

DAF HASHAVUA

חֻקַּת-בַּלָּק | CHUKAT-BALAK

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 10.28pm
 Birmingham: 10.42pm
 Bournemouth: 10.36pm
 Cardiff: 10.48pm
 Dublin: 11.08pm
 Edinburgh: 11.30pm
 Glasgow: 11.39pm
 Hull: 11.02pm
 Leeds: 10.54pm
 Liverpool: 11.07pm
 Manchester: 11.00pm
 Nottingham: 10.55pm
 Sheffield: 11.01pm
 Southend: 10.23pm
 Southport: 11.11pm
 Jerusalem: 8.31pm

**The Three Weeks begin
on Wednesday night**

**The Fast of 17 Tamuz
is on Thursday**

London 1.05am-10.20pm

*(For times in other cities,
please consult your local
community)*



*"Then God opened the donkey's
mouth and it said to Bilaam, 'What
have I done to you that you struck
me these three times?'"*
(Bemidbar 22:28)

**חַקַּת-בַּלַק
CHUKAT—
BALAK**

6th & 7th Sidrot
in:

**בְּמִדְבָּר
BEMIDBAR**

By Numbers:
191 VERSES
2,700 WORDS
10,027 LETTERS

Headlines:
**MOSES HITS THE
ROCK, BILAM'S
TALKING DONKEY**

CHUKAT—BALAK
Artscroll p.838
Hertz p.652
Koren Sacks p.1003
Soncino p.898

HAFTARAH
Artscroll p.1189
Hertz p.682
Koren Sacks p.1579
Soncino p.929

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEMIDBAR 19:1 - 20:6

God instructs Moshe (Moses) and Aharon (Aaron) to teach the laws of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*). The unblemished, never-yoked animal is given to Elazar to be slaughtered. A different Kohen burns it with cedar wood, hyssop and crimson thread; both he and Elazar become ritually impure (*tameh*) through the process. In contrast, the ashes are then mixed with water to purify those who have become *tameh* through contact with a corpse. The ritually pure (*tahor*) person who sprinkles this mixture becomes *tameh* himself. The Israelites arrive in the wilderness of Tzin, where Miriam dies. The people complain of thirst and wish they had stayed in Egypt.

2ND ALIYA (SHEINI) – 20:7-12

God tells Moshe to take his staff and speak to a rock in front of the nation, after which water will emerge from the rock. However, Moshe strikes the rock twice. Although the rock then produces abundant water, God tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not enter the Land.

Point to Consider: Why was Aharon also punished if he did not strike the rock? (20:12)

3RD ALIYA (SHELISHI) – 20:22-21:20

Moshe sends messengers to the king of Edom, asking permission to pass through his land, but despite assurances that no resources will be taken, Edom refuses and threatens war, so the Israelites turn away. At Mount Hor, Moshe, Aharon and Elazar ascend the mountain. Elazar dons the garments of the High Priest and Aharon dies; the nation mourns for 30 days. Israel is attacked by the Canaanites and defeats them. The people complain again of thirst and a plague of serpents strikes. God tells Moshe to fashion a copper snake to heal those who look at it. The nation reaches Moab, finds a well, and composes a song.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 21:21-22:12

After denying the Israelites passage, the king of Sichon attacks Israel but is defeated, as is Og, the mighty king of Bashan, who had also attacked them. Balak, king of Moab, fears the Israelites after their victory over the Amorites and is afraid they may plot against him. He sends emissaries to Midian, to Bilaam son of Be'or, asking him to curse the Israelites. Bilaam

seeks guidance from God, who warns him not to curse the Israelites, for they are blessed.

5TH ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEMIDBAR 22:13-38

Bilaam tells Balak's officers he cannot go, having been forbidden by God. Balak sends more senior emissaries, but Bilaam insists he is bound by God's word. That night, God permits him to go, but only to speak as He instructs him. On the way, God sends an angel to block his path. The donkey sees the angel and turns aside; Bilaam, unaware, strikes her. After she presses him against a wall and later stops entirely, he hits her again. God "opens the donkey's mouth" and she defends her actions. God then "uncovers Bilaam's eyes" and he sees the angel, who rebukes him. Bilaam admits his sin. The angel tells him he may continue, bound to God's words. Balak goes out to greet him.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 22:39-23:26

Bilaam and Balak go to a vantage point overlooking the Israelite camp. Bilaam instructs Balak to build seven altars and sacrifice seven bulls and rams. God appears to Bilaam and tells him what to say; instead of cursing, Bilaam blesses the Israelites. Balak is incensed.

