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MASKIL LE'DAVID

The Council of Hashem Prevails

"He sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor to Petor, which is by the river of the land of the members of his people, to summon him saying, 'Behold! A people has come out of Egypt, behold! It has covered the surface of the earth and it sits opposite me' (Bamidbar 22:5).

This verse seems puzzling. Why did Balak's message to Balaam include the fact that Am Yisrael came out of Egypt? This information was well known and clear to everyone; their redemption was preceded by the Ten Plagues, which declared Hashem's name throughout the world (*Shemot* 9:16). Similarly, when Hashem split the sea for Bnei Yisrael, all the nations became agitated and gripped with terror from seeing Hashem's power and how He leads His people with signs and miracles (*ibid* 15:14). In light of this, it seems strange that Balak saw fit to mention the fact that Am Yisrael left Egypt.

Chazal tell us that Balak was a greater sorcerer than Balaam, possessing many more powers of impurity than he. If Balak's power of impurity was so great, why did he need to send messengers to Balaam asking him to curse Am Yisrael? He could have done it himself using his own powers. This request required Balak to humiliate himself by pledging to compensate Balaam with much riches in order to convince him to carry out the mission of cursing Bnei Yisrael. It seems as though Balak could have saved himself all this bother, expense and embarrassment by cursing Bnei Yisrael himself, without asking for Balaam's help.

Moreover, Balak knew that Balaam was the prophet of the gentile nations; Hashem certainly would not allow him to curse His Chosen Nation to whom He gave the Torah. Why was Balak so sure that Balaam would be able to curse Am Yisrael without Hashem preventing him from doing so?

One can reconcile these questions according to the *sefer Shema Yisrael*, which quotes Rabbi Moshe Medinor. He explains Balak's words (*Bamidbar* 22:5), "Behold! A people has come out of Egypt," as implying that behold, Am Yisrael has come out of Egypt which

is a place of impurity and filth. Egypt is termed "the land's nakedness" because of its inherent immorality. However, despite Am Yisrael dwelling inside this filthy place, "Behold! It has covered את הארץ, the surface of the earth" (*ibid*), meaning that they covered their materialistic, worldly eyes (עֵינֵיהֶם הָאֲרִיצִית), to prevent them from gazing at forbidden sights.

Balak knew that wherever there is immorality, Hashem's presence departs and the destroyer is given permission to destroy. Therefore, Balak wished to make Bnei Yisrael sin by gazing at forbidden sights and defiling their eyes. He did not succeed because Bnei Yisrael had accustomed themselves to guarding their eyes while in Egypt, a place flooded with immorality. Am Yisrael merited redemption from the forty-ninth level of impurity and elevating themselves to the forty-ninth level of purity, since they were careful to guard their eyes from all the forbidden sights in Egypt. This is the merit that enabled them to be redeemed from that exile.

The tzaddik, Rabbi Shlomo of Radomsk (*Tiferet Shlomo al HaTorah, Balak*), states: "A person's main holiness is dependent on guarding his eyes. The more he guards his eyes from looking at forbidden sights, the more he sanctifies himself and grows in levels of Torah and fear of G-d. This is why it says, (*Bamidbar* 15:39), 'And do not explore after your heart and after your eyes, after which you stray.'" The eyes and heart are procurers of sin (*Bamidbar Rabba* 10:2) and they cause a person to contemplate bad thoughts, and even immoral reflections.

Now we can understand why Balak turned to Balaam and did not rely on his own powers to cause Bnei Yisrael to stumble. He knew that when Am Yisrael were in Egypt, the source of all impurity and filth, they safeguarded the purity of their eyes so as not to stumble with forbidden sights, and in this way they merited redemption. Am Yisrael's purity is what saves them from all kinds of troubles. The commentaries tell us that it was this "purity of the eyes" that caused Am Yisrael to be distinctive and set apart from the Egyptians in three ways: They did not change their names, their attire, and their language. They were particular about modesty and the way they dressed, they did not foul their mouths with immoral speech, and their names too were taken from a holy and pure source. It was due to these merits they were redeemed from Egypt.

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16 Tammuz 5785

12 July 2025

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Balak



Hilula

16 Tammuz
Rabbi Emanuel Mishali

17 Tammuz
Rabbi Shimon Bitton, Av
Beit Din Marseille, France

18 Tammuz
The Maharal of Prague

19 Tammuz
Rabbi Ben Zion Abba
Shaul, Rosh Yeshiva
of Porat Yosef

20 Tammuz
Rabbi Avraham
Chaim Na'eh

21 Tammuz
Rabbi Rachamim Nahori,
Av Beit Din of Paris

22 Tammuz
Rabbi Shlomo
of Karlin hy"d





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

I Did Not Imagine I Would get Caught

“Balaam said to the angel of Hashem, ‘I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing opposite me’” (Bamidbar 22:34).

