

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

A GUEST APPEARANCE

“And from there he saw the edge of the people.” (22:39)

“Unbeknownst to our hero, the wicked count Carlo was looking down at him from the gallery of the grain silo. A huge metal anvil hung silently, poised to drop sixty-five feet to the granary floor and turn our hero into Steak Tataré. Just a few more feet and he would be directly under the anvil. “Heh, heh, heh!” laughed Carlo quietly to himself. “This time, my fine friend, you will not escape my clutches!” Inch by inch our hero drew closer to his fateful nemesis. Inch by inch. And then he was there — directly under the massive anvil!

“Count Carlo relished the moment for a few nanoseconds, and then very gently he let go of the cord. The anvil, released from its restraints, fell like a stone, like an eager racehorse let loose from the starting gate. Said Baklava, the count’s faithful bumbling butler: “Master, you let go of the anvil!” “I know I did, you bumbling idiot!” “But Master — the end is tied to your right leg!” “What! You fool! How did that happen?” “I did it, Master,” said a beaming Baklava. “I didn’t want us to lose the anvil!” “Quickly, grab the rope, you idiot, maybe our combined weights will stop the anvil and I won’t be pulled to my death!” “That would be nice, O master... But I’m not so heavy anymore, I’ve been going to Weight Watchers.” “Don’t argue with me, you, you, you, you bumbling Balkan!”

“In the time it takes to say Sidney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre, Count

Carlo and Baklava grabbed the rope. The anvil was suddenly checked in its downward plummet. But it wasn’t going to give up without a struggle. It hoisted the two men right up to the pulley which was set into the granary roof and there they swung like a couple of trussed chickens. The anvil came to an abrupt stop eighteen inches above the head of our hero.

“Our hero could have sworn that he heard something. He looked around him. Nothing out of the ordinary here. He sighed his diffident sigh

“When Man uses his power of speech to add spirituality to the world, he fulfills his true purpose...”

and sauntered out of the granary into the morning sunlight, unaware that he had come within a few inches of his life.”

There’s something very unusual about the story of Balak. If the Torah had not revealed the episode of Bilaam trying to curse the Jewish People, we would never have known about it. Other events that the Torah

records concerning the Jewish People could also be known from tradition, but not this week’s Parsha. When this week’s Parsha was taking place, the Jewish People were way out of earshot. You could only see them somewhere in the distance — from the top of a hill; across a field; in the wilderness. But we never see them close up. They’re like extras in their own movie. Had it not been for the Torah, we would never know what a narrow escape we had. The Jewish People walk through this week’s Parsha blissfully unaware of the machinations of Balak and Bilaam.

At the end of the sixth century, the Byzantine Empire completely destroyed the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. Unbeknownst to the Jews of Babylon, the Byzantines then poised themselves to make Babylon “Judenrein.” Before they could implement their plans, however, the Moslem revolt toppled them from power.

Jews played a prominent role in the overthrow of Czarist Russia and in the subsequent Soviet government. Secretly however in 1953, Josef Stalin tried unsuccessfully to destroy the Jews in what became known as “The Doctors’ Plot.” According to one theory, had the Doctors’ Plot reached its climax there would have been a mass expulsion of Soviet Jewry. But these plans died along with Stalin in 1953.

The shortest Psalm, Psalm 117, speaks of a world in the time of the Mashiach: “Praise Hashem *all nations*; laud Him *all the peoples*; for His kindness to us was overwhelming...”

Once, a Russian prince asked Rav

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Balak, king of Moav, is in morbid fear of *Bnei Yisrael*. He summons a renowned sorcerer named *Bilaam* to curse them.

First, Hashem appears to *Bilaam* and forbids him to go. But because *Bilaam* is so insistent, Hashem appears to him a second time and permits him to go. While en route, a *malach* (angel, messenger from Hashem) blocks the path of *Bilaam's* donkey. Unable to contain his frustration, *Bilaam* strikes the donkey each time it stops or wants to make a detour. Miraculously, the donkey speaks, asking *Bilaam* why he is hitting her. The *malach* instructs *Bilaam* regarding what he is permitted to say and what he is forbid-

den to say regarding the Jewish People. When *Bilaam* arrives, King *Balak* makes elaborate preparations in the hope that *Bilaam* will succeed in the curse. Three times *Bilaam* attempts to curse, and three times a blessing issues instead. *Balak*, seeing that *Bilaam* has failed, sends him home in disgrace. *Bnei Yisrael* begin sinning with the Moabite women, and worshipping the Moabite idols, and are punished with a plague.

