



Parshat Balak

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Weekly Dvar Torah

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Earthly Matters

Rabbi Yisroel Gettinger

Mara D'atra, Young Israel of the West Side

In Billam's first attempt at cursing the Jews, one of the first forced blessings that emerged from his mouth was: "Who has counted the soil of Yaakov and the numbers of the divisions of Israel?" While Onkoles translates "Afar Yaakov" to mean the infants of Yaakov, Rashi cites an alternative idea from the Midrash that the Pasuk is referring to the innumerable mitzvos performed with soil- not plowing with an ox and donkey together, not planting a mixture of seeds, the ashes of the Para Aduma, and the soil used for the Sota waters. From this perspective, Billam is praising the Jews for their dedication to mitzvos, and specifically in their connection to mitzvos that are soil related. Why are these mitzvos unique, and how do they speak of Israel's greatness?

The Gemara in Megilla 16a says that when Haman returned home after leading Mordechai around town on his special horse ride, his wife told him this was the beginning of his ultimate downfall, because the Jews are likened to both stars and dirt- when they fall, they descend all the way down to the dirt, but when they rise, they ascend all the way up to the stars. If this observation is indeed true, there must be some deeper meaning behind the polarized states of the Jewish people.

The Gemara in Kesubos 66b speaks of an interaction between R' Yochanan Ben Zakkai, the leader of the Jews at the time of the Destruction of the Second Temple, and the daughter of Nakdimin Ben Gurion, one of the richest Jews before the Temple was destroyed. Observing her picking through animal dung in desperate search for food, R' Yochanan inquired about her father's riches. She replied that her father had lost all his money because he had not given enough charity, and she was left completely indigent and hopeless. Upon hearing this, R' Yochanan said: "Praiseworthy are you Israel! When you act in accordance with God's will, there is no nation higher than you, but when you disobey HaShem's will, even the animals of the lowest of nations are higher than you."

Based upon the comments of the Maharsha and Marahal on this Gemara, it seems that R' Yochanan's point was that Jews are fortunate to have such great reliance with G-d because it is a reflection that our very identity is our connection with G-d. It is not just that G-d gives us special rewards when we do good and horrible punishments when we are bad, but rather that the entire culture of the Jews is contingent on their relationship with G-d. When the Jews ignore this aspect and try to live without this connection, they are the lowest of the low, but when they connect to G-d, they are stronger than anyone else. Other nations exist without intrinsic connections to G-d, and while this means that their bad actions will not necessarily bring them down to the dirt, it also means that they are limited and disabled from the potential of over rising to the stars by acting in accordance with G-d's will. Only the Jews, whose very character is being G-d's people, can actualize this absolute reliance with G-d as a means of rising to the top. Although R'

Yochanan was unfortunately inspired to this insight through observing how low the Jews fell, it was an inspiration nonetheless, as only a nation completely dependent on their connection to G-d could have such a fall.

When Avraham spoke with HaShem back in Parshas Vayeira, he prefaced his comments by stating that he was comparable to dirt and ashes. The Gemara in Sota 17a says that in reward for Avraham likening himself to dirt, his children merited the mitzvos associated with dirt, such as the ashes of Para Aduma and Sota dirt. Besides being a clear display of humility, Avraham's words meant that a Jew removed of his connection with HaShem is just like dirt, because unlike other nations who exist on levels above dirt without their connection to HaShem, the Jew's very identity is his relationship with HaShem. Recognizing that without HaShem we are just like dirt is also recognizing that with HaShem we can be like the stars, and the depth of Avraham's succinct comment lay in his understanding of his role as the first Jew and a man who felt empowered only through connecting with HaShem.

Avraham was rewarded for this declaration with the soil associated mitzvos, because the soil related mitzvos are the tools for connecting with G-d from even the lowest points. Even when we hit our spiritual "rock bottom," when we have descended all the way down to the dirt, there are mitzvos that focus on the dirt and pull us up from those depths. Moreover, the "innumerable soil mitzvos" are meant as a testament to our comparison with dirt, as if mitzvos in general are the process of taking dirt out of its low state and bringing it to a higher state. Soil ostensibly seems bland and powerless, and yet, as soon as a few seeds are planted and the right conditions are found in the right environment, the soil becomes a potent beast that creates strong trees with endless fruits and deep roots. Jews are like the dirt, and the seeds and conditions are the tools known as mitzvos mixed with the proper contexts of serving G-d, and when these variables merge together, our potential is limitless. Billam's point was a depiction of the futility of trying to fight the Jews, because even if the Jews are somehow reduced back to being plain dirt and void of connection with God, there are always "innumerable soil mitzvos" opportunities that pull them back up.

