



Parshat Balak

By: Rabanit
K. Sarah Cohen

PARSHA

HALACHA

STORY

Q&A

SHIURIM

JOKE

RIDDLE

QUOTES

DAVEN FOR

PARSHAT BALAK

In this week's parshah, we meet two of the greatest of anti-semites; Balak, the King of Moav and Bilaam, the gentile prophet and sorcerer. Chachamim reveal an astounding fact concerning Bilaam who possessed prophetic powers equal to Moshe Rabeinu (a"h). The pasuk states, "There arose not in Israel another prophet equal to Moshe" [Devarim 34:10].

Rabanim explain that there was no other prophet specifically in Am Yisrael as Moshe – but amid the nations of the world there did arise another such prophet. Who was he? Bilaam the son of Be'or. We are therefore dealing with a person who had a relationship with Hashem that we can only dream about. And yet we see that he had an attitude that is hard to fathom.

When Hashem asked Bilaam, "Who are these people with you?" Rashi explains that Bilaam answered Hashem in an arrogant manner: "Even though I am not important in Your eyes, I am important in the eyes of kings."

Later, in one of the most mind-boggling episodes in the Torah Ha'kedoshah, Bilaam is not at all phased by the fact that his donkey began speaking to him. He simply replied to his donkey and continued the dialogue with the donkey as if it was an everyday occurrence. How do we explain the paradoxical personality of Bilaam?

Rav Schwab (a"h) offers an amazing insight. He writes that Hashem bestowed upon us certain senses. Most of us are blessed with the sense of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. There is a sixth sense however – and that is the sense of being able to be awed with wonder. Hashem gave most human beings the ability to be taken in by certain phenomenon that occur in this world.

This sense of being impressed ("mitpael") is necessary for our Avodat Hashem. The Rambam (a"h) speaks of a person becoming impressed and overwhelmed with the awe of creation, and of the wisdom and beauty of nature. This is a sense that we need to develop within ourselves – the emotions of love and reverence towards the Creator.

However, just like the other senses can be deadened and destroyed if they are abused or misused, so too it is with the sixth sense. If a person listens to loud music for long enough, he can lose his sense of hearing. If a person continuously eats very spicy foods, he can lose his sense of taste. Likewise, a person can lose his sense of awe. How does this happen? What costs a person his sense of awe and admiration?

REFUAH SHLEIMAH
&
HATZLACHAH

Yonah bat Henya
 Michael ben Yonah
 Ro'ee ben Rachel
 May bat Ilana
 Ben Tzvi ben Ilana
 Gidon ben Esther
 Esther bat Mazal
 Yosef ben Devorah
 Yaffa bat Rivka
 Baruch Chai ben Zoya
 Rivkah bat Malkah
 Nissan ben Liza
 Gavriel ben Toviyo
 David ben Liza
 Baila Chava
 bat
 Sorka
 Freida Leah
 bat
 Pesha Rachel
 Yehoshuah Mordechai
 ben
 Leah Gita
 Chaim Yehudah
 ben
 Aidel
 Efrat
 bat
 Shifra Tanya

Rav Schwab suggests that a person can lose his sense of awe and admiration through excessive indulgence in every passion and lust in the world. If a person is obsessed with enjoying, taking, eating, consuming, and all he ever thinks about is indulging in the most obscene and gluttonous fashion, then after a while, nothing impresses him anymore; nothing moves his neshamah. He is so consumed with simply enjoying himself that there is very little if anything at all, that creates in him a feeling of excitement.

If it seems difficult to relate to this concept, all we need to do is open our eyes and observe what is happening today in the western world. Nothing seems to make a deep impression on people anymore. Movies have become more and more violent and explicit. Music has become vulgar and outrageous. The way people talk and the words we hear have become more and more shocking, because nothing makes an impression on us anymore.

As a society, we have lost our sense of wonder. We have become hardened. It seems as if people all over the world, but especially in America, have simply lost their "shock value." Nothing shocks anyone anymore.

