



THE CHEVRA

Young Israel of Fair Lawn
The Morris J. Kraut z'l Torah Center

Joe Smith - President

This Shabbat:

שבת פרשת בלק

Shabbat Parashat Balak

14 Tamuz 5767; June 29-30, 2007

The Haftorah is read from Micah 5:6-6:8.

Friday

Mincha	7:00 PM
Candle Lighting	8:14 PM

Shabbat

Chevra Mishnayos Shiur	8:00 AM
Shacharit	9:00 AM
Sof Zman Keriat Shema:	9:13 AM (Gra"h)

Shiur Pirkei Avot

Mincha	7:10 PM
Shabbat Ends	8:10 PM
	9:23 PM

Sunday	Shacharit	8:30 AM
Monday – Friday	Shacharit	7:00 AM

Tuesday, July 3, 17 Tamuz

Fast of 17th of Tamuz

Next Shabbat:

שבת פרשת פינחס

Shabbat Parashat Pinchas

21 Tamuz 5767; July 6-7, 2007

The Haftorah is read from Jeremiah 1:1-2:3

"דברי ירמי" (the three Haftoros of these three

weeks are called the דפורענותא של — the

"Three Haftoros of Punishment").

Friday

Mincha	7:00 PM
Candle Lighting	8:13 PM

Shabbat

Chevra Mishnayos Shiur	8:00 AM
Shacharit	9:00 AM
Sof Zman Keriat Shema:	9:16 AM (Gra"h)

Shiur Pirkei Avot

Mincha	7:10 PM
Shabbat Ends	8:10 PM
	9:21 PM

Sunday	Shacharit	8:30 AM
Monday – Friday	Shacharit	7:00 AM

Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Dorit and Leslie Gabor on the marriage of their son Elie to Aya Eliyahu.

Special Mazel Tov to Rebetzin Gabor as well as to the entire Gabor and Eliyahu families.

May they have much Nachas from the young couple for many years to come and share many Smachot together in the future.

May Aya and Elie build a Bayit Ne'emon B'Yisroel.

Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Esther and Sholom Silvestri on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Ahron.

May they and their family see much Nachas from Ahron for many years to come.

May he grow to be a great source of pride to Klal Yisroel and may we share many Smachot together in the future.

Torah Insights – Harav S. Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Balak Numbers 22:2 – 25:9

Efrat, Israel – The miracle of the existence of the Jewish people for the past 4,000 years – despite destructions, exiles and persecutions – remains the secret which confounds the world.

From as far away as the universities of Beijing and Kai fang Fu I was invited to address both the faculty and student body on the reason for the miraculous survival of the people of Israel. Interestingly enough, the answer to this conundrum is to be found in this week's Biblical reading of Balak.

Bilam, a Gentile prophet, is hired by the King of Moab to curse the Israelites, a nation whose miraculous exodus from Egyptian slavery has both astounded and terrified the civilized world. Bilam desperately wants to curse Israel in order to receive the gold and silver he was promised once he were to do so, but he finds the task impossible. "What curse can I pronounce if G-d does not express a curse? How can I express anger if G-d is not angry?" (Numbers 23:8).

Apparently Bilam looks upon the nation of Israel with a desire to pronounce the curse, but he is prevented from doing so by the very special qualities he finds defining this nation "From the head of the mountains do I see this people and from the high places do I gaze upon the Israelites. Behold, they are a nation dwelling alone not to be counted the way in which other nations are counted. Who can count the dust of Jacob or give a number to one quarter of the Israelites...." (Ibid 9,10) At the end of this vision, the last words that we have cited, Bilam declares that the Israelites have the unique capacity to stand alone, isolated from all other nations of the world and subject to a very different kind of historiography which seems to govern other peoples; other nations

develop from paltry beginnings progress and reach their zenith, and then pass away from the arena of history. Israel, on the other hand, constantly seems to renew itself, rises and falls and rises again, and each time Israel renews itself she plays center stage within world history. Even when she seems to have disintegrated into dust (this almost seems like a reference to the crematoria of Auschwitz and Treblinka), she begins to develop once again. Even when only one quarter of her population is left (perhaps because of persecution, perhaps because of assimilation) she never the less always rises again in defiance of all demographic and sociological rules.

Bilam in his introductory words to this vision, provides the answer to his own question, at least according to the Midrash (Tanhuma 12). “‘From the head of the mountains do I see this people’ - I look upon their heads the beginning of their roots. I see them entrenched and ensconced like these mountains and hilltops within the infrastructure of their patriarchs and matriarchs”. In other words, Bilam is saying that the Israelites are rooted in their past in the merits of their ancestors, in the special covenant guaranteeing their eternity which G-d made with those ancestors, and in the fundamental pride which emerges with the knowledge that they are the nation of G-d imbued with a unique Divine message to perfect and redeem the world. What Bilam sees is that it is virtually impossible to curse a nation that believes in itself and in its destiny with such firm faith and commitment.

What is truly astounding about this prophecy is that although it was written more than 4,000 years ago, it could very well have happened this very morning. There is only one basic change: our leaders do not have the same kind of belief in the national mission of Israel and in the ability of Israel to execute that vision as had the Israelite leadership encountered by Bilam. Undoubtedly, David Ben Gurion, Golda

Meir and Menachem Begin were such leaders. We must ask ourselves what is there about our political structure that does not seem to be providing such leadership at this particular juncture of our history.