Billam's "soil of Yaakov" or the mitzvos done with dirt are ironically the same mitzvos that Avraham created with his self-likening to dirt, as they both are reflective on the fortunate state of the Jews that R' Yochanan Ben Zakaai found in the dire state of Nakdimin's daughter and that Haman's wife saw in Mordechai's sudden rise. Good Shabbos

What Do You See?

Rabbi Yisroel Brotsky

Associate Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis

Our perceptions mold the world in which we live. But as the saying goes: "two Jews in the room and you will have three different opinions."

I was learning in the Beit Midrash, when all of a sudden a man wearing tefillin and a gun in his shoulder holster came storming in! That's right, a gun! I was petrified, thinking: around these parts it was highly unusual to see a man sporting a gun, and he seemed a bit impetuous. I tried to keep my cool and pretend I didn't notice anything unusual. Apparently, I wasn't as discreet as I thought I was. He asked me, "What are you looking at?" I hesitated in fear, and he continued, "Oh you are probably looking at my tefillin. They are a Sephardic pair for a lefty and I had to turn it around. You probably never saw that before!" I immediately responded, "eh, exactly! That is exactly what I noticed, it is so interesting." Perception is everything – two people and two very different perceptions. Perhaps the tefillin should have piqued my interest more than the gun.

Parshat Balak is all about vision and perception. We begin with "Vayar Balak" (and Balak saw). We continue with "Vayar Bilam" (and Bilam saw), and we conclude with "Vayar Pinchas" (and Pinchas saw). Each one saw what others did not, in their own way – some for the better and some for the worse. Balak saw a selfish opportunity for anti Semitism, so he seized the moment. And according to Rav Chaim Brisker, he was elevated to the status of King of Moav for this reason. Bilam selfishly saw a nation to be cursed, with wealth and honor to be attained in return. Pinchas, however, saw with a selfless eye, and he saw HaShem's honor at stake. He saw an outrageous *chillul HaShem* taking place so he stood up for HaShem's honor and was blessed with a covenant of peace. The selfish and the selfless see very different things.

Different people see different things. Many, however, have distorted vision. If we turn our attention to Bilam and his distorted vision,

we will see that Bilam tried to curse the Jewish people. He had a vision, a perception of us, and he thought he would be able to destroy us by focusing in on it. HaShem, however, saw something else which brought us *bracha* (blessing). What did Bilam see, and what was his mistake?

Bilam is described by Rashi as being the man with the *shisum haayin*. (Sanhedrin 105a teaches us that it means he is the man with one good eye.) He sees well with one eye, implying that he was blind in the other. This explanation seems somewhat peculiar, for if the Torah wants to teach us that he was blind in one eye, then it seems it should have stated so explicitly, not merely by implication. So why does the Torah describe him as the man with one good eye?

Perhaps the Torah is teaching us something about the vision of Bilam. He did see well with one eye, but his other eye was missing. What is the difference between seeing well with one eye as opposed to two? The difference is two- fold. First, the man with one eye has a narrow vision, but the man with two eyes sees the broad picture, has a panoramic view, and sees the big picture. Second, the man with one eye is limited to seeing the surface of the object, whereas the man with two eyes is able to perceive the depth of the object, as he is able to see the dimension on the second side more clearly and thereby perceive its depth. Bilam saw well, but only with one eye. He had a narrow vision of people and of Klal Yisrael, and was unable to perceive our depth as well. His narrow and shallow vision of us was supposed to bring a curse upon us. But his prophetic mouth uttered a blessing instead. His prophecy was while “nofel oogiluy eynayim” – fallen and with both eyes wide open! HaShem opened both his eyes! He gave Bilam the big picture, the panoramic view. He showed him the depths of His holy nation.

