

LAMPLIGHTER

16 Tammuz
Parshas
Balak
1198
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Balak, contains the famous prophecy of Bilaam, the gentile prophet who was hired to curse the Jews, but who ended up blessing them instead.

"For from the top of rocks I see him, and from hills I behold him," Bilaam began.

Bilaam's entire prophecy is couched in symbolism. Rashi, the great Torah commentator, explained the meaning of Bilaam's words: "I have looked back to their beginning and to the origins of their roots: I see they are as stable and secure as these rocks and hills, because of their Patriarchs and Matriarchs."

The Torah itself tells us that Bilaam's prophecy is allegorical, prefacing his words with the verse, "And he took up his parable, and said."

Bilaam, therefore, was not only describing the physical location where he stood, but was expressing a deeper concept, one pertaining to a vital attribute of the Jewish people.

But why was it necessary for Bilaam to resort to allusions?

Why couldn't he have said exactly what he meant?

In general, allegorical terms are necessary only when the subject matter does not lend itself to "regular" terminology.

Deep and profound concepts are sometimes difficult to express in simple language. In such cases, an allegory is best suited for expressing these ideas.

Bilaam, with his gift of prophecy, was able to discern the eternal strength and power of the Jewish people.

"Rocks" and "hills" were the closest he could come to expressing this in human terms.

An allegory was necessary because the unique strength of the Jewish people, the inheritance of their forefathers, is unlike any other force in the world - for it is a strength of the spirit and of the Jewish soul.

When speaking of physical matter, the larger and more substantial an object is, the stronger and mightier it is perceived to be.

But the strength of the Jewish people lies not in their physical might, but is directly proportional to the depth of their submission to G-d.

The true strength of a Jew lies in his capacity for self-sacrifice, his willingness to forfeit his very life for G-d if need be.

Every Jew, when put to the ultimate test, is unwilling to be severed from his Source for even a minute.

This spiritual power is what distinguishes the Jewish nation from all others, at it states, "For it is a people that dwells alone, and is not considered among the nations."

This spiritual strength is the inheritance of every Jew, passed down from our Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

Unlike physical characteristics that fluctuate from generation to generation, this inheritance remains just as strong today as it was thousands of years ago, for it comes from a holiness that is eternal and not subject to change.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. 28

"It Just Happened..."

By Mordechai Wollenberg

In this week's Torah portion we are told that that "G-d happened upon Balaam."

The hallmark of the careless, irresponsible person is the notion that something "just happened." It's not my responsibility, it just sort of happened. It is all too easy to find oneself denying one's culpability-blaming somebody else, or external circumstances-anything to avoid taking responsibility and accepting that, ultimately, we are the ones to "blame" for whatever actions we take.

This may sound obvious, yet it is amazing how often we find ourselves denying this feeling of responsibility for our actions. It is an awesome burden, but one which nonetheless falls upon our shoulders, since our actions and decisions affect our own lives, not to mention those of others.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks relates the story of how he visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe many years ago. Rabbi Sacks told the Rebbe that "I find myself in such-and-such a situation." The Rebbe seemed dissatisfied with this statement. After several more attempts, finally Rabbi Sacks said something to the effect of "I placed myself in such-and-such a situation."

While everything that happens may be divinely ordained, the way we see things in our everyday lives we do not just "find ourselves" in a particular situation-rather, we place ourselves there. Insofar as we have free choice, we are responsible for what happens once we get to that place where we supposedly just "found" ourselves.

We have seen such hatred and horror this past century; the only answer is a massive dose of kindness. As a friend of mine recently saw spray-painted on the wall of a train, "Do a random act of kindness." Indeed, there is no better way to put it. It is only through kindness to others, through "random," unconditional acts of goodness, that we can redeem ourselves and the world around us.

Things do not "just happen"-we make them happen. The Torah tells us that every day the Temple is not rebuilt, it is as if it was destroyed that very day. Each of us has a constant obligation to improve the world around us, to participate in our own "rebuilding of the Temple." G-d set up the world in such a way that it depends upon our efforts and actions. It is up to us to make it a better place for everyone.

Slice of LIFE

This scene is by the gravesite of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in New York, a few years ago (2006). The story was told by Rabbi Yitzchak Idan, who was to become the Mayor of the Israeli city of Elad but then the head of a Torah academy (Kollel) in Bnei Brak.

He, like hundreds of thousands of other Jews throughout the year was visiting this holy place to pray and receive spiritual inspiration.

He sat in the large tent (ohel) near the grave and remembered the first time he entered the Rebbe's room over thirty years earlier and the blessings he had received. Then the Rebbe's gaze had left him speechless and all the blessings he gave came to fruition.

But then he noticed something unusual. A boy and girl in their early teens were standing near the door like security guards eagerly examining everyone that entered. But something was strange about them. They were too young to be plain clothed security guards and it seemed that they were looking for something other than suspicious visitors but they drew his attention and curiosity.

