



Congregation Ahavat Shalom

The ACHDUS
NEWSLETTER
www.ahavatshalomteaneck.com

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Parshat Balak

Volume: 18, Issue: 48 | June 29-30, 2018

Tammuz 17

Rabbi Yehuda Halpert

Shabbat Times



Friday, June 29	
Mincha/Maariv:	7:15 PM
Candle Lighting:	8:14 PM
Shabbat, June 30	
Shacharit:	9:00 AM
Kriyat Shema:	9:13 AM
Mincha / Shalosh Seudot:	8:00 PM
Shkiya:	8:32 PM
Maariv:	9:17 PM
Shabbat Ends:	9:22 PM
Next Friday, July 6	
Mincha/Maariv:	7:15 PM
Candle Lighting:	8:13 PM

Weather Report Friday night: 89°, Mostly sunny

Shabbat day: 96°, Hot and humid; stay hydrated!

Welcome to Maggie & BZ Silberstein, and welcome back to Shoshana, Josh and Yehuda Goldstein who recently moved into the community!

Graduation Celebration Kiddush! - The Graduation Celebration Kiddush will take place this Shabbat right after davening! Thank you to the following sponsors:

- Ariel Kirshenbaum in honor of Melissa's graduation from Wurzweiler!
- Rebecca and Jason Katz in honor of their 4th anniversary!
- Deena Bernstein in honor of Henry's graduation from City College!
- Yael Wine in honor of Ben's graduation from Cardozo; Ben Wine in honor of Yael's graduation from Hunter; and Yael and Ben Wine in honor of Gabee London's graduation from Touro!

Introducing your 2018-2019 Ahavat Shalom Board! The incoming Board has a lot of wonderful plans in store and will take over on August 1, 2018. Please consider getting involved to help continue to grow our community!

- President: Ben Wine
- Treasurer: Yishai Kadry
- Secretary: Yosef Chai Klein
- Vice President (Ayers + Outside Apartments): Shira Giller
- Vice President (Terrace Circle): Eliana Baum
- Vice President (Walraven): Henry Bernstein
- Vice President (Westgate): Eli Fenyes
- Gabbaim: Avi Sonnenblick, Stephan Gilbert, Steven Lowinger & Eli Baum
- Sisterhood Co-Presidents: Yael Wine & Deena Bernstein

Chesed Committee - The Chesed Committee's Community Resource Initiative is open for business! If there is anyone in need of professional services, please reach out to chesed@teaneckapartments.com. Thanks to the generous members of our community, we have set up a professional network to assist you with your professional needs. All correspondence will remain virtually anonymous. Available services include financial planning, tax returns and advice, and therapy/counseling and more.

Annual Yoetzet Event - Wednesday July 18th 2018 at 8:00 PM at Rinat. The topic will be *Life in Transition: Looking Back and Looking Forward*. Women of all ages and stages are welcome to join us for a stimulating and informative conversation with Yoetzet Halacha Shoshana Samuels, who is making Aliyah to Israel this summer and in-coming Yoetzet Halacha Tova Warburg Sinensky, moderated by Rebbetzin Shira Schiowitz. Hear their personal reflections, visions, lessons learned from work in this field, and why so women say after they call, "Really?! I'm so glad I asked!" Suggested donation: \$10 Please consider a sponsorship to support our Teaneck Yoetzet Halacha Initiative. RSVP, sponsor, and message the panelists at www.rinat.org/yoetzetevent2018

The Annual Teaneck Children's Clothing Drive - Starts THIS SUNDAY at Keter Torah (600 Roemer Ave. in Teaneck)! **Children's CLOTHING DROP OFF Dates:** Sunday, July 1, 9 am-1 pm, Mon.- Tues. July 2-3 all day. We accept children's clothing, coats and shoes in gently used and current condition (please no stained, ripped, very worn or outdated clothing). We are also looking for **VOLUNTEERS** to help us sort anytime during those days & hours. If shopping for your children is a hardship, please come shop for free once the clothing has been sorted. To shop, email us for a sign up sheet to make an appointment. Shopping days are July 4-10. A Rummage sale which is open to everyone (no appointment necessary) will be Monday, July 9, 9 am-9 pm and Tuesday July 10, 9 am-1 pm. (recommended fee of \$1/item to benefit Yad Leah). For more info and sign up sheets, please contact childrensclothingdrive@gmail.com

