



## Balak/Shiva Asar B'Tammuz - The Mouths of Creation

*Special expanded edition marking 20<sup>th</sup> Yahrzeit of my Rebbe,  
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the Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisroel*

### The Three Mouths

In this week's Parsha, we have the account of Bilaam's donkey speaking, besting him in an argument, and causing him humiliation. The Mishna says in Avos (5:9) that "**Pi ha'ason**"-**the mouth of the donkey** - meaning the ability for Bilaam's donkey to speak was a special creation that was created in the twilight zone between the first Friday and the first Shabbos. First and foremost, that means that **this phenomenon was meant to happen** whether Bilaam would have succumbed to the temptation of cursing the Jewish people for financial gain or not. What is the function of the "**mouth of the donkey**" that was created already at the beginning of time and why was it created at this very unique time in the twilight zone between Friday and Shabbos? The account in this week's Parsha comes after the parshas that teach us of the other two "**mouths**" created at the twilight zone between Friday and Shabbos, that we just read about. There is the "**mouth of the well**" in last week's Parsha and there is the "**mouth of the earth**" that swallowed Korach in the Parsha before that. We explained last week (see Even Shesiya Chukas 5779) why it's called the "**mouth of the well**" and not simply,

opening of the well. This week, we will add explanation from another angle. Why is the pit that swallowed Korach called the "**mouth of the earth**"? The fact that the "**mouth of the earth**" was also created at that unique point at the beginning of time, means that this event was meant to happen whether Korach deserved it or not. **What is the meaning behind the inevitable opening of the "mouth of the earth"**? Why did it have to be created at this unique point at the beginning of time? What does it say about these Parshiyos that they come in direct succession?

### Generation of the Desert

The bulk of what was created at this unique point at the very end of the days of creation were manifest in the generations that spanned the leaving of Egypt to the coming of the land of Israel. They include the three "**mouths**" mentioned above, the **Mann**, the **staff of Aharon**, the **Shamir** that was needed already in the desert to cut the precious stones, the **writing** that was manifest upon the Torah and the **Luchos**, the **Luchos** themselves and according to some opinions, the **place of burial of Moshe**. The notable exception that predates all of these, is

MAY ALL THE HARBOTZOS HaTORAH AND KEDUSHA GENERATED BY THIS  
WEEK'S PARSHA SHEET BE A TREMENDOUS Z'CHUS FOR

לע"נ פרן הגאון האפ"ת פוהר"ר  
שפואל יעקב בן יצחק פתתיהו וינברג  
זצוקללה"ה ראש ישיבת נר ישראל

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the **rainbow** and according to some opinions, the **ram that Avraham sacrificed** instead of Yitzchak. What is the connection between the generations that lived in the desert and these ten things that for some reason, as yet to be explained, had to be created for them at that time? How do we fit them together with these other two entities that were revealed at an earlier point in history? (The other opinions as to what was created at that time are “regular forces” of creation that are with us perpetually like all other natural forces, not entities that were revealed at specific times and therefore we will not deal with them at this time).

### **Overcoming the sin of Adam**

The greatest distinction of the generations that lived under Moshe, be it the one that left Egypt and died out in the desert, be it the one that entered the land of Israel and would be associated also as the generation of Yehoshua is that **they received the Torah and lived under the influence of Moshe who brought the Torah to earth. These are water shed generations that actualized the potential to overcome the sin of Adam.** Amongst the many setbacks caused by the sin of Adam there is one that is the defining character of what changed because of the sin. Hashem barred the tree of life from Adam because he became unworthy of the eternal life that it would grant him. We know that the “tree of life” is the Torah that is also described as “the tree of life for those who uphold it’ (Mishlei 3:18) and the Torah repeatedly promises us the real eternal life as the outcome and reward of upholding the Mitzvos of the Torah. For twenty-six generations the world was unworthy of the “Tree of life”. The generations living under Moshe actually got it and for a brief period, actually overcame all the ill effects of the sin of Adam, which were sadly reinstated with the sin of the golden calf.