Bilam wanted to set his narrow vision upon us, so he gazed at the Jewish encampment, but only *katzaihu* – its edge. He was focusing on the sins of the weak, the vulnerable, possibly even the outcasts of society. The Kli Yakar offers some insights into the nature of Bilam’s narrow vision. He focused on our beginnings – the idol worshiper, Terach. Bilam said, “I see evil beginnings of idol worship.” HaShem, however, opened his eyes and showed him a different picture. A picture of a righteous man named Avraham as our true beginning. Bilam said, “I see the sin of the golden calf, right after Har Sinai!” However, HaShem opened his eyes and told him “I see only a few sinners. Only three thousand died at the hands of the Leviim, and it was only the Eruv Rav (mixed multitude), an appendage to my children. I see my children, the Leviim, standing up for my honor, risking their lives for me! I also know that in their heart of hearts they really want to do my will. All I see is a nation that said ‘naaseh venishma’ (we see and we will do) – a people that deeply want to be connected to me”.

Perhaps Bilam, with his narrow and shallow vision, would see only the felons of the world, criminals that exploit the trusting and are locked in jail, away from society. However, perhaps HaShem sees a bigger picture, a picture of a charitable people who give away millions of dollars despite an economic recession... people willing to give their money to help their brothers and sisters while not knowing what kind of economic future lies around the corner. Perhaps HaShem does not see a people serving time in jail, but rather a people involved with the very important mitzvah of *pidyon shevuyim*, such as the efforts to release our dear brother Jonathan Pollard from prison. He sees a people willing to spend much time and resources to urge that he be allowed his freedom. We must escape our Bilam vision and expand our view to the panoramic one. We must appreciate the entire person and the entire Jewish people. We must see the entire picture, and focus on the good of others, and of our communities.

After the Jews were liberated from the Nazis, there was a man in a DP camp who did not want to participate with his fellow Jews at Shabbat services. When Rabbi Eliezer Silver asked him why he didn’t want to participate, he responded that, after what he had seen, his heart just wasn’t in it. Then there was a Jew who had the only Tehillim (book of Psalms) in the concentration camp. He rented it to others for three slices of bread, taking away their last morsel of life. A person said, “I can have nothing to do with such people that take advantage of others like that!” To which Rabbi Silver responded without hesitation: “It is unfortunate that you see things this way. I see a different picture. I see hundreds of Yidden willing to give up everything for a sefer Tehillim! We are so fortunate to be a part of this holy nation!” Together they all burst into the songs of the Kabbalat Shabbat service! Yes, we are all fortunate to be part of this Holy Nation! Shabbat Shalom.

Appreciating the Limits

Rabbi Dov Shapiro

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A few year's ago in Mishpacha Magazine, writer Ari Zivotofsky describes a celebratory feast he stumbled upon in Mumbai, India,

sponsored by a member of the Jewish community in honor of having acquiring a new car. Apparently, in the Mumbai Jewish community many have the custom to express gratitude for good things that happen in their lives. To many of us, such events might generate a fleeting, short lived feeling of excitement, but would hardly seem worthy of acknowledging with a gesture of gratitude towards Hashem. A wonderful practice indeed this remote community maintains; perhaps the more primitive society of Mumbai has some valuable instruction to offer our more sophisticated American culture.

There are numerous Chazal that identify the *mida* of *hakaras hatov* - showing appreciation - as foundational to many other good *midos*, and bemoan the ripple effect on one's *midos* when he ignores or denies the good he has received. Interestingly, although our society does not give primacy to this important perspective, as a matter of fact, as time passes, a proliferating sense of entitlement seems far more ubiquitous than the humbling *mida* of gratitude which *chazal* so passionately espoused, there was a time when even the arrogant self-centered persona could not ignore the innate, intuitive, *hakaras hatov* imperative.

In this week's *parsha* we meet *Bilaam*, who seems to have made a series of devastatingly bad choices. In addition to being etched in the annals of history as one who attempted to outsmart G-d, and instead was himself bested by his own mule, the individual who until recently would have been referred as the paradigm of the arch-enemy of the Jewish people, on a personal level, was also identified by *chazal* as an immoral individual with severe character flaws. Chazal describe him as selfish, greedy, and arrogant. Furthermore, and to his ultimate detriment, he was blissfully unaware of his bad *midos*. He boasted of his conformance with Hashem's wishes. As he proclaimed to *Balak* and his entourage, "*Im yiten li Balak m'lo beiso kesef v'zahav, lo uchal la'avor es pi Hashem* – Even if Balak were to give me a house full of gold and silver, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem." In his distorted sense of morality, *Bilam* considered his evil, nefarious behavior to be fulfilling the word of Hashem.

