

Intimate with YHVH

The Comet – Is This A Bad Omen?



Sean Parker @seanparkerphoto Jul 8

Comet Neowise photographed in #Tucson about an hour ago! #cometneowise
#NEOWISE

We have been listing in the past News Letters events that have happened on or very near the dates we believed would mark the start of the 2300 Days of Hell. We told you how the Pandemic was declared on March 10th the day we kept Passover on in 2020. We told you about the UN warning of famine coming for 135 million people in about three months' time. He said this the week before we kept Shavuot on May 3rd, 2020. That same week, food processing plants began to close across North America. Then just 6 days before the May 31 Shavuot date, the day we have been speaking about since 2005, the day we thought was going to be the start of the 2300 Days of Hell, George Floyd was killed setting off the riots and looting and BLM protests around the world and the defunding of police. As of today July 11, these protests and riots persist. We then told you about the lunar eclipse of June 4 and the solar eclipse of June 21 and the next lunar eclipse of July 5, 2020. Last week we listed all the News events that took place on these days. We also told you of the conjunction of the moon with Mars in the constellation of Cetus on three different occasions. And we also have had two interviews with Cyrus Harding as he explained the crazy cycles of perigee and apogee of the orbit of the moon around the earth.

I went out Sunday morning at 4 Am to look at this comet and I could also see the moon

and Mars in the tale of the constellation Cetus which we wrote to you about earlier. You can see many great pictures of the comet starting from July 5, 2020, [at this link](#). The event is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience — the comet takes about 6,800 years to complete its path around the sun, according to NASA. Starting this weekend, it will be visible to viewers in the Northern Hemisphere in the evening, just after sunset. This comet was not expected or known before this past week.

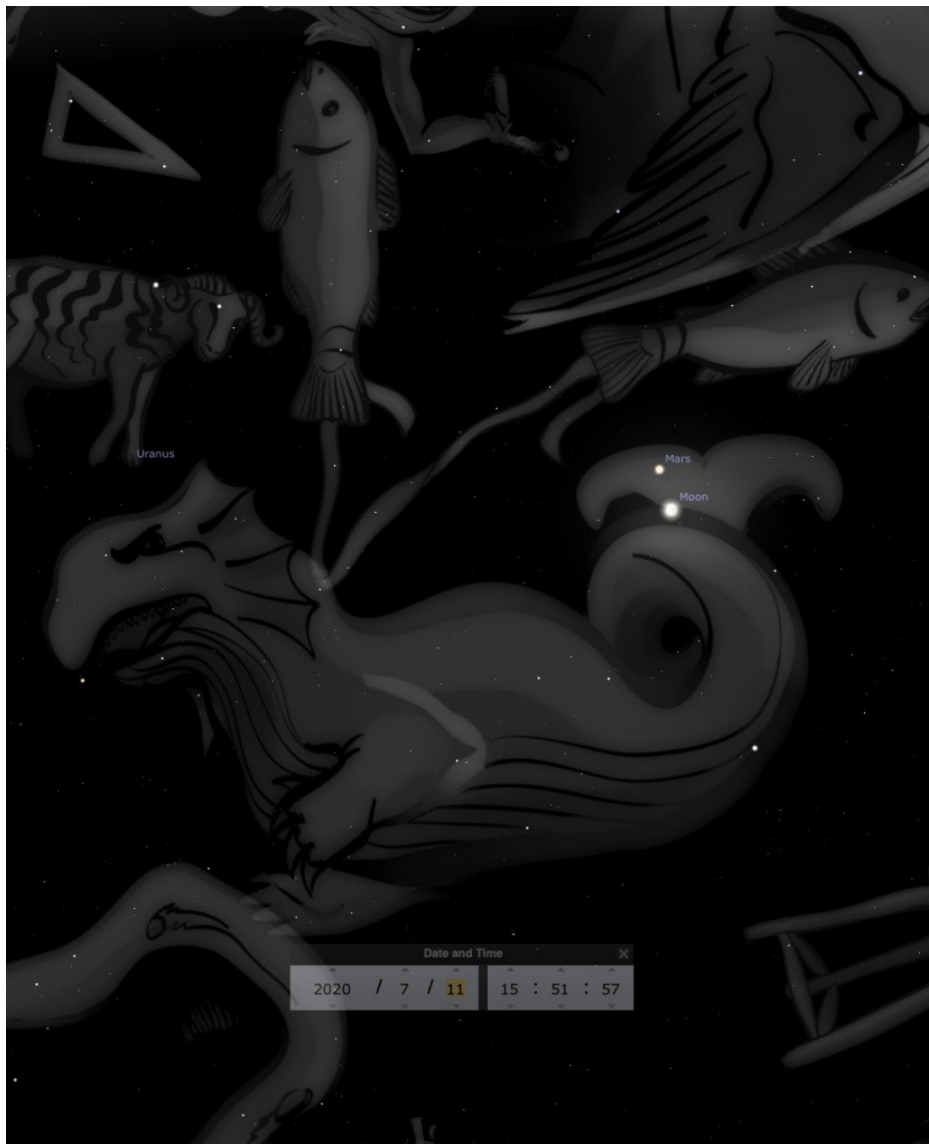
Let us now recap some of the signs in the heavens we have been telling you about the past couple of months.

Jul 10 02 Venus at Aphelion

Jul 11 02:10 Venus 1.0°N of Aldebaran

Jul 11 09:36 Mars 2.0°N of Moon

When I looked at Mars as it was in conjunction with the moon, my heart stopped. On July 11, the moon represents Israel in the tail of Cetus the Great Leviathan, the bound serpent, spoken of in the Bible. Mars in Hebrew is called Adom, and means blood-shedding.



The two fish are bound to the serpent by the cords. This serpent is the second decan of

the constellation of Aries. Other depictions have the Lamb Aries taking hold of the two ribbons. The fish on the right represents Judah and the one going to the north represents Israel.

Phase VI = July 26 – August 18. How much = 30%.

Aug 01 10:14 Mercury 6.6°S of Pollux

Aug 01 13:30 Jupiter 1.5°N of Moon

Aug 02 03:17 Saturn 2.3°N of Moon

Aug 03 02 Mars at Perihelion

Aug 03 05:59 FULL MOON

Aug 05 18 Mercury at Perihelion

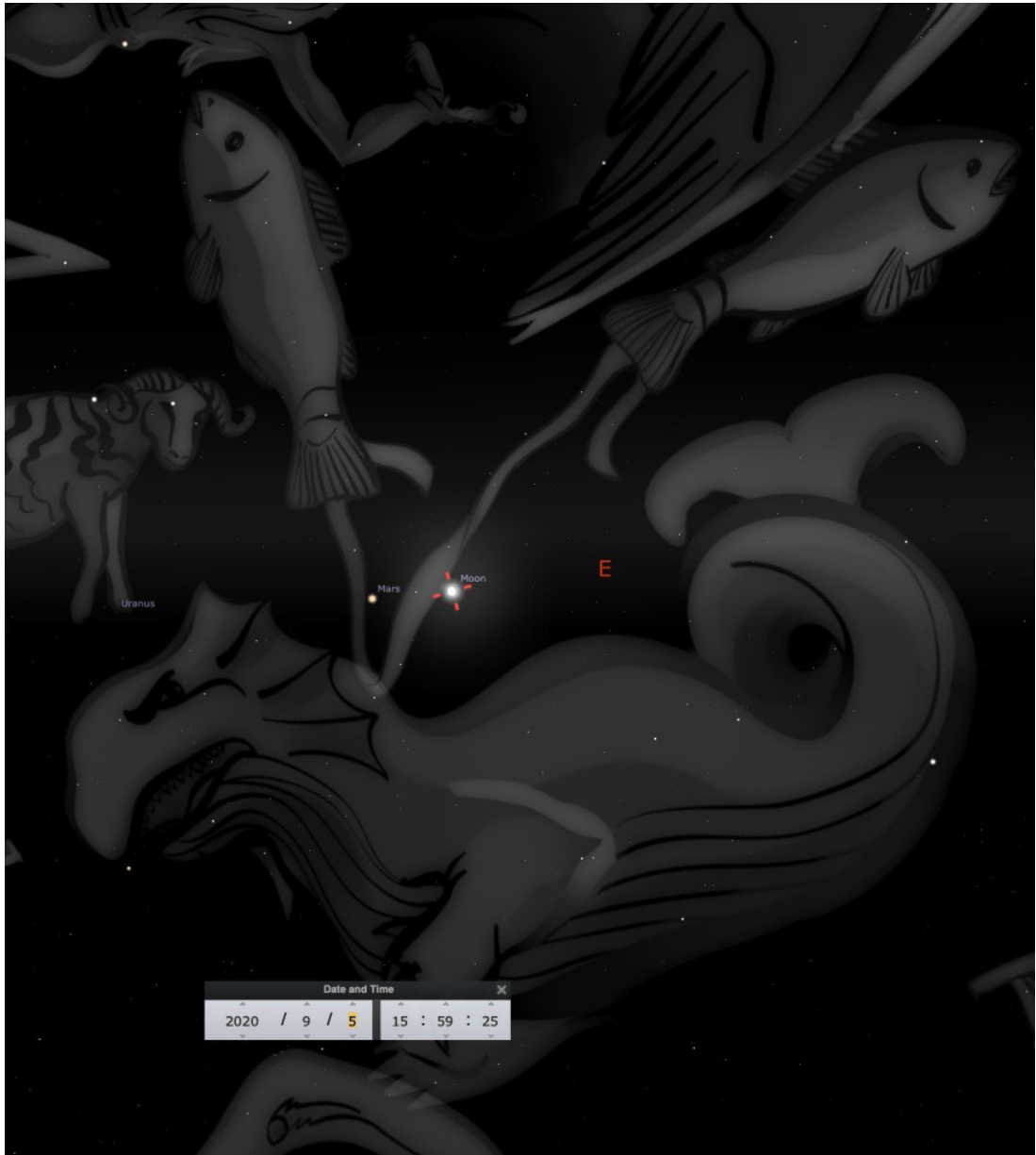
Aug 08 21:57 Mars 0.8°N of Moon: Occn.