What was Balaam’s reaction after his donkey spoke and after seeing the angel standing with its sword drawn?

“I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing opposite me.”

The Maggid, Rabbi Reuven Karelenshtein *zt”l*, related: A thief once climbed up a sewage pipe at three o’clock in the morning in an attempt to break into an apartment in the dark of the night. A police car passed by and he was caught. They took the thief to court and the judge rebuked him. As he concluded his reprimand, the judge asked him, “Do you regret your deed?”

“Certainly,” he replied, “had I known that the police would drive past, I would never have done such a thing...”

This is exactly how Balaam sounds when the angel revealed itself to him and he reacts, “I have sinned, for I did not know...”

One Cannot Be a Messenger to Carry Out a Sin

“Do not refrain from going to me, for I shall honor you greatly, and everything that you say to me I shall do” (Bamidbar 22:16-17).

We have a rule that we cannot appoint a messenger to carry out a sin. The initiator is not liable for the deed which the messenger performs, unless he promises compensation to the messenger; in that case he *is* considered liable since the messenger is only committing the sin on account of the compensation.

This then, explains Rabbeinu Yohantan Eibeshitz *zt”l*, was Balak’s implication to Balaam when he said “Do not refrain from going to me.” Do not be afraid of being harmed by acting as my agent to curse Am Yisrael, for “everything that you say to me I shall do.” I am prepared to pay you in full for your act, therefore your mission will be on my account and you will not be harmed because of it. “So go now and curse this people **for me**” — as my messenger, and you have no reason to fear punishment.



FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings
of Moreinu v’Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi
David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

The Torah is Compared to a Wall

One of the reasons why we fast on the seventeenth of Av is because this is the day when Am Yisrael sinned with the Golden Calf. After waiting patiently for Moshe Rabbeinu for forty days, they erred in his expected arrival time and thought he would never come back. Thus they stumbled by making the Golden Calf, whose effects we still feel today. As an atonement and in order to eradicate the terrible impact of that sin, this day was established as a fast day for all generations (see *Ta’anit* 28b).

Also, the wall surrounding Yerushalayim was breached on the seventeenth of Tammuz (*ibid*), which eventually led to the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. This shows us that the seventeenth of Tammuz is considered a day of punishment for Am Yisrael, resulting from the sin of the Golden Calf that took place on this date.

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 87a) compares the Torah to a wall, since it guards and protects Am Yisrael. When this wall is breached, meaning when Am Yisrael neglect Torah study, the destructive force is given permission to destroy; the route to destruction is a short one. Similarly, the word “חומה” (wall) is cognate with the term “חמה” (anger), to teach us that Hashem’s anger towards Bnei Yisrael who forsook His Torah led Him to destroy His abode which housed the *Shechinah*.

One can also say the wall was breached specifically on the seventeenth of Tammuz since this date (17) has the same numerical value as “טוב” (good). “There is no good but Torah” — when Am Yisrael forsook the Torah the wall was breached. It also alludes to Am Yisrael’s punishment — the eventual destruction of the Beit Hamikdash.

It is important to understand that the root of the *churban* is imbedded in the sin of the Golden Calf which took place on the seventeenth of Tammuz. The day they sinned with the Golden Calf is considered the beginning of the punishment, which continued to the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash (see *Netzach Yisrael* 8).

These days of “*Bein Hametzarim*” (the days between the seventeenth of Tammuz and the ninth of Av) are designated for punishment, not only because of the indictment of the sin of the Golden Calf and the destruction of both Batei Mikdash (on the ninth of Av), but because these days fall in the middle of the summer, a time when people seek to leave their homes for a change of atmosphere. As we know, danger lurks in the outdoors where there is the challenge of seeing forbidden sights. Due to the summer heat, people walk around dressed immodestly — the spiritual danger is great. If frequenting places like a beachfront where immodesty is rampant, how can one prevent oneself from sinning? Just as one can acquire one’s (spiritual) world in one hour (*Avodah Zara* 17a), so too can one lose one’s (spiritual) world in one hour (see *Be’er Mayim Chaim*, *Re’eh* 12) — in that hour when one’s eyes stumble by gazing at forbidden sights.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto**, *shlita*

A Piercing Prayer

An old friend from Bnei Brak once asked me to bless him. As I looked at him, I sensed great danger lurking over him. I looked down and noticed a nail lying in the street. I picked it up and prayed to Hashem, "If this man is slated to undergo any sort of danger, let this nail serve as an atonement for him."

