



Kiddush and Seudah Shlishis this week are generously sponsored by the Sved family in honor of Stan Sved's 50th birthday.

Please support one of the very beautiful elements of our Kehilla by sponsoring a kiddush or Seudah Shlishis in the future. It's a great way to mark an anniversary, birthday, Yahrzeit, or other occasion. Speak to Janis Fine to sponsor.

**Second Weekday Minyan at Young Israel**  
8:00 am Daily Minyan

**Mazal Tov!**

Mazel Tov to...

Sam and Laya Back on the upcoming marriage of their granddaughter, Chaya Back of Lakewood to Eli Konovich.

**Seri Friedman Memorial Scholarship Fund**

The Friedman family has requested that those wishing to make a tax deductible contribution in Seri's memory consider contributing to the "Seri Friedman Memorial Scholarship Fund." For more information, please speak with Daniel Eisenberg or e-mail him at eisenber@pol.net.

The *Chevre Mishnayos* is beginning to learn *Seder Kodshim*. The siyum is tentatively planned for Shabbos, August 13. If you would like to sign up to learn, put your name on the sign up sheet on the bulletin board or speak to Moshe Eisenberg.

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*Young Israel of the Main Line*  
**Weekly Update**

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Rabbi Avraham Steinberg

**July 16-July 21, 2005**  
**Parshas Balak**

**Shabbos Davening Times**

Earliest Candle lighting:	6:57 p.m.
Candle lighting:	8:11 p.m.
Mincha - Friday:	7:00 p.m.
Sof Zman Krias Shema:	9:26 a.m.
Shacharis:	8:45 a.m.
Sefer HaMitzvos Shiur	1 hr before Mincha
Mincha followed by Shalosh Seudos:	7:55 p.m.
Maariv:	9:14 p.m.

**Weekday Davening Times**

Shacharis – Sunday:	8:00 a.m.
Shacharis – Mon, Thurs:	6:40 a.m.
Shacharis - Tues, Wed, Fri:	6:50 a.m.
Shacharis II – Mon. – Fri	8:00 am
Mincha/ Maariv (Sun-Thurs):	8:15 p.m.

**Topic for the Sefer Hamitzvos Shiur**

**Mitzvas Mora Rav:**  
**A New Perspective from Rav Velvel Brisker**  
Shabbos, 6:55 pm

Take advantage of this opportunity to experience the depth of Talmudic reasoning, while gaining knowledge of some of the most important principles of the Torah's Mitzvos. (Each week's shiur is an independent presentation and one can join the Shiur at anytime.)



## Shiurim\*



DAY	TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER	NOTES
Shabbos	8:15 a.m.	Chumash Shiur	Rabbi Steinberg	
Shabbos	7:00 p.m.	Rambam Sefer Hamitzvos Shiur	Rabbi Steinberg	Resumed!
Sunday Morning	After Davening	Sefer Hachinuch Shiur	Rabbi Steinberg	
Mon., Wed.	After Maariv	Mishna Berura Hilchos Shabbos	Eli Back	
15 minutes before Shacharis on Sun.-Fri.		Mesilas Yesharim	Rabbi Steinberg	
Monday	9:30 a.m.	Women's Tehillim Group	--	Eisenberg Home
Tuesday night	After Maariv	Gemora Shiur,	Rabbi Steinberg	Resumes after summer.
Wednesday	9:00 p.m.	Women's Pirkei Avos Shiur	Rabbi Steinberg	Will not be held this week
Thursday night	10:10 p.m.	Nefesh Hachaim	Rav Sholom Kamenetsky	

\*All shiurim are at YIML unless specified.