Point to Consider: How do we see Bilaam trying to emulate the patriarchs? (see Rashi to 23:4)

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 23:27-25:9

Balak takes Bilaam to a new location, but again, he can only bless the Israelites. At a third site, "the spirit of God rests upon him" (Rashi), and he no longer even wishes to curse them. He blesses Israel again, and Balak dismisses him. Before leaving, Bilaam advises Balak that Israel may be vulnerable to licentious behaviour (Rashi), and prophesies about their future. The Israelite men are drawn to Moabite women and the worship of Pe'or. Pinchas sees a public act of immorality and kills Zimri of the tribe of Shimon and Kozbi, the Midianite princess.

HAFTARAH (MICHA 5:6-6:8)

The prophet Micha describes the Messianic times that the 'remnant of Yaakov (Jacob)' will experience. He also recalls how God looked after the nation in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt, including His thwarting of the evil plans of Balak and Bilaam.



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United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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QUIET CONTRIBUTIONS

BY: **ARIELLA JOY**

Marriage Enhancement Programme (MEP) Manager and participant in the Women's Beit Midrash

The Torah tells us about Miriam's death in just a few words: "Miriam died there and was buried there" (*Bemidbar* 20:1). Right after that it says: "And there was no water for the congregation." The connection between these two verses teaches us something important about Miriam and about the people.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) points out how understated is the Torah's description of Miriam's death. There are no dramatic scenes and no lengthy mourning. This shows us that Miriam's greatness was not loud or showy. She led in a quiet, consistent way. Only after she dies do the people begin to realise what they have lost. The lack of water is not just a physical problem - it is meant to wake them up and make them think.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l explains that the order of the verses is key: first Miriam dies, and then the water disappears. Our Sages teach that the well existed in Miriam's merit. As long as she was alive, the people had

water. But they did not realise this. Only when it was gone did they understand how much they depended on her. Miriam was not a formal leader like Moshe (Moses), but she quietly gave strength and support to the nation, just like water gives life.

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (1903-1993) explains that this shows a basic human weakness. We often take important things for granted - especially things we rely on every day. Water is the perfect example: it is simple, constant and essential. Only when it is gone do we realise how much we need it. The same was true for Miriam. Her role was quiet but vital, and it was only after her death that the people began to understand it.

Even so, the people's reaction is surprising. Instead of stopping to reflect or mourn, they immediately complain about the lack of water. In doing so, they miss the moment. They are so focused on their immediate need that they neglect to properly mourn the loss of Miriam.

This also helps us understand

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what happens next. Moshe, faced with the people's complaints, hits the rock instead of speaking to it. This seems out of character for him. Both reactions show a kind of confusion and imbalance as Moshe and the people grieve for Miriam. The loss of her presence affects the whole nation more than they realise.

Miriam's death reminds us how much one person can contribute to a community, even in ways that are not always visible. It also teaches us how easy it is to overlook the people and things that support us every day.

Miriam's legacy is a reminder to recognise those influences while they are still with us, not only after they are gone.





50 YEARS AGO: THE RAID ON ENTEBBE

BY: **RABBI MICHAEL LAITNER**

US Director of Education, Interim rabbi at Belmont US

*In order to strengthen our close blood relations with Israel, we shall soon unveil a statue to Yoni Netanyahu at the exact spot he was killed at Entebbe Airport. Yoni was the big brother of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. God bless Uganda and Israel.*¹ This was posted on X by General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, chief of the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF), on 19th February 2026.

The catalyst is the 50th anniversary of one of the most audacious hostage rescues ever, popularly known as the "Raid on Entebbe" which took place in July 1976.

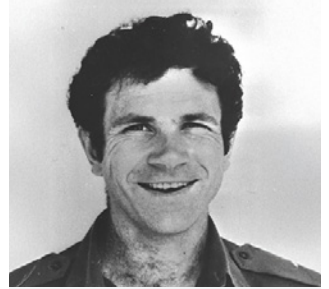
What happened? On Sunday 27 June, Air France flight 139 took off from Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion

Airport with 247 passengers bound for Paris.

After a scheduled stop in Athens, known then for its low-level airport security, the progress of the flight was interrupted by the barking of orders. Suddenly, armed hijackers controlled the aeroplane. Within moments the shocking reality had set in...

Gripped with fear, the passengers heard German voices, an extra chill for the older passengers in particular. Horrified, the passengers and crew sat in shock as the plane headed south.

