



Lubavitch, Aventura South

PARSHAT BALAK

The Torah Portion in a Nutshell:

King Balak of Moab retains the sorcerer Balaam to curse the Jewish people. Instead of curses, only blessings come out of his mouth—including prophecies concerning the Messianic redemption. By Balaam's advice, Moabite and Midianite women entice some of the Israelites to sin, resulting in a plague amongst the Jews. Phinehas zealously kills two of the high-ranking offenders, and the plague comes to an end.

A Lousy Excuse By Yossy Goldman

In this week's parshah, we read the strange but famous Biblical narrative of the heathen prophet Balaam and his talking donkey. At one point an angel blocks the donkey's path and the animal stops in its tracks. Balaam is frustrated and strikes the donkey. "And G-d opened the mouth of the donkey and it spoke to Balaam saying: 'Why did you hit me?' ... And then G-d opened the eyes of Balaam and he saw the angel standing in the way...." So Balaam apologizes to the donkey and says, "I have sinned because I did not know" (Numbers 22:28-34).

I've always wondered: if he genuinely didn't know, why was it a sin?

The answer is obvious: for a prophet who is able to communicate with the Divine not to be aware of an angelic presence right in front of his nose is indeed sinful. A man of his spiritual stature should have known better.

There is no question that in many communities where organized Judaism is weak and not easily available, ignorance of what being Jewish entails may still be a valid excuse. For millions of Jews who grew up in the former Soviet Union under an atheistic regime, ignorance of Jewish law and lore is, undoubtedly, justifiable.

But for those of us who live in Jewish communities that are alive and vibrant, for those who are aware enough to be reading these lines, surely ignorance as a rationalization no longer holds water.

In my own community of Johannesburg, South Africa, thank G-d there are educational opportunities too numerous to mention. Day Schools for children, adult education programs; a recent series of lectures we had here on Jewish Mysticism attracted 250 men and women every Monday night for six weeks running.

The Internet, with all its serious flaws and dangers, is providing unparalleled opportunities for Jews, even in the remotest outposts, to connect with their heritage. In this modern mode of outreach, Chabad.org has been an outstanding pioneer. So today, while Jewish ignorance still remains Public Enemy Number One, there are thankfully ample avenues for Jews who were never exposed to Judaism, its teachings and its relevance, to become more aware and better educated.

I remember an advertising campaign that ran in the United States years ago for what was then known as the United Negro College Fund. The fund was established to provide a university education to promising black students from underprivileged backgrounds. To

this day, I can still visualize that photograph of a young man studying and underneath the slogan, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

How many Jewish attorneys, advocates and judges have never perused a single page of Judaism's grandest legal repository, the Talmud? How many Jewish doctors and thinkers have never read any of the works of Maimonides, Judaism's great physician and philosopher? How many spiritually enlightened Jews who meditate daily have never been exposed to the teachings of authentic Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism?

Why do rabbis become rabbis? To teach. The word rabbi means "my teacher." True, there are many facets to a spiritual leader's position, but the main incentive for me and for so many of my colleagues is the privilege of educating Jews about Judaism -- especially those who for no fault of their own were not raised with that awareness.

In no way do I minimize the importance of the pastoral role a rabbi plays in his community. Helping people in times of distress, as on joyous occasions, can be deeply gratifying. Counselling troubled souls or ordinary people with moral dilemmas is equally significant. But the most stimulating part of the job for me is teaching Jews how to be Jewish. Teaching Torah and introducing it to the previously uninitiated. The privilege of opening a Jewish mind to the beauty of Jewish wisdom and to the eternal relevance of the Jewish way of life is what led me to the rabbinate.

During my tenure thus far I have officiated at many hundreds of Bar Mitzvahs, weddings and, sadly, at as many funerals and unveilings. While I always treat each case with the sensitivity and respect it deserves and do my best to make these milestones meaningful rites of passage, my true "job satisfaction" comes when a young person comes to see me for advice on how to explore his or her Jewish identity. Rabbis get a real "high" when young couples take the initiative and ask for guidance on how to establish a really successful Jewish home and family. That's a rabbi's nachas.

So wherever you are reading these lines, follow the wise counsel of Ethics of the Fathers and "Acquire for yourself a rabbi." If you are out in the sticks, there are excellent virtual educators available via this very website. If you live where there is a Jewish organizational infrastructure but don't know where to start, use the facility on this Home Page to find your nearest real teacher.

In our age of the information explosion, ignorance has become a lousy excuse.

On The Lighter Side

In this week's Torah portion, we read Balaam's prophecy concerning the Messianic Era. On this note...

A young boy visits the London Zoo and sees a lamb sitting nicely in the lion cage. "Unbelievable," he thinks, "these must be Messianic times when the lion and the lamb live in peace!"

He runs over to the caretaker and asks, "How long is this going on? How long do you have the lion together with a lamb?"

"Over a year now" he replies. "What's the big deal? We put in a new lamb every day!"

With G-d's will, and our efforts, we will soon see the real realization of this prophecy!

Shabbat

Candle lighting Times:

Times for the Aventura area:

Friday, July 6

Light Candles at: 7:58 pm

Shabbat, July 7

Shabbat Ends: 8:55 pm

On Shabbat we read:

**PARSHAT
BALAK
PEREK 6**



Minyan Schedule

Summer Schedule

Friday night

Mincha 7:00 p.m.

Maariv/ Kabbalat Shabbat 15 minutes after Mincha

Shabbat

Shacharit: 9:30 a.m.

Torah Reading: 10:45 a.m.

Kidush: 12:00 p.m.