One of the Jewish leaders brazenly brings a *Midianite* princess into his tent, in full view of Moshe and the people. *Pinchas*, a grandson of Aharon, grabs a spear and kills both evildoers. This halts the plague, but not before 24,000 have died.

HAFTORAH: MICHA 5:6-6:8

WALKING HUMBLY

“O Man, what is good and what does Hashem seek from you, only to do justice and love kindness, and walk humbly with your G-d.” (6:8)

“To walk humbly with your G-d’ — this refers to the mitzvos of providing for a bride and escorting the dead” — *Rashi*.

To perceive the true essence of a person, one must see him both in moments of transcendent joy — providing for a bride — and abject sor-

row — escorting the dead.

For in these moments of extremity, the inner qualities are revealed in stark relief. Only then can it be seen whether he can be said “to walk humbly with your G-d.”

• *Kochav M'Yaakov*

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LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

THE CONSOLATION OF DESOLATION

“And I shall make the land desolate and your enemies that dwell in it shall dwell in desolation.” (*Devarim* 26:32)

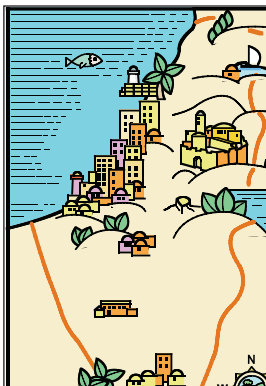
In this Torah passage, warning the People of Israel about the exile from *Eretz Yisrael* if they turn away from observance of the Torah, there is a note of comfort, say our sages.

Our land will never

accept our enemies.

This is an extraordinary promise, because you will not find anywhere in the world a land so good and bountiful which was once so developed and is so in ruins. For ever since we left it the land has accepted no other nation, although so many have unsuccessfully tried to settle it.

• *Ramban,*
Commentary on the Torah



Itzaleh of Volozhin why *non-Jews* will be expected to praise Hashem for His kindness to Israel. Rav Itzaleh replied “The princes of the nations constantly plot our annihilation but our Merciful G-d foils their plans. You keep your plots so secret that we Jews don’t even realize in how many ways you have tried to harm us and in how many ways G-d has saved us. Only you, the nations of the non-Jewish world, truly see the extent of G-d’s kindness to us, and therefore only you can praise Him adequately.”

NAME CALLING

“I cannot transgress the word of Hashem, my G-d to do anything small or great.” (22:18)

G-d can have no name. A name distinguishes something from everything else. It separates. A name says: It’s *this* — not *this*.

When we speak of Hashem being One, it is not just that He is the only G-d, but rather that nothing else exists except for Him. He is One and All. Obviously then, He cannot have a name, for a name would separate Him from All.

And yet Hashem has names. The very word “Hashem” means “The Name.”

When we talk of Hashem having names, it is only in the context of His connection to the world that He created. Hashem’s names relate to the ways in which we perceive Him running the world. Sometimes, we perceive G-d’s actions as merciful. Other times, we perceive G-d’s actions as conforming to the letter of the law. G-d’s names refer only to the way we perceive His actions. For at an ultimate level, He is neither merciful, nor just, nor any epithet or quality. For these adjectives relate only to our understanding of Him.

In the above verse, Bilaam says he cannot “transgress the word of Hashem, Elokai (my G-d) to do anything small or great.” The order of this sentence is puzzling. If Bilaam cannot do a small transgression, then all the more so he will not be able to do a large one. So why does the Torah need to spell out “small or great?” Tell me “small” and automatically, I’ll know “great.”

Bilaam’s method of cursing the Jewish People was to invoke against them names of G-d which represent unyielding justice — *Elokim* and *Kah*. Thus, he surmised, there would be a possibility for his curses to strike home. However, when he tried to use the name *Elokim*, his mouth was closed prematurely and the name that came out was *Keil* — a name expressing mercy. And when he wanted to utter the name *Kah*, his mouth suddenly experienced a moment of garrulousness. His tongue ran on ahead of him and what came out was the four-letter name of Hashem which epitomizes G-d’s mercy.