This is what happened to Bilaam. Nothing shocked him. His animal spoke to him and he took it in stride. Everyone recognizes the seriousness of losing a sense of sight or hearing, chas ve'shalom. We need to recognize that losing the sense of awe is also very serious. Losing the sense of awe and admiration is a by-product of the gluttonous and indulgent life that Bilaam lived.

The "Trouble" Of Reciting Parshat Bilaam Daily

The Torah testifies that Bilaam knew the thoughts of his Creator (yodeah daat Elyon). The Gemara in Berachot (7a) explains that this means that he knew how to precisely pinpoint the times that were auspicious for invoking the anger of Hashem. The Gemara discusses a certain moment each day when Hashem becomes angry with the world.

Bilaam knew how to estimate that moment, and this knowledge was his secret weapon. He intended to synchronize his cursing of the Jewish people with that moment of Hashem's wrath, thereby bring Hashem's anger down upon the Jewish nation.

Rav Elyakim Schlessinger in his sefer, *Bet Av* asks: if, in fact, Bilaam's power was limited to knowing the moment of Hashem's anger, that would seem to be a far cry from the Torah's testimony that he was a Yode'a daat Elyon – that he knew the mind of his Creator.

The *Bet Av* therefore cites a Rabbinical teaching regarding the Creation of the world. We are taught that Hashem's "initial plan" was to create the world only using the Attribute of Justice (Midat Ha'din). In such a world, if someone sinned, the punishment would be exacted immediately.

But when G-d saw that human beings would not be able to exist in such a world, He partnered the Attribute of Mercy (Midat Ha'rachamim) with Midat Ha'din in His Creation of the world. This does not mean that if someone sins, Hashem forgets about it. It simply means that He extends a grace period. Hashem affords the sinner some slack, giving him the ability to ultimately repent.

This combination of Din and Rachamim is the way the world operates.

Bilaam knew "Daat Elyon." This means that he was aware of Hashem's original plan. He knew that Hashem originally wished to create the world with only the attribute of Din. He knew that every single day of every single year there is one moment when Hashem returns to his "Grand Plan" and views the world with Midat Ha'din.

This is the intent of the Gemara which states that during one moment of the day Hashem becomes angry. At that moment, chas ve'shalom, anything can happen. The Midat Ha'din has free reign at that moment. This knowledge was Bilaam's great strength.

Bilaam's power was to always look at the world suspiciously. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot [5:22] teaches us that Bilaam had an "Ayin Ra'ah - Evil Eye." He looked at the world in a non-generous fashion, rather than with a merciful eye. He always looked with an eye toward invoking the Midat Ha'din.

This explains why Bilaam always referred to himself as the "one eyed man." Who would ever describe himself as delivering "the speech of a one-eyed man?" Is being

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PARSHAT BALAK

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blind in one eye something to brag about and be proud of?

Man was afforded two eyes: One to look at things with Midat Ha'din and one with which to look at things with Midat Ha'rachamim. We should examine things and be able to see in them the positive aspects as well as the negative ones.

Bilaam bragged that he was a person who always looked at things only with an "evil eye."

"My claim to fame is that I can invoke Judgment against the Jewish people because I know when Hashem utilizes only his Attribute of Judgment."

Our great salvation was that "He perceived no iniquity in Yaakov - Lo hibit aven be'Yaakov." (Bamidbar 23:21).

In all the days that Bilaam tried to invoke the Attribute of Judgment, Hashem in His great mercy abstained from anger and never looked at us with Midat Ha'din.



Finally, homiletically, the *Bet Av* suggests that this is the intention of the Gemara in Berachot which states that, "Would it not cause great trouble for the congregation (Torach Tzibur), the Rabbis would have instituted the recital of the section of Balak in the middle of the daily recitation of the Kriyat Shema."

The standard interpretation of this Gemara is that we would have included the reading of Balak within - and in addition to the reading of Kriyat Shema.

However, the *Bet Av* cites an opinion from the Satmar Rebbe (a"h) that the Gemara is making an even stronger statement: We would have REPLACED the reading of Kriyat Shema with that of Parshat Balak.

If that is the case, how would that be "troubling the congregation?"

