

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

A PROJECT
OF THE
Mesorah
Heritage
Foundation

פרשת בלק
ט"ז תמוז תשפ"א

5781

JUNE 26, 2021

ISSUE #47

RABBI YITZCHOK
HISIGER, EDITOR

DESIGN & LAYOUT:
MRS. AVIVA KOHN

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

DEDICATED BY MENACHEM AND BINAH BRAUNSTEIN AND FAMILY

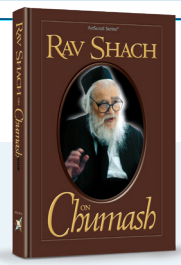
L'ILLUI NISHMAS RAV MOSHE BEN RAV YISSOCHOR BERISH AND MARAS YENTA BAS YISROEL CHAIM

PARASHAH

BEYOND HIS CONTROL

Rav Shach on Chumash

from Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach, written by Rav Asher Bergman



אם יתן לי בַּלֶק מְלֵא בֵיתוֹ כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב לֹא אוּכַל לְעֵבֵר אֶת פִּי ה' אֱלֹקֵי.
*If Balak were to give me his houseful of silver and gold,
I am unable to transgress the word of Hashem, my God (22:18).*

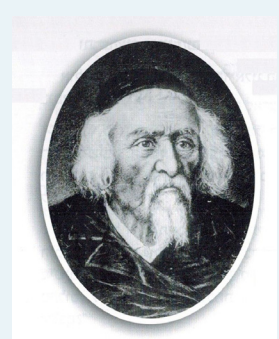
Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach related the following story: A group of rabbis once met with the *maskilim* (proponents of the “enlightenment”) who wanted to introduce improper “innovations” into Jewish life. Among the *maskilim* were those who clearly showed their animosity to the Jewish religion, revealing their evil intentions. Others presented themselves as moderates, who merely wanted some minor concessions to the spirit of the times. One of the latter said apologetically, “Look, I have quite a bit of influence, and if I really wanted to, I could have all the *yeshivahs* closed down. Nevertheless, I respect the Torah, and my only interest is the benefit of Judaism.”

**HE DID NOT
HAVE THE
ABILITY TO
VIOLATE
HASHEM'S
WILL.**

The *Bais HaLevi*, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, stood up and said, “Wicked one! You are following the path of Bilam.”

He proceeded to explain: “The wicked Bilam said, ‘If Balak were to give me his houseful of silver and gold, I am unable to transgress the word of Hashem, my God.’ Why, he seems so righteous and God-fearing! Why, then, does the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 90a) list him among the most wicked of the gentiles? The answer is that when a person says, ‘If they would give me 1,000 rubles I would not leave my hometown,’ it makes sense; he

has the ability to move, but he chooses to remain. When a person says, however, ‘Even if they give me 1,000 rubles, I will not stop the earth from rotating around the sun,’ he is considered a fool, for with or without receiving 1,000 rubles, the rotation of the earth is beyond his control.



The Bais HaLevi

“That,” continued the *Bais HaLevi*, “is why Bilam is considered so wicked. When he said that even a lot of money could not convince him to violate Hashem’s will, he implied

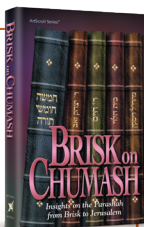
that he had the ability to violate His will, but would not do so out of the goodness of his heart. That is pure wickedness. The same applies to you. You imply that, in your opinion, Torah can be extirpated from the Jewish people, and that it is possible to close down *yeshivahs*, but that out of the goodness of your heart, you will allow them to stay open. You are just like Bilam!

“You should know,” he concluded, “that just as Bilam erred, you, too, are mistaken. He did not have the ability to violate Hashem’s will, and when he attempted to do so, the *Midrash* says that Hashem sent an angel to restrain him. Similarly, you do not have the power to close down *yeshivahs*, because Hashem is their protector!”