Aug 09 03:51 Moon at Apogee: 404658 km

With the moon in Apogee look where the moon and Mars end up. In the Ribbon for Judah. Does this mean anything? We will know only after that date passes.



When I then went another month and looked at Sept 5, 2020, I see the moon in conjunction with Mars again only this time Mars is in the Ribbon connected to Israel. What does this mean? Again I do not know. I am only showing you what I have found.



Aug 11 06:45 LAST QUARTER MOON



Photo was taken by Cosmonaut IvanVagner of comet Neowise from the International Space Station

One of the brightest comets in decades is passing Earth. Here's how to see it.

Comet NEOWISE is delighting professional astronomers and amateur stargazers alike, and it will be visible in Northern Hemisphere skies until mid-August.

A comet called NEOWISE is paying a visit to Earth's neighborhood this month, and astronomers say it may end up ranking as one of the brightest comets seen in our skies in more than a decade.

The comet is currently bright enough to be seen with the unaided eye, if you know where to look. It's already delighting sky-watchers across the Northern Hemisphere who have been rising before dawn to gaze at the glowing celestial traveler.

Chris Schur, an astrophotographer based in Payson, Arizona, describes the comet as "gorgeous." When he trained his binoculars on it on the morning of July 7, he estimated that its tail spanned about five degrees in length, which is about 10 times the apparent size of the full moon. If the tail continues to grow, which astronomers say is possible, "it could be very dramatic," Schur says.

For the next week or so, NEOWISE will be strictly a predawn target. To see it, head outside at least 45 minutes before sunrise and look just above the northeastern horizon. The bright star Capella can serve as a marker, as the comet lies just below it, while the brilliant planet Venus is visible to the east. In about a week's time, the comet will transition to the evening sky, making it even easier to spot. Beginning around mid-July, the comet will be visible in the northwestern sky after sunset, arcing slowly upward beneath the stars of the Big Dipper.

To have the best chance of glimpsing the celestial transient, a little planning goes a long way. "It's not like you're just going to glance up and, Oh wow, there it is!" says Dave Schleicher, a senior astronomer at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona. "You need to have a good idea of where to look—and binoculars will help."

Still, judging by photos posted on social media over the past few days, the comet is putting on a quite a show—arguably the best since Comet Hale-Bopp, which lit up the night sky in 1997. Comet McNaught, which passed by Earth in 2007, was also brighter than NEOWISE is now, but it was primarily visible from the Southern Hemisphere.

"The buzz around this comet is justified," says photographer Malcolm Park, who captured an image of NEOWISE and its tail from his home in eastern Ontario on the morning of July 5.

FLYING CLOSE TO THE SUN AND EARTH

Named for the space telescope used to discover it in late March, the comet's full official moniker is C/2020 F3 (NEOWISE). It made its closest approach to the sun, known as perihelion, on July 3, and the fact that the comet is still visible at all has sky-watchers breathing a sigh of relief. Many comets don't survive the heat of a close approach to our host star. Comets, often described as "dirty snowballs," are made up of rock, dust, gases, and ice—a combination that doesn't always hold together in extreme temperatures.

"As it comes closer to the sun, it heats up, it blows off all kinds of material, and you get a

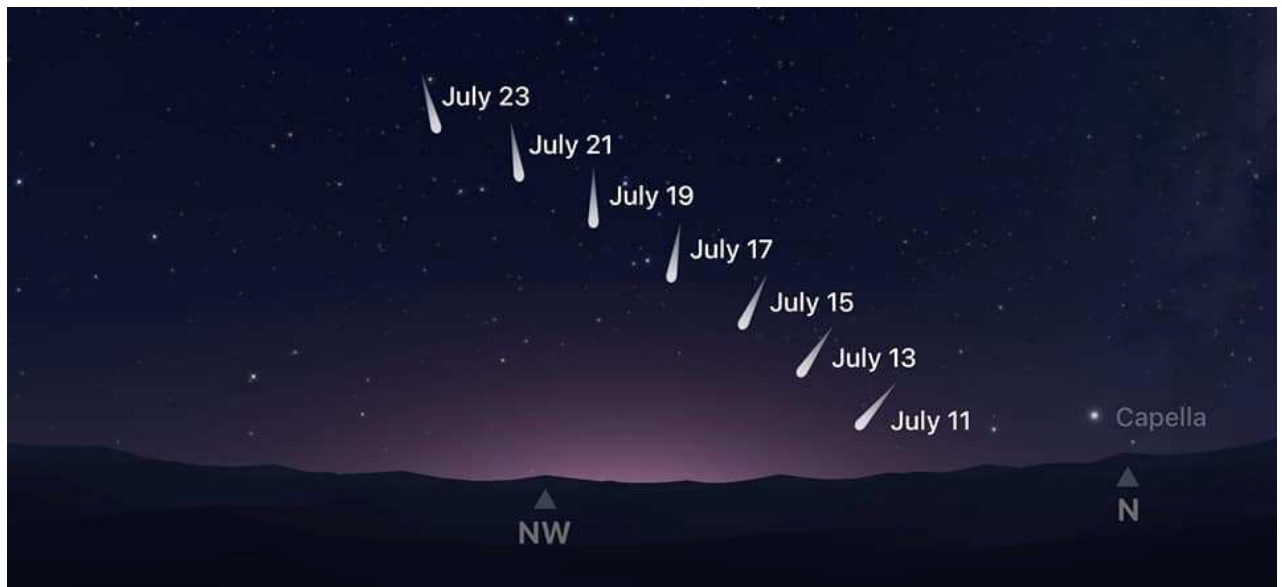
spectacular tail,” says Laura Danly, curator of the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles. “But sometimes they just fall apart completely, and they disappear.”

NEOWISE seems to be a survivor, emerging from its encounter with the sun sporting a long tail of gas and dust. “We’ve already gone past that point of closest approach, and the comet is still there,” Danly says. “So we can hope for another month of good viewing.”

Several factors determine the comet’s brightness. Having passed the sun, it’s now reflecting less of the star’s light toward us, but it is also getting closer to Earth. NEOWISE will make its closest approach on July 22, when it comes within 64 million miles of our home planet. After that, it will gradually fade from view as it heads back to the outer reaches of the solar system.

To catch the best view, should you get up early to see the comet this week, or wait until later in the month when it’s more conveniently positioned in the evening sky? Many sky-watchers, fearing that the comet’s show may be fleeting, suggest setting a morning alarm and seeing the comet as soon as possible. And with many people feeling a bit stir-crazy due to the pandemic, a passing comet might be the perfect excuse to get outside and engage with nature, Danly says.

“Get your kids up early, if you have them, or get yourself up early, and go see this beautiful sight,” she says. “And maybe stay for the sunrise.”



I saw it Sunday morning at 4 Am. and Monday evening it was then visible after sunset. In July the Comet will be visible in the Northwestern sky after sunset near the big dipper.

You will recall what Cyrus Harding said in our video interview about the next supercycle that is to begin after the Feast days. Cyrus told us before that the Crazy cycles, (when people act weird during the full moon) would become more intense up to 75% during the week we are currently in. After that, it would wind down until about August 18, 2020. You can watch that video at <https://youtu.be/3OULO-bA2yA> He is

now saying the next cycle is going to start immediately at the 50% to 66.747% about Oct 18, 2020, and go up to an intensity level of 88.996 % by Dec 14, 2020, before

dropping back down to 50%- 66.747% again February 11, 2021. Again he is using the perigee of the moon around the earth or how close the moon comes to the earth in its orbits and reflecting the sun's gamma rays. This second video can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHQ9e0hVowY> and make sure you sign up for our youtube channel.

You will also recall that we shared with you the video of the Pastor who had a dream last year that came true and his most recent dream about the hand underlining the month of Sept and then November. And he then said that in his dream this hand then smashes

the month of November and it flies apart. And I also told you my views about those who have dreams and how you cannot verify them. But for some reason, this dream has caught our attention.

Now, this past week we have had a comet show up that really was not expected. What does it mean? Or does it have any meaning at all?

Comets are often seen as a bad omen, appearing years before a major war or natural disaster. A few examples are of a comet was sited before the Exodus, the first Passover and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. In Natural History, Pliny wrote that it was a "terrible comet...(that) was twisted like a coil, and it was very grim to behold." Exodus 9:19 records "So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation." The Jewish Talmud records 'stones fell in Egypt and were very hot.' Josephus wrote about a heavenly appearance resembling a sword in the sky before the destruction of the Temple.

October 2011 Astronomy magazine carried an interesting article on comets. The first paragraph caught my attention, "..This makes them an object of popular fascination and has led to their common association as omens of significant events on Earth. (The destruction of Jerusalem by Roman Emperor Titus and the Norman conquest of England are two famous examples)" [please remember astronomy is a science, astrology is witchcraft]

God many times will use a comet as a sign of upcoming events. Job 38:22, "Have you entered the treasury of snow, Or have you seen the treasury of hail (23) Which I have reserved for the time of trouble, For the day of battle and war?" (see my post of 9/25/11 and 9/26/11 for history of comets and wars in our time)

In March 44 BC, a group of Roman senators assassinated Julius Caesar over concerns that he would declare himself king. Four months later, a huge funerary festival, called Ludi Victoriae Caesaris, was held in his honor. A great comet appeared in the skies during the ceremonies and remained visible for seven days before disappearing. Today, we remember that comet as the Great Comet of 44 BC. Astronomers say it is one of the brightest comets to have ever appeared in the sky, and it was also recorded in ancient China.

The Romans did not consider the appearance of the comet a coincidence. They claimed it was actually the soul of Julius Caesar as he left the Earth to become a god in the skies.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that we will ever see the comet again. The Earth sped it up as it flew past and sent it out of our solar system. On October 14, 1066, troops loyal to King Harold II of England faced the Norman army led by William the Conqueror in the Battle of Hastings. The battle was decisive. King Harold was killed, and William the Conqueror went on to take his throne and become the ruler of England.[4]

Halley's Comet, which had appeared in April of that year, was linked to the battle. As we already mentioned, people of the day had not yet realized that the comet was a periodic one that came around every three quarters of a century. That year, Halley's comet was so bright that it was four times the size of Venus and around 25 percent as bright as the Moon.

