

TORAH

חומש

במדבר

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TORAH

CHUMASH BEMIDBAR  
*The Book of Numbers*

*Parshat Balak*

*A free excerpt from the Kehot Publication Society's  
Chumash Bemidbar/Book of Numbers with commentary  
based on the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
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*With an Interpolated English Translation  
and Commentary Based on the Works of  
The Lubavitcher Rebbe*

**THE TORAH - CHUMASH BEMIDBAR**

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION  
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF  
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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# חומש במדבר

## THE TORAH

*With an Interpolated English Translation  
and Commentary Based on the Works of  
The Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson*  
וצוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע

CHUMASH BEMIDBAR  
*The Book of Numbers*

*Parshat Balak*



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# 40 בַּלַּק Balak

## Overview

The preceding *parashah* ends with the arrival of the Jewish people at the threshold of the promised land. The remainder of the Five Books of Moses, the next 15 *parashiot*—more than a quarter of the Torah’s 54—take place at this, the Israelites’ final stop of their trek from Egypt.

We would expect the Torah to turn now to subjects pertinent to the entry into the Land of Israel: its borders, laws of land inheritance, and instructions for the impending conquest. And indeed it will, but first it will recount how the Jewish people are contested by their final enemy before their entry into the land: the alliance of Moab and Midian. This turns into a drama with several acts, the details and after math of which extend over much of the next three *parashiot*.

The first act of this drama is the curious tale of how the Moabite king Balak hires the gentile soothsayer Balaam to curse the Jews.

Why does the Torah tell us about this non-Jewish pair and their thwarted attempt? The Jewish people are not directly involved in the events at all; in fact, the sages point out that the fact that the story is found in the Torah altogether proves that the Torah was written through prophecy, for otherwise, there is no way Moses could have known that the whole episode even happened! True, this chronicle does provide the background for its aftermath (which begins at the end of this *parashah*), in which the Jewish people are caught in the snare of these nations’ plot to entice them into sexual sin. But if this were its only purpose, the entire episode could have been summarized in a few sentences rather than been given the prominence it receives as a lengthy, detailed departure from the Torah’s main narrative.

What is particularly ironic about this whole story is that Balaam’s foiled attempts at cursing the Jews lead him to voice the most explicit of the Torah’s veiled references to the coming of the Messiah and the final Redemption. Outside of these prophecies, there are only vague allusions in the Five Books of Moses to the messianic future. It might therefore seem that the Torah details the story of Balak and Balaam solely to transmit these prophecies to the Jewish people. On the eve of their entry into the promised land, God evidently felt that it was necessary to inspire them with a vision of their ultimate destiny, to focus them on their true goal—beyond their immediate goal of conquering the land and performing the commandments that require them to live a settled, material life in it.

For, one might ask, once we know what God requires us to do in the here and now, why do we need to know about our reward, our ultimate goal? Our job is to do what God wants of us; if this brings us a reward, so be it, but why not trust implicitly in God to provide the reward when the time comes and not be concerned about what and when?

The answer, of course, is that having a clear vision of what it is we are working toward makes all the difference in the quality of our work and the effort we put into it. God wants us to serve Him in an inspired way; He wants our vision to be His vision, our goals to be His goals. Of course, our relationship to God must be predicated on the absolute, unconditional devotion every creature owes its Creator, but that is only the basis, the beginning. Ideally, God wants us to dream about what He dreams about; this is why He shares with us His dream for the messianic future.

Still, aside from the unsettling fact that such a fundamental aspect of Judaism is brought to light via an idolatrous king's and an egocentric diviner's obsession to curse us, the above question still remains: the Torah could have recorded the messianic prophecies and still spared us the lengthy details of the tale of Balaam and Balak.

And besides, if the messianic prophecies were the focus of the *parashah*, why should it be named *Balak*? As we have mentioned previously, the careful reader will note that the Torah shuns negative words and idioms whenever possible.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Torah enjoins us to obliterate all traces of wickedness<sup>2</sup> and idol worship. Why, then, does Jewish tradition immortalize the name of a wicked, idolatrous king, who clearly wished to wipe out the Jewish people at any cost, and in fact succeeded in bringing about the death of over a hundred thousand Jews?<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the real villain of the story seems to be Balaam, whose ability to curse evidently posed a real threat to the Jews. To be sure, Balak is the one who hired Balaam, but the action focuses more on Balaam.