That’s why Bilaam said “I cannot transgress the word of Hashem, my G-d (Elokai) to do anything small or great;” meaning: “I cannot change these two names, neither to shorten *Hashem* to *Kah* nor to lengthen *Keil* to *Elokim*.”

YOU LOSE — I WIN

“So now, please come and curse this people for me, for it is too powerful for me.” (22:6)

What does a Jew do when he finds himself in trouble? He goes to a great *tzaddik* and asks for a *bracha*. He *davens* to the Creator of the world to save him. But how do some nations react to trouble?

When Balak ben Tzipor, the king of

Moav was frightened of the Jews, he went to Bilaam and asked him, not to bless *him*, but to *curse* the Jews!

This is the way of the wicked — rather than seek a blessing for themselves, they would prefer a curse for someone else.

ASININE TALK

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

What does it mean when a donkey starts to speak? The essential difference between Man and the animals is the power of speech. Man is called “*The Speaker*” — this is the quality that epitomizes his elevation above the animals.

The power of speech is given to Man to elevate the physical world, to inject spirituality into the physical.

Describing the creation of Man, the Torah says that Hashem “blew into his nose a spirit of life.” *Targum Onkelos* translates this phrase as “He blew into his nose a *speaking* spirit.”

In the Hebrew language, the word for “thing” — *davar* — has the same root as *dibur* — “word.” Speech is the threshold between the world of things, the physical world, and the spiritual world.

When Man uses his power of speech to add spirituality to the world, he fulfills his true purpose, he epitomizes the “speaking spirit.” He elevates both himself and the world with him. But when he degrades the power of speech by using it to curse and to denigrate, then Man becomes no more than a talking donkey.

Sources:

- **A Guest Appearance** - Rabbi Reuven Subar
- **Name Calling** - *The Vilna Gaon*
- **You Lose, I Win** - *The Chafetz Chaim*

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“And Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey..” (22:28) The other nations had heard that Moshe’s might came from his power of speech. They did not realize that this referred to his prayer, and instead believed that his power lay in his tremendous oratorical abilities. They therefore hired Bilaam, who was known as a great orator and who had exceptional powers to curse people, in order to vanquish Moshe. As a result, “G-d opened the mouth of the donkey” to show that even a donkey can be a good orator, and that Moshe’s powers were all based on prayer.

• *Imrei Kohen*

WEEKLY DAF

ERUVIN 63 - 69

SLEEPING IT "ON"

Sobriety is an absolute necessity both for prayer and for ruling on matters of halacha. But even if one has come under the influence of wine, says the Sage Rami bar Abba, he can return to a sober state by walking the distance of a *mil* (roughly a kilometer) or by sleeping a bit.

A qualification of this sobering solution is provided, however, by Rabbi Nachman in the name of Rabba bar Avuha. Only when a *revi'is* of wine (86 grams) is imbibed will sleep have a sobering effect. If one drinks more than this, sleep will only make him more intoxicated.

This *gemara* can help us explain a halacha mentioned in *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 695:2)*, based on the ruling of the Sage Rava (*Mesechta Megilla 7a*), that on Purim one must drink wine until he can no longer distinguish between "cursed be Haman and blessed be Mordechai." In contrast to the literal interpretation which suggests excessive drinking, *Rema* cites an opinion that it is sufficient to drink more than one is accustomed to and then go to sleep, "since when he is asleep he is unable to distinguish between cursed be Haman and blessed be Mordechai."

On the basis of the aforementioned *gemara* about the relationship between wine and sleep, it may be concluded that it is not drink-induced sleep which is the Purim state of confusion prescribed by *Rema*, but rather the state of intoxication induced by sleeping after drinking more than the customary measure of a *revi'is*.

• *Eruvin 64b*

THE THREE INDICATORS

You can tell a man by three things, says Rabbi Ilouï. By his drinking (*kosso*), his pocketbook (*kisso*) and his temper (*ka'asso*).

A good man, the Sage informs us, is one who can hold his liquor, deal honestly in business and control his temper (*Rashi*).

This basic interpretation is expanded upon by Maharsha:

All human characteristics can be divided into three categories — man's relationship with Heaven, with his fellow man and with himself.

Whether one deals honestly in his affairs with others determines whether he is good or bad towards his fellow man. How he behaves when he has drunk more than a little spirits is an indication whether he is good or bad in caring for himself. How quick he is to anger is a criterion to Heaven, for our Sages have taught us that one who is prone to anger is considered as if he worships idols.