Astrologers in England suggested that the comet had something to do with an upcoming battle with the Normans. However, they could not determine if it was a good or bad omen. They discovered it was a bad omen when King Harold was killed.

However, what was bad for King Harold was good for William the Conqueror, who had also spotted the comet in France while traveling to England for the battle. He called it "a wonderful sign from heaven" and suggested it was evidence that he would win the war. He was right.

Another great comet soared past the Earth in 1264. Today, we call it C/1264 N1 or the Great Comet of 1264. It was very bright and remained visible for four months, starting in July. At the time, people already had some superstitions about comets, and seeing one was considered a forewarning of impending disaster.

This time, it was the death of Pope Urban IV, who is said to have become ill immediately after the comet was sighted that July. He died in October 1264, reportedly on the last day that the comet was visible.

On October 20, 1811, Europeans and Americans watched in awe as a bright comet made its closest approach to the Earth. This was the Great Comet of 1811. The comet had showed up in March, even though no one was expecting to see one at the time. Some Americans became paranoid and suggested that it was an omen of some upcoming disaster.

That disaster came on December 16, when a great earthquake shook the Midwest and Southern United States. The earthquake was so intense that the Mississippi River temporarily flowed backwards. Americans soon linked the comet with the earthquake. They blamed it again when the US and England went to war the following year.

Americans weren't the only ones to blame a random comet for causing a disaster. Napoleon Bonaparte sighted the comet in Europe, too. He considered it a good sign and evidence that he would be victorious in his planned invasion of Russia. Napoleon later

realized that the comet was a bad omen after he suffered defeat at the hands of the Russians.

Until the sixteenth century, comets were usually considered bad omens of deaths of kings or noble men, or coming catastrophes.

Ancient Chinese made important decisions by looking at celestial omens and comets were an important omen, always disastrous. Under the theory of Wu Xing (also known as five elements), comets were thought to signify an imbalance of yin and yang.[9] Chinese emperors employed observers specifically to watch for them. Some important decisions were made as a result. For instance, Emperor Ruizong of Tang abdicated after a comet appearance in 712 AD.[10] Comets were thought to have military significance. For example, the breakup of a comet on 35 AD was interpreted as portending the destruction of Gongsun Shu by Wu Han.

Why am I bringing up this comet in 2020? Yes, it comes in a year and at a time of great volatility. It also comes preceding the horrific events I have been warning you were to begin in 2020 and last until the destruction of Satan in 2033. Has Yehovah used comets in the past as warnings?

Let me share with you a story about two comets that drew our attention to them. The first one came in the Sabbatical year of 2016. The second the year after.

We are opening this month with a look at the decan Perseus, in Hebrew meaning “The Breaker,” as one who makes a breach. On June 15, 2016 Mars aligned with Beta Perseus, “Algol,” the star associated with the Head of the adversary. This indicates Mars-

Michael the warrior archangel in conflict with the adversary, [Jude 9, Rev. 12:7].

From the picture of this decan, we can see how this conflict turns out-in the severed head of the enemy. We find this Hebrew word for “Breaker” used in Micah 2:12-13;

Micah 2 [NIV]

12 “I will surely gather all of you, Jacob;
I will surely bring together the remnant of
Israel. I will bring them together like sheep
in a pen,
like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with
people. 13 The One who breaks open the way will go up
before them; they will break through the gate and go
out.

Their King will pass through before
them, the Lord at their head.

The Hebrew name for

the constellation Perseus is Peretz also meaning the Breaker, representing Jesus Christ as he defeats the beast in Revelation 20, delivering His captive bride, as seen in the constellation Andromeda. The language in Micah 2:12 above certainly agrees

with this idea of gathering the captive bride of Israel together in the Lord's Second Coming. The Beta star Algol is located in the severed head of Satan, held by Perseus among the stars of the northern Milky Way, a decan of Aries. It's positioned west of the brightest star in Capella—alpha Aurigae and southeast of the well known "W" ϵ of Cassiopeia. As Bullinger tells us, the star α (in the waist) called Mirfak; who helps. The next star, γ (in the right shoulder), is named Al Genib, which means who carries away.

The bright star in the left foot is called Athik, who breaks, depicted in Figure 1 below. 1

Figure 1. Perseus Delivering his captive Bride Andromeda

In his left hand he carries a severed head, which, by perversion, the Greeks called the head of Medusa, being ignorant that its Hebrew root meant the trodden under foot.⁵⁸ It is also called Rosh Satan (Hebrew), the head of the adversary, and Al Oneh (Arabic), the subdued, or Al Ghoul, the evil spirit. This bright star, β (in the head), named Al Gol, means rolling round.

It is a most remarkable phenomenon that so many of these enemies should be characterized by variable stars! But this head of Medusa, like the neck of Cetus, has one of the best-known variables. Al Gol is continually changing. In about 69 hours it changes from the 4th magnitude to the 2nd. This first known variable star represents the transitive nature the enemy, who "like a roaring lion, is seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8); then changing into "an angel of light" (2 Cor. xi. 14). The adversary is always "transforming himself" as a subtle serpent (Gen. 3:8); to steal, kill, deceive, and destroy.

Algol (β Per) is a bright eclipsing binary system in the northern decan of Perseus. As one of the best-known variable stars in the sky normally, it's at [mag. +2.1] but every two days, 20 hours and 49 minutes the star suddenly dips in brightness to [mag. +3.4], remaining dim for about 10 hours before returning to its original state.

The change in brightness results in the Algol system pictured below in Fig. 2, consisting of at least three-stars (β Per A, β Per B and β Per C) with the orbital plane of Algol A and B aligned with the Earth. The regular changes in brightness occur when the dimmer B star moves in front of, and eclipses the brighter A star. There is an added element where a secondary eclipse occurs, when the brighter star occults the fainter secondary star resulting in a minor dimming detected with special equipment.

As Perseus is pictured carrying the severed head of the Adversary, we were reminded of the result of this conflict by the path and passage of Comet Holmes in 2007-2008. The path of Comet Holmes (17P) through the decan of Perseus from October 25, 2007 to Jan. 20, 2008, was most remarkable when the comet went into outburst on October 24 located near the thigh of Perseus. On January 22, 2008 it was in a very close conjunction (less than a degree) with the star Algol that is the main star in Rosh Satan, the head of Satan, in Perseus' left hand. Here the arc of the path of Comet Holmes appears to depict the path of the sword of "The Breaker" as it cut off Satan's head. Since Comets signify "disaster" these comet signs linked with Perseus would depict

the imminent, disastrous and final destruction of the adversary at the hands of the Lord. Comet Holmes was discovered by Edwin Holmes on November 6, 1892 when it had a similar outburst to the one in 2007. The comet was of magnitude 4 – 5 and faded from visibility over a period of several weeks. The orbital period was about 6.9 years. The Holmes Comet was observed again in 1899 and 1906 and after that it was lost for 58 years; or 8 Comet cycles. It was rediscovered in 1964 and it has been observed on every return since. The comet exhibited normal behavior until October 23, 2007. Between October 23 and 24 the comet brightened from about magnitude 17 to almost magnitude 2 in only a few hours. This extreme outburst has no precedent (except perhaps the 1892 outburst of this comet). This idea that a comet depicted events shown in the star picture Perseus is not an isolated incident, nor the first time that notable comet activity has been linked to Algol!

In 1996 and 1997 two bright comets made unique appearances in Perseus. These were Comets Hyakutake and Hale-Bopp. They appeared in the same place in Perseus one year apart on the very same day, April 11, 1996 and April 11, 1997. The spot where they crossed in Perseus was in his forehead and between the eyes of Rosh Satan, near the Star Algol, the exact same place that Comet Holmes also targeted ten years later in 2007-2008, to sever the head of the enemy. There was a foreshadowing of this event when David destroyed another beast that came up against Israel, namely Goliath. David shot a stone into the forehead of Goliath and then taking Goliath's sword, cut off the beast's head. Afterwards David came before Saul holding the head of Goliath in his hand (I Samuel 17:57). Comet's Hyakutake and Hale-Bopp crossed at this spot where David slung the stone into Goliath's forehead felling him.

Figure 3. Comet Hale-Bopp, Hyakutake near the Star Algol of Perseus

Comet Hale Bopp passed through the decan Perseus, carrying the enemy's severed head. The comet crossed Algol, the star positioned in the forehead of Satan, on April 11th. This noteworthy united testimony with Comet Hyakutake, that also crossed through the head of Satan at Algol on the 11th of April, as a celestial prophecy of the demise of the adversary. Thus it was no coincidence that these two comets crossing in Satan's forehead (almost right between the eyes) on the same day, April 11th, one year apart, marking the beast for destruction.

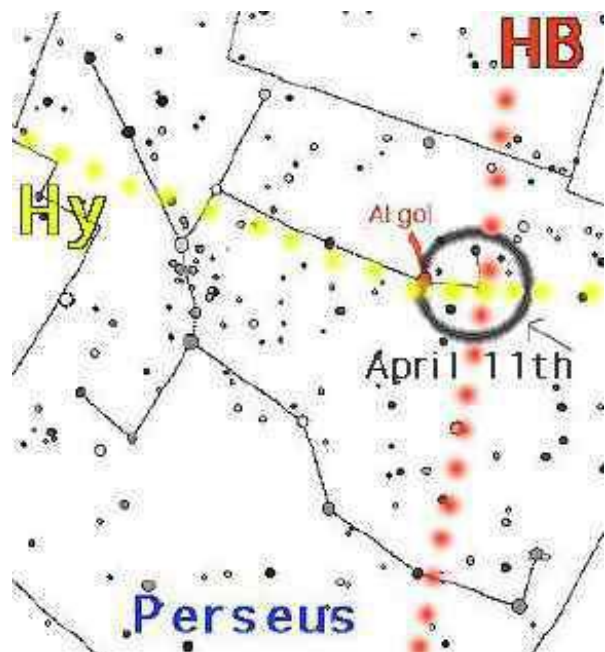


Figure 4. Hyakutake and Hale-Bopp comets in the Decan Perseus –



The intersection of the two comet's paths near Algol appears like a cross, or "x" marks the spot between the eyes or in the forehead of Rosh Satan! The area of the sky in the forehead of Satan where the comets crossed paths called in Hebrew, where the nearest bright star is Algol has long been known as the most malevolent star in the sky. This mark of the cross on the forehead also points to the mark of the beast in the forehead of his followers in Rev. 13.