Rabbi Idan pointed it out to one of his friends that was accompanying him. It was clear that the young couple was looking for someone or something and they seemed quite harmless and helpless. So the Rabbi's friend approached them and asked if he could help.

They seemed shocked that anyone noticed them, shook their heads no, and quickly left the large room.

But when they returned just moments later, more confused than ever, he again approached them and this time they calmed down, realized that he only wanted to help and revealed their secret.

They told him that they were brother and sister, fifteen and thirteen years of age

respectively and they were looking for their father.

When they were just babies, twelve years ago, their father left their house and they hadn't seen him since. It seems that he and their mother got into some sort of argument, she involved her entire family and things got so out of control that he got mad and insulted and simply abandoned ship.

Everyone figured it was just temporary. Their mother regretted what happened and wanted to apologize and they were sure that he would show up any day. But the weeks, months, and years passed and not only did he not show up but they informed the police and it seems that no one, not even his own family, knew where he was.

So, with no other choice, their mother raised them as best as she could but as the years went by their longing to see their father grew and grew until it became unbearable and managed to creep into almost every conversation they had.

Then one day one of their friends suggested that they write a letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, put it in one of his holy books and wait for an answer.

The girl took the advice, she had never done such a thing before and didn't really know much about the Rebbe but nevertheless she wrote the letter, went to a nearby Chabad House, put it in a book and waited. And she didn't have to wait long.

A few days later, which was last night, she had a dream.

She was standing in a long line of people waiting to get a dollar, a blessing and advice from the Rebbe and when her turn came she burst out in tears. She had seen pictures of him but this time it was in person. The Rebbe then gave her a dollar, told her to stop crying and told her that if she wanted to see her father she should go to the 'Ohel' and there she will meet him.

So that's why they were here. The dream she had was last night. They came here for the first time in their lives and were waiting with faith and hope that the

dream would materialize.

They didn't even have a picture of their father. The only sign they had was that their mother often had said that the face of the boy reminded her and was similar to that of their father's just like the girl; his sister's face was similar to her mother's.

Rabbi Idan and his friend were filled with emotion from the touching story and curiosity to see what would happen. They had a busy schedule before them for the day and had planned to stay only a short time but now they weren't able to leave. They felt that they were about to witness a miracle and when others in the crowd noticed their excitement they asked them what the young children had said and within a short time there were tens of people waiting at a distance for something to happen.

People constantly trickled into the tent and nothing seemed to be happening. But after a short time a tour bus stopped before the place, tourists began to exit one after the other, entered the large tent and become swallowed up in the crowd while the brother and sister examined the face of each middle aged male that entered.

Then there descended from the bus a distinguished man dressed in an expensive business jacket with a straw hat. When he entered the tent his gaze caught the eyes of the young couple and he stopped for a second and returned their stare.

Rabbi Idan relates, "From where I stood it was possible to see that the man approached the girl and began the conversation. It seems to me that what caused him to approach her was her similarity to her mother. He asked her something and then the brother joined in.

They spoke for a few minutes, he pulled out a handkerchief and covered his face then they all burst out crying. This was the father they had been seeking! Ten minutes afterwards the three of them left the tent, while constantly wiping tears of joy from their faces, entered a taxi and left".

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Editor: Isaac Hilel
P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

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ISSUE 1198

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk was so strong in his faith in Moshiach that he literally awaited him every day and night. Every evening, before he went to bed, he set one of his disciples near him. In that way, if the disciple heard the sound of the shofar heralding Moshiach, Rabbi Menachem Mendel could be immediately awakened from sleep.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Continued from previous issue, letter dated the 14th of Sivan, 5724 [1964] regarding the observance of Taharas Hamishpocho - Family Purity.

...As a matter of fact, in regard to the observance of Taharas Hamishpocho, even the plain statistics of reports and tables by specialists, doctors and sociologists etc., who cannot be considered partial towards the religious Jew, clearly show the benefits which accrued to those Jewish circles which observed Taharas Hamishpocho. These statistics have also been published in various publications, but it is not my intention to dwell on this at length in this letter.

My intention in writing all the above is, of course, not to admonish or preach, but in the hope that upon receipt of my letter you will consider the matter more deeply, and will at once begin to observe the Mitzvah of Taharas Hamishpocho, within the framework of the general Jewish way of life which our Creator has clearly given to us in His Torah, which is called Toras Chaim, the Law of Life.

Even if it seems to you that you have some difficulties to overcome, you may be certain that you will overcome them and that the difficulties are only in the initial stages.

I understand that in your community there are young couples who are observant and you could discuss this matter with them, and find out all the laws and regulations of Taharas Hamishpocho. If, however, you find it inconvenient to seek the knowledge from friends, there are booklets which have been published, which contain the desired information, also a list of places where a Mikvah is available.