This oft-quoted Talmudic advice is borne out by so much human experience. The veneer which some people of poor character affect in their routine activities is exposed when they are challenged to hold their drink or temper, or to refrain from cutting corners in order to earn another dollar at someone else's expense.

• *Eruvin 65b*

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why did the Moabites consult specifically with the Midianites regarding the best strategy to use against the Jewish people?
2. What was Balak's status before he became king of Moav?
3. Bilaam was an evil person. Why, then, did Hashem grant him prophecy?
4. On what basis did Balak think that Bilaam's curse would be effective?
5. Why didn't the elders of Midian remain with Bilaam overnight?
6. When did Bilaam receive his prophecies?
7. Hashem opened his conversation with Bilaam by asking, "Who are these men with you?" What did Bilaam deduce from this question?
8. How do we know that Bilaam hated the Jewish People more than Balak?
9. What is the evidence of Bilaam's greed?
10. In his conversation with his donkey, how did Bilaam shame himself in front of the princes?
11. Why was Bilaam's donkey slain by the *malach*?
12. Bilaam compared his encounter with an angel to someone else's encounter with an angel. Who was the other person and what was the comparison?
13. What does the word "*shefi*" mean?
14. Why did Bilaam tell Balak to build seven altars?
15. What tragedy befell the Jewish People at Rosh Hapisgah?
16. Why are the Jewish People compared to lions?
17. On Bilaam's third attempt to curse the Jewish People, he changed his strategy. What did he do differently?
18. What were Bilaam's three primary characteristics?
19. What did Bilaam see that made him decide not to curse the Jewish People?
20. In verse 24:19, Bilaam stated that a king "shall rule and destroy the remnant of the city." Who is the king and which city?

BONUS QUESTION?

SHERLOX HOLMES AND THE HOUSE OF GOLD

World famous detective Sherlock Holmes puffed softly on his pipe. "A person reveals his character through tiny nuances of speech," he said.

"Yes," said Watstein. "For example, the verse quotes Bilaam telling Balak: '*Even if Balak will give me his entire houseful of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem my G-d...*' Rashi comments: '*From here we see that Bilaam was greedy, desiring money that belonged to others.*'"

"A common malady," said Sherlock.

"For the life of me, though, I do not see how the verse hints to Bilaam's greed," said Watstein.

"Explain," said Sherlock.

"When Balak promised Bilaam great honor, he was really offering Bilaam a hefty sum of money. Bilaam's response that '*even if Balak will give me his entire houseful of silver and gold*' seems totally appropriate: Balak offered wealth and Bilaam responded regarding wealth. In fact, some of the most righteous people have responded similarly."

"Such as?" asked Sherlock.

"Such as Rabbi Eliezer Ben Hismah. He wasn't greedy in the least. Yet when offered precious jewels to join an unknown community, Rabbi Eliezer Ben Hismah responded: '*Even if you give me all the precious jewels in the world, I will not live anywhere other than a Torah community.*' (*Pirke Avos*) What is different about Bilaam's statement which marks *him* as a greedy person?"

"People reveal their character with tiny nuances of speech," Sherlock said.

answer on page eight

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 22:4 - Since Moshe, the leader of the Jewish people, grew up in Midian, the Moabites thought the Midianites might know wherein lay Moshe's power.
2. 22:4 - He was a prince of Midian.
3. 22:5 - So that the other nations could not say "If we also had prophets, we would also return to be good."
4. 22:6 - He knew that Bilaam had helped Sichon defeat Moav.
5. 22:7 - They reasoned that if Bilaam didn't come right away, he would not be of help to them.
6. 22:8 - Only at night.
7. 22:9 - He mistakenly reasoned that Hashem isn't omniscient.
8. 22:11 - Balak wanted only to drive the Jewish People from the land. Bilaam sought to exterminate them completely.
9. 22:18 - He said that Balak should give him all of his gold, since otherwise Balak would need to hire many armies.
10. 22:29 - He told his donkey, "Were there a sword in my hand, I would slay you." He was hired to destroy an entire nation through his power of speech, yet for a donkey he needed a sword!
11. 22:33 - So that people should not point to it and say, "This is the donkey that silenced Bilaam." Hashem is concerned with human dignity.
12. 22:34 - Avraham. Bilaam said, "Hashem told me to go, but later sent an angel to stop me. The same thing that happened to Avraham: Hashem commanded Avraham to sacrifice his son Yitzchak, and later He rescinded the command through an angel."
13. 23:3 - Alone, silent.
14. 23:4 - Corresponding to the seven altars built by the Avos. Bilaam said to Hashem, "The ancestors of the Jewish People built seven altars, but I alone have built altars equal to all of them."
15. 23:14 - Moshe died there.
16. 23:24 - They arise in the morning, and "strengthen" themselves to perform *mitzvos*.
17. 24:1 - He realized that enchantments wouldn't persuade Hashem to allow him to curse the Jewish People. Rather, he hoped that by calling attention to their sins, he would be permitted to curse them.
18. 24:2 - An evil eye, pride, and greed.
19. 24:2 - He saw each Tribe dwelling without intermingling. He saw the tents arranged so that no one could see into his neighbor's tent.
20. 24:19 - The king is the *Mashiach* and the city is Rome.