We can understand the term "Torach Tzibur" if the option was to read both the three sections of Kriyat Shema as well as Parshat Balak.

After all, the inclusion of an additional paragraph in the tefilah of Kriyat Shema would create a burden for the congregation.

If, however, the alternative was to replace Kriyat Shema with the recitation of Parshat Balak - there would have been no net increase, so how would it trouble the congregation?

The answer is that we would be shattered if twice every day we were to hear that "Kel Zoem be'Chol Yom - that Hashem is angry every day and that every day the Midat Ha'dine is given free reign, at least momentarily. We would not be able to handle the thought. A smile would not appear on our faces the entire day.

We would tremble and fear the day. That being said, we would not accomplish much throughout the day because our souls and bodies would too preoccupied with the feeling of fear.



The thought of Hashem judging the world even if for a moment in the day, with the attribute of judgment, would be too chilling to contemplate on a daily basis. This is the burden that it would place on the congregation and this is what the Gemara is referring.

When we witness tragedies in our midst that should not have occurred and do not make any sense - we ask ourselves, "Why?"

Sometimes, these tragedies can be the result of the severe Midat Ha'din that can affect anyone at any time. This is why a person has to constantly examine his deeds on a daily basis. Teshuvah is not something that should be addressed only when Elul rolls around on the calendar. The antidote to Midat Ha'din is Midat Ha'rachamim which we will be granted if we show Hashem that we are constantly working on ourselves to improve.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

Besides the change that people must effect at the time of initial impact (of an event that makes them feel they must change), it is even more important to find some way of keeping alive those original feelings for many years.

(Rav Chaim Shmulevitz - a"h)

THE EYES HAVE IT

A prominent eye specialist became a ba'al teshuvah. A friend asked him what it was that influenced him to follow the path of Torah.

The doctor stated that he had a patient who lost his eyesight several years before and had surgery to restore his vision.

"I asked him what was the first thing he would like to see after the surgery and you know what he told me? He said, Tzitzit, because the Torah says, 'You shall see them.' I was so impressed with his answer I decided to check if maybe I should look at life a little differently. As they say, 'I saw the light.'"



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YOU ARE DRINKING TOO MUCH COFFEE WHEN:

You answer the door before people knock.

You sleep with your eyes open.

You just completed your third sweater today, and you don't know how to knit.

You grind your coffee beans in your mouth.

Your eyes stay open when you sneeze.

You can type sixty words a minute with your feet.

Your birthday is a national holiday in Brazil.

You don't even wait for the water to boil anymore.

QUOTES

** "Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want - but the realization of what you have already!" **

** "Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence - and I learn that whatever state I am in - I must be content!" **

** "When we long for a life without difficulties - we should remember that Oak Trees grow strong in contrary winds and diamonds are made under pressure."

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Rabanit K. Sarah Cohen will be speaking on the following dates:

Date: July 10, 2017

Time: 7:45pm

Place: 8201 Castor Ave.
Philadelphia, PA

Date: July 12, 2017

Time: 8:15pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

Date: July 26, 2017

Time: 8:15pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

Date: July 30, 2017

Time: 7:45pm

Place: 148 Copley Ave.
Teaneck, NJ

Date: Aug 2, 2017

Time: 8:15pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

Date: Aug 15, 2017

Time: 8:15pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

Date: August 26, 2017 - Shabat

Time: 5:00pm

Place: 1364 E7th - Bklyn, NY

Date: August ?? - To Be Announced

Time: 7:45pm

Place: 115 Addison Rd.
Bergenfield, NJ 07621

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Shiur Already Posted

Parshat Balak

Lessons On The Parshah

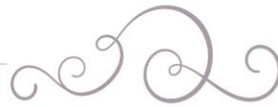
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Newsletter Dedication

Sara Bat Mimon Ha'Kohen (A"H)

Ohel Sara is named after this tzadikah (my grandmother). May the inspiration that women draw from this weekly newsletter benefit her neshamah in Gan Eden and may we all be redeemed as a result.



Ohel Sara wishes all it's readers a Shabbat Shalom u'Mevorach!



Candlelighting Time

**8:11PM
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