



Agudas Yisroel Anshei Kielce

ZMANIM FOR PARSHAS KI SEITZEI

Candle Lighting: 7:35 pm

Mincha/Kabbalas Shabbos: 6:16 pm & 7:35 pm

Shacharis: 8:45 am

Pirkei Avos Shiur: 6:45

Mincha (Seudas Shlishis): 7:25 pm

Maariv/Motzei Shabbos: 8:36 pm

Motzei Shabbos Rabbeinu Tam: 9:03 pm

Sunday Shacharis: 8:00 am

Getting It All Together

Parshas Ki Seitzei

By: Torah.org adapted from Hamedrash Vehamaseh

An Amonite or Moabite may not enter Hashem's congregation... because they did not greet you with bread and water on the way when you were leaving Egypt, and because he hired Bilam against you.

The construction of this sentence is jarring. The two reasons for rejecting Amon and Moav just don't go well with each other. It sounds like the following conversation: "Why do you hate Frank so much?" "That's easy to explain. I hate him for two reasons. First, he cut ahead of me at the supermarket checkout last week. Second, the next day he burnt down my house and my business!" One reason completely dwarfs the other. The same applies to Amon and Moav. Bilam was hired to put the kibosh on the Jewish people – to invoke any theurgic powers at this disposal to harm them. That is pretty serious; it seems like reason enough to want to have nothing to do with his patrons. Why does the Torah also state that we should not forget that they also should have been good neighbors and offered some food to wayfarers passing nearby, and they didn't? So they were not the most kind-hearted people. That doesn't seem to hold a candle to the evil they wanted to inflict upon the entire Jewish people by hiring Bilam!

Chazal appear to give us contradictory statements on the relative values of the actions of individuals versus groups, both in performing mitzvos and in violating prohibitions. On the one hand, Chazal attach special importance to mitzvos that are done by greater numbers of people. They elevate the "mitvah of the many" to a higher plane than mitzvos that devolve upon the individual. It would make sense that a transgression by the many is more serious than many transgressions by individuals. Indeed, we could point to *ir ha-nidachas* as an example. The idolatrous city is dealt with more severely (e.g. forfeiting all of its possessions) than an equivalent number of individuals who happen to all be guilty of idolatry.

On the other hand, we see leniency aimed at the collective that has sinned. The gemara^[2] says that an individual sinner has one last

chance at undoing an unfavorable Heavenly edict, *teshuvah* between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Afterwards, he has no recourse. The repentance of the *tzibbur*, however, can call back the *gzar din* at any time.

There is no contradiction at all. We've set up a straw man. The gravity of the offenses of individuals relative to the collective simply depends on the nature of the *aveirah*. Our transgressions are judged by how difficult it is to avoid them. Sins of commission – requiring some sort of action – are weightier when done by the collective, because it is much harder to get many people to act in concert than to get individuals. Sins of omission – of failing to act in a mandated manner – are less severe when a large group is involved, because it is difficult to get a large group of people to act together than to get individuals to act. Group settings are noted for their inability to get anything done, as participants each go off in their own directions.

Hashem's judgment is nuanced. Other factors come into play as well. Sometimes, HKBH can view an individual as part of a group-sin, or judge him as an individual. His *chesed* dictates that He will use the measure that works most favorably for the person.

We see a hint of this in two images that we take into the Rosh Hashanah period. One of them^[3] portrays us as passing like sheep exiting one at a time through a narrow exit, and G-d examining us individually. But another^[4] sees Him as examining everything with one, all-encompassing glance. Perhaps the difference is whether we are better off being judged as individuals, or as a collective.

We can return to our opening observation about the curious blending of two faults that seem to lack a common scale. But maybe not. Let's start with the one we think is the more serious transgression – hiring Bilam as a supernatural hit-man. While the crime was weighty, it came with a good facial defense. Chazal tell us that *ein shliach l'dvar aveirah* / there is no agency for sin. The "agent" is culpable for his own action. He had no business listening to the one who commissioned him. And the one who designated the would-be agent can shrug off any guilt for the crime by noting that his would-be agent should have listened to his Creator rather than to a human.