WHO'S BURIED IN DAVID'S TOMB?

M.G. <moish@juno.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have heard that there are those who claim that King David is not buried in the place in Jerusalem known as "Kever David Hamelech" (King David's Tomb). I would appreciate if you have more info on the subject.

Dear M.G.,

The Bible states that King David was buried in *Ir David*, or City of David. According to the book of Joshua, the ancient city was divided into two halves; the eastern part was then called "Metsudat Zion" and later "Ir David" and the higher part in the west which was controlled by the Jebusites was called *Har Hamoriah*. So it appears that Zion and *Ir David* are one and the same place, i.e., the low valley (which is nowadays called Silwan). If that is the case, the present tomb upon Mt. Zion (being that it is in the higher, western portion of the city) cannot be that of King David.

Sources:

- Kings I 2,10
- Joshua 14:8 and 18:15
- See Atlas, *Da'at Mikrah*, Mossad Harav Kook pp. 12,13,212,270

CAUTION! MARRIAGE!

Eddy Webber from Lansing, MI <egw@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Forgive my ignorance in what may be a simple question, but I was at a wedding last night and after the groom broke the glass and everyone danced away, I noticed the glass — which was wrapped in a plastic bag — was lying on the floor. I picked it up so no one would get hurt, but then I thought to myself, "what do you do with it?" I was very puzzled. It didn't seem right to just throw it in the garbage as it had been used for a religious ceremony; on the other hand, it

was broken glass and it seemed like you should throw it away. So what do you do with the broken glass after the wedding?

Dear Eddy Webber,

You acted very correctly by picking up the broken glass in order to avoid injury. There is no problem with throwing it away in the garbage. Although it was used in a religious ceremony, it itself is not a holy article.

I've heard that some have the custom to save the glass and make jewelry from it.

WHY JEWS DON'T COUNT

Todd from Dallas, Texas <todd1@bigfoot.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

There was a time where King David took a census of the people. One of his servants tried to talk him out of it but was unsuccessful. Then Hashem dealt severely with David and with the people of Israel. (Sorry, I'm not sure of the exact reference.) I have never understood why G-d does not like a census? What is so wrong with counting the people?

Dear Todd,

The reference is in Samuel II, Chapter 24. The reason that G-d did not approve of counting the people directly is that by counting, one is ascribing a finite value to a Jew, a number, a physical reality. In fact, the Jewish people are spiritually infinite, and should not be numbered and defined in the finite sense. Even when the Jews needed to be counted, such as the census described in the Book of Numbers, it was done indirectly, whereby each person contributed a coin and the coins were counted.

By the way, if you are from Dallas, may I suggest continuing your study of Judaism with the Dallas Area Torah Association. Below is a contact: Rabbi Yerachmiel Fried, Dean Dallas Area Torah Association Community Kollel 5840 Forest Lane Dallas, Texas 75230

Phone: 987-DATA
e-mail: data@datanet.org

IMMERSED IN THOUGHT

Ashley Sevitz <rsevitz@iafrica.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi

A few years ago when I was studying in yeshiva, I adopted the minhag of going to the mikveh (spiritually purifying bath) every erev Shabbat (Friday afternoon). This I have kept up all these years. A while ago I heard it mentioned that there are actually certain kavanot (holy thoughts) that a person should have each time he immerses himself, seven in total. Is this true? If so, what are they? And if it is true, how is a person allowed to have a religious kavana (thought) in the mikveh?

