

The Great Rabbi Akiva Eiger's Amazing Revelation “לק” ב אויבי לקחתיך — I Hired You to Curse ב קל Days “רק” ב — Yet You Also Blessed the Remaining ב רכ Days

In this week's parsha, parshas Balak, we learn about Balak and Bilam's determined effort to curse Yisrael. Curiously, we find that they chose to combat Yisrael with the power of the number seven. They built seven altars, upon which they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams. This process is repeated three times in three separate locations. Let us explore the rationale underlying this curious choice.

Here is the first instance (Bamidbar 22, 41): **“ויהי בבוקר ויקח בלק את בלעם ויעלהו במות בעל וירא משם קצה העם, ויאמר בלעם אל בלק בנה לי בזה שבעה מזבחות והכן לי בזה שבעה פרים ושבעה אילים—**and it was in the morning: Balak took Bilam and brought him up to the heights of Baal, and from there he saw the edge of the people. Bilam said to Balak, **“Build for me here seven altars and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams.”** Here is the second instance (ibid. 23, 14): **“ויקחהו שדה צופים אל ראש הפסגה ויבן שבעה—**he took him to the field of lookouts, to the top of the peak, and he built seven altars and brought up a bull and a ram on each altar. In other words, a bull and a ram were to be sacrificed on each of the seven altars. Here is the third instance (ibid. 28): **“ויקח בלק את בלעם אל ראש הפעור הנשקף על פני הישימון, ויאמר בלעם אל בלק בנה לי בזה שבעה מזבחות והכן לי בזה שבעה פרים ושבעה אילים—**Balak took Bilam to the summit of the Peor that overlooks the face of the Yeshimon. Bilam said to Balak, **“Build for me here seven altars and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams.”**

Let us begin our enlightening journey with the words of our blessed sages concerning this matter, in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 20, 18): **“ולמה שבעה מזבחות, כנגד שבעה מזבחות שבנו שבעה צדיקים מאדם ועד משה ונתקבלו, אדם והבל ונח אברהם יצחק ויעקב ומשה, שהיה [בלעם] אומר למה קבלת את אלו, לא בשביל עבודה שעבדו לפניך קבלתם, לא נאה לך שתהא נעבד משבעים אומות ולא מאומה אחת. השיבו רוח הקדש (משלי יז-א) טוב פת חריבה, טוב מנחה בלולה בשמן וחריבה, מבית מלא זבחי ריב, שאתה רוצה להכניס מריבה ביני ובין ישראל.”** The seven altars correspond to the seven altars built by the following seven tzaddikim—Adam, Hevel, Noah, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and Moshe. Bilam reasoned

that Hashem favored them because of their offerings to Him. So, he appealed to Hashem: Wouldn't it be nicer for you to be served by seventy nations rather than by a single nation? He received the following divine response (Mishlei 17, 1): **“Better a dry piece of bread and peace with it than a house full of celebrations that are contentious—for you wish to introduce contention between Me and Yisrael.**

Bilam Opposed Shabbas Kodesh which Moshe Established for Yisrael

In Imrei Emes, the great Rabbi Yehudah Leib Eiger of Lublin, zy”a—the grandson of the great Rabbi Akiva Eiger—states his bewilderment: **“וכי שוטה היה בלעם שרצה לפעול פעולתו בהרבה מזבחות—**was Bilam really such a fool—thinking that offering sacrifices on all of these altars would earn him the favor and status of all of these tzaddikim? He explains the meaning of the Midrash based on the formula we recite in the Shacharis service on Shabbas: **“שמח משה במתנת חלקו כי עבד נאמן קראת לו, כליל תפארת בראשו—**נתת לו בעמדו לפניך על הר סיני, ושני לוחות אבנים הוריד בידו וכתוב בהם שמירת” Moshe rejoiced in the gift that was his portion—for You referred to him as a faithful servant. You placed a crown of splendor on his head, when he stood before You on Har Sinai. He brought down in his hand two tablets of stone—inscribed upon them was the observance of Shabbas.