I buried the nail in the sand and then removed it. I did this procedure a number of times, asking Hashem to allow this nail to take the place of the marked man. Then I placed the nail in his hand for safekeeping.

I had no idea why I was led to do this unusual act.

A few days later the man phoned me in France and related:

"I do not understand the significance of the nail that you gave me," he began. "But I was just involved in a serious car accident in Yerushalayim. Baruch Hashem, with great miracles, I emerged unscathed."

I myself did not understand the power of the nail. Maybe its entire purpose was to implant the thought within me to pray for this man, in the merit of my forefathers, thereby saving him from all harm.

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Being aware of this, Balak chose this introduction in his message to Balaam, informing him that since Am Yisrael's abstention from immorality in Egypt was their redeeming factor, it would be necessary to develop a clever strategy to bring them to sin, which would then remove Hashem's presence from them.

Let us take note of Hashem's great kindness to us: He revealed the nation's wicked plans by implanting fear in their hearts to single-handedly cause Yisrael to stumble. Hashem did this intentionally, knowing that if our enemies smite us secretly, the damage would be manifold and we would have no chance of being saved from them. But since their evil plans are brought to light, blessing no longer rests on their deeds, and they only succeed in smiting Yisrael in a way that allows for revival, forgiveness and pardon.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Life in the Jungle Follows Exceptional Order

"Then Hashem uncovered Balaam's eyes" (*Bamidbar* 22:31).

We constantly encounter the concept of "Hashem uncovered." We cannot possibly understand our experiences in life until Hashem "opens the eyes of the blind." If Hashem decides to open our eyes, we will suddenly become aware.

The Maggid, Rabbi Elimelech Biderman *shlita*, quotes from the sefer *Misod Si'ach Chassidim*, where the following incident is related. Rabbeinu Chaim ben Attar *zy"a*, the holy Ohr HaChaim, once addressed his congregation. He advised them to consider themselves among the students of Rabbi Meir who said (*Avot* 4:12), "Decrease your business activities and engage in Torah study." From now on, he advised them, they should concern themselves with their business affairs only during the first three days of the week, while the rest of the week they should devote to Torah study alone. Rabbeinu Chaim ben Attar *zy"a*, promised them that he can guarantee their income will not be affected in any way and they will not feel any lack.

Indeed, all the townspeople in unison obeyed his words, which automatically changed their entire way of life. Within a few weeks their regular business associates became accustomed to the new reality: From Wednesday until Sunday these people were not available for commerce. From that time on the townspeople saw much blessing in their work; although they cut down their business hours, they were no less well-off.

This is how things carried on for several years, until the Ohr HaChaim *zy"a*, left his town to settle in Eretz Yisrael. Morocco's glory had departed and from then on their desires started growing steadily. They began to doubt their simple, innocent faith regarding their income.

Eventually they completely forgot about the commitment they had accepted upon themselves while the Ohr HaChaim was still the Rav in their town, and they once again began managing their businesses throughout the week. They thought this additional investment would surely double their income, but were astounded and disappointed to discover this was not the case. They earned no more money than previously; their increased toil brought them no additional profit.

This was a clear demonstration of the truth of their Rav's words — income is determined by Heaven, and is not dependent on the degree of man's toil.

The Maggid also quoted the Radak on the verse (*Tehillim* 145:17), "Righteous is Hashem in all His ways." We see an animal preying on another, for example a cat preying on a mouse and devouring it, and we do not understand the justice in this!

But in truth, Hashem determined that the time had come for this mouse to die, so He arranged that this mouse should "present itself" before the cat who will consume it as a means to satisfy its hunger. This means it is not the cat who killed the mouse, rather it died because its time had come. Hashem runs the world; He arranged for the mouse to die this way while nourishing the cat.

The Radak writes, "With justice and uprightness He provides each being with its sustenance. Although animals prey on other animals, for example a cat devours a mouse, and similarly the lion, bear, tiger and other animals prey on other animals, and also birds prey on other birds, still it is all within His justice. For while animals are alive,

He provided food for them, but when their time comes to die, they nourish another animal."

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Our Torah is Eternal



Chazal tell us (*Sanhedrin* 105b) that all Balaam's blessings turned into curses, besides the blessing of "How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov, your dwelling places, O Israel," which was said regarding the *batei kneset* and *batei midrash*.