Revelation 13:14-17

14 Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. 16 It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, 17 So that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. [Rev. 19:20]

These people left on the earth during the time of the future Tribulation, who consent to the rule of the Beast/Anti-Christ will get this mark of the beast on their right hands or foreheads. Even as the Almighty marked the head of Satan with the "x" where the comets crossed, so the beast will mark his rebellious followers even as the first rebel among men and against God [Cain], was marked by God Himself.

Perseus and Andromeda in the portrayal of Peretz delivering His captive Bride.

Decan of Perseus

We also have this story about a comet that came in 66 AD that led to the destruction of the Temple.

Josephus explained to Vespasian, about an ambiguous oracle that said that

a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab, and break down all the sons of Sheth.

note

Almost every Jew believed that this prophecy referred to the coming of the Messiah.

However, who said that the ruler who was to rise out of Israel was to be a Jew? Why should Vespasian not become king or emperor? Ridiculous though this may seem to a modern reader, Vespasian was impressed. After all, in Gaul and Hispania an insurrection had started against the emperor Nero, and it was clear to any

intelligent observer that civil war was bound to break out. Besides, everybody had observed the comet, resembling a sword, that had stood over the country during the preceding months.{{Josephus, Jewish War 6.289; an earlier comet is referred to by Tacitus, Annals 15.47.}} Instead of having Joseph crucified, the Roman general kept him in detention. The former Jewish commander became friends with Titus, who was of the same age.

Nero committed suicide in June 68; he was succeeded by Galba, who was lynched in January 69. Two men tried to become emperor: Vitellius and Otho, both commanding large armies. The latter was defeated, and Vitellius became the new, very unpopular emperor. This was the moment Vespasian had been hoping for, and Joseph's prophecy came true in July 69. Not only was Joseph released, he was also rewarded with the Roman citizenship, with the Roman name Titus Flavius Josephus, with an Egyptian wife, and with a role as advisor of the new crown prince Titus, who was to end the war.

When Titus laid siege to Jerusalem, Flavius Josephus served as his translator; he also had



to persuade the defenders of Jerusalem to surrender. Since he was seen as a traitor, his arguments did not convince Jewish leaders like Josephus' old enemy John of Gischala. He was also mistrusted by many Romans, who attributed every reverse to some treachery on his part. However, Titus trusted and protected his advisor. The siege lasted almost half a year, and ended with the complete destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple.

I do not use the book of Jasher very often but it does have some information to keep in mind at this time.

THE BIRTH OF ABRAHAM

In The Book of Jasher there is a certain celestial event mentioned which occurred at the birth of Abraham.

(The Book of Jasher is not a canonical book of the Bible, but is referred to in Joshua 10:13 and II Samuel 1:18. The translation that I have in my possession was published by M.M. Noah & A.S. Gould in 1840).

Jasher 8:1-4 reads:

And it was in the night that Abram was born, that all the servants of terah, and all the wise men of Nimrod, and his conjurors came and ate and drank in the house of Terah, and they rejoiced with him on that night.

2) And when all the wise men and conjurors went out from the house of terah, they lifted up their eyes toward heaven that night to look at the stars, and they saw, and behold one very large star came from the east and ran in the heavens, and he swallowed up the four stars from the four sides of the heavens.

3) And all the wise men of the king and his conjurors were astonished at the sight and the sages understood this matter, and they knew its import.

4) And they said to each other, this only betokens the child that has been born to Terah this night, who will grow up, and be fruitful, and multiply, and possess all the earth, he and his children for ever, and he and his seed will slay great kings, and inherit their lands.

The questions arise, what was the very large star that came from the east and ran in the heavens? What were the four stars from the four sides of the heavens? And what are the four sides of the heavens?

With all of this history, and with all that has happened in 2020, and what is predicted to come in the Daniel 9 prophecy, should we be concerned about this comet that is in the North and Eastern Sky? From a North American view, this is pointing towards Europe. The EU as we all know is the Great Whore that is going to destroy the USA.

Psa 19:1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse proclaims His handiwork.

Psa 19:2 Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

Psa 19:3 There is no speech nor are there words; their voice is not heard.

Psa 19:4 Their line has gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,

Luk 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars. And on the earth will be anxiety of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Luk 21:26 men fainting from fear, and expecting those things which have come on the earth. For the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

Parasha Chukat

Welcome to Parshat Chukat.

This week, we learn about Moses's sin of hitting the rock when God told him to speak to it.

In past years, we at Aleph Beta have often focused on the event itself: Why did Moses hit the rock? What's the difference between hitting and speaking? Was the sin SO bad that Moses deserved to be banned from entering Israel for it? These are real questions, and check the links below for the videos where we discuss them. But there's another aspect of the story that often gets overlooked. And that's what happened right before Moses hit the rock... what precipitated needing to speak to or hit the rock in the first place?

You guessed it, it's another complaint, the nation of Israel complain that there is no water.

How Can We Describe the Israelites' Relationship with God?

Over the past few weeks, we've watched them complain over and over, and we keep asking, how can they continue to complain after everything God had done for them?

But this week, it gets even stranger, because...we've actually heard these exact complaints before – many times! They moaned about food and water three times in Exodus, and then, they cried over food again, earlier in Numbers! Don't they see that each time they cry out to God, He provides for them? Shouldn't they have learned their lesson by now?

If they've run out of water, they shouldn't whine, they should pray! God hasn't let them down yet! Did they forget that God has always taken care of them? And, after this chutzpah, you would assume God would be angry. Enough already, stop complaining!

But shockingly, God acquiesces. He tells Moses to supply the people with water, as if Israel's complaining was justified. What's going on?

Join us as we explore the baffling story of Israel's complaints, this week on the Parsha Experiment.

Hi, I'm David Block, and welcome to the Parsha Experiment.

We think that the key to unlocking this mystery may be in the context of this story. Last week's parsha, Korach, ended on a somber note. After sinning over and over, Israel finally accepted their fate. They said to Moses: **וְנָתַתְּנוּ אֶתְנוֹתָנוּ** – look, we're going to perish, we're lost. **וְנָתַתְּנוּ אֶתְנוֹתָנוּ** – we're all lost. And that's precisely what happened. According to most commentators, that's the last story of the Torah that deals with that generation of Israel. The next story – our parsha – actually takes place 40 years later. Now, the people of Israel are a new people, Generation B. They weren't the ones who complained any of the earlier times.

As we've spoken about in Parsha Experiment for the past few weeks, the nation – the people who were Generation A – struggled with the challenges of being reliant on God. That's why they complained so much, they were scared to give up control, and rely completely on God. And they failed, and God decided that they won't get to enter the land of Israel. But now, we have a new Generation, Generation B, who gets to start from scratch. They have to learn the lesson that their parents never did, that all that they have is from God, and they have to trust Him completely. Can they do it?

A Chance for the Israelites to Restore their Relationship with God

It seems to start off tragically. In the very first story featuring Generation B, **וַיִּבְרַח אֶתְמוֹן מִלְּפָנֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן** – the people argued with Moses. Moses, why have you taken us out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? Reading this, we're so disappointed. This is exactly how Generation A sinned. It seems like Generation B will replay the sin of their parents, trying to control their own fate, and not trusting God to take care of them.

But it's not too late for them. Just like God gave Generation A several chances to learn their lesson, God, too, will give them several chances. Maybe Generation B will understand what their parents couldn't, that the people of Israel must cede control, and completely put their trust in God. So God doesn't punish or chastise Generation B for complaining, He uses this moment to provide for them! He instructs Moses to speak to the rock so that it will supply water to the whole nation, and in doing so, nudge the people, don't worry. I'm here for you. Trust me, and I'll take care of you forever. And now, we are left hanging. Will it work? Will the people learn the lesson that their parents never did?

The next story seems to give us the answer. **וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶתְמוֹן מֶלֶךְ אֶרֶץ אֲרָד כִּי יֵשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל**

וַיִּקְרַח עִלָּיו מִלְּפָנֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן – the Canaanite king of Arad heard Israel was coming

– and he waged war with Israel and took captives. So the people of Israel are in dire

straights; they're in battle with a nation far mightier than their own, and some of their people have already been taken captive. What are they to do?

Well, they have a precedent to look to: 39 years ago, when their parents considered the prospect of fighting the Canaanite nations after the report of the spies, they lost it. They mourned their fate, lost faith in God, complained to Moses and Aaron that they even wanted to return to Egypt rather than enter the land of Israel! And now their children are faced with an even worse situation – not a future clash with Canaan; they're already in battle, and they're losing! If Generation B is anything like Generation A, now is the perfect time to lose resolve.

But look at what happens next.

How Did the Israelites Grow their Relationship with God?

וַיִּזְכֹּר יְהוָה אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּיַד-לְהוֹרָה – Israel made a vow with God, וַיִּזְכֹּר יְהוָה אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּיַד-לְהוֹרָה – and they said: if you deliver this nation into our hands, וְנִתְּנָה אֵת-עָמָל – we'll take the spoils of these cities and dedicate them to You, as the commentators explain. This is a groundbreaking moment for Israel. They don't whine about their circumstances. They don't throw up their hands and say, "let's go back to Egypt!" They approach God, and say, please help us.

And, come to think of it, who is glaringly missing from this narrative? Moses. They don't complain to Moses, they don't blame him, like they did in Korach, and like they did when they don't have water, earlier in our parsha. The people turn directly to God.

They finally recognize that their failure or success is all dependent on God, and God alone. It seems that Generation B succeeded. They learned the lesson that their parents never did. Because look at what happens next: וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל – God heard Israel's voice, וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל – and he delivered Canaan into their hands. God listened, and took care of them, as He always promised to do, as long as they trust Him.

