

### 1 – Topic – A Thought for the Three Weeks.

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Balak, the 16<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz Erev Shiva Asar B'tammuz. Let me therefore begin with a thought for the three weeks and Shiva Asar B'tammuz. It says in Zecharia and it would be wonderful to learn Perek Zayin and Perek Ches which are really beautiful. The whole Zecharia is really beautiful but let me tell you what happens in Perek Zayin and Perek Ches.

In the beginning of Perek Zayin we find Jews and Rashi says they are Tzaddikim from Bavel who send a message to Zecharia in Eretz Yisrael. The message is that they have a Shaila. The Shaila is as is found in 7:3 (הָאֶבְרָהָהּ, בְּחֹדֶשׁ ) (הַחֲמִישִׁי--הַנִּזְכָּר). Should I continue to weep on Tisha B'av and Rashi says that the Shaila was not just for Tisha B'av but the Shaila was for all of the Tannaism. They were asking should we fast on all of these Tannaism (הַנִּזְכָּר) should I separate from wine now that the Bayis Sheini is built? That was the Shaila that they sent from Bavel to Zecharia, should I continue to observe the Tannaism.

In Perek Ches about 19 Pesukim in but finally Zecharia gets to the answer. He says to them (צִוּם הָרְבִיעִי וְצִוּם הַחֲמִישִׁי וְצִוּם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְצִוּם הָעֲשִׂירִי) the fast of the 4<sup>th</sup> month Shiva Asar B'tammuz, the 5<sup>th</sup> month Tisha B'av, the 7<sup>th</sup> month Tzom Gedalya, the 10<sup>th</sup> month Asara B'teves (יְהִיָּה) (לְבִית-יְהוּדָה לְשָׂשׂוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה, וּלְמַעֲדִים, טוֹבִים) will be for you days of happiness and rejoicing and happy holiday. So that the Navi says no more fasting.

There are three difficulties (Kashas) with this Nevua:

1) Why is the Shaila being addressed to the Navi, this is a Shaila that should go to a Beis Din, it should go to the Sanhedrin. There were Gedolei Yisrael, the members of the Anshei K'nesei Hagedola were then in Eretz Yisrael. Ezra, Nechemia, Mordechai, why is he asking the Navi?

2) The Bayis Sheini was still missing five major things, not just Chamisha Devarim but Chamisha Ikrim. There was no Gilui Shechina, Aron, Urim V'tumim, Ruach Hakodesh or Aish Min Hashamayim. So therefore, it would seem that the Bayis Sheini is not quite yet the day of rejoicing that it should be?

3) Even if it is, the Gemara says if you buy something for a dollar and sell it for a dollar are you a businessman, you are back where you were. I ask the same Kasha here. You had a Bayis Rishon and it was destroyed, you have a Bayis Sheini. I understand that you don't fast, as that is what they asked if they should fast. The Navi says hold on a second, don't fast? Guess what, there are going to be Yomim Tovim (לְשָׂשׂוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה, וּלְמַעֲדִים, טוֹבִים) what is the grounds for (לְשָׂשׂוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה, וּלְמַעֲדִים, טוֹבִים)?

The answer to this lies in a Yesod that has a Makom in a number of places. In Nach most prominently by Yechezkel Hanavi. Yechezkel Hanavi became a Navi shortly before the Churban and was a Navi during the Churban. By what merit?

Rav Tzaddok writes in his Pri Tzaddik on Sukkos that the Maila of Yechezkel that he became a Navi during the Churban was and his Lashon is incredible, as Jews went to Galus broken and bitter during the Churban Bayis, Yechezkel went B'simcha Rabbah. What do you mean that he went B'simcha Rabbah with great joy? Yechezkel with the Koach of Nevua understood that Klal Yisrael with the Churban were in a mode of "reset", of starting again. There was a reset button. They had Shlepped along not listening to Mussar, and in the Tzura of Avoda Zorah for so many years and bang with the destruction Yechezkel understood there would be a new rebirth, a new energy, a new beginning, a new start, starting clean, starting anew. That is what happened in Bavel. Yechezkel Hanavi understood that.

It is something similar to after the Holocaust. People came to America and everything was destroyed, people were broken, people were Marei Nefesh. There were a few special special

individuals, Gedolim who had Ruach Hakodesh, that understood that in America we are going to rebuild, there will be a rebirth and they built B'sasson Ub'simcha. That was what was special about Yechezkel Bish'as Hagalus.

Returning here. Is this a Shaila for a Beis Din? Of course the Beis Din would say there is still room for sadness. After all, we don't yet have a return to the real Bayis Rishon. Eretz Yisrael is still in the hands of our enemies, Jews didn't control the land in the Bayis Sheini. Most of the Jews didn't return. The 10 Shevatim disappeared. Most of the Yidden in Bavel didn't come back.