The hijackers demand – aimed primarily at the government of Israel - was the release of approximately 50 Palestinian and other terrorists. After stopping at Benghazi, the plane finally



Lt Col Yonatan Netanyahu (Yoni), the late commander of the Entebbe operation. (Credit: Israeli Government Press Office)

reached its new destination. Peering through the windows, the passengers saw a notorious figure standing on the tarmac. They were in Entebbe Airport, hostages of the terrorists and Idi Amin, the brutal dictator of Uganda. They were led off the aeroplane to squalid conditions in an airport building.

As Israeli leaders deliberated,

“ Led by Lt Col Yoni Netanyahu, over 200 soldiers and support teams flew stealthily in a group of six aeroplanes to Entebbe on Shabbat afternoon 3 July, the longest-range operation ever of this type.



Commandos from an elite special forces unit of the IDF with the Mercedes they used to deceive the Ugandans (Photo: IDF Spokesman)

¹ <https://x.com/mkainerugaba/status/2024325380799094940>

“ Amidst the thanksgiving for the salvation at Entebbe, the memory of those who did not return is never forgotten.

the situation took on an added urgency when, five days after the hijacking, the terrorists divided terrified Jewish and non-Jewish hostages, providing a chilling overtone of the Shoah. The non-Jews were then released.

In Israel, a military solution was brewing which carried many risks; the Cabinet approved it. Led by Lt Col Yoni Netanyahu, over 200 soldiers and support teams flew stealthily in a group of six aeroplanes to Entebbe on Shabbat afternoon 3 July, the longest-range operation ever of this type.

Jewish law mandates breaking Shabbat to save life (a principle called *pikuach nefesh*). With the hostages in mortal danger, there was no time to lose. Miraculously, the operation was almost entirely

successful. Taken unawares – particularly by the presence of a large, black Mercedes of the model as used by Idi Amin which the Israelis brought along to maintain an element of surprise - Ugandan troops at the airport and the hijackers were overcome. For the hostages, the sound of shooting was a heart-stopping moment. Cries of *Shema Yisrael* rang out as some feared the end had come. To their amazement, a loudspeaker cried out in Hebrew and English: “Lie down, the IDF is here!” The hostages were rushed onto the waiting Israeli planes and flew back safely to Tel Aviv.

Around the world, Jews and others breathed an enormous sigh of relief. Never before had such an operation succeeded.



Deputy PM Yigael Allon (back to camera) welcoming the hijacked Air France passengers, coming off the Hercules plane at Ben Gurion Airport. Left, Captain Bacox from Air France. (Photo: Moshe Milner, Credit: Israeli Government Press Office)

Sadly, the joy was tempered. Three hostages perished during the rescue mission and another, Dora Bloch, who had been taken to hospital in Entebbe was murdered there by Amin’s henchmen. Lt Col Netanyahu, who was mortally wounded towards the end of the operation, passed away on the flight back despite desperate attempts to save him. Amidst the thanksgiving for the salvation at Entebbe, the memory of those who did not return is never forgotten.



Bird’s eye view of Entebbe Airport with the terminal building in the center. (Credit: Israeli Government Press Office)



Reunion of hijack victim and family at the IAF Base. (Photo: Sa’ar Ya’acov. Credit: Israeli Government Press Office)



THE THREE WEEKS: **BEFORE THE WALLS FELL**

BY: **REBBETZEN DINA GOLKER**

Magen Avot

History always fascinated me at school, but the aspect that intrigued me most was how ordinary people spent their time, and the nature of their hopes, fears and ambitions. Such mundane matters, though mostly sparsely recorded, help us appreciate the real atmosphere of the relevant era.

Research has revealed that, just before the Pompeii eruption, there were some initial warning signs - ash began falling and a cloud appeared. Yet people blindly continued pursuing their daily business. Whilst some individuals attempted to steer clear of the ash by avoiding inhaling it, no real urgency was felt until it was too late - when chaos and destruction rained down upon the city from all directions.

Chazal (our Sages) understood the importance of depicting the atmosphere both before and after major events and, accordingly, describe *Yerushalayim* just prior to the *Churban* (destruction of the Temple) in familiarly graphic terms. *Midrash Eichah Rabbah* records regular market-place activity and the general hustle and bustle of the market streets. The signs forewarning catastrophe were totally ignored.

The Chafetz Chaim (Rabbi

Yisrael Meir Kagan, 1838-1933) explains this phenomenon through a *mashal* (parable). A merchant is busy assisting customers and packaging goods, whilst outside his store there are loud noises, sirens and a fire has broken out. He doesn't notice even when people shout for help, not because he doesn't care, but because he is absorbed in his business affairs. People had simply lost their sensitivity to the surrounding devastation.