Mincha at candle lighting

Followed by Maariv
(on time)

לזכות ולרפוא"ש עבור:
שרה בת פולה בוליסה תחי'
פנחס מאיר בן הינדא גיטל שיח'
נועה מי' בת דבורה רחל תחי'
יואל צבי בן רייזל שיח'
יהודה חיים בן רבקה שיח'

Ongoing Classes

SUNDAY

10:00 a.m. [for men]
Short inside on the Torah
Following morning prayers 9:00 am

MONDAY

4:30 5:30 p.m. JM for KM at My Gym
(For kids ages 3-6)
8:00-9:00 Torah class in Spanish for
young couples and singles at Shul.

TUESDAY

11:00 a.m.
Lunch and learn for young women at
Fresko restaurant.
Please call Raizel (786) 515-5729

WEDNESDAY

8:00 p.m.
The Kabbalah of the Parasha [for
community]
At Shul

FRIDAY NIGHTS

Torah class after Mincha

SHABBAT

9:00 Chasidus before the Tefilah
Running commentary on the Parasha
Halacha class between Mincha &
Maariv

A Project of

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Everything You Wanted To Know About...

The Fast Day

This Sunday, July 8th, (Tammuz 18) is the fast of the 17th of Tammuz, known as Shiva Assar B'Tammuz. This fast day starts a three week mourning period for the destruction of the two Holy Temples.

The fast commemorates five tragic events which occurred on this date:

1. Moses broke the tablets upon seeing the Golden Calf.
2. During the Babylonian siege on Jerusalem and the first Holy Temple, the Jews ceased to offer the daily sacrifices because of a lack of cattle in Jerusalem.
3. Apustmus burned the holy Torah. Historians have long debated when this occurred: some maintain that Apustmus was a general during the Roman occupation of Israel, while others contend that he lived years earlier and was an officer during the Greek reign over the Holy Land.
4. An idol was placed in the Holy Temple. This event is also shrouded in controversy: some say that this too was done by Apustmus, while others say that this was done by King Manasseh of Judea.
5. The walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans after a lengthy siege. Three weeks later, after the Jews put up a valiant struggle, the Romans destroyed the second Holy Temple. [The Jerusalem Talmud maintains that this is also the date when the Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem on their way to destroying the first Temple.]

Practically speaking:

- Abstaining from food and drink is the external element of a fast day. On a deeper level, a fast day is an auspicious day, a day when G-d is accessible and waiting for us to repent.
- In Aventura, the fast begins at 5:02 a.m. and ends at 8:46p.m. Between these hours, it is forbidden for any adult above bar or bat mitzvah to consume food or drink.
- Pregnant and nursing women do not have to fast. Someone who is ill should consult a rabbi. Even those who are exempt from fasting, such as ill people or children, shouldn't indulge in delicacies or sweets on this day.
- It is permitted to wake up early before the fast begins to grab a bite, provided that prior to going to sleep the person had in mind to wake up and eat.
- During the Shacharit prayers we recite *selichot* (elegies). The *selichot* are printed in the back of the Siddur. The "long *Avinu Malkeinu*" is recited during the Shacharit and Mincha prayers.
- The Torah is read during the Shacharit and Mincha prayers. After the reading of the Torah by Mincha, a special fast-day Haftorah is read.
- During the Amidah of the Mincha prayer, all those who are fasting add a small section, the *aneinu*, to the *Shema Koleinu* blessing.

The Three Weeks

•The "Three Weeks" refer to the 21 days between the fast days of 17th of Tammuz and 9th of Av (Tisha b'Av). This period is called "*Bein Ha'mitzarim*" – "between the straits (or distresses),"* i.e., days that are between the abovementioned two days of misfortune and distress. Throughout our history this period has been one of tragedies and suffering.

•During the three weeks between 17 Tammuz and 9 Av, we maintain a semi-mourning attitude. We don't:

1. Make weddings. (It is however permitted to throw an engagement party – without music – until Rosh Chodesh Av).
2. Play musical instruments or listen to music.
3. Do anything that would require the *Shehecheyanu* blessing. For example: it is forbidden to wear a special new garment or have a first taste of a seasonal fruit during this time.
4. Take a haircut or shave. Many Sephardic communities permit haircuts and shaving until the week of Tisha b'Av (in other words, from the Saturday night beforehand). There are Halachic authorities who allow shaving until the week of Tisha b'Av for someone who will lose business or his job because of his unshaven demeanor.

•Aside from the aforementioned "technical" rules, during this period we spend extra time contemplating the less-than-perfect state the world is in now and what we can do to improve it by increasing in deeds of goodness and kindness.

•G-d told the Prophet Ezekiel to instruct the then exiled Jewish People about the measurements and design of the third Holy Temple. Ezekiel replied, "Master of the world, why are You telling me to go and tell Israel the form of the House... They are now in exile in the land of our enemies—is there anything they can do [about it]? Let them be until they return from the exile. Then, I will go and inform them."

G-d answered: "Should the construction of My House be ignored because My children are in exile? The study of the [design of the Holy Temple as detailed in the] Torah can be equated to its [actual] construction. Go tell them to study the form of the Holy Temple. As a reward for their study and their occupation with it, I will consider it as if they actually built the Holy Temple" (Midrash Tanchuma, Leviticus 14).

•Based on this Midrash, The Lubavitcher Rebbe requested time and again that especially during the Three Weeks every Jewish person should study the laws concerning the building of the Temple. Particularly our generation, which stands on the threshold of Redemption, must study these laws, with the awareness that these laws will be quite practical in the imminent future [click to find a plethora of study material relating to the Temple](#).

May we soon merit the fulfillment of the prophecy: "I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow" (Jeremiah 31:12).