### **Building a Bridge to what was Lost**

The **Abarbanel** in his commentary on Avos, “**Nachlas Avos**” points out that the sin of Adam occurred on the first Friday afternoon in history. The original plan that Adam failed to live up to was to withhold from the temptation of eating

from the tree of knowledge just until Shabbos came in and then Adam himself would have been the Moshiach, eaten from the tree of life and at that point he would be permitted to eat from the tree of knowledge as all evil gets converted to good and the very first Shabbos would usher in Olam Habah. But Adam not only failed to complete the mission but became categorically unworthy to make another attempt at the mission. How would the world fulfill the destiny of being repaired and elevated by man and lead into Olam HaBa? **For that purpose, following the sin of Adam, before Shabbos came in, Hashem created these special entities and their function is to be the bridge that connects to Shabbos in the grand cosmic sense.** These forces will facilitate man and the world around him to make it to the grand Shabbos, the world that is “**all Shabbos for eternal life**”. As the Abarbanel explains, the unique function of the generations that lived under Moshe is to merit to get the Torah and put everything that was derailed by the sin of Adam back on course. With this idea of the Abarbanel we can gain an additional appreciation why the generation of Moshe is called the “**Dor De’ah**” – the generation of **knowledge**, not just because they got the knowledge of the Torah but also because they were a Tikun for the sin of “**Etz HaDass**” the tree of **knowledge**.

### **Assessing the Damage**

Before we continue with the Abarbanel’s brilliant and deep observations, a few words of introduction are necessary in order to appreciate the full impact of his ideas. By the original plan, this world that requires refinement and elevation would have lasted six days and Shabbos would have closed the circuit on this world to **shut it down** so as to usher in Olam Habah. But as a result of all the added work that the sin of Adam created, what would have taken days, now takes millennia and hence, “six thousand years is [the span of] the world and one [millennium] desolate and at the end of that thousand years (the seventh millennium), Hashem renews his world” (Sanhedrin 93A). We know that the setbacks of the sin of Adam corrupted everything in the earthly realm including the animals, the

vegetation, and even the earth itself “accursed is the earth because of you”(Bereishis 3:17) and it will take the combined effort of all the generations to undo all this damage. **All the damage was done was because Adam and Chava fell into heresy because they were convinced by the snake that they themselves can be gods and compete with Hashem.** Adam is told “**Kotz vedardar tazmiach lach**” - **thorns and thistles** will grow for you”. In here lays an allusion that all the ills of the world come from the heresy of Adam thinking that Hashem is not the one and only, but if he eats from the tree of knowledge, he could be a god also. Hashem is “**Echad**” – one, which has the numerical value of 13. Idolaters think that there could also be “**acher**” – another, which has a numerical value of 209. The difference in the spelling between “**Echad**” and “**acher**” is that “**Echad**” ends with a “**Dalet**” with a numerical value of 4 and “**acher**”, ends with a “**Reish**” with a numerical value of 200. The difference in numerical value is 196 which is the numerical value of “**Kotz**” – thorn. In essence, Hashem was saying to Adam your heresy is the “**Kotz**” – thorn, numerical value of 196, that converts the “**Dalet**” (4) of “**Echad**” to the “**Reish**” (200) of “**Acher**” and that is what causes everything that is wrong in the earthly realm. **This is the secret why one man’s work now has to be done by generations as the Hebrew word for generation is “Dor”, same as “Dar” – thistle, where the “Dalet” transitions to a “Reish”, but , “Dor” is with the addition of the ‘Vav’ numerical value 6 which represents the Torah which was given on the sixth day of Sivan, the ‘Vav’ also represents the six thousand years that it will take and the ‘Vav’ is also a connector, like a line connects two points, representing that it will be the combined effort of all the generations. But most of all, the ‘Vav’ represents Torah, as the ‘Vav’ is called in the Zohar (Vayikra 2A) ‘the letter of truth’ and the ‘Vav’ resembles a small tree, the stem being like the trunk and the head like the emergence of branches, as it represents the Torah which is the “tree of life”.**

### **Multi-Generational Admission**

Heresy is called “**Kefirah**” - denial. The opposite of that is “**Hodaa**” – which means both admission

and thanks”. Whenever we **thank** Hashem, we are **admitting** that He is the only one that could have helped us. We say in davening “**I’dor va’dor nodeh lecha**” – **from generation to generation we thank (admit) to You.** That is the essence of the Tikkun that has to emerge from the span of the generations: an admission and acknowledgment that Hashem is the One and only real power and master that there is and there ever will be, and that will be what will fix the heresy that came into the world through the snake and the sin of Adam.