Yet, despite all of his sinful, misguided self-justification, there was one *mida* whose evil he recognized and whose implications he could not ignore. The *Yalkut Shimoni* describes that when *Balak* asked *Bilaam* to curses the Jews, *Bilam* initially resisted with a simple argument. He pointed out that *Balak* was a descendant of Lot, and it was *Avrohom Avinu* who had saved Lot from the destruction of *Sedom*. *Bilaam* himself was a descendant of *Lavan's* son, and it was only in Yaakov's merit that *Lavan* had a son. Hence the very existence of *Bilam* and *Balak* was owed to the credit of *Avrohom* and *Yaakov*. "How can we conspire" wondered *Bilam*, "to curse the descendants of those who are responsible for our very existence?!? You are causing both of us to be *'k'fuyei tov* guilty of denying the good that was done for us!" Not the kind of *mussar shmuess* you would expect to hear emerging from *Bilam's* mouth, right? Yet, apparently even *Bilam* was unable to ignore the shame and inescapable guilt of being categorized as a *kofuy tov* – one who denies the good he has received.

Let us consider the context of this dialogue. *Balak* was concerned about the very future of his country. He was concerned that the Jews would unseat him, conquer his land, and destroy his nation. The only solution he could come up with was to have *Bilam* curse the Jews. He decided that this was necessary for the survival of his nation. The benefit he had received stemmed from an event that took place centuries earlier, and had certainly not been intended as a benefit for *Balak*; it was a by-product of something *Avrohom* had done for his nephew, Lot. Yet *Bilam* rebuked *Balak* and felt that the essential *mida* of *hakaras hatov* should have prevented him from suggesting such an antagonistic strategy against *Klal Yisroel*.

Hakaras Hatov is something we struggle with constantly. Society tells us (both subtly and overtly) that we are entitled to great success, wealth, and luxury. We more readily notice where we are less endowed than our neighbors, than we do the great kindness we receive and have done nothing to deserve. It takes a diligent, conscious effort for us to feel and identify with the sense of propriety in this area than the misguided *Bilam* intuitively recognized.

The *Mesillas Yesharim* (Chapter 8) points out that every situation in a person's life is filled with opportunities to recognize and appreciate the *chesed* that Hashem has done for him. He writes this specifically about challenging situations in which the difficulties are prominent and far more apparent than the silver lining. Even at times of sickness, poverty, and personal tragedy, a discerning person is still able to recognize that Hashem is helping him get through these difficulties with kindness that he has not earned. Certainly, many of us have situations that are far less challenging and we still struggle to recognize and appreciate Hashem's kindness.

One who is successful at recognizing the good he receives not only becomes a better person, but a happier one as well. And the importance of this *mida* is underscored by none other than *Bilam* and his reaction to being asked to disregard it. And for that revelation, we thank him. Good Shabbos

The Weekly Sidra

"The Bulletproof General"

Rabbi Moshe Greebel Z"L

In this week's Sidra we find that Balak the king of Moav was terrified that his land would imminently be conquered by the B'nai Yisroel. As a result, he contracted the services of Bilam, a wicked Navi (prophet), to curse the B'nai Yisroel:

"And he sent messengers therefore to Bilam, the son of B'or, to P'sor, which is by the river of the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, 'Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they are dwelling opposite me. Come now therefore, I pray you, curse this people for me; for they are too mighty for me; perhaps I shall prevail, that we may defeat them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.'" (Bamidbar 22:5-6)

In the end, HaKadosh Baruch Hu did instruct Bilam to go to Balak:

"And G-d came to Bilam at night, and said to him, 'If the men (of Balak) come to call you, rise up, and go with them; but only that word which I shall say to you, that shall you do.'" (ibid. 22:20)

Nevertheless, once in Moav, Bilam regaled Balak with the following words:

"How shall I curse he whom G-d has not cursed, or how shall I defy he whom the L-rd has not defied? Who can count the dust of Ya'akov, and the number of the fourth part of Yisroel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his (Ya'akov)!" (ibid. 23:8-10)

Astounded at these words of Bilam, Balak bitterly rebuked his contracted Navi:

"And Balak said to Bilam, 'What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and, behold, you have blessed them!'" (ibid. 23:11)

If Bilam's curse would be rendered as nil, why then, did HaKadosh Baruch Hu tell him to go to Balak in the first place? The Dubno Maggid (Rav Ya'akov Ben Volf Kranz 1740- 1804) of blessed memory, expounded upon this subject with the following very clever parable of a 'bulletproof general.'

Word once came to a great general that in a far away place a prominent scientist concocted a certain salve, which when applied to a human would repel bullets. Being a commander of large military forces, the general decided to discover whether this information was true or not.

Hiring a wagon filled with provisions, the general set out on the long journey to the domain of the scientist. After an extensive and arduous excursion, the general at long last, reached his destination. There, he was told by the scientist that whosoever rubbed this salve upon his flesh, would become immune to bullets. Paying an exorbitant price, the general applied the salve to his flesh, and began his return trip. Yet, he was not absolutely certain whether the potion would perform as advertised.

On the return route, a gang of thieves took notice of the wagon, and decided to attack. Riding out of their hiding place, they drew their weapons and fired point blank at the general, their bullets striking him directly in the chest.

However, when they saw that their victim was not even stunned, they became terrified and ran for their lives. Surely, they thought, this one must be a sorcerer who could do them much harm.

"Where are you going?" called the general after them. "Come back and have a drink with me!"

The thieves, hearing these words of friendship, turned their steeds around, and headed back to the wagon. There, they all sat down

with their host, drinking and making merry.
"Tell me," inquired one of the thieves, "why did you invite us to drink, when we attacked with the intention of killing you?"

"I have purchased a most miraculous potion," replied the general, "that makes one bulletproof. Nevertheless, I was in doubt whether this concoction would be effective or not. It would have been illogical to shoot myself since there was always a possibility that the potion was a hoax. However, when you came along and shot me point blank in the chest, I knew that I had purchased something miraculous. It is for this that I am in debt to you."

The Maggid taught that the B'nai Yisroel had been told by HaKadosh Baruch Hu that they were a blessed nation, none being able to curse them. Yet, they were not absolutely certain of this. That is why He brought Bilam to curse them, to illustrate clearly that they were immune to any anathema. And so, concludes this parable of the Maggid.

Any student of history can very easily perceive that through all the persecutions and attempted genocides which Jews have experienced down through the ages, it is only their enemies who have been defeated. While perhaps, not psychologically prepared to admit this, the nations of the world know deep in their hearts that there is something very special about us not only to have survived the maltreatment to which we have been subjected, but to flourish so successfully as well.

It is as Dovid HaMelech (King David) has written:

"Behold, He who watches Yisroel shall neither slumber nor sleep..... HaShem shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul." (T'hillim 121:4-7)

May we soon see the G'ulah Sh'laimah in its complete resplendence- speedily, and in our times. Good Shabbos.

Parshas Balak: How Do We Know When The Al-Mighty is Speaking To Us?
Parshas Балак: Как мы знаем, когда Аль-Могучий обращается к нам?
Rabbi Yisroel Yitzchok Silberberg
Associate Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis

Можно с уверенностью предположить, что все мы испытали в нашей жизни той или иной форме автомобильной проблемой. Это могло бы быть спустило колесо, разряженная батарея или даже простая ошибка вождения без достаточного газа. Теперь можно предположить, что большинство из нас не приветствовал такой незапланированной проблемы автомобиль и рассматривали эти события как события, которое мы пожелал не произошло и отходов нашего времени. Однако, после рассмотрения этой недели парше, я хотел бы предложить, что мы рассматриваем любые такие трудности автомобилей как благословение в маскировке.

В нашем недельной главе мы имеем хорошо известную историю о том, как Валак, царь Моава нанял Билам проклинать еврейский народ. Мы знакомы с тем, как Всевышний вмешался от имени еврейского народа и как Билам был неудачным в его попытках больно нас. Да Билам был свободную волю и попытался проклясть, но аль-Могучий имеет возможность вмешаться и изменить проклятия в благословения вместо этого.