The answer to these questions may be found if we recall that the *parashah* in which the giving of the Torah occurs is also named after an idolater: Jethro. There, we explained that in order for the Torah to be given, the ground work had to be laid for it to permeate all of reality, overtaking even the elements of reality that deny God, or at least His sole authority over creation. Before the Torah could be given, Jethro, the arch-pagan and consummate idolater, had to acknowledge God's existence and omnipotence.

Similarly, before the Jewish people could enter the Promised Land and begin to fulfill the Torah's mandates in the physical world—with the ultimate goal of ushering in the messianic future—a similar act of transformation had to occur. The groundwork had to be laid for the transformation of all reality that would be the eventual goal and result of the Jewish people living in their land. The hatred and curses of the enemies of God's people had to be transformed into blessings, and not into just any blessings, but into the prophecies of the ultimate victory of God's people over the very enemies that sought to curse them. In the messianic era, the non-Jewish nations will use their power to aid the Jewish people instead of combating them, as it is written, "Kings will be your nurturers, and their princesses your wet nurses."<sup>4</sup> "Foreigners will stand and tend your flocks, and the sons of the stranger will be your farmers and your vineyard workers."<sup>5</sup>

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1. *Bava Batra* 123a; v. *Pesachim* 3a.

2. *Proverbs* 10:7; v. *Yoma* 38b.

3. See Rashi on *Numbers* 25:5.

4. *Isaiah* 49:23.

5. *Isaiah* 61:5-6.

Since the messianic Redemption will herald the consummate annihilation and transformation of evil, it is now self-evident why the prophecies concerning this era issued from the mouth of the idolatrous anti-Semite, Balaam. Only in this way could the full force of their transformational nature be expressed.

For the same reason, the *parashah* is named after Balak,<sup>6</sup> since he embodied the idea that the messianic future will be the full transformation of evil into good. Firstly, he hated the Jewish people more than anyone (including Balaam, who would not have attempted to curse the Jews had Balak not hired him to do so),<sup>7</sup> yet the result of his hatred was that the Jews came to be blessed with the assurance of their triumph.

Secondly, Balak, it turns out, is a direct ancestor of the Messiah. King David, the progenitor of the Messiah, was the great grandson of Ruth, the Moabite convert,<sup>8</sup> and Ruth was a descendant of Balak.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Balak perceived that the Messiah would be among his descendants, and he felt that if he could have the Jews cursed, this greatness would remain in his own people. The transformation of evil into holiness was exactly what he feared.<sup>10 11</sup>

Because Balak personified evil's consummate hatred of holiness and its eventual transformation into holiness, the *parashah* is named after him and not Balaam. Balak's hatred was the catalyst that instigated the entire episode.<sup>12</sup>

The word *Balak* in Hebrew means "cut off," or "dead."<sup>13</sup> Allegorically, then, *parashat Balak* describes a deadened spiritual state, in which one's Jewish identity is at its nadir.

Indeed, it sometimes happens that just when we are about to accomplish some great goal in our life, when we are just about to enter our "promised land," our inspiration is preempted by a feeling of worthlessness and dejection, making us feel unequal to the task. An honest self-appraisal leaves us all too aware of our shortcomings and failings. How can we presume to answer the call to greatness when we are so thoroughly corrupt and acutely lacking the qualities necessary to see the challenge through? We feel "cut off," our life seems like a curse.

At such times, we must remember that Balak is a progenitor of the Messiah: that if we renew our connection with our ultimate goal, we can transform the curse giver within us into a source of blessing. We can transform our inner enemy and propensity to curse our own mission into a blessing by adopting God's dream as our own. Each of us possesses a messianic spark, a potential role to play in redeeming the world. Focusing on our inner messianic imperative enables us to rise above ourselves and to realize our true, inner greatness.

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6. Deliberately, for although the names of the *parashiot* are generally taken from among their first words, the word *Balak* in this *parashah* is preceded by the word "And he saw" (*vaya'ar*). Thus, the *parashah* could have become known by this word, just as, for example, the *parashiot* *Vayeira* and *Va'eira* are named after their very first words and not after the subjects of these verbs (God, in Genesis 18:1; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in Exodus 6:3).

7. *Midrash Tanchuma, Balak* 2. According to others, however (see Rashi to Numbers 22:11), Balaam hated the Jews more than Balak did.