The Tur (O.C. 281) explains the meaning of this formula based on the teaching in the Midrash (S.R. 1, 28) that Moshe Rabeinu arranged for Yisrael to observe Shabbas while they were yet in Mitzrayim: **“וירא בסבלותם (שמות ב-יא), ראה שאין להם מנוחה, הלך ואמר לפרעה, מי שיש לו עבד, אם אינו נח יום אחד בשבוע הוא מת, ואילו עבדיך, אם אין אתה מניח להם יום אחד בשבוע הם מתים. אמר לו, לך ועשה להן כמו שתאמר, הלך Seeing their suffering, he appealed to Pharaoh on their behalf. He argued that without a day of rest once a week, the slaves would surely die. Pharaoh conceded and told Moshe to give them a day of rest. Moshe established Shabbas as their day of rest.**

This is the significance of the phrase: “ישמח משה במתנת חלקו”—Moshe rejoiced in the Shabbas—that he had already had the privilege to provide for Yisrael in Mitzrayim, even before the Torah was given. In fact, we find that for this reason Moshe also merited giving Yisrael the mitzvah of Shabbas after the exodus from Mitzrayim—as it is written (Shemos 31, 12): “ויאמר ה' אל משה לאמר, ואתה דבר אל בני ישראל” לאמר, אך את שבתותי תשמורו כי אות היא בני וביניכם לדורותיכם לדעת כי אני ה' מוקדישכם—Hashem said to Moshe, saying: “And you, speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: ‘Just observe My Shabbasos, for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am Hashem, Who sanctifies you.’”

In the Arizal’s Likutei Torah (Ki Tisa) we find the following explanation. In Mitzrayim, Yisrael observed the Shabbas solely for the purpose of resting from their strenuous labor; however, the true purpose of Shabbas observance is to become sanctified to Hashem. Therefore, HKB”H ordered Moshe: “And you”—who chose the day of Shabbas for Yisrael in Mitzrayim, as a day of rest from their strenuous labor; “speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: ‘Just observe My Shabbasos’”—from now on, they will observe the Shabbas just because I commanded them to do so—they are “My Shabbasos”; Shabbas constitutes a sign between Hashem and Yisrael for all generations.

Thus, we see that Moshe Rabeinu was the conduit through which Yisrael received the kedushah of Shabbas. Accordingly, Rabbi Leibele Eiger explains, Moshe Rabeinu was the seventh tzaddik, starting from Adam HaRishon, to build a mizbeiach for Hashem. He was the seventh, corresponding to the seventh day, Shabbas Kodesh, to impart his kedushah upon Yisrael. Now, let us recall the well-known Sifrei in parshas V’zos HaBerachah regarding the following passuk (Devarim 34, 10): “ולא קם נביא עוד” “ולא קם כמשה, אבל באומות העולם קם ומנו בלעם”—among Yisrael, there was no other prophet like Moshe; however, among the other nations there was—namely Bilam.

Therefore, when the evil Bilam witnessed Moshe’s tremendous power—his ability to extend the kedushah of Shabbas to Yisrael—he planned to oppose him—thinking that he was Moshe’s counterpart and equal from the side of tumah. Consequently, he built seven altars corresponding to the seven altars built by the seven tzaddikim from Adam to Moshe. He intended to use his power of tumah to oppose Moshe—who built the seventh mizbeiach corresponding to the day of Shabbas. This is the gist of his explanation.

This fits in very nicely with what the Imrei Noam writes (Balak 4). He explains that Balak was afraid to combat Yisrael alone, because he understood that the mitzvah of Shabbas would protect them.

Hence, he cleverly joined forces with Bilam. Their two names--702=132+52+376+142) (בל"ק ב"ן צפ"ר בלע"ם)—possess the same numerical value as 702) (שב"ת). So, he mistakenly thought that the two of them together possessed the power to combat the kedushah of Shabbas that Moshe had successfully bequeathed to Yisrael.

Seven Altars Three Times Corresponding to the Three Aspects of Shabbas

Following their lead, I would like to propose my own explanation concerning Balak and Bilam’s malicious intent—specifically, why they chose to build seven altars, three times, in three different locations. The Tur (O.C. 292) teaches us that our blessed sages instituted three distinct tefilos for Shabbas Kodesh corresponding to the three aspects of Shabbas—the Shabbas of creation, the Shabbas of Matan Torah and the Shabbas of “le’asid la’vo”:

The tefilah recited on leil Shabbas corresponds to the Shabbas of creation. Accordingly, it mentions the creation of the heaven and the earth, and the completion of the creation on the seventh day. The tefilah recited for Shacharis corresponds to the Shabbas of Matan Torah. Accordingly, it makes mention of Har Sinai and the luchos Moshe brought down from the mountain. The tefilah for Minchah corresponds to the Shabbas of “le’asid la’vo.” Accordingly, it mentions the oneness of G-d and His name and His people Yisrael—as described in the passuk referring to the final redemption (Zechariah 14, 9): “וזהיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה” “ה' אחד ושמו אחד”—Hashem will be the King over all the world; on that day, Hashem will be one and His name will be one. Then, Yisrael will be the one nation on earth.

