

J.L.C. Connections

The Jewish Learning Connection's Weekly Newsletter



Parsha Balak

July 19, 2024 / 13 Tamuz 5784

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Candlelighting: 8:39 pm

Waxman Torah Center · 2195 S. Green Road · University Heights, OH 44121 · (216) 691-3837 · www.clevelandjlc.com

Friday, July 19

7:05pm Early Mincha / Maariv
8:39pm Candlelighting
8:40pm Mincha / Maariv

Shabbos, July 20

8:45am Shacharis
Kiddush is available for sponsorship
7:30pm Pirke Avos
8:30pm Mincha / Shalosh Seudos
9:46pm Maariv

Sunday, July 21

9:15am Parsha Class
(R. Nisenbaum)
10:00am "The 613 Mitzvos"
(R. Stoll)

Monday, July 22

8:00pm "Ten Commandments":
Coveting (R. Nisenbaum)

Tuesday, July 23 17th of Tammuz

5:01am Fast Starts
8:30pm Mincha / Maariv
9:43pm Fast Ends

Wednesday, July 24

8:00pm Nach Still Speaks –
Tehillim (R. Stoll)

Thursday, July 25

10:15pm Parsha Class
(R. Nisenbaum)

Torah Podcast

Listen to Rabbi Nisenbaum's "Torah Podcast" at Spotify, Apple Podcasts, iHeartRadio, and more, or download at www.maverickpodcasting.com

New episodes twice a week!

Weekday Minyanim

7:00am Shacharis (M-F)
8:00am Shacharis (Sun)
10:00pm Maariv (Sun-Th)

Class Connection

R. Nisenbaum:

425-436-6200 #352171

"The Torah Podcast" weekly
at all podcast locations

R. Stoll:

Zoom: 876-619-3551
Audio: 669-900-9128

Parsha: Balak

Balaam was a gentile prophet. The Talmud mentions that in some ways his prophecy was actually comparable to that of Moshe's. Yet, the contrast could hardly be greater. Whereas Balaam's greatness actually contributed to his corruption, Moshe's greatness only enhanced his character.

The Talmud contrasts Balaam's character to that of Abraham. Balaam was the prototype of the three primary negative traits; jealousy, lust and arrogance. Abraham personified the exact opposite; satisfaction with his lot—both materially and physically, and he was the paradigm of humility.

Balak, the king of Moab, asked Balaam to curse the Jewish nation. In return, he offered him large sums of money and honor. Balaam conferred with G-d who refused to let him go. Balaam, however, told Balak's messengers that he would not go with them because it was beneath his dignity to follow lowly servants. Here we see an example of Balaam's arrogance. Balak sent higher officials with even greater promises of wealth to entice Balaam.

Although G-d had already told Balaam that he should not go, his desire for wealth and honor drove him to make the request a second time, perhaps G-d would change his mind. G-d agreed that Balaam could go, but he could only say whatever G-d would allow him. The Talmud sees

in this change that a person is led in the way he desires to go, both positively and negatively.

When Balaam finally realized that he would not be able to curse the Jewish people, he advised Balak to entice the nation to act immorally. Knowing that the G-d of Israel does not tolerate immorality, and that the foundation of the Jewish people's holiness is based upon their high standards of morality, Balaam understood that this would incur G-d's wrath against the people. Balak followed this advice and sent young women to entice the Jewish soldiers. As a result of this, G-d's anger was indeed aroused and many Jews lost their lives in a plague. The Rabbis see in Balaam's advice a reflection of his own licentious character.

Although Balaam may have been granted great spiritual gifts, his evil character earned him a place in infamy rather than recognition. A person who does not develop his character properly lacks the ability to use his spiritual gifts, and they can become a source for spiritual destructiveness rather than an asset. The Torah relates how Balaam's donkey miraculously chastised him. The significance of this miracle was to show Balaam that if one does not use his G-d-given gifts, he is no different than a gifted animal.

Insights: Balak

... Behold they are a nation that lives apart... (Num 23:9) Rav Avigdor Miller was once accompanied by a student on his daily walk, when they were accosted by an unruly youth who began shouting anti-Semitic epithets at the elderly Rav. To the student's amazement, Rav Miller merely responded by stopping and saying, "Thank you, sir!" Later he explained, "The Torah tells the Jewish people that we are a nation apart, that we must live by a higher standard than is expected of the rest of the world. Sometimes we unfortunately forget our mission. When that happens the Al-mighty must send us reminders, to get us back on track. That is one of the purposes of anti-Semitism. This young man was merely doing his job in reminding us of our purpose, and for that I thank him!"

Did You Know?

Although the fast of the Seventeenth of Tamuz does not begin until morning, most authorities rule that the laws and customs governing the Three Weeks begins the previous evening. This is especially so when the fast falls on Shabbos and is delayed until Sunday. Thus, one may not listen to music, take haircuts, or shave from the evening of the Seventeenth. Dancing is also prohibited, even without music. As this is a time of misfortune, one should avoid any dangerous situations or activities throughout the three week period.

Thought for the Week: Truth these days is at a premium, -- for lie insurance. (A Candle By Day)