### **The Goal and the Steppingstones**

The unique function of the generations under Moshe’s leadership is to get the universe back on course toward Olam Habah. People mistakenly think that the universe was repaired with the rainbow as that was a covenant that the world would never be destroyed again. But that was just a stepping- stone for the sake of Torah that would emerge under the leadership of Moshe. That is the secret that an allusion to Moshe before he was born is by the decree of the flood (Chullin 139), because **what really made us categorically better than the generation of the flood was getting the Torah under the leadership of Moshe. This is the secret that Moshe as a baby was also in an ark, and the final destruction of the Egyptians was with the drowning in the Red sea, all pointing to the fact that we only really got past the flood with Moshe, who was drawn and elevated above water.** The ram sacrificed instead of Yitzchak made us worthy to be the people to get the Torah and indeed **the sound of the shofar at Matan Torah was the Shofar from that very ram!**

### **Seven Books of Chumash**

This is the secret that Chazal actually see the Chumash divided into seven as the book of **Bamidbar can be subdivided into three** because one book is Bamidbar until the P’sukim that are surrounded with the two upside-down “**Nuns**” in Parshas Behaalosecha, those P’sukim between the upside-down “**Nuns**” are a book in their own right, and all the P’sukim from that point until the end of Bamidbar, would be the sixth book of Chumash and sefer Devarim would be the

seventh, corresponding to the seven days of creation. **We have reached a point in Chumash corresponding to the end of the sixth day in the twilight zone before Shabbos**, as sefer Devarim is said in the last weeks of Moshe's life to the generation that would see a new world order under Yehoshua.

### **Mouth of the Earth**

We now can go back to the words of the Abarbanel and appreciate their depth. We will not belabor the reader with all the details that he says about all the ten things created in the twilight zone between Friday and Shabbos. Suffice it to say that it all has to do with bringing Torah, which is the tree of life barred from Adam, into the world and duplicating to some extent the conditions of the garden of Eden. The unique ideas that he says about the three **"mouths"** is that they are **making admissions to counter the heresies by the original sin**. The **"mouth of the earth"** is because Adam was overly earthly and gave in to his desires and for that reason, even the earth was cursed because of him. In truth, Adam himself deserved to be swallowed up by the earth because of the heresy that the snake conned him into, but he got a commuted sentence and was only told that he is now mortal and will **eventually** return to be buried in the earth that he was created from. The phenomenon of the **"mouth of the earth"** is the earth giving a message contra to the heresy that man can have his own independent kingdom on earth, separate from Hashem. That message had to emerge at one point during history. Hashem combined that message with the necessity to punish Korach for his heresy against Hashem by questioning Moshe, Hashem's loyal servant, whose role IS to be a Tikun for Adam.

### **Resolving a Contradiction in Rambam**

I would like to add this idea of the Abarbanel to an idea I heard from **my Rosh Yeshiva, Maran HaGaon HaRav Yaakov Weinberg, ZT"l** (Yahrzeit today - 17<sup>th</sup> Tammuz). There are those that raise a contradiction in the Rambam. The Rambam writes in the eighth chapter of Hilchos Yesodos HaTorah that we believe that Moshe is a faithful representative of Hashem solely and only

because of the revelation at Sinai when **we heard from Hashem Himself that Moshe is His faithful representative** – and all the miracles that Moshe did in the desert **including having Korach sink into the earth** were done out of the necessity of the time, and not as proof of Moshe being Hashem's faithful messenger. However, the Rambam in his commentary on the Mishna where he lays out his 13 principle of Judaism, in the 8<sup>th</sup> principle which is to believe that Moshe is a faithful messenger that always said exactly what Hashem said says: "and this idea is demonstrated by the Pasuk: ".....I made nothing up from my own heart..." That Pasuk leads into Moshe saying that if he is telling the truth "the earth will open its mouth and swallow them...". The Rosh Yeshiva explained that **what the Rambam means by "the idea is demonstrated...."** simply means a Pasuk where the idea is articulated – and NOT necessarily the incontrovertible empirical evidence, which in this case is the revelation at Sinai. **According to the Abarbanel the earth itself was admitting and articulating that truth** we learned from the revelation at Sinai

### **Mouth of the Well & Mouth of the Donkey**

The **"Mouth of the well"** which was in the merit of **Miriam who was a Tikun for Chava**. Chava talked Adam into eating from the forbidden fruit. Miriam **speaks** prophecy and praise of Hashem and is a Tikun for Chava and as we explained last week, the **"mouth of the well"** enables understanding the truth of Torah – the opposite of falsehood.