Что самое поразительное из истории Билама является то, что Всевышний пытался влиять свободный выбор Билам в. По дороге на вступление встречаться Валака, Билам оспаривается Nahem многократно в попытке остановить его в его треков. Впервые Хашем появляется непосредственно к Валаку и после Аль-Могучий просто спрашивает, кто эти посланники, которые пришли, чтобы нанять его, чтобы вылечить евреев были, Аль-Могучий затем насильно инструктирует Билам не вступать Валака, а не вылечить евреев. Однако, как Билам сохраняется присоединиться Валака и проклинать евреев, сопротивление Аль-Mighty По становится менее очевидным и более тонким. Хашем в конечном итоге позволяет Билам пойти с посланниками, но ставит пределы и условия о его миссии.

Кроме того, когда Аль-Могучий чувствует, что Билам есть и другие идеи в уме и намерен проклясть евреев, Аль-Могучий

посылает Билам еще более тонкие признаки в виде автомобиля / осла неприятности как Аль-Могучий посылает Билам подсознательные сообщения что он должен переосмыслить свою миссию. Сначала осел видит ангела с мечом в руке осел лишь поворачивает дороги. Реакция Билам типична для человека, которые испытывают проблемы с машиной, пытаюсь решить эту проблему, нажав осла, а понимая, что проблема осел является лишь симптомом более серьезной проблемы, что он вызвал.

Кроме того, когда осел видит ангела снова осел вынужден выжимать вдоль стены, которая вызывает боль в ноге Билам в. Билам снова не видеть этого происшествия знак свыше, чтобы отразить и, возможно, изменить свои планы и поездки, но удвоить свой гнев по отношению к ослу, ударяя ее с большей силой. Кроме того, Аль-Могучий посылает Билам еще один знак, чтобы изменить свой путь, как осел не может продолжаться в любом направлении и сама вынуждена прекратить на ее пути. Тем не менее Билам, ослепленный жадной богатства, престижа и общей ненависти к евреям, игнорирует все знаки и сделать еще один удар на осле.

На данном этапе Аль-Могучий удаляет шоры с Билама и открывает ему правду его проблем осла.

В нашей жизни хорошо, хотя мы предоставлен свободный выбор в том, как мы будем действовать по отношению к другим и в отношении наших обязательств перед нашим Творцом, все же Аль-Могучего каждый так часто пытается вести нас и посылает нам знаки, что путь мы принимаем, возможно, является ошибочным. Еврейский народ только что пережил страшный потерю трех молодых еврейских студентов ешивы, которые были убиты бессмысленно арабскими террористами. И да, мы должны выследить их убийц и, возможно, изгнать арабов из определенной части страны. Однако идея, что мы должны отомстить и убить других молодых арабских мальчиков является ошибочным.

Когда трагедия в приключилась на нас, мы должны занять время, чтобы отразить то, что подсознательные или прямой сообщение Аль-Могучий посылает нас. Мы не должны путать террористов как реального человека в управлении этого мира, а в качестве инструмента в арсенале Аль-могучий, в котором он посылает Своих избранных нацию сообщения. Мы никогда не должны снова испытать проблемы с машиной и дай Б-г любого носил проблемы, как мы только что пережили. Но когда такие события происходят, мы должны иметь мудрость и силу, чтобы соперничает события в правильное перспективным.

Хорошие Шаббат! Good Shabbos!

The Parsha of Hallel
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler
Associate Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis

Parashat Balak is always a welcome relief from the stressful news we read and hear about in the world around us. We go to sleep every night knowing that our neighboring countries, our “cousins”, are constantly planning and plotting to annihilate us in every way possible.

But then we read Parashat Balak. We realize that this kind of planning and plotting is nothing new. Our enemies have tried every mean and way; from nuclear weapon, to chemical weapons and even cursing weapons from the mouth of a Bil’am HaRasha, who indeed, represented such a weapon. But the Shomer Yisrael, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, never slumbers or sleeps, He is our Guardian. The plans of Balak and Bil’am repeatedly fail, although they expended much energy and many animal sacrifices.