It really feels like the tides of Bamidbar are turning. Until now, the stories have been disastrous and tragic. Over and over again, the people sinned by pushing God out of the picture, and each time they were faced with calamitous consequences. But Generation B is figuring it out! The people are coming closer and closer to God, they're making Him front and center. And in return, God helps them defeat the superior Canaanite army

But then, disaster strikes. The people start traveling again, and וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל – the people speak with God and with Moses, וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל – Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the desert, וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל – for we have no bread or water. What? Again? After Generation B finally recognized God and got the message, they're back to complaining, and acting like Generation A! How is this possible?

But look again at the first line, because maybe it's not the same as Generation A. Look at that word: דָּבַר. It means to speak, to have a conversation. In the past, we've seen very different verbs: וַיִּלּוּנוּ – the people complained, וַיִּרְבוּ – they argued or fought. But now, it's וַיִּדְבְּרוּ – they spoke. Already, something is different. They're complaining, yes, but it

seems to be a lesser form. And something else is different. In their complaints, Generation A had always spoken to Moses, and hadn't communicated directly to God. But here, with Generation B, the people don't just turn to Moses. Yes, they turn to him as their leader, but first and foremost, they turn to God. The trend that started in the battles with Canaan in the last story continue: They're recognizing God and communicating with Him.

But while the people properly channeled their issues to God, still, they did complain. And, while they spoke with God, they still did include Moses, instead of speaking with God alone.

As a result, **וַיִּשְׁחַר יְהוָה אֶת-הָעָם**, and the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, **וַיִּגְעֹסוּ אֶת-רַגְלֵיהֶם**, and they bit the people, **וַיָּמָוּתוּ מֵעַבְדֵי יְהוָה**, and many people of Israel died. So how do the people respond?

Again, they are tested! Will Generation B respond the way their parents did? Or will they acknowledge that they messed up?

Clues on How to Revive Our Relationship with God

Look what they do: **וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ**, The people came to Moses and said: **וַיִּשְׁחַר יְהוָה אֶת-הָעָם** – we have sinned. **וַיִּגְעֹסוּ אֶת-רַגְלֵיהֶם** – we have spoken against God and against you. And they continue: **וַיִּתְפַּלֵּם מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה**, וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, וְיִסְרֹף יְהוָה אֶת-הָעָם – Moses, pray to God and have Him remove the snakes from us!

Generation B did what their parents couldn't! They see that God is in control! But, while the people recognized that they sinned, they made the same mistake again. They asked Moses to pray to God for them. They should have cried out to God directly, like they did after the war, in the very last story. So, God does acquiesce to the people, but He doesn't stop the plague, and remove the snakes. He tells Moses to do something odd **וַיִּשְׂרָף מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הָעָם** – “make a fiery serpent and place it on a pole, a **וַיִּשְׂרָף מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הָעָם** – and anyone who was bitten can look at it and live.

Does that remind you of anything? Where else have we seen something that was raised up by Moses, and through it came national divine protection from an attack? Way back in Exodus, when Generation A was battling with Amalek, Israel was successful only so long as Moses kept his hands raised up to God; as if to say, so long as the people recognize that their strength – that everything – comes from God, they'll actually have that strength. And now, Generation B experiences the same thing.

Restoring Our Relationship with God

In this story, they're slowly learning that message, that God is their strength, that all that they have is from God. And God caps it all by reinforcing that point: so long as you look up, and recognize that your successes and failures, your sustenance and guidance, is all sourced back to Me, you'll be fine. I'll take care of you.

Parshat Chukat marks a turning point in the history of people of Israel. Generally, when we read Numbers, we always look at failures. We get caught up with Israel's complaints,

with Moses' tragic mistake. But we miss what is perhaps the most beautiful and instructive part of the story: the new generation turns it around.

After the snakes story, we hear anecdotes about Israel's military success. And it's not just there as historical data. The Torah is highlighting the stark contrast between the past generation and this one. One was ultimately punished terribly, and the other was successful in all they did. And the difference in fate rested on one simple point.

This new generation understood what we, today, are meant to learn as well – that all strength is from God. And that's all God was waiting for.

Parashat Balak

Hi I am Rabbi David Fohrman and welcome to Parshat Balak.

So the sages of the Talmud tell us something puzzling, they contrast two biblical figures that you would never think of contrasting and in their words, kol mi sheyesh beyado shloshah devarim halalu, anyone who possesses these three qualities, mitalmidav shel Avraham avinu, is from the students of Abraham. V'shloshah dvarim acherim, but anyone who possess these three other qualities, mitalmidav shel Bilam harasha, are from the disciples Balaam.

Who Was the Prophet Balaam Hired by Balak?

Balaam and Abraham, Balaam of course is the star of this week's Parsha. He is the non-Jewish prophet who's hired by Balak, the King of Moab, to try to defend his land against invasion by the Israelites. Balak doesn't want Balaam to build a Sherman tanks or flying M-16 machine guns, he is looking for spiritual protection, he wants Balaam to curse the Jewish people and somehow allow Balak to get the upper hand against them in the war. Balaam is a spiritual mercenary of sorts, a prophet for hire, but why of all people, would we think of contrasting Balaam and Abraham?

And why would we think of contrasting them in the precise way that the Mishnah does? Let's hear what the Mishnah says about these men.

Contrasting the Spirit of Baalam and Abraham

Here's the language of the Mishnah, describing the disciples of Balaam and Abraham, it's really their way of talking about the general differences between Abraham and Balaam. Ayin tovah v'ruach nemuchah v'nefesh shefelah, someone with a generous eye and a humble spirit, they are disciples of Abraham, ayin raah v'ruach gevohaah v'nefesh rachovah, someone possess a narrow spirit, a haughty disposition, these are the disciples of Balaam. Why would the sages see Balaam that way and why would they contrast among of all people, with Abraham? Where were they beginning that from?

The sages here and elsewhere are pretty hard on Balaam. Balaam is often categorized as

Balaam harasha, the evil one and yet, a quick look of the text doesn't seem to yield such great evil in Balaam. He seems like a pretty nice guy. I mean it's true he is a prophet for hire and he is willing to do harm to the Israelites, if Balak ends up being one of his clients; but he tells Balak over and over again, I am just going to say what God puts in my mouth. And lo uchal laavor et-pi Hashem Elokai laasot ketanah o gedolah, I cannot contravene God's word and either in a great way or in a little way and in fact, it is true. Balaam never says anything that God doesn't tell him to say. So why the sages are so hard on him, why does he deserved to be called 'Balaam harasha'?

These two questions, where does it lurk Balaam's great evil and why contrast him to Abraham, are something I would like to explore with you, in this week's parsha.

Connections to Balaam and Balak's Story in the Bible

Okay, so our first indication that Balaam and Abraham might be linked in some way comes at the very beginning of the text, when Balak first propositions Balaam and asks him to go curse these people, asher-tevarech mevorach vaasher taor yuar. He says, I know that anyone that you bless will be blessed, those who you curse will be cursed. What does that remind you of?

Let's play our favorite little game here, where have we heard these words before? 'Those who you bless, will be blessed, those who you curse will be cursed'.

When God first reveals himself to Abraham, we also hear about blessings and curses, vaavarchah mevarcheicha, God tells Abraham, 'And I will bless those who bless you', umekalelcha aor, 'And I will curse those who curse you'. Sounds pretty similar although they are not exactly the same, they are in fact opposites or inverses of one another. Balaam is active, 'Those who you curse will be cursed'. In Abraham's case, he is passive, he is not doing anything, the people are doing it to him. Those who curse Abraham, will be cursed, those who bless him will be blessed.

So, we have on the one hand, kind of language which seems to link these two men and yet, they do seem to be the inverse of each other.

The Inverse Characteristics of Balaam and Abraham

And now, look at what we actually find in this Mishnah. The Mishnah tells us that Abraham and Balaam represent two kinds of people that are the inverse of one another. But this isn't the only link between these two men. The links actually run much deeper than just this. Let's keep on reading.

Balaam sets out on his trip, vayakam Bilam baboker, Balaam wakes up early in the morning, vayachavosh et-ato, and settles his donkey. What does that remind you of? Yeah, you have got it, that's actually the way the very climax of the Abraham saga began. The story of the Akeidah, the binding of Isaac, vayashchem Avraham baboker, Abraham woke up early in the morning, vayachavosh et-chamoro, and he too, settles his donkey and both men, set out on a journey.

Now maybe you think that's kind of coincidental but what about this, what's the next thing that we hear with Abraham? Vayikach et-shnei nearav ito, he takes two lads with him. And now, Balaam, hu rochev al-atono, he is riding his donkey, ushnei nearav imo, and two lads are with him. Doesn't seem so much like a coincidence anymore, does it? I mean it really seems like that there is something here.

We continue reading this more and more parallels and I don't have time enough to get into all of them here but think about the angle on the Akeidah. God says, 'take Isaac and sacrifice him', the angel says, 'no, don't touch him'. Here too, God actually tells Balaam 'you can go'. Along comes the angel and says, 'don't go anywhere'. The angel once again, seems to stop Balaam in his tracks. What's the Torah saying?

We seemed to have answered one question but just created another. Yes, that's which the sages say there's a deep comparison between Balaam and Abraham seems evident from the text itself. The Torah seems to be setting up these two men on going on an Akeidah-like journey and yet, what does it mean to say to Balaam is on an Akeidah-like journey? He is not going to sacrifice anyone, what's the text mean to tell us by creating these parallels and how does this help us understand what the sages tell us about the disciples of Abraham on the one hand and the disciples of Balaam on the other?

I think the answer to these questions is that in some deep way that journey taken by Abraham and the journey taken by Balaam is a similar journey. Even though, these two men approach that journey differently. Indeed, their approaches are the opposite of one another but the journey is the same journey.

What is the central challenge of the Akeidah? In the Akeidah Abraham hears the words he most does not want to hear from the almighty, 'take a child, the one that you love and give him back to me'. Abraham would do anything not to hear those words.

When God asks you to do something that you desperately do not want to do, what is your challenge? Many of us would say your challenge is, will you do it or not? And yes, at one level, that's of course is true but I think, there's even maybe a deeper challenge that faces us. It is not so much will I do it or not, but will I admit to myself that this is truly what's being asked of me. Will I allow myself to see things as they truly are, or will I deceive myself about what God has asked of me?

