miracles that occurred to the Jewish people such as the Splitting of the Sea, the defeat of Amalek, and numerous others?

Rav Raphael Berdugo (Mei Menuchot) explains that what made this miraculous intervention unique was that the Jewish people were entirely unaware that it was taking place. While they were dwelling tranquilly in their camp, little did they know that a terrible plot was being initiated against them. It was only through Hashem's revelation to Moshe that they learned how Hashem had saved them from this enemy.

In the Pesach Haggadah we read: "*She'bchol dor va'dor omdim aleinu...* In every generation they rise up to destroy us and Hashem saves us from their hands." The commentaries explain that even in times when we never see our enemies plotting against us, that's only because Hashem is foiling their plans before they even materialize.

The story of Bilaam serves as the prototype for this kind of intervention and is singled out by the prophet Micha because of its vast implications: just as Hashem saved us then without us realizing it, so does He continue to protect us in every generation.

The Haftorah continues by posing the question: "With what shall I approach Hashem?" i.e. How can we repay Him for these kindnesses? "Shall I approach Him with burnt offerings?... thousands of rams, streams of oil?" The Navi answers: "He has told you what is good and what Hashem seeks from you: only the performance of justice, the love of kindness, *v'hatzneiya leches im Elokecha* – and walking modestly with your G-d."

In light of the explanation cited above, perhaps the Navi's answer can be understood as follows. How can we repay Hashem for the hidden kindnesses He does for us? By emulating Him – performing acts of justice and kindness modestly – without drawing attention to ourselves. Acts of kindness performed in this manner are not motivated by a desire for recognition or repayment but rather by a sincere desire to fulfill Hashem's *mitzvah*.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Miriam died there and was buried there. There was no water for the assembly... (20:1-2)

There is a custom to spill out the water in the vicinity of a person who has passed on. (Yoreh Deah 339:5)

This is because the Angel of Death washes off his sword of death in the water in the area and drinking that water could pose a health threat. (Taz)

The juxtaposition of the lack of water to Miriam's passing is a source for this custom. The people had no water because it was spilled out when Miriam died. (Avudraham)

Miriam died through a "kiss from Hashem". (Bamidbar Rabba)

Why would the people pour out the water if the Angel of Death was not involved in Miriam's passing?

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)

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Where in NaCH do Dasan and Aviram show up as gilgulim in a different form?

Answer: The cows used on Har HaCarmel (Melachim 1 Chapter 18) were a reincarnation of Dasan and Aviram (Rav Chaim Vital).

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Chukas* (21:4-9), the Torah relates that in response to the sinfulness of the people, "G-d sent the fiery serpents against the people and they bit the people." When the people admitted wrongdoing and Moshe prayed for them,

Hashem said to Moshe, "Make yourself a fiery [serpent] and place it on a pole, and it will be that anyone who was bitten will look at it and live." Moshe made a serpent of copper and placed it on the pole; so it was that if the serpent bit a man, he would stare at the copper serpent and live.

Our Sages teach that Moshe fashioned the serpent of copper since the Hebrew words for "serpent (*nachash*)" and "copper (*nechoshes*)" are similar (*Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah* 3:9). The Ramban explains:

[T]his is one of the ways of the Torah, every deed of which is a miracle within a miracle. Thus [the Torah] removes injury by means of the cause of the injury, and heals illness by means of the cause of the sickness ... Now it is a well-known medical principle that all people bitten by poisonous creatures become dangerously ill when they see them, or [even] when they [only] see their likeness ... Now in view of all this, it would have been correct that the Israelites, who had been bitten by the fiery serpents, should *not* look upon a serpent, and should *not* mention it or bring it to mind at all. But ... G-d commanded that they should be healed by the harmful agent whose nature is to kill; therefore they made its likeness in form and name, and when a person concentrated his gaze upon the brass serpent which resembled totally the offending agent, he lived. This was to make them realize that it is G-d [alone] *Who sendeth death and maketh alive*.

Some have invoked this idea that G-d "removes injury by means of the cause of the injury, and heals illness by means of the cause of the sickness" as a basis for the homeopathic principle of "like cures like," but others have countered that on the contrary, the Ramban is maintaining that normally like actually **exacerbates** like, and it is only G-d who miraculously subverts the natural order who cures like with like (see R. Josh Waxman, *parshablog* Sep. 9, 2008). [A general discussion of Torah perspectives on homeopathy is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article.]

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

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

#2 WHO AM I?

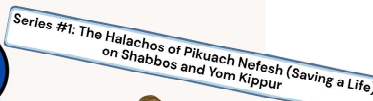
1. I was Bilaam's end.
2. Unscrambled, I am a "friend."
3. I guard the garden.
4. Zeroa Netuya/Outstretched arm.

Last Week's Answers

#1 On ben Peles (My wife saved me, I am not off rather..., I am from the first, Neighborly affect.)

#2 The mouth of the earth that swallowed Korach (I am still steaming, I am from twilight, I can't speak, Toothless.)

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with **Rabbi Yitzhak Grossman**
and
Rabbi Dr. Jason Weiner

Wednesday, July 8 at 9:05pm on Zoom

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