ARTSCROLLS
PUBLISHED
MONTHLY
BY
MESORAH
HERITAGE
FOUNDATION

LIFTED TO POWER

Brisk on Chumash by Rabbi Asher Bergman, written by Rabbi Yaakov Blinder



וַיֵּרָא בָלָק בֶּן צְפוּרָה אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶמְרֵי...
וַיִּגַּר מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי הָעָם מְאֹד... וַיִּקְוֶן מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל...
וּבָלָק בֶּן צְפוּרָה מֶלֶךְ לְמוֹאָב בֵּעֵת הַהוּא.

Balak son of Tzipzor saw all that Yisrael had done to the Emorites. Moav became very frightened of the people ... and Moav was horrified at the Bnei Yisrael ... And Balak son of Tzipzor was the king of Moav at that time (22:2-4).

Why does the Torah not identify who Balak was when his name is first mentioned, rather than waiting several verses to do so?

As *Rashi* (v. 4) mentions, Balak was originally not the king of Moav; he was in fact not a Moavite at all. It was only “at that time” that he was declared king, as an emergency measure in the face of a possible invasion of the *Bnei Yisrael*.



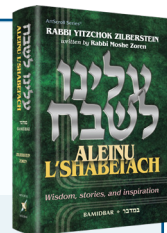
Rav Chaim Soloveitchik

And why was Balak, of all people, chosen for this task?

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik explained that it was because of his hysterical, fanatical pronouncements against the *Bnei Yisrael*: “Behold, a people has gone out of Egypt” (v. 5); “And now, the congregation will lick up our entire surroundings” (v. 4). The *Gemara* (*Gittin* 56b) tells us that “anyone who denounces and intimidates the *Bnei Yisrael* becomes a leader.” Since it was Balak’s diatribes against the *Bnei Yisrael* that lifted him to power, the Torah first presents him as just Balak, an ordinary man. Only after quoting some of his anti-Jewish fulminations does it say that Balak was the king of Moav at that time — as a result of these pronouncements. 📖

SPARING HIS DIGNITY

Aleinu L'shabei'ach by Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein



וַיִּפְתַּח ה' אֶת פִּי הָאֲתוֹן.

Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey (22:28).

Our sages teach that Hashem killed the donkey to spare Bilam from embarrassment, as *Rashi* comments (22:33): So that [people] should not say, “This is the one that dismissed Bilam with its rebuke, and he was not able to respond,” for the Omnipresent is considerate of people’s dignity.

HOW MUCH MORE CAREFUL DO WE HAVE TO BE WITH THE HONOR OF EVERY JEW, WHO IS A CHILD OF THE KING OF KINGS.

Everyone knows that a donkey cannot speak, and it was abundantly clear that the donkey’s ability to speak was an open miracle. If so, people would surely recognize that the donkey’s words were coming from Hashem, not from the donkey itself. What sort of diminishment of Bilam’s honor was this?

Perhaps we can answer that the Torah is teaching us how careful we have to be with the honor of every human being, no matter who he is. Bilam was a *rasha* in his personal life, and was determined to curse the Jewish people, as well. Nevertheless, Hashem was concerned that he should not be embarrassed, and if there was any chance that people would see the donkey on the street and say that it was the cause of Bilam’s humiliation, that was reason enough to kill the donkey and remove it from the world.

Human intelligence cannot fathom the great honor that every person deserves. If Bilam was deserving of this level of honor, how much more careful do we have to be with the honor of every Jew, who is a child of the King of kings. 📖

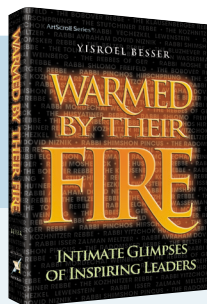
Newest Releases from ArtScroll



To have your shul receive copies of this newsletter every week for free, please send your shul name and address info to: yhisiger@artscroll.com.

TODAY I AM A SHLOMO

Warmed by Their Fire
by Yisroel Besser



Rav Shlomo Freifeld's *ne-shamah* had an extraordinary ability to bond with another, and there was no external form of connection that was beneath him. The medium made no difference; he knew how to connect with them. Not only with his *talmidim*, but with any Jew.