In that vein I want you to look for a moment with me at what happens with Balaam when he first asks God permission to go with Balak.

A Closer Look at Balaam and Balak's Story

God's response to Balaam is lo telech imahem, 'do not go with them', lo taor et-haam, 'do not curse this people', ki baruch hu, 'because they are blessed'.

Now, will you say God has been clear about his intentions or not so clear? This is about as clear as it gets. I mean God says, 'do not go, do not curse them, they are blessed'. There is really no room for argument here. What happens next, Balaam wakes up in the morning,

goes to the messengers of Balak and tells them lechu el-artzechem, 'Go home, it's not going to work', ki me'en Hashem letiti lahaloch imachem, 'Because God has withheld himself from allowing me to go with you'.

Now, would you say, that is an accurate summery of what God said to Balaam? It's kind of accurate but not exactly so. Is it true that God has withheld himself for allowing Balaam to go? Dad didn't let me go with you, that really what's going on? It's not what God said, God is saying, 'This can't work. God is not letting me go with you', softens the thing ever so much, it creates implications that perhaps God could be persuaded.

God is holding back, that's really the sense of the word me'en. Same language when the wife of Potifar is trying to seduce Joseph, vayimaen, and Joseph withheld himself, there's a struggle there. God struggling, he is just holding back. What happens next, vayakumu sarei moav vayavou el-Balak, the messengers from Balak come back to the king and they say, me'en Bilam haloch imanu, 'Balaam has withheld himself from coming with us'. Now, is that accurate or not so accurate? Well, on one hand it is kind of accurate, Balaam was not going but look at it carefully. Did Balaam say he is withholding himself? He didn't even say that, he said God is withholding himself. It is like a game of broken telephone here, why are the messengers from Balak misrepresenting what Balaam said or are they misrepresenting it?

In a deep kind of way the messengers understand the truth, it's Balaam who is withholding himself from going with you, that in Balaam's mind it is not just about what God wants or doesn't want. Balaam is playing with the truth. It's Balaam who is showing us that God is withholding himself back, Balaam is holding back. Must be we haven't given Balaam enough of what he wants yet which explains the next thing that happens.

The King of Moab tries again. This time, vayosef od balak sheloach sarim rabim v'nichvadim me'eleh, he sends messengers who are more honorable and greater than those before and he tells him, 'please go'. Ki chabed achabedcha, 'I will honor you greatly, everything you ask of me I will do, just please, curse these people for me'. Balaam's response, im-yaten-li Balak melo beyto kesef v'zahav lo uchal laavor et-pi Hashem Elokai, 'if Balak would give me a whole house full of gold and silver, I couldn't transgress that which God, my God, asks of me', laasot ketanah o gedolah, I couldn't transgress it in a great way or even in a small way.

Well, that's very righteous of Balaam but there are two things that I have to catch your eyes here. The first is, he is being a little too explicit about that house full of gold and silver, isn't he? Even he would give me a whole house full of gold and silver, what do I really want here? I am looking for the house full of gold and silver. Which explains the next thing that happens, vaatah shevu na vazeh gam atam halaylah, 'and now, wait here tonight', v'edah mah yosef Hashem daber imi, 'let's see what God will tell me again'. What did he means let's see what God tell me again? He already explained very categorically, you should not go, what is there to ask God again for?

So God comes to Balaam and says, im-likro lecha bau haanashim, 'The people are calling you', kum lech itam, 'Go with them', v'ach et-hadavar asher adaber eleicha-oto taaseh, 'But you still have to say whatever I may tell you'.

Strange, first God said, don't go and then God is saying go? Is God contradicting himself? And if God said go, then how come once Balaam goes, vayichar af Elokim ki holechu, that God becomes angry that Balaam went and sends the angel to block him. Why you are angry? You said he could go.

Why Was God Mad at Balaam?

There is a great principle that our sages speak of, bederch sheadam rotzeh leyelch bah molichin oto, 'And the place that you want to go, God will take you there'. God already said no, Balaam comes back for another crack of the bat. So what do you do, say no again? Then Balaam will come back again.

At a certain point, if you are God, you say, 'Look, if you want to go, go but what's your journey now? Your journey is, can you be honest enough to see what I really want? When are you going to open your eyes? And that really is the great journey of the Akeidah: will you open your eyes to the truth?

Abraham's greatness lies not just in his willingness to act on God's command but lies in his willingness to see God's command for what it is. Do not lie to yourself about what you heard God say. Balaam's greatest evil here is that he is lying to himself.

Avoiding Balaam's Greatest Error

Balaam's self image is as a great servant of God, I cannot transgress what God has said even a little bit. I am a spiritual man. But he is a prophet who lies to himself, who softens, changes what God has said, to ever so slightly suit his own, unexpressed desires.

So the great question of the Akeidah is this: will you look the truth in the eye, as painful as it is or will you distort it? At the end it is an issue of ego, if I understand who God is and I understand who I am then at some point yet to take yourself out of it. It says this is what I really heard and if you do that then you are an Abraham. That's the humility that our sages were talking about and the disciples of Abraham. But if you are not humble, if your sense of self is inflated, well, then I am not so interested in really hearing what God says. I mean, yeah, I will hear him but we can message things a little bit, right? This our sages tell us is actually great evil.

At face value it seems that Balaam is making slight adjustments to what God says but slight adjustments, the inserting of self into God's words, the lying to yourself about what you heard, this is the making of true evil and in this lies the difference between Abraham and Balaam.

Parashat Balak 2

Welcome to Parshat Balak.

For the first time in a while, the main characters of this parsha are not the people of Israel. We learn the story of Balak, king of Moav.

Why Is the Story of Balak in the Bible?

Israel just destroyed the Amorites, who in the past, had defeated Moav. So Balak was worried – Israel conquered the nation that conquered them. Balak hoped that a curse would weaken Israel and make them easier to conquer. So he hires Bilaam, a non-Israelite prophet. His hopes are dashed when, every time Bilaam opens his mouth to curse Israel, he accidentally blesses them instead.

And while it's an interesting story, we can't help but wonder: why are we hearing this? I get that it's relevant to Israel, but the Torah isn't an all-inclusive history book. We never hear about the internal conversations and strategies of, say, Amalek. Why does the Torah tell us this story?

Join us as we explore the story of Balak and Bilaam this week on the Parsha Experiment.

Hi, I'm David Block, and welcome to the Parsha Experiment.

To understand why Balak and Bilaam are included in the Torah, let's look at the beginning of this story more carefully, and as we go through it, ask yourself, does this remind us of any other story in the Torah?

Biblical Connections to Balak's Story

וַיִּירָא מוֹאָב, בְּנֵי רְעִים, מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל – and Moav, Balak's nation, feared Israel,

כִּי רַב-הָיוּ – for they were many.

וַיִּקַּח מוֹאָב, בְּנֵי רְעִים, מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל – and Moav became repulsed by Israel.

So Balak has a plan. He sends messengers to Bilaam, this prophet, with the following message:

וַיֵּשֶׁב עָלַי-נְאֻם ה' – so, now, Bilaam, go and curse this nation,

כִּי-עֲצוּם הוּא מִמֶּנִּי – because they're mightier than me.

וְאִנִּי אֶנְלֶנְהוּ-וְזָבַח, וְאֶנְבִּישׁוּם מֵהָאָרֶץ – and perhaps that will enable us to strike them and expel them from the land.

So, Does Balak's plan remind us of anything? Is there another time in which the leader of a nation feared Israel, because they were רב – many? Because Israel was עצום – mightier than they? And that fear turned to revulsion – ויקץ? And those fears convinced this leader to take steps to enable his own nation to fight with Israel?

Don't these fears sound exactly like Pharaoh's? Back in Egypt, before they were slaves, when Israel was living securely and peacefully as guests in Egypt, Pharaoh became suspicious, paranoid.

יהוה, עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – this nation of Israel

מְרִיבִים וְעֲצוּמִים – they're many and mightier than us!

לְיָדָם נִחְשְׁמָה, לֹא – so let's deal wisely with them.

כִּי יִבְיֶהוּ וְיִקְרַח נַפְשָׁם וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּהוּ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּהוּ – lest they become even greater and when war comes, they'll side with our enemies,

וְיִלָּחֲמוּ עִמָּנוּ וְיִשְׁאַרְצוּ – and they'll fight with us, and leave the land.

וְיִקְרַח נַפְשָׁם וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּהוּ – and Egypt was repulsed by Israel.

Look at that – Balak's fears are almost identical echos of Pharaoh's!

But our comparisons seem a little unfair to Balak, don't they? Yes, Balak was a bad guy, but Pharaoh committed genocide! Cursing Israel is not the same thing as murder and slavery! But actually, the Torah is making a deeper comparison. Not about the actions of Pharaoh and Balak but in their mindsets – the intentions behind their actions.

Why Did Balak Want to Curse Israel?

Look at Pharaoh. Why did he enslave and murder the Israelite people? Well, he saw the growing nation of Israel as a potential threat. יהוה, עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. There were getting to be too many of them, so he needed a way to make them vulnerable, to ensure control over them.

Balak, like Pharaoh, also feared Israel, and needed to figure out how to weaken them, so that he too could ensure control over them. They were really trying to accomplish the same thing.

But when we talk about motivations of these two leaders, we can go even deeper than a fear of Israel's size and strength. Let's go back to Pharaoh. The first time Moses and Aaron visit Pharaoh, they say: הֲלוֹא אֵלֵינוּ יְהוָה, אֵלֵינוּ יְהוָה, thus says God, לֹא אֵלֵינוּ יְהוָה, let my people go to celebrate me in the desert. They don't demand that Pharaoh free them on moral or political grounds. They don't demand freedom at all. They ask him to let the people worship God for a few days, because God said so!

And look how Pharaoh responds:

מִי יְהוָה אֲנִי אֲשַׁעֲבֶדְךָ, לֹא יְהוָה אֲנִי אֲשַׁעֲבֶדְךָ – who is this God that I should listen to Him and

send the people?

לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֶת-יְהוָה – I don't know this God,

וְגַם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשַׁלַּח – and I also won't send out the people.