Summer Pottery Classes - CBY BNOT Summer Pottery Class! A 6-session summer pottery class will be given by Michael Preston (pottery teacher at Teaneck Rodda Center, JCC, Teaneck Community Charter School, Teaneck Sports and Arts, etc.). This year we will be offering 2 classes one on Tuesday nights & one on Wednesday nights. There are only 10 spots in each class and they will ONLY be held with receipt of payment. Tuesday classes: July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 & Aug. 7; Wednesday classes: July 11, 18, 25, Aug. 1, 8, & 15 at 8:00 - 10:00 pm - Congregation Bnai Yeshurun, Lower Level Classrooms 1-3. Class fee \$100. Open to men & women. To register please visit www.bnaiyeshurun.org/events. For more information contact Sari Sheinfeld at TheSheinfelds@gmail.com

Congregation Ahavat Shalom Board Members 2017-2018

President: Ben Wine **Vice Presidents:** Alex Daitch | Ariel Kirshenbaum | Yosef Chai Klein | Evan Rottenstreich **Secretary:** Eli Baum **Treasurer:** Yonatan Isser
Sisterhood: Melissa Kirshenbaum | Sam Locke **Gabbaim:** Dani Weinberger | Steven Lowinger | Benjy Lebowitz | Adam Ehrenreich

We welcome your input! Please send your newsletter announcements by Wednesday.

board@teaneckapartments.com | president@teaneckapartments.com | rabbivehudahalpert@gmail.com

Rabbi Halpert's Availability

Rabbi Yehuda Halpert will be here: 6:30, 7:7.
He can be reached via email at RabbiYehudaHalpert@gmail.com, or phone in the evenings at 201-836-3828. In the event of an emergency, Rabbi Halpert can also be reached at 212-909-6951.

Yeshivat Noam Youth Groups

Groups will take place over the summer from 9:45 - 11:00 AM. There will only be one Morah, so please be sure to check in on your kids! If you plan to make use of groups over the summer, please consider making a donation to help cover the cost.

Chesed Committee

If you or anyone you know has moved in recently or knows somebody moving in, let Yosef Chai Klein or Yael Wine know! Check out ahavatshalomteaneck.com/movingin for more information.



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- Competitive rates

*Minimum loan amount \$300,000
Loan must be originated with Jordan Kadry. Must be a member of Ahavat Shalom at time of application. Offer expires June 1, 2018.



Jordan Kadry
Vice President
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The Subversion of the Spiritual

Bilaam's threat to *Klal Yisrael* registers as unique in many ways. We are enjoined, "My nation remember what Balak schemed against you and what Bilaam responded...in order that you recognize G-d's kindness" (Michah 6.) Similarly, "Hashem turned his curses into blessings, for He loves you" (*Devarim* 26.)

To the naked eye it seems that Bilaam's threat falls far short of those of Pharaoh, Amalek, and Sichon, all of whom employed physical force against us and actually hurt and oppressed us. Bilaam's curses, by comparison, are just a form of prayer, and if Hashem doesn't want to listen to those prayers, why are they so significant?

Bilaam's own status is also unclear. He is depicted as being a prophet (*Sanhedrin* 106a), similar to, or in the order of, Moshe (*Bamidbar Rabba* 14:19.) Was Bilaam good or evil? If he was evil, how could something as "spiritual" as prophecy become subverted for the bad?

Bilaam is described as a "sorcerer." We really have little understanding of what this is since we have no personal experience today with magic, etc. However, we will need to understand what the evil in magic is - at least conceptually - if we are to have any understanding of "*parshas Bilaam*".