Next I will refer to the various undesirable events which occurred in your family, which left you confused, as you write. In view of what has been said above, it is not entirely unexpected. For, inasmuch as the essence of a Jew is to live in accordance with G-d's command, it is clear that if one disturbs the normal flow of this kind of life by disobeying G-d's command, it is not surprising that one should feel confused, lacking the true faith in G-d, which is the only terra firma for a Jew. Moreover, inasmuch as the Mitzvoth are also the channels through which to receive G-d's blessings, it is not surprising that a lack of observance prevents the fulfillment of G-d's blessings.

I repeat, it is not my intention to admonish with regard to the past, but if you want to follow my advice, I urge you to begin from now on to live the Jewish way of life with a firm resolution and determination, and this will surely bring you the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good...

With blessing,

9th of Elul, 5718 [1958]

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter of August 14th, containing the good news that you are pleased with the outcome of the court case so far, and, what is even more important, with the progress that you and your wife have been making towards complete recovery.

You do not mention anything about your business and your public work, which I take it as an indication that all is well in those departments.

Now that we have entered the month of Elul, when we say twice daily in our prayers Psalm 27, "G-d is my light and my salvation," etc., I trust that you will become increasingly aware that this is so in your case.

Wishing you and yours a Kesivo Vachasimo Toivo,

With blessing,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Are there any special laws concerning "table-talk"?

Though we are enjoined to discuss matters relating to the Torah at every meal - since our table is considered an altar - we are instructed not to speak while actually eating, since one might choke by doing this. (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*)

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbos is the 17th of Tammuz, when the ancient city of Jerusalem was assaulted by invading gentiles. Twenty-one days later, on the Ninth of Av (Tisha B'Av), the Holy Temple was set afire and razed.

The fact that this interval on the Jewish calendar is known as the "Three Weeks" and not the "Twenty-One Days" is not incidental. The number three alludes to the inner significance and function of the Three Weeks as a period of preparation for the Third Holy Temple.

On a superficial level the Three Weeks are a sad time, a period of mourning for the destruction of the Temple and the beginning of the Jewish people's current exile. But on a deeper level they contain a hidden good. Why? Everything that happens in the world is directed by G-d. G-d is the essence of good, and everything He does is good, even if it doesn't appear that way at first. Having come directly from G-d, there is no other possibility.

Accordingly, the Three Weeks, although superficially associated with sadness, contain a positive meaning: At the exact moment when the Second Holy Temple was destroyed, the Third and eternal Holy Temple was constructed up in heaven! In this light the entire destruction can be seen as nothing but a preparatory stage in the Redemptive process, a necessary step toward the Final Redemption with Moshiach, at which time the concept of exile will no longer exist.

At present, the good contained within the Three Weeks remains hidden. But reflecting upon its true, inner meaning hastens the day when its inner goodness will be revealed, when the Temple will be re-established.

Let us therefore accustom ourselves to seeing the hidden good that exists in all things and at all times.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Once, when Rabbi Yehoshua encountered Elijah the Prophet, he asked Elijah if he could accompany him so that he could learn from his conduct. Elijah refused, explaining that Rabbi Yehoshua would not understand what he would see. On the contrary, his mortal mind would raise countless questions and there would be no time for explanations.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi begged and pleaded; he promised that he would not ask any questions. Elijah finally agreed on the condition that if Rabbi Yehoshua would begin to ask questions, they would part company.

And so they set out together. Toward evening, they reached an old hut. An elderly couple was sitting outside. They were obviously poor, but their poverty did not hamper their enthusiasm to welcome guests. As soon as they saw the travellers, they jumped up and eagerly invited them into their home, offering them a meal and a place to sleep.

The accommodations were somewhat lacking because the people did not have very much. But whatever they had, they willingly shared, doing the best they could to observe the mitzva (commandment) of hospitality to guests.

The following morning, the two travellers bade their hosts farewell and set out again. Shortly after they had departed, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi saw that Elijah was praying. He listened closely. What was Elijah praying for? The elderly couple who had hosted them owned a cow. The cow was the most valuable possession they owned - indeed, the majority of their income came from the cow's milk. Elijah was praying that this cow should die.

When Rabbi Yehoshua heard this, he was shocked. The couple had been so kind, so pleasant, so warm. Why did they deserve that their cow should die? But he could not ask any questions; that was the agreement.

As they proceeded on their journey, they talked. Rabbi Yehoshua hoped that Elijah would offer an explanation for what happened. But that was not so. Toward evening, they came to a beautiful mansion. Although many members of the household saw them, no one offered them hospitality.

They asked the owner of the house, a very wealthy man, for permission to spend the night. Reluctantly, the man agreed. But he was very cold to them; he did not offer them any food, and he hardly said a word to them.