Freeing the people is secondary... first and foremost, Pharaoh denies God! This is a theological conversation! Moses' request was about Pharaoh's enslavement was not just about the practical benefits of having slaves... it was his way of denying God.

And we know this is true, because when God decided to take Israel out with plagues, He addressed precisely that denial of God! God didn't need plagues in order to free the people from Egypt, he could have whisked them out on magic carpets. The plagues, the miracles, were all about educating Pharaoh and Egypt that God is God: **וַיֵּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי-אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה** – and Egypt will know that I'm God when I stretch out My hand against them. And Pharaoh continuously rejected that idea, wanting to enslave the Israelites until the bitter end, even when his advisors, and his nation, wanted him to just let go. Because, fundamentally, this was all a battle of control. God tried to show Pharaoh that He, God, is in control... but by holding onto Israel, Pharaoh tried to assert his own power... to live in the illusion of his own control and he denied God.

And Balak? Unlike Pharaoh, Balak didn't deny God. He knew that Israel had a God, and he knew of that God's superior might. He just saw this Israelite nation of amateur fighters destroy Emor, the very nation that previously defeated Balak's own nation. And, after Bilaam meets with God, **וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בְלָק, מַה-יָדָבָר יְהוָה** – Balak asked: Nu, what did God say? He knew, unequivocally, about God. So, unlike, Pharaoh, Balak was operating within the God framework.

And yet, Balak thought he could use Bilaam to beat God in battle! After one of the failed attempts at cursing Israel, Balak said to Bilaam:

וְעַתָּה יֵצֵא אֲנִי אִתְּךָ אֶל-מָקוֹם אֲחֵר – come, I'll take you to another place,

אֲנִי יִישַׁע מִיַּד יְהוָה, וְקִלְסוּ לִי מִשָּׁם – perhaps it'll be pleasing in God's eyes and you can curse them from there.

That might sound ridiculous to us: God's not going to suddenly allow you to go against His will, by changing where you're physically standing. But it highlights exactly Balak's motivation.

The Lesson Behind Balak's Story

Even when recognizing God, he refused to cede control, and kept attempting to use Bilaam to manipulate the circumstances and maneuver it towards his desired results. Yes, he believes in God, but he's trying to control God!

And while Bilaam went along with Balak's game, he knew the truth. He told Balak, **מַה אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּי אֲבָרֵךְ אֲשֶׁר-לֹא-בָרַךְ אֱלֹהִים**; how can I curse those whom God hasn't cursed? **יְהוָה אֵל זֵעַם** – I can't conjure up Divine wrath if God isn't angry! Balak, it doesn't work like that. We can't control God.

And, now look at what God Himself tells them during their second attempt to curse Israel.

קוּמְךָ בָּלָק וּשְׁמָע – get up, Balak, and hear this:

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵל יָחִיד – God is not a man that he should waver.

אִישׁוֹן לֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה – He's not a mortal that he should change His mind!

Exactly! I'm not like a human being who changes his mind, who can be manipulated, who can be controlled. Learn that lesson: I'm in control, God says, not you.

So, while Pharaoh's and Balak's tactics were different, these parallels show us that, at their core, they were trying to do precisely the same thing – maintain their power, live in the illusion of their own control.

Both were unwilling to become vulnerable by admitting that only God is really in control. And in both scenarios, God has to show them – I'm in control, not you. Pharaoh, you won't see me at all? So I'll bring these plagues until you have no choice but to see me. Balak, you know about Me, but you think you can control Me? So I'll put words of praise into Bilaam's mouth, instead of curses, and you'll see who's really in control.

Understanding the Meaning of Balak's Story

And now it makes perfect sense why the Torah includes this story about Balak, and Moav's internal strategies. Because over the last number of parshas, we saw that Israel's struggle with God was precisely what Balak's struggle is here. Israel knew God, but they didn't want to give up control, to become vulnerable and exposed. But, in last week's parsha, something changed.

The new generation of Israelites begin to learn the message that their parents never did: They recognize God, and they give up control to Him! And when they do, Israel's relationship with God is repaired. They are finally ready to assume their role as God's people. The people are now spiritually ready to pick up the mantle, as the nation chosen by God to be the ממלכת כהנים – kingdom of priests... a people who models God's morality and values to the other nations of the world.

And now that they have mended their relationship with God and accepted upon themselves the responsibility of the chosen nation, we jump right into the story of Balak, another nation. Will Moav look at Israel as a model of morality and Godliness? Will other nations be able to learn from the chosen nation, to let go of control and trust in God?

Teaching that lesson to Moav through Israel is the driving force of much of what God says in this week's parsha: וְאֵלֵינוּ אֵל יָחִיד, וְאֵלֵינוּ אֵל יָחִיד – there is no enchanting in Jacob, no divining in Israel. As Rashi explains, that means there are no diviners among Israel. Unlike Balak and Bilaam, Israel doesn't try to manipulate God, to control Him. They put their trust entirely in God's hands. And the question is: Balak, can you look at

Israel and learn that lesson?

The story of Balak isn't random. It's a story of a nation's struggle to internalize God's message. To be willing to cede control and to trust God. And, most importantly, it's a story that highlights Israel's national mission. Israel isn't only meant to internalize the message of control and trust in God for themselves. They're meant to model it to the rest of the world. To teach everyone that, when one trusts in God completely, God never abandons you. You're never alone.

Join us next week, on the Parsha Experiment.

Parashat Pinchas

Welcome to Parshat Pinchas.

This week, we finish a terrible story that began last week, in Parshat Balak. Israel commits idolatry by worshipping Moabite gods, Ba'al Pe'or, which seriously provoked God's anger. Ultimately, Pinchas, in an act of zealotry for God, saved the day... but not before thousands of Israelites were killed in God's plague.

The Perplexing Heresy of Ba'al Pe'or

But something about this seems strange. Because, yes, we've seen the people sin plenty of times in the Book of Numbers, but they had finally turned things around in their relationship with God! Over the past few parshas, the 2nd generation of Israelites in the desert had done what their parents couldn't, they finally ceded control to God and trusted Him completely. In fact, in the story right before this, in Parshat Balak, the nation of Israel was held up as the paradigm of a Godly people! And now, idolatry?? What happened? How did the people fail so quickly?

Join us as we explore the perplexing story of Ba'al Peor, this week on the Parsha Experiment.

Hi, I'm Imu Shalev, and welcome to the Parsha Experiment.

Understanding the Sin of Ba'al Pe'or

So let's take a look at what happened in the sin of Ba'al Pe'or.

First, **לָקַחְתָּ בָּנוֹת אֱלֹהֵי מוֹאָב**, וַיִּחַלְתָּ – Israel began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moav.

וַיִּקְרָא אֵלֶיהֶן לְעֹלֵתָאֵיהֶן – these women called Israel to sacrifice to their gods.

And then, **וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶל־עֹלֵתָאֵיהֶן** – and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods.

So this is interesting. Promiscuity leading to idolatry. And then, sacrifice. And, some sort

of idolatrous feast. Does this...remind us of anything? Was there another time when the people committed idolatry through worship and sacrificial offerings? And where they were sexually promiscuous? And, they also ate an idolatrous feast?

This all seems to recall the sin of the Golden Calf!

Connections to Ba'al Pe'or Worship in the Bible

After the people of Israel built the calf:

וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ עֹת, וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ עֹת – they sacrificed burnt offerings, and peace offerings.

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ – and they sat down to eat and drink, and then,

וַיִּקְוּ עָמָּה – they rose לצחק.

The Torah often uses the term לצחק to mean sexual activity. Rashi brings an example; when Joseph was working for Potiphar in Egypt, Potiphar's wife tried to frame Joseph... she said: וַיִּבְרָא לָנוּ אִישׁ עִבְרָאִי – look, they brought us a Hebrew man to be מצחק with us... וַיָּבֵא לִי לְשָׁכְבָהּ – he came to lie with me. So, לצחק seems to mean some sort of sexual promiscuity. Just like Ba'al Peor.

Both stories of idolatry seem to involve a worship, sacrifice, a feast – and, the fundamental link between idolatry and sexual promiscuity. But that's not all – there's one more fascinating parallel.

God was incredibly upset with the nation after the sin of the Golden Calf, and he gives them some new laws – so that something like it could never happen again. God says:

Don't forge a covenant with other nations,

וְלֹא תִכְרַת בְּרִית אִתָּם – because you'll stray after their gods.

וְיִקְרְאוּ אֶתְּךָ – and the people will call you,

וְאָכְלוּ מִזִּבְחֵיהֶם – and you'll eat of their offerings. But it won't end there.

וְלָקַחְתָּ לְבָנוֹתֵיהֶם – you'll take of their daughters for your sons,

וְאֵת בָּנוֹתֵיהֶם יִשְׁבְּעוּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם – and their daughters will stray after their gods,

וְיִקְרְאוּ אֶתְּךָ אֶתְּבָנֶיךָ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם – and they'll pull your sons astray to their gods.

Amazingly, the sin of Baal Pe'or is exactly what God was warning against after the Egel! And even look at the words in the Ba'al Pe'or story – וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ, בָּנוֹת, וַיִּקְרְאוּ, and וַיָּבֵא. Not only are the two sins related – the Egel seems to be warning against Ba'al Pe'or. There is clearly some sort of connection between these stories. Why does the Torah link Ba'al Pe'or with the Golden Calf?

What Do the Connections to Ba'al Pe'or Mean?

We think that the key to understanding their connection lies in one critical, subtle difference between the two stories. At the Golden Calf, idolatry led to promiscuity; but at Baal Pe'or, promiscuity led to idolatry. The order is reversed. And that difference is critically important.

Often, when verses parallel one another, there will be something you expect to line up perfectly, and the pieces just don't fit together. For instance, in a chiasm, you have your A pasuk and your A', B, B', C, and instead of C', you get D'. And your chiasm looks like this. This is called an inverted pair.

Rabbi Fohrman argues that in situations like this, when something is listed twice in Torah, but listed in backwards order from one another, the Torah is trying to tell us that these two things that you might think are different, they're actually the same thing. It isn't this, it's this.

