



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

CHUKAT-BALAK - חוקת־בלק

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Candle lighting: 8:45 pm  Havdallah: 9:53 pm (50 minutes after שקיעה)

Sponsored by Shloimie & Annie Romberg to commemorate the yahrzeit of Annie's father, Isidore Schindelheim, Yisrael ben Yosef v' Malka Frimet, z"l and Annie's mother, Sonia, Sarah Ruth bat Avraham v' Freidl, z"l, and to commemorate the yahrzeits of Pinya and Hendel Rondberg, z"l, Shloimie's uncle and aunt who perished in the Kielce pogrom of 5 Tammuz 1946, h"yd.

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דבר תורה RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

The Power of a Pause

A member of our community once told me an incredible story.

His rabbi became a baal teshuvah because of the 1986 New York Mets!

For years, he lived and breathed Mets baseball. Ever since their last championship in 1969, he waited, hoped, and dreamed that they would finally win again. Season after season, game after game, he invested enormous amounts of time, emotion, and energy following the team.

Then came 1986. The Mets won the World Series. In the excitement of the moment, he threw open the window and shouted, "YES!"

But a few moments later, a different thought entered his mind: "Now what?..."

For years he had been waiting for this moment. He had imagined it countless times. Yet now that it had finally happened, he felt strangely empty.

The question wouldn't leave him: *If I've devoted so much of my life to this, and this is all there is, then what am I really living for?*

That moment of reflection set him on a journey to discover genuine meaning and purpose. He eventually became a baal teshuvah and, years later, a rabbi.

All because the Mets won the World Series.

Why do I tell this story?

Parshas Balak contains a fascinating anomaly. Unlike almost every other parshah in the Torah,

it contains no breaks at all. From beginning to end, it is one continuous, "closed" section.

The commentators ask: Why?

Rav Shmuel Dovid Walkin, quoting his teacher, the Chofetz Chaim, explains that the breaks in the Torah were given so that Moshe Rabbeinu could pause between sections and reflect on what he had learned.

Bilam, however, never reflected. Again and again, Hashem sent him messages. Hashem told him not to go. His donkey spoke to him. His plans repeatedly failed. Yet he continued charging forward, determined to pursue his own agenda.

How could someone miss so many obvious signs? Because he never stopped to think.

He was running so quickly through life that he left no room for reflection.

That is the deeper meaning of Parshas Balak being entirely "closed." Bilam's life was a closed parshah. There were no pauses. No moments of introspection. No opportunity for Hashem's message to penetrate.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the opposite. Every event became an opportunity to learn, grow, and internalize. Bilam simply kept running.

Perhaps that is exactly what happened to

that Mets fan. For years, his life was consumed by one goal: "When will they finally win?"

Then they won. For the first time, there was a pause. And in that pause, he was finally able to hear a deeper question calling him.

I once heard another story about Rav Moshe Shapiro zt"l. His lectures were famous for their depth and brilliance, but they were also famous for something else: he spoke slowly and often paused. A student once suggested recording the lectures, speeding them up to 1.5x speed, and removing the pauses so that more people could enjoy them.

Rav Moshe replied, "Remove the pauses? That's the most important part of the shiur..."

The pauses were where people absorbed, processed, and internalized what they had heard.

Perhaps this is a message especially relevant for this time of year. Summer often brings a different rhythm to life. Many people take vacations, spend time at the cottage, or simply enjoy a less hectic schedule while their children are away at camp.

It is a gift. A gift to slow down. A gift to reflect. A gift to listen. A gift to reconnect with our Creator.

If we use these moments wisely, we will return refreshed and renewed, ready for a meaningful Elul, uplifting Yamim Nora'im, and another remarkable year of growth together at Beit Medrash Zichron Dov.



Can You Say Tehillim at Night?

Question: I recently joined a WhatsApp Tehillim group where the rabbi shares the daily Tehillim together with inspiring thoughts and words of encouragement. Since joining the group, I have become much more consistent in saying Tehillim every day. However, someone told me that I should make sure to finish the daily Tehillim before nightfall because there is a problem with saying Tehillim at night. What could possibly be wrong with saying Tehillim at night?

Answer: That is an excellent question, and the answer involves an interesting discussion between the masters of Halachah and the masters of Kabbalah.

Among the halachic authorities, we find that the *Be'er Heitev* writes that one should not ideally study *Mikra* (the Written Torah) at night. The *Sha'ar HaTziyun*, however, explains that there is no prohibition whatsoever. Rather, it is simply preferable to study Written Torah during the day. He cites a Midrash which relates that when Moshe Rabbeinu ascended to Heaven to receive the Torah, he learned Written Torah with

Hashem during the day and Oral Torah at night. Therefore, it is considered especially appropriate for Written Torah to be learned during the daytime.