In this light, we can comprehend Balak and Bilam’s malicious intent. Thrice they constructed seven altars; and they offered korbanos on these altars in three distinct locations. They wished to use their power of tumah to oppose the three distinct aspects of Shabbas. Since these three Shabbasos represent the three foundations of our emunah, they wished to uproot them, chas v’shalom.

Balak and Bilam Opposed the Two Types of Judgment

It appears that we can support and explain the ideas presented by the Imrei Emes and the Imrei Noam—regarding Balak and Bilam’s opposition to the mitzvah of Shabbas—based on a revelation presented by the divine kabbalist, the author of the Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (35 and 148). He suggests that the wicked Bilam intended to awaken the two forms of judgment against Yisrael—the strict form of “din” and the more lenient

form of “din.” This is alluded to by the name בלעם. If we spell out each letter of this name fully as follows: בֵּית לַמִּדְּעֵי מַיִם and we calculate the sum of these letters, we obtain a total of 696, which equals קִשׁוּה רַבָּה—meaning strict and lenient.

Regarding Bilam, the passuk states (Bamidbar 23, 4): וַיִּקַּר אֶלְקִים: וַיִּקַּר אֶלְקִים—G-d happened upon Bilam. According to the Megaleh Amukos this alludes to the fact that Bilam drew his power from קִשׁוּה רַבָּה—an abbreviation for קִשׁוּה רַבָּה רַבָּה—strict, lenient. Additionally, his forces totaled 696, תַּרְצִו, the sum of the full spelling of his name (see previous paragraph). Rearranged this sum spells צַרְרוּת—meaning trouble—indicating that Bilam intended to use his powers to cause Yisrael trouble and misfortune.

Next, let us introduce a teaching from the Bnei Yissaschar (Shabbas 1, 6). He addresses the matter of why we do not blow shofar on Rosh HaShanah if it falls on Shabbas. In Sha’ar HaKavanos (Rosh HaShanah 2), the Arizal explains that the purpose of the mitzvah of blowing the shofar on the two days of Rosh HaShanah is to mitigate the force of the judgment—to lessen the “dina kashya” on the first day and the “dina rafya” on the second day (the two forms of “din” mentioned above).

Now, we learn in the Zohar hakadosh (Yisro 88b) that all judgment is suspended in the world on Shabbas. This is alluded to by the numerical equivalent of 702 (שִׁבְתָּהּ), which equals קִשׁוּה רַבָּה רַבָּה (411+291)). Consequently, it is unnecessary to blow the shofar to lessen the force of the “din” when Rosh HaShanah falls on Shabbas; because the “dina kashya” and “dina rafya” have already been nullified by the kedushah of Shabbas.

We can now appreciate why Balak and Bilam opposed the mitzvah of Shabbas so vehemently. As mentioned, Bilam wished to curse Yisrael by invoking the force of the two types of “din”—“dina kashya” and “dina rafya.” Yet, as we have explained, the kedushah of Shabbas has the power to mitigate these two forces of judgment; for קִשׁוּה רַבָּה רַבָּה equals קִשׁוּה רַבָּה רַבָּה. Therefore, they built seven altars in order to combat the kedushah of Shabbas with their power of tumah.

Combining the Ideas of Two Spiritual Giants

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation concerning the subject of these two types of “din”—“kashya” and “rafya”—that Bilam intended to invoke against Yisrael. Additionally, how does the kedushah of Shabbas mitigate these two types of “din”? Our great teacher, the Chasam Sofer, provides us with an amazing allusion in Toras Moshe HaShalem (112b), citing a holy, anonymous, brilliant individual. This allusion is found in the following passuk in this week’s parsha (Bamidbar 23, 11): וַיִּאמֶר

“בלק אל בלעם מה עשית לי לקב אויבי לקחתך והנה ברכת בך” —Balak said to Bilam, “What have you done to me?! I hired you to curse my enemies; instead, you have actually blessed them.

