

Torah Weekly

July 10-16, 2022
11-17 Tammuz, 5782

Torah Reading:
Balak: Numbers 22:2 - 25:9
Haftarah:
Micah 5:6 - 6:8

PARSHAT BALAK

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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ALEPH INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Keeping Up with the Cohens

“That’s some new kitchen Sandra just had done. State of the art!” “Psst . . . did you see the new car Mark just took delivery of? It’s got every gadget in the book!” Common conversation. Rather routine, everyday talk.

They tell of a rep on the road who had broken all records for sales in his company. When asked the secret of his success, he explained that the first thing he said when someone opened the door was, “Did you see what your neighbor Mrs. Jones just got?” That trick never failed him.

This was never the Jewish ethic, however. We were taught differently, and our ancient value system is as relevant as ever in contemporary life. Privacy, modesty and discretion are all characteristics our people have cherished since we became a nation.

“Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel dwelling according to its tribes” (Numbers 24:3).

What was so special about the Israelites’ dwelling? Rashi offers one interpretation of the verse, that the doorways of the Israelites’ tents in the wilderness were arranged so that they did not face each other. That way, one person was not able to see into his neighbor’s tent, and their privacy was protected. In fact, this is one of the explanations of Balaam’s famous praise of the Jews, *Mah tovu ohalecha Yaakov*—“How goodly are your tents, O Jacob.” The heathen

prophet was extolling the Jews’ virtues in their town planning, whereby they took precautions in safeguarding their modesty and protecting their personal family lives from would-be busybodies and peeping Toms, otherwise known as *yentas* and *nudniks*.

Another possible interpretation of “not looking into your neighbor’s tent” might be this: Do not look into your neighbor’s tent to help you decide what you should be doing. Your decisions in life should not be based on what other people are, or are not, doing. Certainly not on what your neighbors have or do not have.

Social workers today will painfully testify that family breakdowns are often a result of financial difficulties and the stress that these put on marriages. Many of those stresses are self-imposed. Their clients confessed that they didn’t really need the new kitchen or the new car, but once their friends were moving up in the status stakes, they felt under pressure to maintain their social standing. Whether it is the kitchen, car, vacation, or the latest digital technology, if we allow ourselves to be judged by other people’s criteria, we lay ourselves open to a lot of unnecessary stress. Even a *simchah*—a wedding or bar mitzvah—can get us into “keeping up with the Cohens” mode, from the seven-layered designer invitation hand-delivered to every guest, down to the posh dinner dance replete with chopped-liver sculptures.

Why? All because we are busy looking over our shoulders or peering into the

next-door neighbor’s place.

The principle even applies to *tzedakah*. There is an appeal for the *shul* or a Jewish charity, and how do we respond? “Well, if so-and-so, who is a multimillionaire, only gave \$10,000, then all I should give is \$10!” What difference does it make what someone else gave or didn’t give? You should give what you can, irrespective of what others gave.

How much resentment, bitterness and disappointment we would avoid if we didn’t try to measure ourselves by other people’s standards! We would be much happier people if we looked into ourselves and achieved what we could and should, without drawing comparisons with others.

If you want to enjoy the blessing of “goodly tents,” or even just good housekeeping, keep your eyes and your nose in your own tent. Then you will be content, too.

By Yossy Goldman

“It Just Happened . . .”

There is an elderly gentleman who lives not far from us. While not officially a member of our congregation, he comes to our synagogue every Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and to say kaddish on his parents’ *yahrtzeits*. I visit his home on an irregular basis and I’ve always found him an amusing conversationalist and pleasant company.

Just last week I met him in the local supermarket and was shocked in the drastic change in him since I’d seen him last. He’d lost a lot of weight and was clearly lacking in energy. When I came upon him he was halfway down an aisle,

perched on the seat attached to his walker and trying to catch his breath. Of course I stopped to chat and express my concern about his obvious health issues.

Turns out that he'd had a heart attack a few months back and had been in and out of hospitals ever since with ongoing complications. Thankfully he was now on the mend, yet his doctors were warning that it would take him some time till he could expect to be back to anything like full health.

I felt awful. He'd been struggling for months, all on his own, and I'd done nothing for him. I tried to stammer out an apology, but he waved away my regrets. "It's not your fault, Rabbi" he told me, "you didn't know. I didn't tell anyone other than my immediate family because I didn't want to make a fuss."

Obviously, now that I know I'll be more proactive in the future and make a point of stopping by regularly with some chicken soup and good cheer. But I wonder, am I really blameless for having abandoned him in his time of need? True, I didn't know, but I hadn't exactly made much of an effort to keep tabs on him in the first place.