According to this approach, there is certainly an advantage to learning Tanach during the day, but there is no problem with studying it at night.

The discussion changes somewhat when we turn to the teachings of Kabbalah. Several Kabbalistic authorities teach that nighttime is associated with a stronger manifestation of *middat ha-din* (Divine judgment). For that reason, they discourage the study of *Mikra* at night, a category that would seemingly include Chumash, *Nevi'im*, *Kesuvim*, and Tehillim.

Not all Kabbalists agreed. Some maintained that Tehillim occupies a unique status and is not included in this concern. Others, including the Chida, disagreed and remained stringent.

Other authorities, including the Kaf HaChaim, distinguished between before and after halachic midnight. Before

midnight they maintained that the concern exists; after midnight, it does not. Interestingly, we find a similar distinction regarding Selichot. The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are generally not recited before midnight, but they may be recited afterward.

It is also important to note that even according to many of the stringent opinions, learning Tanach at night is permitted on Shabbat and Yom Tov. One proof is the Mishnah's description of the Kohen Gadol being taught sections of *Iyov*, *Ezra*, *Divrei HaYamim*, and *Daniel* on the night of Yom Kippur.

So what is the practical conclusion? Today, many prominent authorities permit the recitation of Tehillim at night, while others continue to follow the more stringent Kabbalistic approach.

Perhaps the most powerful guidance comes from the *Kehillos Yaakov*, who writes that if refraining from Tehillim at night will cause a person to say less Tehillim—or eventually stop saying Tehillim altogether—he should certainly recite Tehillim at night.



From the Wilderness to the Land of Israel

In Parashat Chukat, a new stage begins in the history of the Jewish people. Until this point, the Torah has focused primarily on the nation's internal development: sins, complaints, leadership, and spiritual growth. From Parashat Chukat onward, however, Israel begins to encounter the nations of the world on its journey toward the Land of Israel.

For the first time, we see Israel engaged in political and diplomatic affairs. Moses sends messengers to the king of Edom and requests permission to pass through his land: “וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה מַלְאָכִים מִקֶּדֶשׁ אֶל מֶלֶךְ אֲדָוִם” (במדבר כ”ד)

Later, as the nation approaches the Land of Israel and encounters Sichon, king of the Amorites, the Torah states: “וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מַלְאָכִים אֶל סִיחֹן” (במדבר כ”א, כ”א)

Rashi notes the change in language. At first the Torah says, “Moses sent,” while later it says, “Israel sent.” He explains that “Moses is Israel and Israel is Moses,” teaching that “the leader of the generation is equivalent to the entire generation.” Rabbi Uri Sherki explains that the Torah is describing a profound transition taking place as Israel nears its homeland. While the nation is still wandering in the wilderness, the leader stands at the center. Moses guides, shapes, and carries the people. But as they draw closer to the Land of Israel, a new reality emerges: not only the leader, but the nation itself becomes the central actor. Therefore the Torah now speaks in the name of Israel.

This transition is also reflected in the passing of the wilderness leaders. Miriam dies, Aaron dies, and Moses is informed that he too will not enter the land. A new generation and a new chapter are beginning.

Rashi explains that at Mei Merivah, Moses sinned by striking the rock instead of speaking to it. Beyond the specific act, this points to two forms of leadership. One is suited to a nation newly freed from slavery, requiring firm direction and discipline. The other is suited to a nation entering its own land and assuming responsibility for its future.

The Sages expressed this difference by saying: פְּנֵי מֹשֶׁה כְּפְנֵי הַחֶמֶד, פְּנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ “כְּפְנֵי הַחֶמֶד” “The face of Moses was like the sun; the face of Joshua was like the moon.” ספרי, בלק ק”מ (Sifrei, Balak 140)

There is no superiority of one leader over the other. Rather, they represent two complementary stages. Moses built the foundations of faith and nationhood in the wilderness, while Joshua led that nation into the Land of Israel and toward the fulfillment of its destiny.

Parashat Chukat teaches that entering the Land of Israel was not merely a geographic journey. It was the transition from the leadership of the wilderness to the leadership of national life in the land, built upon the enduring foundations established by Moshe Rabbeinu. This transformation allowed the people of Israel to move from being guided as a camp in the desert to living as a nation in its own land, carrying forward the mission that began at Sinai.