Dear Ashley,

Many people immerse in a mikveh Friday afternoon to honor the Shabbat. There are many different customs regarding the number of dips and regarding the kavanot which one should keep in mind. Here are seven of the main customs:

- Two dips: The first to remove the spiritual "clothing" of the weekday and the second to "wear" the spiritual clothing of Shabbat. If he is physically impure, he needs one more dip before these two. (*Arizal in Pri Etz Chaim, Sha'ar Hakavanot*)
- Three dips: The first for *nefesh* the second for *ruach* and the third for *neshama* (*nefesh, ruach* and *neshama* relate to different levels of the soul. (*Ben Ish Chai 2nd year, Lech Lecha note 16*))
- Four dips, parallel to the four-letter name of G-d, one dip for each letter. (*Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avodah*).
- Five dips corresponding the five levels of the soul: *Nefesh, ruach* and *neshama*, as mentioned above, plus the two higher levels of soul called *chayah* and *yechidah*. There are five different kavanot to have in mind when performing each of these dips: At the first dip, purity

from *keri* (physical impurity), at the 2nd, spiritual cleansing from anger, 3rd to remove spiritual “clothing” of the weekdays, 4th to remove “*ruach*” of weekdays, 5th to receive *tosefet kedusha* of Shabbat (additional sanctity of Shabbat). (*Ben Ish Chai 2nd year, Lech Lecha note 16*)

- Seven dips: Regarding the intricate *kavanot*, see source. (*Kaf HaChaim 260:4-6*)
- Ten dips: This was the custom of the Chatam Sofer. Regarding the intricate *kavanot*, see source. (*Tomer Devorah ch. 4, Kaf HaChaim 260:4-6*)
- Thirteen dips: Thirteen is the *gematria* (numerical value) of the word “*echad*” which means “one” (as in “G-d is One.”) Regarding the intricate *kavanot*, see source. (*Kaf HaChaim 260:4-6*)

If the surroundings are clean, a person is permitted to have in mind the *kavanot*, even though he is in the *mikveh*.

LEVITES AT WORK

Bruce Blumenthal from Baltimore, MD
<bblume@pol.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
In Parshat Naso, the levite service is described as beginning at age 25, but in Parshat Beha'alotcha it is 30. Why the discrepancy? Moreover, if the age of majority for men is 13, what was the role of the *levi'im* from age 13 to 25?

Dear Bruce,

Rashi explains that the *levi'im* went through a five year “apprentice program” from the age of 25 until 30. At age 30 they then became integral members of the Temple service roster. Between age 13 until age 25 the *levi'im* apparently had no special role above that of any other Jew.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous “Ohrnet” features

Re: Yiddle Riddle (Ohrnet Beha'alotcha):

In a recent Yiddle Riddle, you asked: “Two exactly identical people in the exact same place on the exact same day do the exact same act with the exact same intentions. However, the first one is fulfilling a Torah commandment, and the second one is transgressing a Torah prohibition.” Could this refer to placing two *mezzuzot* on the same door post? Would this not violate “*bal tosif*” — the prohibition against adding to the Torah — because he tried to do a mitzvah which did not exist?

• Akiva Miller <kennethgmiller@juno.com>

It is Shabbat & there is still *chametz* left in the house the day before Passover. One cannot burn the *chametz* or remove it from the property (surrounding the property is a *reshus harabim*, and there is no toilet or other exit from the property by which the *chametz* can leave.) Consequently, by eating the *chametz* before midday, one is performing the mitzvah of removing the *chametz* from one's property. A person who eats *chametz* after midday is performing a Biblical sin of eating *chametz*, as the Sages say “*ach chalak*.” And yet it is the same day, same action.

• Tuttle Norman, <TUTTLE@Sensormatic.com>

Why can't you give us a Yiddle Riddle once a week, it is a popular subject for discussion! Thanks a lot.

• Ravi Shahaar <ravi@jerusalem.com>

Re: Kosherer Than Thou (Ohrnet Shlach):

Regarding the person who brought his home-made dough to the Kosher Pizza store: I too suffer from the disease celiac sprue. There is no cure, except to avoid glutinous grains the rest

of your life. I do not eat out very much because everything contains wheat, but if I do I usually call ahead to the owner or manager. I recommend this. Most restaurants are willing to accommodate their customers with food allergies.