The prophet Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) likewise mocks the false prophets and political leaders of the time who proclaimed "*Shalom, shalom, ve'ein shalom.*" They would say "peace, peace", whereas the reality was so different; it was all an illusion, there was no peace! This prevented people from doing *teshuvah* (repentance) and making real changes. He also criticised the people who had lost the ability to blush (*Yirmiyahu* 6:15). In other words, it wasn't only about wrongdoing, but the fact that they had become used to it and didn't feel embarrassed by it; it all became mundane!

This is what the Fast of 17th Tamuz is alerting us to. The tragedy was that the breaching of the city walls didn't occur in a vacuum. Tell-tale cracks and weaknesses in

“ The message of the Three Weeks is clear - we cannot afford this sort of complacency. We have to notice, and respond, both in the practical steps we take and in the way we look at ourselves.

the fabric had long existed but were ignored because the general atmosphere appeared normal.

We are witnessing this pattern again in our own current climate. Antisemitism is increasing exponentially and, unless we are careful, it will lose its sense of shock. Even something as serious as arson attacks on shuls and ambulances - even stabbing attacks - can start to feel like another story in the news cycle; that is the danger. The message of the Three Weeks is clear - we cannot afford this sort of complacency. We have to notice, and respond, both in the practical steps we take and in the way we look at ourselves. Because once something wrong begins to feel normal, the damage has already begun.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT CHUKAT-BALAK

26-27 JUNE | 12 TAMUZ

THE VALUE OF HONESTY



BY: **SARA MARCOVITCH**

Regional Tribe
Coordinator – Essex

There are six *parashiot* in the Torah named after individuals: *Noach, Chayei Sarah, Yitro, Korach, Balak* and *Pinchas*. Most of these people are remembered for their greatness. Even Korach's name teaches an important lesson about the danger of arguments and division within the Jewish people.

But Balak, king of Moab, seems different. He was an enemy of the Jewish people and wanted to destroy them, so why would a *parasha* carry his name?

Our Sages explain that there was a major difference between Balak and Bilaam, the non-Jewish prophet he hired to curse the Jewish people. Bilaam acted like he was holy, respectable and close to God, but his actions showed who he really was, selfish and corrupt. He hid his true character behind a fake image.

Balak didn't do that. He was openly wicked and never pretended to be something he wasn't.

We can compare this to the example of the pig in the laws of *kashrut*. To be kosher, an animal must both chew the cud and have split hooves. A pig only has one of these signs, yet it stretches out its hooves as if to say, "Look how kosher I am!" It looks pure on the

outside while hiding the truth inside.

Bilaam was like the pig, pretending to be righteous while being the opposite underneath. Balak, although evil, was at least honest about who he was. His sincerity became the one positive quality connected to his name.

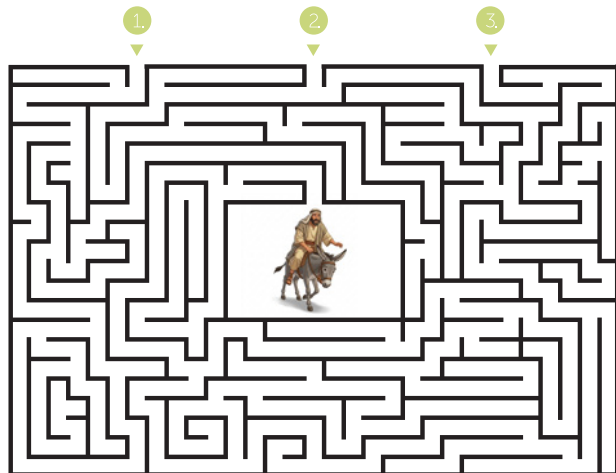
If Balak was praised for his honesty, how much more so should we be trying to live honestly?

In all of the choices we make, especially in a life of kindness and truth, we have the amazing opportunity to elevate ourselves, our community and the world.

May we all see these opportunities clearly and have the strength to choose, as our true honest selves would, to elevate the world around us!