His allusion is based on the writings of the Chesed L’Avraham, authored by the divine kabbalist Rabbi Avraham Azulai. He writes that Balak requested that Bilam curse the 132 (קל”ב) days of the year on which tachanun is not recited—either because of the kedushah of Shabbas, or Yom Tov or some other minor festival; whereas Bilam proceeded to bless even the remaining 222 (רכ”ב) days on which tachanun is recited. Here are the sacred words of the Chasam Sofer:

“לקב אויבי לקחתך והנה ברכת בך. שמעתי בשם גאון קדוש אחד מדבר, על פי מה דאיתא בחסד לאברהם כי בשנה פשוטה יש שנ”ד ימים, רכ”ב ימים אומרים בהם תחנון והמה ימי הדין, וקל”ב ימים אין אומרים בהם תחנון והם ימי רחמים ורצון... ועל פי זה יש לומר שבלק רצה [מבלעם] שקל”ב ימים ימי רחמים ורצון, יקלל להשליט בהם חלילה מדת הדין, ורכ”ב ימים [של דין] יניחם כמות שהם, אבל הקב”ה הפך הקללה לברכה, והיה מברך הרכ”ב ימים שיהיה ימי רחמים ורצון, וקל”ב ימים ימי רצון הניח כמות שהם. וזה לק”ב בגמטריא קל”ב לקחתך, ועתה ברכת בך הרכ”ב ימים.”

A normal Jewish calendar year is comprised of 354 days; 222 of them are days of judgment on which tachanun is recited; while 132 of them are days of rachamim and good-will on which tachanun is omitted. Applying this notion to Balak’s statement to Bilam, we can infer that Balak wanted Bilam to curse the days of rachamim and good-will, transforming them into days ruled by the attribute of “din.” For, Balak uses the word לק”ב which has a numerical equivalent of 132. He wanted the remaining 222 days—that were already characterized by “din”—to remain as such; however, HKB”H transformed the curse into a blessing; he ended up blessing those 222 days, so that they would become days of rachamim and good-will. This is inferred by the word בך”ד employed by the passuk, which has a numerical value of 222.

Although the Chasam Sofer refers to the author of this chiddush as an anonymous source, it is known that it comes from the brilliant Rabbi Akiva Eiger.

The Name קל”ב Is an Anagram of בל”ק—the Number of Days on which Tachanun Is Omitted

Now, based on what we have just established, we can better understand the significance of the passuk (Bamidbar 22, 4): וַיִּאמֶר מוֹאָב אֶל זְקֵנֵי מִדְיָן עֲתָה יִלְחָקוּ הַקְּהָל אֶת כָּל סְבִיבוֹתֵינוּ כְּלַחֹךְ הַשּׁוֹר אֶת יֶרֶק הַשְּׂדֵה, וּבִלְק בֶּן צְפוּר מֶלֶךְ לְמוֹאָב בָּעַת הַהוּא—Moav said to the elders of Midyan, “Now the congregation will chew up our entire surroundings, as an ox chews up the greenery of the field.” And Balak the son of Tzipor was the king of Moav at that time. Rashi provides the following clarification: “בעת ההיא, לא היה ראוי למלוכות, מנסיכי מדין היה, וכיון

“שמת סיחון מנוהו עליהם לצורך שעה”—**at that time, he was not yet fit to be king; for, he was one of the princes of Midyan; since Sichon died, they appointed him as their ruler, due to the immediate necessity.** We must endeavor to explain why the people of Moav saw fit to choose Balak specifically in their time of need.

It seems evident that Rabbi Akiva Eiger meant to address this issue. As we learned, the name Balak alludes to the 132 (קל"ב) days on which tachanun is not recited—indicating that his power of tumah was aimed at combating the positive influence provided by these 132 days. For, we have learned in the Gemara (Yoma 83b): “רבי מאיר הוה דייק בשמא”—Rabbi Meir could detect a person’s essence and nature based on his name. As an example, the Gemara cites an incident related to an innkeeper named Kidor; based on his name alone, Rabbi Meir understood that he was an evil person.

Thus, we can understand the pesukim as follows: “ובלק בן צפור”—because his name בלק indicated that he had the power to counteract the 132 days on which tachanun is omitted, this is the reason: מלך—“למוזאב בעת ההיא”—that he was chosen to be the king of Moav at that precise moment. We might even insinuate the following from Rashi: “מנוהו עליהם לצורך שעה”—they chose him to transform the hours of rachamim into hours of “din,” chas v’shalom. [The words לצורך שעה literally mean for the sake of the hour.]

Thus, Balak says (ibid. 22, 6): “ועתה לכה נא ארה לי את העם הזה”—**so now, please come and impose a curse upon this people for me**—specifically for me. For my name, בלק, indicates that I possess the power to combat the 132 auspicious days of the year. Fortunately, not only did Bilam fail to curse the 132 days on which tachanun is omitted, he was even forced to bless the 222 days on which tachanun is recited.

