

**Bilaam arose in the morning and he told the officers of Balak to return home since Hashem has refused him the opportunity to go with them (22:13)** – **Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh** notes that this shows us the further evil of Bilaam that he woke them up early in order for them to leave before breakfast so that he would not have to pay for the meal. **Rav Shraga Grossbard ztl.** asks why we need to further see the evil of Bilaam. What was to be gained? **Rav Shraga Grossbard** answers that we see here that one considered to be a Rasha in relation to his connection Bein Adam Lamakom will also be considered a Rasha in his relationship Bein Adam L'Chaveiro. Values cannot exist fully without heavenly guidance.

**Bilaam told the Donkey since you played with me... (22:29)** – How could it be that Bilaam experienced the miracle of a talking donkey and remained unmoved by it and spoke to it as if it were a regular occurrence? **Rav Chaim Kanievski Shlita** explained that Bilaam wanted to woo the princes of Balak into thinking that this was indeed, a regular occurrence and that he was sought after by the world over – including the animals. Alas when he lost the argument to the donkey he demonstrated the exact opposite...

**They are a nation (Am) that dwells by itself and is not considered by other nations (Goyim) (23:9)** – **Rav Elchanan Wasserman HyD** noted that an Am is a nation with a common set of spiritual values. A Goy, is a nation that derives its connection through the fact that the land it is based upon, is its common heritage. Bnei Yisrael are unique because we continue to survive as a nation not only when we are on our land. Our land provides us with the opportunity to reach our real purpose – to fulfill the will of Hashem. However, it is not the land alone that makes us thrive.

**And he turned his face toward the desert (24:1)** – **Rashi quotes Onkelos** who notes that by turning to the desert Bilaam was hoping to get Hashem to remember the sins of Bnei Yisrael in the desert. **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explains that this is the style that comes out of the Sotah as well whose Korban is Mazkeret Avon – it reminds us of sin. Remembering sin can be dangerous as a result. Similarly remembering sin can also make one remember the enjoyment when it was committed which, in turn, could limit the power of the Teshuva from it. Proper Teshuva does not require a detailed analysis of the Avaira experience.

**How wondrous are your tents Yaakov (24:5)** – **Targum Yonasan** explains that Bilaam was praising the tents of Yeshivos that Yaakov Aveinu learned in. The question needs to be asked: Why praise Yaakov's tents? What tents of Yaakov was he talking about? Wasn't Yaakov buried already? **Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro ztl.** explains that Bilaam was impressed by the consistency of the Battei Knessios and Battei Midrashos of the day that were clearly able to mimic those of Yaakov based on consistency and continuity of approach. THAT is the key to our survival.

**Oy Mi yichyeh MeeSumo El (24:23)** – **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that the Targum uses the translation of "Veh" for the word Oy – suggesting perhaps that this is the source for the term Oy Veh. He explained in the name of the **Rambam** that this is the great challenge of wars involving nations that turn humans into Gods. The crusades and other wars were much more heinous because they were launched in the name of men turned into Gods. The **Netziv** adds that whenever a battle is launched over religious ideals then everyone who does not adopt the religion of the aggressor is liable to lose his or her life. These battles are much worse.

**And Yisrael joined itself to Ba'al Pe'or, and the anger of Hashem was kindled against Yisrael" (Bamidbar 25:2-3)** – Why does Peor play such a great role on Klal Yisrael's image – it is constantly a theme that Hashem keeps reminding us of? **Rav Amital ztl.** explained that Peor's method of service was in its natural way. It made it acceptable to do or engage in a manner that while natural was not wholesome. Sometimes in life we need to decide that there needs to be an element of Busha in life in order to handle the challenges of healthy Torah-style living. Knowing when to glorify natural living and when to keep it personal and quiet, is part of Jewish success.

**Haftorah: And I will cut off witchcraft from your hand and Meoninim shall not exist for you (Michah 5:11)** – The Gemara (Sanhedrin 62b) notes that a Meonen is a faker who uses slight of hand to his advantage. Rabbi Akiva suggests that he is one who uses the calendar to express special times that are not spelled out as omens to be omens. **Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** decried the proliferation of people who seek out Segulos as omens. The only good omens are the ones consistent with the Shulchan Aruch. Similarly – **Rav Shteinman Shlita** added that Segulos only work when connected to Mitzva observance.