Parasha Maze

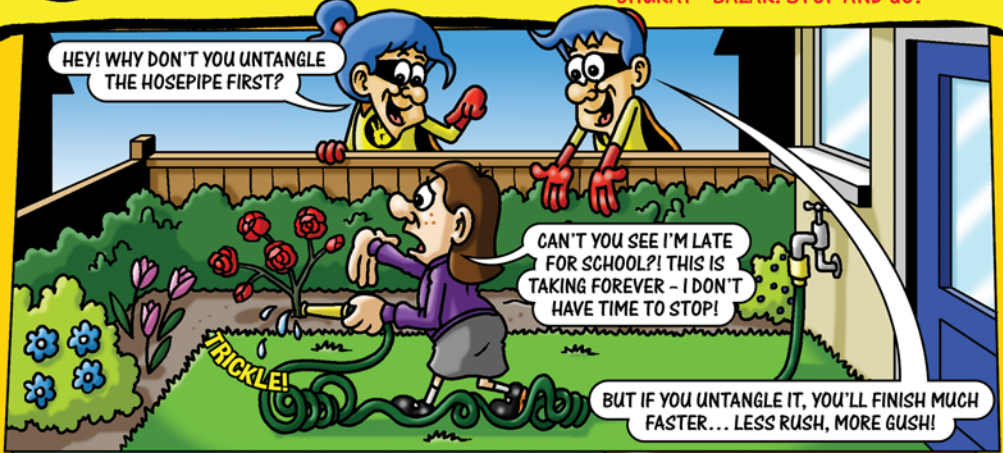
Find the path to Bilaam and the talking donkey!





THE TRIBE SCRIBE

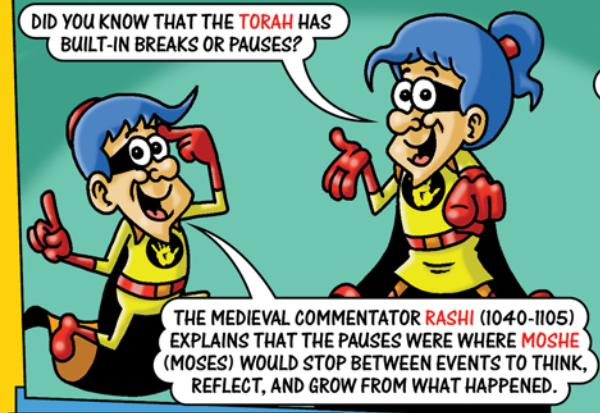
CHUKAT - BALAK: STOP AND GO!



HEY! WHY DON'T YOU UNTANGLE THE HOSEPIPE FIRST?

CAN'T YOU SEE I'M LATE FOR SCHOOL?! THIS IS TAKING FOREVER - I DON'T HAVE TIME TO STOP!

BUT IF YOU UNTANGLE IT, YOU'LL FINISH MUCH FASTER... LESS RUSH, MORE GUSH!

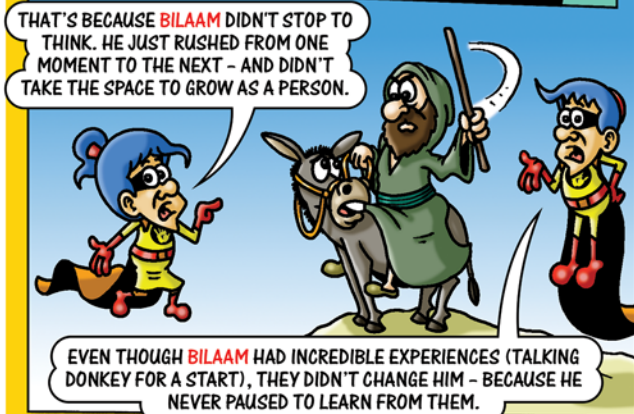


DID YOU KNOW THAT THE TORAH HAS BUILT-IN BREAKS OR PAUSES?

THE MEDIEVAL COMMENTATOR RASHI (1040-1105) EXPLAINS THAT THE PAUSES WERE WHERE MOSHE (MOSES) WOULD STOP BETWEEN EVENTS TO THINK, REFLECT, AND GROW FROM WHAT HAPPENED.



THE UNUSUAL THING ABOUT THE SECOND OF THIS WEEK'S TWO PARASHOT, BALAK, IS THAT THERE ARE NO BREAKS IN THE SEFER TORAH UNTIL AFTER THE EPISODE OF BILAAM. THE EPISODE JUST KEEPS ON GOING!



THAT'S BECAUSE BILAAM DIDN'T STOP TO THINK. HE JUST RUSHED FROM ONE MOMENT TO THE NEXT - AND DIDN'T TAKE THE SPACE TO GROW AS A PERSON.

EVEN THOUGH BILAAM HAD INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCES (TALKING DONKEY FOR A START), THEY DIDN'T CHANGE HIM - BECAUSE HE NEVER PAUSED TO LEARN FROM THEM.



SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO STOP TO MAKE THINGS WORK PROPERLY - LIKE UNTANGLING THE HOSEPIPE!

IF YOU WANT TO DO BETTER: WHETHER IT'S SCHOOLWORK, FRIENDSHIPS, OR MITZVOT - SOMETIMES THE BEST MOVE IS TO PAUSE AND GET YOUR TECHNIQUE RIGHT.



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Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.