The **"Mouth of the Donkey"** is the Tikun for the snake and the whole animal kingdom that was damaged by the sin. The snake, as a representative of the animal, spoke falsehoods that caused Adam and Chava to rebel. **The "mouth of the Donkey", on behalf of all animals, speaks in service of Hashem**. Hashem combined that with putting Bilaam in his place for **not submitting to what Hashem really wants**, but rather tried to find loopholes to do what he wanted.

### The 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz

Parshas Balak, which ends the series of the “mouths” is always read around the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz which ushers in the three weeks when we mourn the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. The precedent for the future destruction of the Beis HaMikdash was the sin of the spies who came back on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av which means that the bulk of their forty days spying on the land of Israel was during the month of Tammuz. The 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz goes directly against the Tikkun made by Moshe’s generation as it was the day that **the Luchos were broken** and in the later generation, **the Torah was burned**. The Luchos were broken in response to the sin of the golden calf. Is there a common denominator?

### The Challenge of Tamuz

The Sefer Yetzira says that in the month of Tamuz, the letter ‘ches’ reigns in the power of sight. This cryptic phrase is explained by the **Beis Yaakov of Ishbitza** as follows: The Gemara says in Menachos that the “ches” is to be written with a high roof, pointing upwards, alluding to that Hashem is ‘chai’ - lives (alluded to by the letter ches) in the highest places of reality. Meaning to say, even though Hashem is everywhere, Hashem’s presence is perceived in Heaven but not on earth. This is the great challenge in life; we see the wonderful world that Hashem gave us full of life events for better or for worse but we don’t see Hashem and His plan behind those events and thus **we ascribe our own interpretations and explanations as to what is going on, and we are invariably wrong**. Adam didn’t know how to look at the fact that Hashem barred the tree from him and Chava and bought into the snake’s false narrative. The Jewish people did not know how to look at the fact that it seemed to them as if Moshe was late in coming back and similarly, they saw something that they didn’t understand which they interpreted as Moshe’s coffin hovering in heaven. The spies did not know how to look at the fact they saw giants and that they saw people dying in masse in the land of Israel. Korach did not know how to look at what he saw prophetically that he would have a descendent Shmuel. Balak sees the Jewish people taking over and sees that in a threatening

way. The Arizal says that the permutation of the name “Havaya” that reigns in the month of Tammuz is the name Havaya spelled backwards, which is alluded to in the final letters of the words that Haman said “**zeh einenu shoveh li**” - **all this is worth nothing to me** when I see Mordechai sitting in the King’s gate”. Everyone is suffering from a bad and wrong perspective on what they are seeing. If they would only perceive the Divine plan behind it, they would see things differently. **The challenge of the month of Tamuz is how to look at things. When we fail it’s called a failure in Torah because Torah has come to the world to give us the proper perspective and that’s why it’s the beginning of the end for the Beis HaMikdash - as the Beis HaMikdash is where Hashem revealed Himself within earth to see the truth three times a year, that Hashem is the One and Only**. The beginning of the end is losing the perspective that was achieved by the admission of the three “mouths”. That is the challenge of Tamuz in general and the setback of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz per se.

### The Torah of the Rosh Yeshiva ZT”L

My Rebbe, the Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisroel was taken from us on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, the same day that the Luchos were broken and the Torah was burned. He was the pillar of truth in our generation and his unique way of learning was to successfully dig beneath the deceptive, simple apparent meanings of the texts and ideas of Chazal and uncover an ‘admission’ of the true meanings. With his keen analysis and subtle “diyukim” – inferences, he would amaze us and **demonstrate** to us that very often, the Gemara and the Rambam were actually saying the **opposite** of what they seemed to say at first glance. מי יתן לנו תמורתו.



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