We can now shed a bit more light on the meaning of the Megaleh Amukos. He wrote that Balak and Bilam intended to invoke the force of the two heavenly courts against Yisrael—imposing upon them “dina kashya” and “dina rafya.” On the days tachanun is recited—days that are unassociated with any festival—they wished to invoke “dina kashya” against Yisrael. On the other hand, on days that tachanun is omitted—days that are festive to some degree—they realized that it would be impossible to arouse the stricter form of “din,” “dina kashya.” Therefore, they hoped to at least invoke the lesser form of “din”—“dina rafya.”

Balak and Bilam’s Downfall Secondary to the Kedushah of Shabbas

Continuing along this exalted path, let us combine the ideas presented by these two great luminaries—Rabbi Akiva Eiger and

his grandson, Rabbi Leibele Eiger, zy”a. Bilam and Balak’s failure to carry out their malicious initiative was due to the merit of Shabbas—which Moshe Rabeinu bequeathed to Yisrael. They planned for both the 222 days on which tachanun is recited and the 132 days on which it is omitted to all be days of “din.” Nevertheless, Bilam was forced to bless even the 222 days on which tachanun is recited. Their malicious scheme was thwarted by the kedushah of Shabbas which diminishes the force of these two heavenly courts of judgment—as alluded to by the name שב”ת, which equals קשי”א רפי”א.

We can comprehend the enormous power of Shabbas based on the following Zohar hakadosh (Yisro 88a): “כל ברכאן דלעילא ותתא ביומא”—**all blessings from above and from below depend on the seventh day.** All six weekdays receive their blessings from the day of Shabbas. This is derived from the passuk (Bereishis 2, 3): “ויברך אלקים את יום השביעי”—**G-d blessed the seventh day**—hence, it is the source of blessing for all the other days.

Not only is tachanun not recited on Shabbas, but there is no element of “din” in force on Shabbas; in fact, all the forces of the klipos flee from Shabbas, like from fire.

It turns out, therefore, that every day of the year receives its blessing and its “din” is diminished because of Shabbas. The 132 days on which tachanun is omitted include the days of Rosh Chodesh, the entire month of Nissan, and all the holidays and festivals; surely these are days on which “din” is not in effect. Nevertheless, even the 222 days on which tachanun is recited, even these days are enhanced and protected by the merit of Shabbas—as alluded to by the name שב”ת, which equals קשי”א רפי”א.

Alludes to the 222 Days Protected in the Merit of Shabbas

There is a well-known principle which is derived from the Gemara (Taanis 9a): There is nothing that is not alluded to in the Torah. Thus, it appears that we can find an allusion to the idea just presented from HKB”H’s statement at Har Sinai in the Aseres HaDibros (Shemos 20, 8):

“זכור את יום השבת לקדשו, ששת ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך ויום השביעי שבת לה’ אלקיך, לא תעשה כל מלאכה אתה ובנך ובתך עבדך ואמתך ובהמתך וגרך אשר בשעריך, כי ששת ימים עשה ה’ את השמים ואת הארץ את הים ואת כל אשר בהם וינח ביום השביעי, על כן ברך ה’ את יום השבת ויקדשהו.”

The Ramban comments in the name of the Mechilta that the statement “זכור את יום השבת לקדשו”—**Remember the day of Shabbas to sanctify it**—represents a mitzvas aseh. It is a positive commandment to mention the day of Shabbas on every one of the six weekdays:

”ופירושה, שהגוים מוניין ימי השבוע לשם הימים עצמן, יקראו לכל יום שם בפני עצמו, או על שמות המשרתים כנוצרים, או שמות אחרים שיקראו להם, וישראל מוניין כל הימים לשם שבת, אחד בשבת, שני בשבת, כי זו מן המצוה שנצטוו בו לזכרו תמיד בכל יום וזה פשוטו של מקרא“.

The other nations of the world name the days of the week individually. The Christians name the days based on the heavenly bodies, for example. Yisrael, however, refer to the days of the week based on their relationship to Shabbas. For, this is the simple meaning of the command to always remember, on a daily basis, the day of Shabbas.

We can understand this as follows. As we have learned, all six weekdays receive their blessing from the day of Shabbas: **”כל”** ברכאן דלעילא ותתא ביומא שביעאה תליין” Therefore, it is appropriate to mention Shabbas every single day in order to draw its kedushah to the other six days of the week. This is conveyed by the directive: **”Remember the day of Shabbas to sanctify it—**one should also remember it and mention it on the other six days of the week in order to draw kedushah to them.