Reb Yussie Lieber was a *rebbe* who taught students from irreligious homes after school hours. He once brought his students to meet his *rebbe*. They stood around the table, cautious, uneasy, uncertain, as he began to speak.

"What's your name?" he asked the first one.

"Charlie," replied the boy.

"No, not Charlie. I want your Jewish name," prodded Rav Shlomo ever so gently.

"Oh ... it's Chaim."

Rav Shlomo beamed at him. "Do you realize what a potent

name you have? Life ... sparks of life, of perpetual movement and growth ..."



Rav Shlomo Freifeld

"LIFE IS AN EVOLUTION, NOT A REVOLUTION."

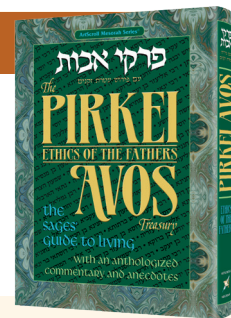
Then Rav Shlomo continued, revealing to Dovid and Liana, to Erez and Hadassah, the splendor of their names. Once he had generated a current powerful enough to have aroused dormant sparks in these *neshamos*, he smiled broadly.

"At my *bris milah*, my father named me Shlomo, yet my mother still preferred to call me Seymour. Don't let the hat and beard fool you. I was Seymour, not Shlomo." Rav Shlomo paused, letting the idea sink in. "Life is an evolution, not a revolution. We have to work to tap into the unlimited potential of our names, but it's a mission that's within our reach ... Today I am a Shlomo." 📖

PIRKEI AVOS

TORAH IS NOT A LUXURY

The Pirkei Avos Treasury
by Rabbi Moshe Lieber



"Rav Yosi ben Kisma said: I was once walking on the road when a certain man met me. He greeted me and I returned his greeting. He said to me, 'Rabbi, from what place are you?' I said to him, 'I am from a great city of scholars and sages.' He said to me, 'Rabbi, would you be willing to live with us in our place? I would give you thousands upon thousands of golden dinars,

HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE MAN DID NOT COME FROM A PLACE OF TORAH.

and precious stones and pearls.' I said to him, 'Even if you were to give me all the silver and gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, I would dwell nowhere but in a place of Torah...' (Avos 6:9).

How did Rav Yosi ben Kisma know that the man's hometown was not a place of Torah?

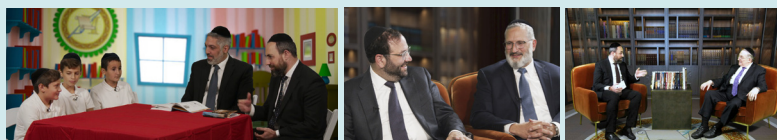
Rav Meir Don Plotzki explains that when Rav Yosi heard the man speak about money so quickly and easily, he understood that the man did not come from a place of Torah. In a place where the Torah has primary importance, people do not talk so brazenly about money.

Furthermore, we know that the barest necessities of life, such as air or water, do not cost much. Only delicacies and luxuries are very expensive. When Rav Yosi heard the man speak of paying such an exorbitant sum for a Torah scholar and his Torah, he understood that the man representing that city viewed the Torah as a rare luxury. Such an attitude is symptomatic of such places. 📖



Behind the Scenes Interviews

Bringing the Books You Read — and the People Who Write Them — to Life



With Rabbi Yaakov Bjou and students.

With Rabbi Yisroel Besser and Rabbi Gedaliah Zlotowitz.

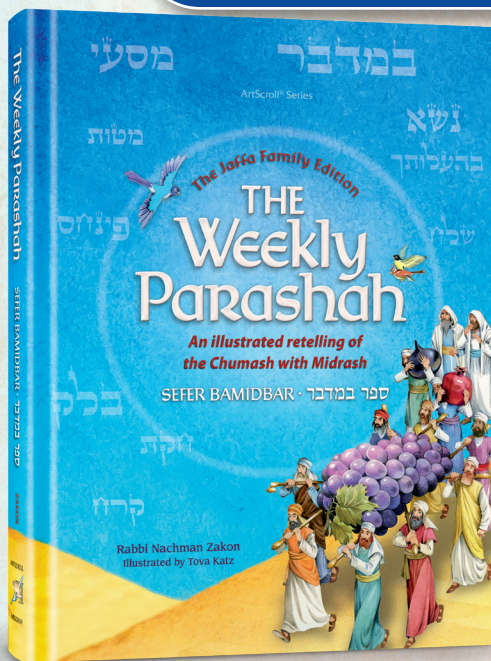
With Rabbi Pinchas Kohn.