The wicked Balaam's true desire was that all of the *batei kneset* and *batei midrash* of Am Yisrael be wiped out. He wanted a world without *talmudei Torah*, without *yeshivot* and without *kollelim*.

Hashem said to him: Although I gave you permission to go with the leaders of Moav and speak, Am Yisrael will remain alive and in existence forever, because they have their *batei midrash* which will re-establish themselves generation after generation!

This is why the blessing "How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov" remained unchanged, and the wicked will never succeed in uprooting Torah from Am Yisrael, until the end of time.

Indeed, we clearly continue to see the proliferation of *batei midrash* and holy *yeshivot*, expanding the boundaries of holiness and fear of G-d.

Establishing a Yeshiva in His Memory

"From my youth," relates the Gaon Rabbi Reuven Elbaz *shlita*, Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr HaChaim, "my soul felt a special connection to the Torah of the holy Ohr HaChaim, who was the light of Yisrael and its central pillar. I would find special delight in studying his holy words.

"Over the years, Eretz Yisrael became home to many *yeshivot*, but a *yeshiva* in memory of the holy master, Rabbeinu Chaim ben Attar *zt"l* (the Ohr HaChaim), had not yet been established.

"One of the special deeds of the Ohr HaChaim was searching for Jews who had wandered

far away from the correct path in life and introducing them to true life through studying Torah. I came to a decision that with Hashem's help, I would build an institution in memory of this holy man of G-d. I too wished to bring people closer to Hashem, to show love for even the most distant Jew and focus on his soul which was carved from the Throne of Glory.

"Immediately following the six-day war, we indeed established this *yeshiva*. Hashem blessed me with the inner strength and courage to frequent various places where I drew youth to the *beit midrash* — youngsters who would be playing in the streets on Shabbat with a cigarette in their mouths...

"There is a pious, honorable Rosh Yeshiva who lives in the same neighborhood as the *yeshiva*. He is the father of a large family who naturally has considerable expenses, yet despite this he donates a respectable sum to the *yeshiva* every month.

"Once when we met up I asked him incredulously: 'I am in awe of the honorable Rosh Yeshiva. You have many children to support. Why do you go to such lengths to assist our *yeshiva*?'"

"You should know,' my neighbor the Rosh Yeshiva replied with emotion, 'I consider it money of protection! Your "shade" offers me protection...'

"You are protected by our shade?" I was surprised, 'Why?'

"Before you established the *yeshiva*, my young children would not dare venture out after seven in the evening. As soon as it grew dark they would be terrified to go outside. Empty-headed youth would be wondering around, spreading fear over the entire neighborhood. Yet with time, in the merit of your holy *yeshiva*, they all became *talmidei chachamim* and G-d fearing Jews!"

"We are delighted that Hashem gave us the

merit to continue spreading the Torah of the holy Ohr HaChaim, engraving the memory of Rabbeinu Chaim ben Attar on our *yeshiva* which spreads his light.

"After the six-day war, when Jews were once again allowed to enter the Old City, I went to the holy Ohr HaChaim's gravesite and I was shocked at what the Jordanians had done to the cemetery. These wicked people had ravaged many tombstones, yet the grave of the holy Ohr HaChaim remained intact.

"There was an Arab worker employed by the Blue Band company. He used to supply margarine produced by this factory to the principal of the Talmud Torah Hamesorah. One day when they met up, the Arab related to the principal that he had personally witnessed two Jordanians about to destroy the Ohr HaChaim's tombstone when suddenly a boulder fell on them, killing them on the spot.

"I was supposed to break the tombstone together with them,' the Arab related, 'but I told them I was not prepared to, and then ran for my life. Thus I remained alive!'

"The holy Gaon Rabbi Gershon of Kitov *zt"l* (brother-in-law of the holy Baal Shem Tov), who later moved to Eretz Yisrael, asked the holy Ohr HaChaim why he speaks to people who show no fear of G-d. He replied: **'What should I do, this is my approach. I reach out to those who are distant and bring them closer to Hashem!'**

"This was the approach of the holy Ohr HaChaim, who returned those who had gone astray to the Rock that hewed them, and this too is the approach of the *yeshiva* that is named in his memory.

"In his letters the holy Ohr HaChaim wrote expressly that he will pray for all those who support his *yeshiva*, both in this World and in the Next World. Indeed, all those who assisted the holy Ohr HaChaim merited seeing wonders."



"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"

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