

# Kinder Torah

## Parashas Balak



### Always in the Camp

**Y**israel settled in Shittim and the people began to sin with the daughters of Moav. They invited people to the feasts of their gods; the people ate, and bowed down to their gods. Yisrael became attached to Baal-Peor, and Hashem's anger flared up against Yisrael" (Bamidbar 25:1-3). This shameful episode in the history of Klal Yisrael poses two glaring questions. Firstly, Bilaam had just praised Klal Yisrael's tsnius (modesty) when he blessed them. "How good are your tents, Yaakov, your dwellings, Yisrael" (Bamidbar 24:5). Rashi explains that the openings of the tents did not face one another. This exemplified their dignity and respect for each other's privacy. How could such a nation so quickly fall into terrible sins? Secondly, what is the significance of telling us that they settled in Shittim? Why do we need to know the name of the place where these sins took place?

**T**he Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh answers both of these questions. The word "shittim" has another meaning besides the name of the place. It also means "tiyulim" - pleasure trips. Klal Yisrael settled in this place and began to relax and walk around. Can you blame them? They had been in the desert for forty years, out of contact with civilization. Now they reached an inhabited place. They wanted to relax a bit and enjoy the change of scenery. And so, they left the camp. There they encountered the Bnos Moav, who cleverly enticed them to worship Baal Peor.

**H**ow could such a holy nation be tricked into *avodah zara* (idol worship)? Because they left the camp. They left that spiritual fortress called Machane Yisrael. In that holy atmosphere, they reached the highest *madraygas* (spiritual levels). When they left, they were unprotected. What started as an innocent *tiyul*, ended in disaster.

**W**hat is the remedy? Never leave the camp. Never leave the camp?!? Does anyone have the stamina for that? A person needs to get out. True. He needs an occasional change of scenery to recharge his batteries. However, he does not need to leave the camp. How is this possible? He can take the camp with him. He can plan his trip in such a way that his spiritual needs are taken care of, as well as his

physical ones. He must provide himself with a time and place to pray properly on the *tiyul*. This is as important as the barbecue. He can take advantage of the unstructured time to learn Torah in a relaxed atmosphere. He should only go to places where his eyes will behold the beauty of Hashem's world, and not things that are forbidden to see. Make sure that the music, the food, and the people that surround him are all uplifting, and not the opposite, *chas v'shalom* (Heaven forbid). In this way, he can "take the camp with him" on his *tiyul*, be protected from spiritual dangers, and have a truly safe and uplifting *tiyul*.

*Kinderlach . . .  
Vacation time is just around the corner.  
Where will you go? What will you do?  
What do you hope to accomplish? Vacation can be a wonderful thing if you plan well. Make sure that you find the time and place to pray properly. This keeps you in touch with Hashem. Go to places where you can appreciate the magnificent beauty of Hashem's world. Guard your eyes from things and people that you should not see. Eat well, rest well, and come back fresh and ready to begin the new year. Kinderlach, have a safe and meaningful vacation!*



### Mercy on All His Creatures

**B**ilaam was very determined to curse the Jewish people. He rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and hit the road. Hashem's wrath flared against him, and He sent an angel to stop him. Three times the angel stood in front of them. The donkey saw him, but Bilaam did not. The donkey turned aside. Bilaam became angry, striking the donkey three times, twice with the reins, and the last time with his staff. Then a startling thing happened. Hashem opened the donkey's

mouth and she spoke. "What have I done to you?" (Bamidbar 22:28). Bilaam was unfazed. Things had gone too far. Hashem uncovered Bilaam's eyes and he saw the angel of Hashem with his sword drawn, standing in the road.

**T**he angel began to rebuke Bilaam. "Why did you strike your donkey these three times?" (Bamidbar 22:32). A shocking statement. "From here we see how great the sin of cruelty to animals truly is," says Rav Zalman Sorotzkin. Bilaam was on his way to uproot an entire nation. Had he succeeded, *chas v'shalom* (Heaven forbid), he would have committed the worst crime in history. Yet, he is first criticized for hitting his donkey.

**T**he issue of *tsar baalei chaim* (animal's distress) expresses itself in mitzvos and halachos. If we find a pack animal struggling with its load, we have a mitzvah to unload it (Shemos 23:5). The Sefer HaChinuch explains that this teaches us compassion. The Rambam (Hilchos Rotzeach 13:13) adds that one of the reasons is *tsar baalei chaim*. Certain *melachos* may be performed on Shabbos because of *tsar baalei chaim* (Rambam Hilchos Shabbos 21:9,10. Orach Chaim 305:20). An animal's pain and suffering is something that we must be concerned about.

*Kinderlach . . .  
Hashem created a beautiful world teeming with life; thousands upon thousands of creatures, each with its unique purpose. Animals are Hashem's creations, and should be treated as such. We have mitzvos to relieve their pain when they are in tsar (distress). How much more so may we not cause them tsar ourselves. Compassion is the trademark of a Jew. Have compassion for all of Hashem's creations, large and small. Forget about causing tsar baalei chaim.*

#### Parasha Questions:

- Which Jewish king would kill many Moabites? (Rashi 24:17)
- How do we know which curses Bilaam wanted to give to Klal Yisrael? (Rashi 24:6)
- Which three bad middos did Bilaam have? (Rashi 24:2)
- Why is Hashem so fond of us? (Rashi 23:23)

Kinder Torah © Copyright 2006 ❖ All rights reserved to the author Simcha Groffman ❖ P.O.B. 5338, Jlm, 91052, Israel ❖ Tel: (02) 585-2216

Kinder Torah is distributed each week in Ashkelon, Bat Yam, Bayit Vegan, Beit Shemesh, Beit Yisrael, Beitar, Bnei Brak, Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, Ellrat, Eilat, Ezras Torah, Gateshead, Geula, Givat Shaul, Givat Ze'ev, Gonen, Gush Shemonim, Haifa, Har Nof, Ilford, Istanbul, Izmir, Johannesburg, Kfar HaRif, Kiryat Sefer, Kosel Maaravi, Los Angeles, Maale Amos, Maalot Dafna, Machane Yehuda, Manchester, Mattersdorf, Mattisyahu, Modiin, Neve Yaakov, North Miami Beach, Peduel, Philadelphia, Psagot, Ramot, Rechovot, Rommema, San Simone, Sanhedria HaMurchevet, Telz Stone, Toronto, Unsford, Yishuv Eli, Zichron Yaakov and other cities. Subscribe for yourself or sponsor your shul. Just 120¢ per year. All contributions are deductible from Maaser Kesafim. #406#