Then the Torah goes on to explain the tremendous benefit and purpose served by extending the kedushah of Shabbas to the six weekdays: **”על כן ברח ה' את יום השבת ויקדשהו”—therefore, Hashem blessed the day of Shabbas and sanctified it.** Note that the passuk employs the word **ברך**, specifically. It is an anagram for **רכב** representing the number 222. This teaches us that in the merit of extending the kedushah of Shabbas to the weekdays, HKB”H blesses (ברך) even the 222 (רכב) days on which tachanun is recited.

G-d Is Not a Man that He Should Be Deceitful

How nice it is to find an allusion to this idea in the words of Bilam’s prophesy (Bamidbar 23, 18): **”וישא משלו ויאמר קום בלק ושמע: האזינה עדי בנו צפור, לא איש אל ויכזב ובן אדם ויתנחם, ההוא אמר ולא יעשה—he declaimed his parable and said: “Arise Balak, and hear; give ear to me, son of Tzippor. G-d is not a man that He should be deceitful, nor a human being that He should relent. Would He say and not do, or speak and not confirm? Behold! To bless have I received; He has blessed, and I shall not retract it.”** In other words, he informs **בלק**—who intended to curse the 132 (קלב) days on which tachanun is not recited, as alluded to by his name—that he must rise. For, you have made a grave error: **”לא איש אל ויכזב ובן אדם ויתנחם, ההוא אמר ולא יעשה ודבר ולא יקימנה”—G-d is not a man that He should be deceitful, nor a human being that He should relent.** Let

us explain this statement based on the following from the Bnei Yissaschar (Shabbasos 2, 1):

”חייב תוספת שבת כבר ידעת שהרא”ש ז”ל [ברכות פ”ד סימן ו] כתב שלא גודע שיעורו, והנה מרן האריז”ל כתב (פע”ח שער השבת פרק כד) שיעורו של השביתה עם התוספות לפניו ולאחריו מהראוי להיות ל”א שעות, [היינו כ”ד שעות של יום השבת, ו’ שעות לפני השבת מחצות יום שישי עד הלילה, ושעה אחת נוספת במוצאי שבת], והנה אנחנו בעניינינו מצאנו ראינו רמז בזה בתורה, מצות זכור את יום השבת וכו’, היא מצוה הל”א בתורה על פי חשבון ומנין הרמב”ם אשר סוגיין דעלמא אזלין כוותיה“.

The Rosh, z”l, teaches us that there is an obligation to prolong the Shabbas; however, he is uncertain as to the exact measure of this “tosefes Shabbas.” According to the Arizal, the duration of Shabbas along with its extensions—before and after—should be thirty-one hours [twenty-four hours for the day of Shabbas itself, six hours before Shabbas beginning around midday and one additional hour at the conclusion of Shabbas]. This is alluded to by the fact that the mitzvah of **”זכור את יום השבת לקדשו”** is the thirty-first mitzvah in the Torah, based on the Rambam’s reckoning.

In this manner, he explains (ibid. 3) very nicely why those who instituted the formulae for our tefilos refer to HKB”H by the name **אל** on Shabbas. We find this name in Shacharis on Shabbas: **”לא אל אשר שבת מכל המעשים ביום השביעי and אדון על כל המעשים”** The name **אל** has a numerical value of thirty-one—indicating that Shabbas is the thirty-first mitzvah.

In this light, we can suggest the following interpretation of Bilam’s remark: **”לא איש אל ויכזב ובן אדם ויתנחם”**—in other words, HKB”H, who is referred to by the name **אל**—alluding to the kedushah of Shabbas—will not be deceitful nor relent concerning what he commanded in the thirty-first mitzvah. In the thirty-first mitzvah, in the Aseret HaDibrot, he commanded: **”זכור את יום השבת”**—sanctify it during the six weekdays in order to extend the kedushah of Shabbas to the entire week, as well.

Then, HKB”H adds the following promise: **”על כן ברח ה' את יום השבת ויקדשהו”—in the merit of observing and sanctifying the Shabbas, He will also bless the remaining 222 days of the year—numbering ברך.** This is what Bilam informs Balak: Seeing as HKB”H already promised unequivocally that He would keep His promise, not only am I unable to curse the 132 days as requested, but I am also bound to do the following: **”הנה ברך לקחתי”—I have been commanded by the Almighty by dint of prophesy to bless the remaining 222 days; “ויברך”—thus, I cannot retract this berachah.**

Donated by Dr. Ralph and Limor Madeb
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