Allow me to close with a verbal picture of an amazing scene between Father Jacob, founder of the Family of Israel, and Pharaoh, exalted King of Egypt. The Bible describes the following meeting between a nascent leader and aged paterfamilias with the majestic head of the Egyptian state: “And Joseph brought his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Jacob how old are you? And Jacob said to Pharaoh ‘the days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years; the days of the years of my life are few and evil and they did not reach the days and the years of my fathers during the days of their sojourning.’ And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and exited from before the presence of Pharaoh” (Genesis 47:7)

How can we understand such an inane dialogue being recorded in our eternal Bible? It seems to me that there is much profundity besides this seeming inanity. Joseph is nervous about his father’s meeting with his “boss”. He certainly explained to his aged father the proper protocol for such a royal encounter. He told Jacob that Pharaoh considered himself to be the god of Egypt and always gave out blessings to those who visited him; He told Jacob that a visitor must never begin the conversation and must always take his cue from the mighty Pharaoh, including the time of the conclusion of the meeting. Jacob hears his son’s words without internalizing them. It is impossible for him – the son of Isaac, the grandson of Abraham, the carrier of Israel’s covenant with G-d – to accept a blessing from an Egyptian idolater. Hence as soon as the encounter begins Jacob loses no time and immediately bestows his familial blessing upon Pharaoh. Pharaoh is dumbstruck and probably even considers imprisoning

Jacob or worse, for his disregard of proper respect and protocol. And then Pharaoh changes his mind, asking the old man’s age. He is probably old and senile and that accounts for his disrespect. The proud Jacob understands Pharaoh’s intent and therefore insists that he is much younger than he looks, his age and appearance are as a result of a very difficult life and as a further proof to the fact that he is of sound mind and body, Jacob repeats his blessing and leaves Pharaoh’s presence.

Jacob is the proud Jewish leader who has bequeathed his pride and mission to all subsequent generations. As Bilam understood so very well, the secret of our eternity is our prideful commitment to the execution of our mission to perfect the world.

**By Shlomo Riskin
Shabbat Shalom**

Shlomo Riskin
Chancellor Ohr Torah Stone
Chief Rabbi - Efrat Israel

The 17th of tammuz

from ou.org

כל המתאבל על חורבנה של ירושלים זוכה ורואה
בבנינה...

*All Who Mourn The Destruction of
Jerusalem Will Merit the Celebration of
her Rebirth...*

The 17th day in the Jewish month of Tammuz, Jews the world over fast and lament to commemorate the many calamities that have befallen our people on this ominous day.

The purpose of such fasts in the Jewish calendar is, according to Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov's *Book of Our Heritage*, "to awaken hearts towards repentance through recalling our forefathers'

misdeeds; misdeeds which led to calamities..."

A HISTORIC DAY OF CALAMITY

Going all the way back to Biblical times, Moses descended Mount Sinai on this day and, upon seeing the Golden Calf broke the first set of Tablets carrying the Ten Commandments (Shemot 32:19, Mishna Taanit 28b).

In the First Temple Era: The priests in the First Temple stopped offering the daily sacrifice on this day (Taanit 28b) due to the shortage of sheep during the siege and the next year 3184 (586 BCE), the walls of Jerusalem were breached after many months of siege by Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian forces.

In Melachim II 21:7 we find that King Menashe, one of the worst of the Jewish kings, had an idol placed in the Holy Sanctuary of the Temple, according to tradition on this date. The Talmud, in Masechet Taanit 28b, says that in the time of the Roman persecution, Apostomos, captain of the occupation forces, did the same, and publicly burned the Torah - both acts considered open blasphemy and desecration. These were followed by Titus and Rome breaching the walls of Jerusalem in 3760 (70 CE) and Pope Gregory IX ordering the confiscation of all manuscripts of the Talmud in 4999 (1239).

In later years this day continued to be a dark one for Jews. In 1391, more than 4,000 Jews were killed in Toledo and Jaen, Spain and in 4319 (1559) the Jewish Quarter of Prague was burned and looted.

The Kovno ghetto was liquidated on this day in 5704 (1944) and in 5730

(1970) Libya ordered the confiscation of Jewish property.

Other interesting occurrences on this day include Noah sending out the first dove to see if the Flood waters had receded, (Bereishit 8:8) in 1650 (2100 BCE); Moshe Rabbeinu destroying the golden calf, (Shemot 32:20, Seder Olam 6, Taanit 30b - Rashi) and then ascending back up Har Sinai for the second time where he spent the next forty days pleading for forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf, (Shemot 33:11, Rashi).

The Fast of the Fourth Month

The Mishna in Ta'anit 4:8 associates the 17th of Tammuz as the "*Fast of the Fourth Month*" mentioned by the prophet Zechariah. According to this Mishna, the 17th of Tammuz will be transformed in the messianic era in a day that "*shall be joy to the House of Judah*" full of "*gladness and cheerful feasts*".

Customs

The fast of the 17th of Tammuz is observed from the break of dawn until night (as defined by halacha), one of four Jewish fasts to be observed in this manner - 3 Tishrei, 10 Tevet, 13 Adar and 17 of Tammuz.

Expecting or nursing mothers and those who are ill are expected to observe the fast but with lenience, refraining from meat, luxurious food and hard liquor.

Minors that are old enough to understand, though exempt from fasting, should also be fed only simple foods as a manner of education.

Unlike the two Jewish fast days Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av, washing and wearing leather are permitted on this day.

Special prayers (vayechal and anenu) are added to the morning and afternoon

prayers. Ashkenazim add the latter only in the afternoon service (mincha).

This day is the beginning of the Three Weeks, an annual period of mourning over the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem.

SHABAT SHALOM