The story of Balak and Bil’am is the only episode of our people written in the Torah that has no other witnesses besides the Ribbono Shel Olam. About three million people experienced the Yetziat Mitzrayim [Exodus from Egypt] event, the splitting of the Yam Suf, the falling of the daily Manna, the miraculous “well” that sustained our people with water, but not so the Balak-Bil’am dangers.

Our people were totally unaware of the dangerously threatening words that potentially could have emanated from the mouth of Bil’am. We know what Bil’am tried to do, only because HaShem told Moshe to include it in the Torah. Obviously, G-d wanted us to know what transpired in the country of Mo’av. He wants us to be aware that throughout the course of Jewish history our enemies have plotted and planned to harm us only to be thwarted by Avinu She’bashamayim [our Father in Heaven].

For sure, we have to be vigilant and constantly on guard by utilizing all our resources of intelligence, radar systems, undercover agents

and secret services, to know what is transpiring in our enemy camps... But after all is said and done, as long as the One Above is pleased with us, then we can rely upon *"HINEI LO YANUM VELO YISHON SHOMEIR YISRAEL"* "Behold, He Who watches Israel shall neither slumber or sleep" [Tehilim 121]. The Balak –Bil'am parasha assures us that we can continue with our daily lives, sleep peacefully at night, feeling secure that the Shomer Yisrael is there for us.

Gemara Megillah [14a] asks, "Why is Hallel not recited on Purim?" One of the three answers given is, *KRI'ATA ZOH HALLEILA* "that the mere reading of Megillat Esther is tantamount to reciting Hallel. For Hallel means expressing praise and thanks to G-d for the miracle done on our behalf; and Megillat Esther does just that. Hallel is recited not only for overt and miraculous events, but even for a NES NISTAR, hidden and seemingly natural events. Therefore the Beracha of *"SHE'ASA NISSIM LA'AVOTEINU"* is recited on Purim just as on Chanukah.

Now I ask you, is the miracle that transpired behind the scenes of Mo'av any less miraculous and profound than the events of Purim? I therefore believe that hearing Parashat Balak being read from the Torah is considered equivalent to hearing Hallel recited.

But the Parsha also teaches us, in the very last nine pesukim, that when we do things within our own camp against the Torah that displease G-d, a catastrophe can occur. Not one Jew was harmed by the attempted curses of Bil'am, but twenty-four thousand Jews died as a result of our doing something that angered HaShem. The lesson is simple, We ourselves, not our enemies, could cause our own destruction. The parasha begins with happiness but ends with tragedy. Just as Hallel begins with praises of joy but ends with "Ana HaShem Hoshi'a Na, Ana HaShem Hatz'licha Na", Please G-d, save us now! Because we don't know what tomorrow will bring.

This month of Tamuz begins in happiness, many weddings and joyous celebrations, but the month ends in sadness and mourning. But don't be too upset, because the following month of Av begins in sadness yet ends with great Joy and Simcha. -"Shabbat Nachamu".

Meafar Kumi
Rabbi Ronen Shaharabany
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במדבר כב, ה), שעם ישראל יצא מעצמו קודם) "הנה עם יצא ממצרים", אות תעד-תעה), בשם המפרשים, שבלק שלח לבלעם) "זכרון מנחם" כתב ה לא הביט און ביעקב ולא ראה עמל בישראל ה' אלקיו עמו ותרועת מלך בו. אל " :הזמן (שהרי לא השלים את ה400 שנה). ותשובת בלעם לזה הייתה ?איך זה ענה לדברי בלק שישאל יצא ממצרים קודם זמנו, "זכרון מנחם"במדבר כג, כא-כב). והקשה ה) "מוציאם ממצרים כתועפת ראם לו

ומבאר, " ?"אין צדיק בארץ אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא"הלוא, "לא הביט און ביעקב ולא ראה עמל בישראל"איך שייך מצב של : "זכרון מנחם"שואל ה והכוונה, אפילו בשעה שישאל עושים עבירה, מחשבתם לשם ה', והיא עבירה לשמה - "ה' אלקיו עמו": שהתשובה בהמשך הפסוק