After they set off on their way in the morning, Rabbi Yehoshua noticed that Elijah was praying again. What was he praying for this time? One of the walls in this rich man's house was cracked and weak. Elijah was praying to G-d that this wall should be restored and should remain strong and solid.

Rabbi Yehoshua could not understand. This person had not acted kindly toward them. And yet Elijah was praying to G-d on his behalf! But once more, he abided by the terms of his agreement: no questions allowed.

Eventually, the two travellers arrived in a beautiful city; everything about the place reflected prosperity and opulence. They made their way to the synagogue. It was a magnificent structure, designed with elegance and taste. Everything, even the benches, was beautiful.

Rabbi Yehoshua thought that they would have no problem receiving hospitality in such a town. But it did not work out that way. The people were not very kind. When the prayers were over, nobody approached them to ask where they planned to eat or where they planned to stay. Ultimately, they had to spend the night in the synagogue without eating supper.

In the morning, when they were ready to leave, Elijah blessed the inhabitants of the city, wishing them that they should all become leaders. Again, Rabbi Yehoshua was puzzled. Why did Elijah bless people who had not shown them hospitality?

That evening, they came to another city. It was not as wealthy a community as the first; the shul (synagogue) was nowhere near as beautiful. But the people were very fine, warm and kind. They did everything they could to make the two travellers comfortable. Before leaving that city, Elijah told them, "May G-d help that only one of you becomes a leader."

At this point, Rabbi Yehoshua could no longer contain his curiosity. He told Elijah, "I know that by asking I will forfeit my right to accompany you, but I cannot go on like this. Please, explain these four incidents to me."

And so Elijah began to explain: "The elderly couple whom we met first were wonderful people who always performed acts of kindness. It was destined for the woman to pass away that day. By hosting us, she was given the opportunity to perform a mitzva. And the merit of her hospitality was great enough for the decree to be lifted, but not entirely. So I prayed that their cow - which meant so much to them and which was their source of income - should die. So the cow's death was really a blessing for them.

"About the wealthy person's home. In that wall, a great treasure lay buried. But the wall was weak and would soon break. Because he was a miserly person and conducted himself so rudely, I prayed that the wall should become strong so that he would not be able to benefit from the treasure.

"What about the people in the prosperous city?" Elijah continued. "My prayer that they should all become leaders in the city is not a blessing; if anything, it is the opposite. For the most destructive thing that can happen in a city is that everybody becomes a leader.

"In the other city, where the people were kind, I gave them a genuine blessing: that one, and only one, of them becomes a true leader."

From The Chasidic Approach to Joy by Rabbi Shlomo Majeski

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, behold it has covered the surface of the earth (Num. 22:5)

Balak told this to Bilaam, a former advisor to Pharaoh. When Pharaoh feared that the Jews would multiply and take over the land, it was Bilaam who advised him to enslave the Jews and throw the Jewish boys in the Nile as a means of decreasing their number. Balak came to him and told him that his ideas hadn't worked, that the Children of Israel had thrived and grown in Egypt. (*Ohr Hachaim*)

So now, I beseech you, come and curse this people for me, for it is too powerful for me (Num. 22:6)

When Balak said "for me," he meant, "make something happen to me," because he knew that Ruth, from whom King David and Moshiach would descend, would come from Moav. Therefore, he told Bilaam to make something happen to him, so that there would be no Ruth, no David, and no Moshiach. He knew that this would be the greatest curse on the Jewish people. (*Chomat Anach*)

Behold, it is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations (Num. 23:9)

Bilaam was amazed at the Jewish people's ability to thrive despite constant persecution. He attributed their success to the fact that they keep themselves separate from the other nations. By assimilating ourselves we do not gain acceptance and recognition from other nations, for our survival depends upon our being 'a people apart.' (*Likutei Betar*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 3 JULY 2015

BEGINS	ENDS
4.54MELBOURNE	5.56
4.57ADELAIDE	5.57
4.47BRISBANE	5.43
6.15DARWIN	7.07
4.44GOLD COAST	5.42
5.06PERTH	6.04
4.39SYDNEY	5.38
4.44CANBERRA	5.44
4.35LAUNCESTON	5.39
4.57AUCKLAND	5.58
4.44WELLINGTON	5.49
4.29HOBART	5.35
4.42BYRON BAY	5.39
6.56SINGAPORE	7.48



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS BALAK • 16 TAMMUZ • 3 JULY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4.54 PM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.30 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	4.50 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5.56 PM
WEEKDAYS:	THIS SUNDAY	
	FAST BEGINS	6.12 AM
	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	8.00 AM & 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	4.50 PM
	FAST ENDS/MAARIV:	5.42 PM
	MON-FRI	
	SHACHARIS	8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	5.05 PM
	MAARIV:	5.50 PM / 9.00 PM