Now our case isn't a chiasm, but we would expect these two events, which are both about straying from God and worshiping a foreign deity, and which share many of the same elements, to line up perfectly. Perhaps, the Torah is telling us that they do. Instead of idolatry leading to promiscuity, or promiscuity leading to idolatry, the Torah is telling us that promiscuity and idolatry are both fundamentally expressions of the same thing. But what would that mean?

The Promiscuity and Idolatry Behind Ba'al Pe'or

At its core, sexual activity is a tool – to build a real, deep, loving relationship. If I choose to be involved in sexual activity for the sake of physical pleasure above all else, I'm essentially taking that tool, that was once used to build a relationship, and using it not for love, but for momentary pleasure. And with that, I destroy the entire construct of intimacy. Sexual activity becomes a tool for pleasure and feeling, not love and depth.

And now, idolatry. What is at the core of idolatry? An idolater takes worship – the very thing used to build a deep, loving, relationship with God – and uses it outside the context of a real relationship with Him. As Rabbi Fohrman explains in a video linked below, when it comes to polytheistic idolatry, worship is not about creating a deep relationship... it's about winning the gods over, to convince them to give you what you want. It's the opposite of creating a relationship! With idolatry, worship is just a tool for bribery and selfishness.

So promiscuity is taking sexual activity, which is meant to be a tool for a deep and loving relationship, and using it for selfish, superficial pleasure. And idolatry is about taking worship, also a tool for a deep and loving relationship – with God – and making the rituals meaningless, for selfish purposes, to curry favor gods. These are both ways of willingly destroying – or, at least, severely depreciating – the very concept of intimacy. And at the heart of both of these things is not just selfishness – it's a lie we tell ourselves.

What Is the Meaning Behind the Heresy of Ba'al Pe'or?

The idolater, the adulterer, they deceive themselves into thinking that they can have our cake and eat it too. Sure, they'll also use those tools to build intimate relationships, they're not denying that. But why can't they also separate them and just feel pleasure? Because when you remove the relationship part, you really do cheapen those tools... and you cheapen the concept of intimacy itself.

And that idea – of sexual promiscuity and idolatry being one and the same – perhaps explains something a bit odd. The plague ends when Pinchas takes a spear and impales two people involved in promiscuity. But if the sin of Baal Peor was the idolatry, why would stopping the sexual activity end the plague?

Wouldn't it have made more sense for Pinchas to publicly impale someone worshipping Ba'al Pe'or? But it's the very same answer – the promiscuity and idolatry are two expressions of the same thing. Pinchas kills two people literally while they're misusing and devaluing the concept of sexual intimacy. In so doing, he redeems intimacy, and preserves the potential for sexual intimacy be used in a sacred relationship.

The Lesson Hidden in the Story of Ba'al Pe'or

Perhaps that's what the Torah wants us to learn from the parallels between the Golden Calf and Ba'al Pe'or. Regardless of which comes first, promiscuity or idolatry, one who engages in either shows a propensity to take a tool that's meant to create intimacy in a relationship and misuse it. Devalue it. So, the two really do go hand in hand. If someone violates one of them, violation of the other could easily be right around the corner.

And when God sees Pinchas' act, He says, you, Pinchas, you get it. Intimacy within Israel has been betrayed – with God, and within the people. When Pinchas stands up to the promiscuity of a prince of the people, he's making a statement as a representative of Israel, and saying that we do not stand for those who betray our sacred relationships. Through this intensely violent act, he somehow makes peace.

So, look at how God rewards him: וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְאֵלֵינוּ – I give him the covenant of Peace. In fact, what do we call it when intimacy between a married couple is preserved, when the relationship is solid and loving? Shalom Bayit – a peaceful home. God gives Pinchas the covenant of peace – the kind of peace that is the symbol of a true, deep, intimate relationship.

And isn't it interesting that the sins of the Egel and Baal Pe'or each happen right after a major turning point in the nation's relationship with God? The Egel happened after the revelation at Sinai; Baal Pe'or after the new generation of Israel finally recognizes and commits to God. Maybe they're there to teach us something profound.

At first, Israel's struggle was to recognize and trust God. But once they do, it's not over. They have a new struggle: Can they maintain that relationship, keep it sacred, intimate? And that's a struggle that we can relate to.

We're all in relationships with loved ones – with family, partners, friends... and God. How often do we take them for granted? We assume that once we've established the relationship, we've done the work... at that point, it'll take care of itself. But the stories of Egel and Baal Pe'or teach us the danger of that mindset.

Intimacy and commitment can become dry – with God, and with each other. In these stories, the Torah teaches us to take the tools of intimacy and relationship-building and keep them sacred. Don't misuse these tools by taking them outside the context of a relationship. Realize their potential, so that they'll be able to build our relationships stronger and stronger.

In our [News Letter about the Menorah](#), we began explaining what it was like to have Yehovah's face shine down upon us.

Yehovah's Face

A number of weeks ago we [talked to you about the Aaronic blessing](#) and how it was a guide to parenting. Yes, it too was from Rabbi Forhrman. I am not going to explain it here again but I would that you go and read it as all of this is coming together in this News Letter. Even last week Shabbat Service that we had in which Sombra Wilson taught on Healing. That and the midrash we had after. I do recommend you all come to the services and listen to the discussion about each weeks lesson. They are quite informative. Anyway, it was during that session that it was said many times that Yehovah and these discussions are drawing us closer in an intimate relationship. We are getting to know each other and our weaknesses and strengths.

yevarechecha Hashem v'yishmerecha,

we usually translate this 'may God bless you, keep you and may he watch over you'.

Yaer Hashem panav eleicha vihunecha,

'let God shine his face upon you and grant you grace'.

Yisa Hashem panav eleicha

'let God lift his face towards you',

v'yasem lecha shalom,

'and grant you peace'.

And we showed you in that teaching how this blessing was like Yehovah who guarded us in the beginning and then nurtured us and then step back and let us be who we are. The last part of this teaching was in relation to the Sabbath and Yehovah looking at us eye to eye. Yehovah lifting His face to us looking directly at us and not down upon us.

We then concluded this News Letter with the following.

When our Bride Groom comes and opens the door to let us into the wedding He is going to say to 5 of those virgins, I never KNEW YOU. It will be because they did not keep the commandments.

Now, do you understand what we are saying in the Amidah when we say the Sim Shalom?

With the light of His face, He gave us the Torah.

Pro 6:20 My son, keep your father's commandments, and do not forsake the law of your mother;

Pro 6:21 bind them upon your heart forever, tie them around your neck.

Pro 6:22 When you go, it shall lead you; when you sleep, it shall keep you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you.

Pro 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life;

The commandments and the Torah are light.

Isa 60:2 For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but Jehovah shall rise on you, and His glory shall be seen on you.

Isa 60:3 And the nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawning.

The Menorah, the Tree of Life represents the Light of Yehovah shining on us when we keep the commandments which are the essence of who Yehovah is. And we keep them, we become like Him. Then our lights will also shine.

May Yehovah bless you and guard you –

Yeh-va-reh-cheh-cha Yehovah veh-yeesh-meh-reh-cha

May Yehovah make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you –

Ya-air Yehovah pa-naiv ay-leych-cha vee-chu-neh-cha

May Yehovah lift up his face onto you and give you peace –

Yee-sa Yehovah pa-nahv ay-leyh-cha veh-ya-same leh-cha Shalom

Are you able to understand what you have just been taught and what is going on around you and how it relates to our days right now?

Isa 12:2 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation.

The word translated as salvation is the Hebrew word

H3444 (Brown-Driver-Briggs)

יְשׁוּעָה

yeshu'āh

BDB Definition:

1) salvation, deliverance

1a) welfare, prosperity

1b) deliverance

1c) salvation (by God)

1d) victory

Part of Speech: noun feminine

Isa 41:14 Do not fear, worm of Jacob and men of Israel; I will help you, says Jehovah, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Isa 42:8 I am Jehovah; that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images.

Isa 43:3 For I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.

Isa 43:11 I, I am Jehovah; and there is none to save besides Me.

Isa 43:15 I am Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.

Isa 45:21 Declare and bring near; yea, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this of old? Who has told it from then? Is it not I, Jehovah? And there is no other God besides Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none besides Me.

Isa 60:16 You will also suck the milk of nations, and suck the breast of kings; and you will know that I Jehovah am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

Hos 13:4 Yet I am Jehovah your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but Me. For there is no Savior besides Me.

So knowing all of this, then who are we talking about in Zechariah?

Zec 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, your King comes to you. He is righteous and victorious, meek and riding on an ass, even on a colt, the son of an ass.

Today just as we are about to enter the 7th Millennium, and the Promised Land, Baal Peor rules. LGBT rights dominate the news. Israel has once again become entangled in

Baal Peor lifestyles. It is on our TV in just about everything you can turn on. The COVID 19 pandemic is taking hundreds of thousands of lives around the world, just as thousand of Israel died after the death of the Simeonite Prince.

| Num 25:9 And those that died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

Is our worship with Yehovah as we have been talking about becoming dull. Is our intimacy with Him taken over by other things, other distractions. What I am pointing out here is for each one of us to check our love for Yehovah. Has it become routine. Are you just having sex for your selfish pleasure, Baal Peor, or are you developing a close and open relationship with our Father, with you Husband Yehovah? Do you get through the prayers to check that off your list of things to do or are you talking to Him like you do with your Mother when she calls?

You are about to witness Millions of people die around the world in the next few years. Millions. How intimate are you going to be with Yehovah about everything? When is your prayer life going to get real? Are you at that stage in your life when Balaam can't curse you because you are righteous in Yehovah's eyes? It was Yehovah who died on the tree to pay the penalty that you should have paid. He loved you that much. He did not send someone else to pay for it. He paid for it with His own life. Satan is coming to deceive the whole world and if possible the elect as well. Maybe some of you.

The Jesus in the world today accepts homosexual priests and lifestyles in his church. He is good with the laws being done away and with you worshipping him for doing so. This is Baal Peor and the Golden Calf. Yehovah is the Aleph Tav, He is the Salvation, the Yeh Shua that we seek. He never changed and is the same today, yesterday and forever. It is time to get intimate with Yehovah and seek His face and to let His face shine down on us when we begin to obey Him and uphold the laws He has instituted for the Kingdom.