• Lucy Shriver <lshri@gte.net>

My mother once purchased some prepared food at a certain kosher delicatessen. I do not remember why, but she decided to return it for a refund. She was very upset that the manager put it back in the display case to sell to someone else. This was not a packaged food, but something which might well have been on our dishes. “How do they know how kosher my kitchen is?” she demanded to know, and I don't think she ever shopped there again. Although it is proper to give people the benefit of the doubt, but that pizza shop was supervised by a rabbi, and not by the customers or managers.

In a more practical vein, I'd suggest that when the family whose son has celiac disease goes out to eat, they should prepare something which can be placed in a double-wrapped container and heated like an airline meal, which would protect the *kashrut* of the oven. And *refuah sh'leima* to their son — may Hashem show the doctors how to cure celiac disease, and soon.

• Akiva Miller <kennethgmiller@juno.com>

WHAT I DO WITH OHRNET

Thank you for the wonderful opportunity to spread the light of Torah to members of the community around the world. I receive Ohrnet via the Internet, print and photocopy the pages. Then I distribute it amongst the members of our Synagogue on Shabbos.

This project of mine is somewhat of a breakthrough in South Africa and is evidenced by many of the visitors from Johannesburg (the main centre of *Yiddishkeit* in South Africa) who were down in Cape Town on vacation, and who asked me to send these sheets to their *shuls* in Johannesburg.

Bivracha,

Dovid Jubiler <d-jubiler@usa.net>

Cape Town, South Africa

What do YOU do with OHRNET? Let's hear your feedback!

Write to: whatido@ohr.israel.net

THE PROBLEMATIC GUEST

It is a tradition in our family to invite our neighbors, the Lifshitz family, for a Yom Tov meal. The previous Yom Tov they were away and couldn't accept our invitation, so we were really pleased when this year they agreed to come for the festive meal on Shavuot morning. There was always such a congenial atmosphere at our table when the Lifshitz family came. After we washed and said the *hamotzi*, we sat down at the table, but something seemed different. Mr. Lifshitz didn't seem his usual cheerful self. We tried to encourage him to give a *dvar* Torah, but he just didn't seem to be in the mood. In fact he hardly even joined in the *zemiros*. "What did we do wrong?" we wondered. We couldn't figure it out. After the meal, which all our other guests seemed to enjoy, we walked

the Lifshitz family part of the way home. As we took leave of each other, Mr. Lifshitz commented, "I am sorry I wasn't such good company. After staying up all night studying Torah, I didn't have time to sleep in the morning. If I seemed half asleep, it's because I really was!"

• Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

Do you have a story to share?

Were you ever in a situation with potential to judge negatively, but there really was a valid explanation? Has a friend or a relative ever told you how they were in such a situation? Share your stories with us for inclusion in future columns of *The Other Side of the Story*. To submit your story, send it to <info@ohr.org.il> or write to Ohrnet POB 18103 Jerusalem or Fax 02-581-2890

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked: Which verse in the Torah begins and ends with the same *word. (*The word beginning the verse begins with a *vav* (meaning *and*), while the word ending the verse does not, but otherwise it is the same word.)

Answer: Bamidbar 32:1. The verse says: "U'mikneh rav hiya l'vnei Reuven ... u'lavadecha mikneh" — "Cattle galore there was to the children of Reuven... and your servants have cattle."

• Submitted by Rabbi Dr. Avigdor Boncheck

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BONUS ANSWER!

"Rabbi Eliezer ben Hisma," said Sherlox, "made reference to wealth in a *general* sense — 'all the precious jewels in the world' — but not to any *specific* property. Bilaam, on the other hand, made reference specifically to Balak's wealth: 'Even if you give me *your* house full of gold and silver...'"

"I hadn't thought about that," said Watstein. "But what

of it?"

"Through this very subtle nuance, Bilaam revealed that he eyed Balak's estate. Otherwise, he would have said: 'Even if you give me *a* house' — not *your* house — 'full of silver and gold.'"

"A golden insight!" said Watstein.

• Based on *Devek Tov*

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN

22:5 Balak's Rise to Power
22:20 Bilaam's Mission
22:23 The Donkey
23:16 Bilaam's Prophecy
24:20 Amalek

SFORNO

22:2 What Balak Saw
22:6 Bilaam's Power
23:22 Jewish Conquest