אמר רבי לוי זה עתיד, "ויאמרו איש אל אחיו הנה בעל החלומות הלזה" (כן היה אצל השבטים ומכירת יוסף. איתא במדרש (בראשית רבה, פד יד על המדרש שם, שהכוונה לירבעם בן נבט שעתיד לצאת מיוסף. דהיינו שהשבטים רצו להרוג את יוסף "מתנת כהונה"כ. פירש ה"להשיאם לבעלים, ע לשם שמים, שלא יולד ירבעם הרשע שעתיד להחטיא את ישראל. והרב שם מביא עוד דוגמאות לכך. נמצא, אפילו אם ישראל חוטאים, החטא הוא רק "זכרון מנחם"מצד המעשה, אבל מחשבתם עם ה', עד כאן דברי ה

עתה נבין את תשובת בלעם שישאל אכן השלימו את הזמן. בברית בין הבתרים נגזרה גלות על בני ישראל ל400 שנה, אך למעשה בני ישראל היו ל. (כמו שהביא בהגדת חתן סופר) שהשכינה ירדה והייתה עם ישראל בגלות מצרים, והשלימה להם את הזמן"במצרים רק 210 שנה. ומובא בחז

א פרשת בלק אות נו): חלק ה' שנתן באדם "א (תורת החיד"ה אביו ואמו. כתב על זה מרן החיד"איתא בגמרא (קידושין ל:) שלשה שותפים באדם הקב כ"הוא דעה בינה והשכל. ואם כן, אם אדם חוטא במחשבה נמצא שהוא חוטא בחלק ה'. ואם חוטא במעשה, הוא חוטא בחלק שנתנו בו אביו ואמו, ע

במה זכו ישראל שאף השכינה ירדה עמם למצרים? הירידה למצרים נתגללה מחמת מכירת יוסף. ויתכן שזכות ישראל הייתה גופא בגלל שהשבטים כיוונו ולא פגמו בחלק ה' שהוא המחשבה, שהרי כוונתם הייתה לכבוד ה'. ובזכות זה, ה' גם לא עזב, "ה' אלקיו עמו"במכירה לשם שמים. על השבטים נאמר ה לא מביט "דהיינו, הקב "לא הביט און ביעקב ולא ראה עמל בישראל ה' אלקיו עמו": אותם, וירד עמם למצרים והשלים להם את הזמן. וזה עומק הפסוק

שהשכינה ירדה עמם במצרים, - "ה' אלקיו עמו" מחשבתם עם ה' וכוונתם לשמה. ובעבור זה גופא זכו ל - "ה' אלקיו עמו" על חטאי ישראל מאחר ש
ושפיר השלימו את הזמן

אך לכאורה אפשר להקשות, אדם החוטא במעשה, ומחשבתו לשם שמים, מנין שהולכים אחר המחשבה ולא אחר המעשה? אולי העיקר הוא מעשה
העבירה, אף שהמחשבה לשם ה'. ואם כן, אפשר שהשכינה לא ירדה עמם למצרים ולא השלימו את הזמן

לראיה שהולכים אחר המחשבה ולא המעשה. חתימת וגמר היציאה ממצרים הייתה בקריעת ים סוף. וכתב רבינו, "אל מוציאים ממצרים" ומסיים בלעם
מאיר יחיאל מאוסטראווצא (מאיר עיני חכמים מהדורא תליתאה, פרשת תולדות, עמ' לב): איתא במדרש (שמות רבה כא, ו) בשעה שהלך משה רבינו
ש. ופירש הרבי מאוסטראווצא, שבאמת טענת "לקרוע את הים, אמר לו הים, איני נקרע, אני גדול ממך, שאני נבראתי בשלישי, ואתה נבראת בששי, ע
הים אינה טענה, שהרי במחשבה, האדם קדם לכל היצורים (ישראל עלו במחשבה תחילה). ואם כן, משה גדול מהים. נמצא מקריעת ים סוף ראייה
כהוכחה לדבריו שהולכים אחר המחשבה, וישראל אכן השלימו, "אל מוציאים ממצרים", כ. ועל כן אמר בלעם "שהולכים אחר המחשבה, ולא המעשה, ע
את הזמן

מאמר החכם

—לעתיד לבוא תהיינה שתי גאולות: האחת — להוציא את ישראל מן הגלות. והשניה
להוציא את הגלות מישראל. והאחרונה קשה מהראשונה

רבי מרדכי מגור

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