Visit INSIDE.ARTSCROLL.COM to view over 25 interviews!



Parashah for Children

פרשת בלק

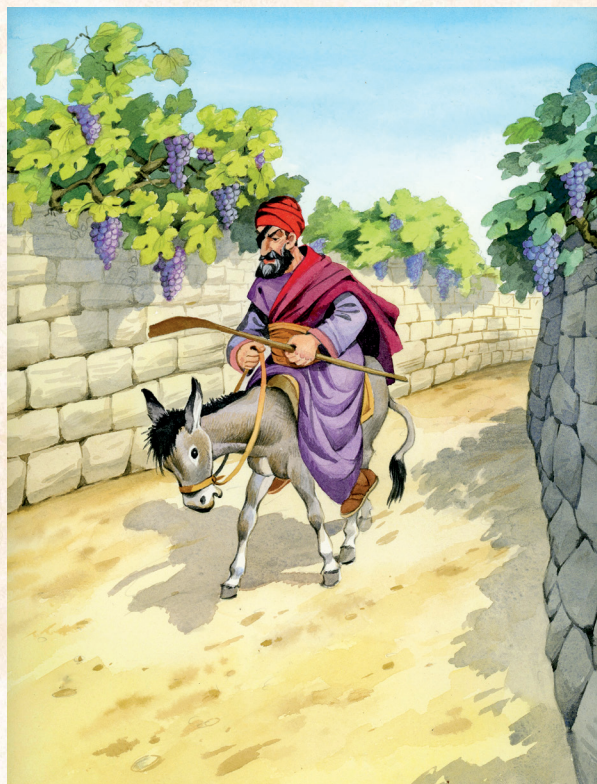


A Talking Donkey!

Donkeys don't talk. But in a miracle that never happened before, and would never happen again — Bilaam's donkey spoke! It was a one-time event in world history!

The donkey asked Bilaam, "Why have you hit me three times?"

I don't know about you, but if I passed a dog in the street and it started talking to me — I would run!



Not Bilaam! He talked right back to the donkey — as if this sort of thing happened all the time! He didn't stop to think, "What's going on here? Maybe Hashem is sending me a message not to go?"

Bilaam answered the donkey, "I hit you because you embarrassed me! If I had a sword, I would kill you right now!"

The donkey asked, "I am the same donkey you always ride on. Have I ever acted this way?"

"No."

Finally, Hashem let Bilaam see an angel, who was holding a sword. Bilaam stopped talking with his donkey. He got off the donkey and bowed to the angel.

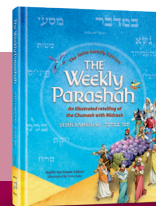
WIN A \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD!

THE WEEKLY QUESTION

Question for Parashas Balak:

Who hated the Jews more, Balak or Bilaam?

Kids, please ask your parents to email the answer to shabbosquestion@artscroll.com by this Wednesday, June 30, to be entered into a weekly raffle to win a \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD! Be sure to include your full name and contact info. Names of winners will appear in a future edition. HINT: The answer can be found in *The Jaffa Family Edition Weekly Parashah*.



The winner of the Parashas Shelach question is: MENACHEM MENDEL KATZ

The question was: Which shevet did not send a spy as one of the meraglim? Why not?

The answer is: Shevet Levi. Eretz Yisroel was to be divided among all the shevatim except Levi. Hashem said to take one spy from each shevet that would inherit the land. Because Levi would not receive a portion in Eretz Yisroel, they didn't send a spy.