When the evil prophet Balaam was travelling to Moab to curse Israel at the behest of King Balak he was confronted by a fiery angel of G-d blocking the path. Balaam's donkey saw the threat and stopped in time, but at first Balaam remained oblivious and began to strike the animal, urging it on. [G-d's](#) messenger finally revealed himself to Balaam, and Balaam belatedly realized that his donkey had just saved his life.

Even before rebuking Balam for embarking on his evil mission, the angel reproached him for having hit his donkey out of frustration. Balaam accepted responsibility "*I have sinned, for I did not know...*"¹

Rabbi Chaim of Sanz questioned why Balaam would say "I have sinned." We could understand had he said "I was mistaken," "I was ignorant," or some such expression, but why is ignorance considered a *sin*? Rabbi Chaim explained that not knowing, or not taking the trouble to find out, was indeed a "sin" for a prophet and leader like Balaam.

Ignorance is no excuse for a rabbi or other public official. When someone is placed in a position of responsibility, he is expected to make it his business to discover all the needs of his constituents. I am this man's local rabbi, and I should have more proactive about keeping tabs on him. Had I cared enough I would have found a way, and just because he wasn't asking doesn't excuse me from trying to help.

The challenge for us all is to care more and do more for those in need. Don't just sit back waiting for people to bring their troubles to you; go out and make the needs of others your business. We are all responsible for each other and ignorance is never, ever an excuse.

As a personal request; If you do know someone who, for whatever reason, has fallen through the cracks and needs a helping hand; whether a caring visit, help finding a job or financial assistance, please, please let your rabbi know. The wider Jewish community offers a wealth of support services to those in need and sometimes all that people require is an introduction to those who want to help.

By Elisha Greenbaum

T.N. FEWTSCH HISTORY

Sunday, July 10, 2022 --- 11 Tammuz, 5782

Passing of R. Elchanan Wasserman (1941)

R. Elchanan Bunem Wasserman headed a famous yeshiva in Baranovitch (in what is now Belarus), attracting many bright students. At the outbreak of World War II, he fled with the yeshiva to Lithuania. In 1941, when the Nazis broke their pact with the Soviets and overran Lithuania, he was one of the thousands of Jews who met their deaths, sanctifying G-d's name. R. Elchanan authored *Kovetz Shiurim*, a collection of Talmudic classes he delivered at the yeshiva.

Monday, July 11, 2022 --- 12 Tammuz, 5782

R. Yosef Yitzchak Born (1880)

Tammuz 12 is the birthday the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn of Lubavitch (1880-1950). This is also the day on which he was liberated from exile to the Soviet gulag 47 years later

Liberation of R. Yosef Yitzchak (1927)

On the 12th of Tammuz of 1927, the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, was officially granted release from his sentence of exile to Kastroma in the interior of Russia.

Twenty-seven days earlier, the Rebbe had been arrested by agents of the GPU and the *Yevsektzia* ("Jewish Section" of the Communist Party) for his activities to preserve Judaism throughout the Soviet empire and sentenced to death, G-d forbid. International pressure forced the Soviets to commute the sentence to exile and, subsequently, to release him completely. The actual release took place on Tammuz 13, and Tammuz 12-13 is celebrated as a "festival of liberation" by the Chabad-Lubavitch community.

Tammuz 12 is also Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's birthday.

Tuesday, July 12, 2022 --- 13 Tammuz, 5782

R. Yosef Yitzchak Freed (1927)

On the 13th of Tammuz of 1927, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, received the documents authorizing his release from a sentence of exile to Kastroma in the interior of Russia. The Rebbe was actually notified of his release on Tammuz 12, but since that day was a legal holiday, the Certificate of Release freeing him to travel home was issued only the next day. Thus both the 12th and 13th of Tammuz are celebrated as a "festival of liberation" by the Chabad-Lubavitch community. (For more on the Rebbe's arrest and liberation, "Today in Jewish History" for yesterday, Tammuz 12).

Shabbat, July 16, 2022 --- 17 Tammuz, 5782

Moses Breaks Tablets (1313 BCE)

The Talmud (Taanit 28b) lists five tragic events in Jewish history that occurred on Tammuz 17, on account of which a fast was instituted on this day (see [Laws & Customs](#)).

The first of these occurred in 1313 BCE, forty days after the [Giving of the Torah](#) on Sivan 6. Upon descending Mount Sinai and witnessing Israel's worship of the Golden Calf (see "[Today in Jewish History](#)" for yesterday, Tammuz 16), Moses smashed the Tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments which he was carrying down from the mountain.

Jerusalem Walls Breached (69 CE)

The other three national tragedies mourned on Tammuz 17 are connected with the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and their destruction of the Second Temple in the year 69 CE:

--The walls of the besieged city of Jerusalem were breached.

--The Roman general Apostomus burned the Torah and,

--placed an [idol](#) in the Holy Temple.

The fighting in Jerusalem continued for three weeks until the [9th of Av](#), when the [Holy Temple](#) was set aflame.