Halacha would say keep on fasting, but they went to the Navi. This is because the Neviim had taught them as Yechezkel did, that it is a time for new energy, a new beginning, a new start. Every end is a new beginning. Every divorce is an end but then there is a new beginning. Every time Rachmana Litzlon a relative dies it is an end, but then a person picks himself up and has a new beginning. The Koach Hanevua tells us the Tzom Harevii, the Tzom Hachamishi, the Tzom Hashevii and the Tzom Ha'asiri ( יְהִיָּה לְבֵית-יְהוָה לְשָׁשׂוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה, וּלְמַעֲדִים, טוֹבִים ), times of rebirth, of new energy and that is a reason to rejoice.

We are back now after the Churban Bayis Sheini, but the words of the Navi ring in our ears. It is a time to rebuild, to make things happen. As we come to a summer after a Covid period, a period that was just not normal, we should not be going back and saying okay we are back to where we were two summers ago. Most people will be doing that. Yechidim will say no, it is a time to start again, a time for a new energy, a time to make things happen in a better way.

## 2 – Topic – A Thought on Parshas Balak.

Let us turn to Parshas Balak and I will share with you an incredible GR"A on Parshas Balak which I would not understand except that Rav Issac Sher explains it in Leket Sichos Mussar. The GR"A says, we know that Bilam is

compared to Moshe in Nevuah, but we find that Bilam is compared to Avraham Avinu in Pirkei Avos 5:19. There are Talmidov Shel Avraham Avinu ( תלמידיו של אברהם--עין טובה, ונפש שפלה, ורוח ) ( נמוכה ) and Talmidov Shel Bilam Harasha ( עין ( רעה, ונפש רחבה, ורוח גבוהה ). What is the comparison between Avraham and Bilam?

Says the GR"A in Aderes Eliyahu. Just like Avraham Avinu had 10 tests in which he succeeded, Bilam also had 10 tests. Where are the 10 tests? We have this one Parsha with the story of Bilam. Where are the 10 tests? Says Rav Issac Sher incredibly it is all in the Parsha, except as follows.

Avraham Avinu wanted to serve the Ribbono Shel Olam. He had 10 Nisyonos, 10 things that would pull him away from serving Hashem and he withstood them all. Bilam Harasha was a different type of Asara Nisyonos. Bilam had a hatred for Kedusha, a hatred for the Jewish people. He wanted to do damage to Klal Yisrael. Hashem sent him 10 opportunities, 10 messages to not go. The initial message of don't go, then Vayichar Af Hashem B'bilam, and then the incident with the donkey, then seeing a Malach, then three times when he wants to curse a Beracha comes into his mouth, then Balak screams at him. Balak says go home. Repeatedly there are Nisyonos. I counted eight in my list that I just said. There is another one or two that Hashem put roadblocks to stop him. Nothing happened. He fell in all of them.

Rashi tells us that when the Malach stood in front of Bilam in 22:22 (מלאך של רחמים היה). These were the Nisyonos of Bilam. The Malach said don't go. If he had succeeded in listening to the Malach and not going, it would have been wonderful. He thinks the Malach is his enemy? (מלאך של רחמים היה). Sometimes Hashem sends us Nisyonos to stop us from learning and Davening and we have to withstand it and sometimes Hashem tries to save us from bad ideas and we have to accept it.

In Atara L'melech Rav Pam writes in his piece on Shidduchim that sometimes someone wants a Shidduch and something happens that ruins it.

Somebody says Lashon Hora about the boy and the girl is not interested. Sometimes the girl is just not interested and the young man is upset.

Rav Pam says (מלאך של רחמים היה). If the Shidduch would have had to be, then it would have been bad so (מלאך של רחמים היה). HKB”H sometimes sends you a Malach (וְסָרְבוּ שְׁלוּפָה בְּגָדוֹ) and stops you from doing things. Do you know what is good and what is not good when clearly HKB”H is stopping something, then (מלאך של רחמים היה). So the Nisayon of Bilam is that sometimes when you have an idea and it is not such a good idea and HKB”H in his kindness stops you from doing it and puts roadblocks in your way from doing it, get the message.

So two wonderful ideas of Chizzuk. The idea of Zechariah Hanavi. The idea of starting again. Every end is a beginning. And the idea of the GR”A and the way Rav Issac Sher explains it beautifully, extraordinarily. Geshmak! Sometimes something is blocking you, stop a minute. Maybe it is not a good idea. Maybe this Malach is a (מלאך של רחמים). Don’t be like Bilam. Accept what comes from Shamayim.

With that I want to wish everyone an absolutely meaningful Shabbos Kodesh and an absolutely meaningful upcoming fast on Shiva Asar B’tammuz. May HKB”H turn it into true (לְשֵׁשׁוֹן) (וְלִשְׁמִינָה, וְלִמְעֻדִים, טוֹבִים) for all of us. A Gutten Shabbos to one and all!