We understand the natural order in our physical universe. It is governed by immutable laws that always are in affect unless Hashem chooses to override them, as in the case of miracles. There is a higher stratum of existence that transcends our physical world, which we call the spiritual world. It is not bound by the constraints of the familiar laws of nature, but it is also not a world devoid of structure and mechanism. The Maharal explains many times (especially in *Gevuros Hashem*) that there is an order and structure to miracles. This order is why the Talmud has disputes about miraculous events such as the stopping of the sun at Givon and its duration. Underlying the dispute are different understandings of the particular nature, not physical nature but metaphysical nature, of that miraculous event.

Another area where this type of understanding manifests itself is in the descriptions of the *Yom Hadin*, and the process of *din* in general. We are told about the order of who is judged first, what time of the day is most auspicious, etc. Even without plumbing and penetrating to the depths of understanding these details of *din*, we see that they clearly indicate that the spiritual world has structure, and only in the most extreme cases will Hashem override that order and structure (i.e. *maavir al midosav*.)

Because there are strata of spirituality that have their own inherent structure and whose system of functioning Hashem does not look to override on a regular basis, this structure too can be perverted and misused. This is the realm of magic, which is the tapping into some spiritual level and perverting it. The power may be spiritual, but rather than being used to bind a person to Hashem, it is being used to break away from Hashem.

That is the reason why "magic" is so destructive. Just as a friend who turns against you is so much more dangerous than someone who was always an enemy because he knows all your vulnerabilities, so too a person who has heightened spiritual sensitivity and misuses it is a much more dangerous adversary. Although Hashem can, of course, do as He wishes and prevent a wicked person from leveraging such spiritual resources just as He could prevent the wicked from making use of physical resources, He desired that the world run within a system - be it the physical world or the "supernatural world". Therefore, a person who is part of a more spiritual stratum has the choice and ability to do much good, and commensurately much evil.

Bilaam was the most knowledgeable and spiritually sensitive of *Klal Yisrael's* enemies, and this is precisely why he was the most dangerous. He could attack *Klal Yisrael's* deepest spiritual connection to Hashem and tried very hard to do so. Rashi describes Balak's choosing of Bilaam as a desire to utilize Israel's own strength (i.e. prayer) against them. Bilaam was also shrewd enough to realize that seducing Israel to sin would do more to destroy them than a physical assault. Therefore, to protect *Klal Yisrael*, Hashem suspended the normal mechanisms of the spiritual world. This suspension goes against the deepest wishes of how HKB"H wants the world to generally run, and thus doing so was an expression of the love that He has for *Klal Yisrael*.

We have a hard time really getting a feel for these lofty concepts and battel grounds because we are removed from the experiences of "magic", etc. But these ideas are helpful if they can provide insight into some relatively contemporary phenomena.

Klal Yisrael has always had members who drifted away because of a desire for physical indulgences. It is sad to see anyone in *Klal Yisrael* lost, but that type of drifting is not the ultimate tragedy. Let us look at a much deeper tragedy in the annals of *Klal Yisrael* - the Jewish communists. Here were people far more spiritual than the fellow who wanted to live the good life in Paris and checked out. These communists were people whose deepest feelings of care for the downtrodden moved them. Their sense of injustice in the world fired their soul. They were willing to live a life of total denial and give up their lives for "the cause". Are these not "spiritual" qualities? Yet these "spiritual" qualities were turned against Hashem and they produced some of the most destructive eras in the annals of *Klal Yisrael*! The relentless persecution of *Yiddishkeit*, and its almost total obliteration in the Soviet Union, could only have happened because the driving force was "spiritual" rather than material.

This *parsha* teaches us that spirituality, while by its very nature is closer to the Divine than physicality, is still not automatically good. It all depends on where those strength and abilities are aimed. If it is focused on serving as a bridge to Hashem then it is the "good" itself. But if *chas v'shalom* it is used to attack Hashem, it is devastating.

By: Rabbi Daniel Stein

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