Thus, Amon and Moav could have deflected responsibility for Bilam's attempted cursing of the Jewish people. Bilam should have

obeyed G-d rather than us. We never really expected him to take our bait. This is why the Torah's first reason was needed. They failed to provide food and drink to the Bnei Yisrael travelling in the nearby wilderness. This was reckoned to be a great moral failing. Here, too, they could mitigate their evil. It would be impossible to make a dent in the hunger of a large population without a coordinated effort of a large population. Getting lots of people to come together and perform some good deed is extremely difficult. Amon and Moav could say, "Call us lazy or disorganized. But don't see us as cruel or uncharitable. We just didn't have the right group dynamic to take on a project of that size."

And here we could have remained stuck, were it not for that other transgression – hiring Bilam. Knowing Bilam's voracious appetite for both money and honor, it took more than one man's credit card to close the deal with him. Hiring Bilam had to have been a national project. It took the contributions of the many to pay for Bilam's services. (It is crucial that Bilam was hired, as the Torah says, rather than asked to serve. We said above that Amon and Moav could have deflected responsibility by placing it firmly on the shoulders of Bilam, who should have disregarded their request. We do, however, find^[5] that one who hires false witnesses to testify is morally obligated to make restitution, even though the court will not demand it, holding the witnesses themselves accountable. Tosafos write that this moral responsibility only applies when the witnesses are

procured by a monetary inducement. Perhaps the explanation is that the "employer" can then not claim that he expected the false witnesses to listen to Hashem, and not to him. The offer of monetary compensation meant that they fully expected Bilam to deliver. Similarly, hiring Bilam for cash rather than simply commissioning him put more blame on the shoulders of Amon and Moav.)

The bottom line is that the two crimes of Amon and Moav were intertwined. They cannot claim that they were incapable of organizing a national program to feed the wayfarers, because they did succeed in a national campaign to pay Bilam's fee! It was not laziness, but hatred for the Bnei Yisrael that motivated their inaction, hatred that was made manifest by hiring Bilam to curse them.

Unfortunately, we see a bit of the Amon and Moav syndrome in our own communities. When people should band together to perform some great mitzvah, they often cannot generate the cohesiveness to see it through. Yet for activities upon which the Torah frowns, people too often succeed in putting their differences aside and working cooperatively.

1. *Based on HaMedrash V'HaMaaseh, Ki Seitzei by R. Yechezkel Libshitz zt"l*
2. *Rosh Hashanah 17B*
3. *Rosh Hashanah 18A*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Bava Kamma 56A*

<p>This week's Kiddush is sponsored by: Ari & Yehudit Hofstedter on the occasion of the birth of a baby girl.</p>
<p>Mazel Tov to Ari & Yehudit Hofstedter on the birth of a baby girl. Mazel Tov to the grandparents, Rabbi & Mrs. Uri Kaufman, & Rabbi & Mrs. David Hofstedter. Mazel Tov to the great grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. Sandy Hofstedter, Mr. & Mrs. Avraham Bleemen, Mr. & Mrs. Nouriel Aryeh, & Rabbi & Mrs. Yehoshua Heschel Kaufman</p>
<p>Mazel Tov to Yehudah & Leah Neger on the birth of a baby boy.</p> <p>The Sholom Zachor will take place Iy"vh at 16 Prince Charles at 9:15</p> <p>Mazel Tov to the Grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. Neger and Mr. & Mrs. Baker.</p>
<p>The kids' program will take place downstairs beginning at 9:30 am.</p>
<p>Seudas Shlishis is sponsored by: The Shul</p> <p>The guest speaker for seudas shlishis is Rabbi Shmueli Heller.</p>
<p>The cholim list is being updated for Chodesh Elul. If you would like to submit a name to the cholim list please email gabbai@agudahsouth.com or contact one of the gabbaim.</p>

Upcoming Weekday Schedule for Parshas Ki Savo

<p>Shacharis Sunday: 8:00 am Monday & Thursday: 7:00 & 7:55 Tuesday, Wednesday Friday: 7:00 & 8:00</p>	<p>Mincha 7:35 pm Maariv 7:55 pm</p>
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To sponsor Kiddush/Seudas Shlishis contact Baruch Klein (kiddush@agudahsouth.com.)
To sign for the bulletin, submit announcements, add names to the cholim list or yearzeit calendar go to www.agudahsouth.com/mailling-lists, email mailings@agudahsouth.com or speak to one of the gabbaim.