### Parsha Musings by Rabbi Steinberg

#### *The Donkey Prophet*

*A dog trainer showed up at the circus director's office one morning to show how talented his dog was, and to seek a role for him in the circus. "What do you call the top of a house?" the trainer prompted the dog. "Roof!" came the immediate response. "And what do you call the underground part of a tree?" asked the trainer, on a roll. "Roof!" the dog answered unhesitatingly. "And who was the greatest baseball player of all time?" the owner asked, by this point with unhidden pride in his brilliant canine. "Roof!" once again, came the correct answer.*

*A half a minute later, as the pair was recovering from their physical ejection from the circus director's office, the dog turned to his owner apologetically and said, "Maybe I should've said 'DiMaggio'?"*

One of the most difficult elements to understand in our Parsha is Balak's stubbornness. Balak hires Balaam to curse the Jewish People. But instead of a curse it is a blessing that comes from Balaam's mouth. So Balak brings Balaam to a new spot from which to prophesy, hoping that the new location will inspire a curse. Once again, Balaam offers only a blessing. This happens three times and still Balak is flabbergasted: *And Balak was angered at Balaam and he slapped his hands and Balak said to Balaam, 'To curse my enemies I summoned you, and behold you have blessed them three times!'* (24:10). Why did

Balak not give up after the first time? Balaam had told him from the outset that he can only utter what G-d puts in his mouth. And, in fact, he reiterates this fact after each time Balak reacts angrily to his blessings. Why did Balak not get the message?

But we can understand the answer to this question when we understand the reputation that Balaam had.

One might be misled by Balaam's words if he does not study the Chumash carefully. Balaam's response to Balak's emissaries, when they initially visit him with their request to curse the Jews is: *Stay here tonight, and I will respond to you as G-d will instruct me* (22:8). If we didn't know better, we might interpret that Balaam actually wanted to hear the Will of G-d in this matter, and that, perhaps, he was going to submit the question to Hashem. But, as Rav Hirsch explains (22:9), this was not at all the case. When G-d "comes to Balaam" in the next pasuk, it is a total surprise, just as in the other two contexts in the Torah in which G-d "comes" to someone – to Lavan and to Avimelech – it is an unanticipated (in fact, unwanted) Divine warning to withdraw from a planned course of action. Indeed, Balaam had no interest in the Will of Hashem. He had mentioned the Will of G-d only to give greater credence to his magical powers and to his decisions – to give them a Divine aura. (Rav Hirsch proves that Balaam had not asked Hashem whether to return with Balak's men, from the fact that Hashem asks Balaam who the men in his company are, indicating that there had been no previous communication about them.)

Balaam's tendency to present his actions with a false sense of the Divine was well-known and understood by his contemporaries. It is for this reason that Balak understands Balaam's demurring, not as a product of Hashem's orders – as Balaam had stated – but as an expression of Balaam's dissatisfaction with the wealth and honor he had been offered. Balak understood Balaam's jargon. He therefore sought initially to tempt him with greater wealth and honor.

How frustrated Balaam therefore must have been, when finally what he said in the name of G-d was, in fact, true!

This, I believe is the lesson of the remarkable incident with the donkey. Balaam's donkey refuses to travel as it should, and Balaam strikes the donkey mercilessly, until the donkey opens its mouth in rebuke, and G-d opens Balaam's eyes to see the Angel that stands in the donkey's way. It is noteworthy that Balaam strikes the donkey *three times*, just as Balaam later -- to Balak's chagrin -- blesses the People *three times*. I believe that what Hashem was conveying to Balaam was: *As unfathomable as it was to you that there should be a Divine apparition before a donkey, it is equally unfathomable to Balak and his men that you should be the recipient of Divine communication. After all of your chicanery, no one will believe you when you speak in the Name of G-d. It is your own fault for making yourself into a donkey!*

When a politician has gained a reputation for acting only in his own self-interest, his words will be met with only skepticism, even when he happens to take a stance solely for the good of society.

Since Balaam had "cried wolf" (G-d) so many times, he had no credibility when finally his words were true. *The greatest punishment for one who feigns prophecy is real prophecy* – to have the burning desire to convey the Will of Hashem but to have no one who will listen. The experience of real prophecy was Balaam's punishment for having lived a life as a donkey prophet.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos,

Rabbi Steinberg