Points to Ponder

Chukas/Balak 5783

**מַ֥יִם חַיִּ֖ים אֶל־כֶּֽלִי A vessel filled with spring water (19:17) - Rav Meir Shapiro** noted that Bnei Yisrael are often compared to water. When it flows, it can break huge buildings and crush mountains. However, all of that assumes that Bnei Yisrael are on the move. If our spirituality freezes then we have no power and no strength.

**וְדִבַּרְתֶּ֧ם אֶל־הַסֶּ֛לַע And you should speak to the rock (20:8)** - Who cares if Moshe spoke to the rock or hit it? Don’t both imply a Kiddush Hashem? **Rav Moshe Feinstein** explained that sometimes we need to speak to rocks. That is, we sometimes need to say things to people even when we know our words won’t necessarily have their desired effect. The Chofetz Chaim adds that when we speak, seeds are planted even if those listening seem unreceptive.

**וַיֹּֽאמְר֨וּ אֵלָ֥יו בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵל֘ Bnei Yisrael said to him (the king of Edom) (20:19)** - Why did Bnei Yisrael respond after Moshe was initially refused? Again later in the Parasha we see that it is Bnei Yisrael and not Moshe who initiate discussions with Sichon too? Why not Moshe? **Rabbi David Holzer** suggested that after Bnei Yisrael learned that Moshe and Aharon were going to die and not lead them into the land, they understood that it was going to be up to them to fill the void. They knew Moshe could not solve everything for them anymore and stepped up to fill the void.

**אִם־לִקְרֹ֤א לְךָ֙ בָּ֣אוּ הָֽאֲנָשִׁ֔ים ק֖וּם לֵ֣ךְ אִתָּ֑ם If the men came to call you (22:20)** - The Talmud (Makkos 10b) notes that it was not that Hashem changed his mind here. Rather, Hashem directs people in the direction that they wish to go. Why? **Rav Wolbe** explains that nothing stands in the way of his will. The utensils are always apparent. **Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi** is amazed that a donkey and a malach speaking to him does not influence Bilaam of his errors.

**חָטָ֔אתִי I have sinned (22:34)** - In truth, what was Bilaam’s sin? The **Malbim** explains that Bilaam didn’t know what was happening in his life and that is a sin. One needs to think about what happens around him or her and learn from the experience. **Rav Yissochar Frand** added that Bilaam didn’t consider Hashem’s hand in everything. This was a mistake. **Rav Aharon Leib Steinman** added that one can see how far Bilaam went NOT to see and understand the hand of Hashem.

**נֹפֵ֖ל וּגְל֥וּי עֵינָֽיִם He falls and has an open eye (24:4)** - Why does Bilaam fall and only then have an open eye**? Rav Elimelech Biderman quoted the Shelah HaKadosh** who notes that sometimes it takes us to fall before we open our eyes and recognize that the reason we are falling is because of our lack of awareness of Hashem and then we open our eyes. Rav Biderman notes how foolish we often are, that we wait until things go bad before we recognize Hashem and then it is even more foolish that once the difficulty passes, we forget who helped us out.

**וַיִּצָּ֥מֶד יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל לְבַ֣עַל פְּע֑וֹר The Jews became attached to Baal Peor (25:3)** - Why did Hashem get so upset at Peor more than Cheit Haeigel? At Cheit Haeigel 3000 died. Here it was 24000! Why the difference? And while we are at it, how did they become so attached to Baal Peor? **Rav Amital** explained that Peor represents natural man – without any Busha. It is the opposite of Torah life where we act with a certain degree of humility and dignity – and Busha. We do not let everything hang out animalistically. We believe in humility.

**Haftara**

**וְהַצְנֵ֥עַ לֶ֖כֶת  And walk humbly (Micha 6:8) - Rav Schachter** explained that the word “Leches” comes form the concept of going to a Beis Avel instead of a party as explained by Koheles. He explained that in order to handle challenges in public, one ought to act in private and maintain as much of his privacy as possible.