8. Ruth 4:16-21.

9. *Sotah* 47a.

10. *Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Balak*, 363b ff., cited in *Or HaTorah, Balak*, p. 902.

11. This idea is also alluded to in the word *Balak* itself, which may be permuted to spell the word for "accepted" (*kibeil*), recalling the verse, "they affirmed and they accepted..." (Esther 9:27) and "and they accepted upon themselves that which they had undertaken to do" (*ibid.* 9:23). According to our sages, these verses refer to the Jewish people's renewal of their commitment to observe the Torah (*Shabbat* 88a).

12. The idea that Balak was the instigator is echoed in the *haftarah*: "My people, remember what Balak, the king of Moab, advised, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him" (Micah 6:5). Balaam only responded to the initiatives of Balak.

13. V. Isaiah 24:1; Radak *ad loc.*; *Chulin* 19a; *Or HaTorah, Balak*, p. 900.

## OVERVIEW OF BALAK

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The same lesson applies in our relationship with others. We may sometimes meet someone who appears altogether dissociated from spirituality and entirely disinterested in advancing the cause of holiness. His mockery of sanctity might make us despair of influencing him to refocus his life toward the goals of Judaism. But if we recall that within his soul is a spark of Divinity that needs only to be revealed in order to transform his entire being into goodness and holiness, we can indeed change this “cursing” individual into a source of blessing.<sup>14</sup>

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14. Based on *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 23, pp. 166 ff.; *Sichot Kodesh* 5733, vol. 2, p. 281-2; *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, pp. 2536, 2538-89, 2544-47; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, pp. 274 ff.

— ONKELOS —

22:2 וְהָיָא בְּלֶק בַּר צְפוּר יֵת כֹּל דִּי עֲבַד יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאַמּוֹרָאִי: 3 וְדַחַל מוֹאָבָא מִן קִדְם עָמַד לְחַדָּא אַרְיִי סְגִי הוּא וְעַקְתָּ לְמוֹאָבָא מִן קִדְם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 4 וְאָמַר מוֹאָב לְסַבֵּי מִדְיָן כְּעַן יִשְׁיַעֲזוּן קְהֵלָא יֵת כֹּל סַחְרֵנָנְאָא כְּמָא דְמַלְחִיךְ תוֹרָא יֵת יִרְקָא דְחַקְלָא וּבְלֶק בַּר צְפוּר מַלְכָא לְמוֹאָב בְּעִדְנָא הַהִיא:

22:2 וַיֵּרָא בְּלָק בֶּן־צְפוּר אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֹמְרֵי: 3 וַיִּגַּד מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי הָעָם מֵאֵד כִּי רַב־הוּא וַיִּקַּח מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 4 וַיֹּאמֶר מוֹאָב אֶל־זִקְנֵי מִדְיָן עֲתִידָה יִלְחָכוּ הַקְּהָל אֶת־כָּל־סְבִיבֹתֵינוּ בְּלַחֵד הַשּׁוּר אֶת יִרְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה וּבְלֶק בֶּן־צְפוּר מֶלֶךְ לְמוֹאָב בָּעֵת הַהוּא:

— RASHI —

עָשׂו שְׁלוֹם בֵּינֵיהֶם. וְגַם רָאָה מוֹאָב לְטַל עֲצָה מִמִּדְיָן? כִּינּוּן שָׂרְאוּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל נוֹצְחִים שְׁלֵא כְּמִנְהַג הָעוֹלָם, אָמְרוּ: "מִנְהִיגִים שֶׁל אֱלֹהִים בְּמִדְיָן נִתְגַּדֵּל, נִשְׁאַל מֵהֶם מַה מִּדְתוֹ". אָמְרוּ לָהֶם: "אֵינן כָּחוּ אֶלָּא בְּפִי". אָמְרוּ: "אֵף אָנוּ נְבוֹא עֲלֵיהֶם בְּאֶדָם שְׂכֹחוּ בְּפִי". **בְּלַחֵד הַשּׁוּר**. כֹּל מַה שֶׁהַשּׁוּר מַלְחָה, אֵינן בּוֹ סִמְנֵן בְּרָכָה: **בָּעֵת הַהוּא**. לֹא הִיָּה רְאוּי לְמַלְכוּת, מְנַסִּיכֵי מִדְיָן הִיָּה, וְכִינּוּן שְׁמֵת סִיחוּן, מְנוּהוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לְצַרְף שְׁעָה:

2 וַיֵּרָא בְּלָק בֶּן צְפוּר אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֹמְרֵי. אָמַר: "אֵלֹהֵי שְׁנֵי מַלְכִים שֶׁהִיָּינוּ בְּטוּחִים עֲלֵיהֶם לֹא עָמְדוּ בְּפָנֵיהֶם, אָנוּ עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה!" לְפִיכָּה: "וַיִּגַּד מוֹאָב": 3 וַיִּגַּד. לְשׁוֹן מוֹרָא, כְּמוֹ: "גִּירוּ לָכֶם": וַיִּקַּח מוֹאָב. קָצוּ בְּחִיָּהֶם, כְּמוֹ: "קִצְתִּי בְּחִיָּי", וְהוּא מִקְרָא קָצַר: 4 אֶל זִקְנֵי מִדְיָן. וְהֵלֵא מֵעוֹלָם הָיוּ שׁוֹנְאִים זֶה אֶת זֶה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "הִמְפָּדָה אֶת מִדְיָן בְּשִׁדְה מוֹאָב", שְׁבָאוּ מִדְיָן עַל מוֹאָב לְמַלְחָמָה? אֶלָּא, מִיִּרְאָתוֹן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל

1. איוב יט, כט. 2. בראשית לו, לה.

4 Since they knew that Moses had lived in Midian before becoming the Israelites' leader, the Moabites decided to ask the Midianites what power he had used to accomplish the miracles that he performed. Moab and Midian were old enemies,<sup>8</sup> but they now cooperated against the Israelites—the Moabites out of fear, and the Midianites out of pure hatred, since the Israelites at this point posed no threat to them at all. **Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now that our protectors are gone, this congregation will pillage us; they will eat up everything around us, as the ox eats up the greens of the field. What should we do?"** The Midianites responded that Moses' power was in his mouth, i.e., his ability to intercede and pray to God. The Moabites recruited the Midianite prince, **Balak the son of Tzipor**, and appointed him to be the **king of Moab at that time**, in order to resist the Israelite menace.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

of his people.

In contrast, when Moses was afraid of Og,<sup>9</sup> he did not share his fear with the people or even betray it by his demeanor at all. He refrained from doing anything that would weaken the people's spirit, and instead bolstered his own spirit within. Because of his positive attitude and steadfast trust in God, the people's self-image and their pride in their Divine mission was preserved. This was critical, for as Mo-

ses saw when he was afraid that Pharaoh would discover that he slew an Egyptian taskmaster,<sup>10</sup> we earn God's helpful intervention in our lives by trusting that He will provide it.

Moses demonstrated here that he learned his lesson from his encounter with Pharaoh long ago, and at the same time set the standard of fearless behavior for all Jewish leaders in the future.<sup>11</sup>

8. See Genesis 36:35. 9. Above, 22:34 10. On Exodus 2:14-15. 11. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 148-149.

## Balak and Balaam

22:2 As was noted earlier,<sup>1</sup> the Israelites had asked the Moabites permission to pass through their territory on their way toward the Land of Israel, and the Moabites refused. The Moabites were not afraid that the Israelites would fight them, since God had not promised them their land.<sup>2</sup> So the Israelites traveled around Moab, passing by its southern and eastern borders. Thus, when the Israelites defeated Sichon and Og, it did not give the Moabites much cause for concern. As was also noted earlier, Sichon and Og collected tribute from the Canaanite kings to protect their land from invaders.<sup>3</sup> But in order not to appear dependent on others to defend them, the Canaanite kings kept this arrangement a secret from the general populace. However, **Balak the son of Tzipor**, a Midianite prince, was aware of this arrangement. He **saw all that Israel had done** to Sichon and Og, the kings of **the Amorites**. He thought that the reason the Israelites had not yet attacked the Moabites was because they were afraid that Sichon and Og would rush to the Moabites' defense. Furthermore, he knew, like everyone else, that God had promised military prowess specifically to the non-Jews, and had seen how this promise had prevented the Jews from waging war against Edom.<sup>4</sup> He therefore assumed that the reason the Israelites had not attacked Moab was because they were afraid to attack *anyone* other than the kings of Canaan proper, for they knew that God had promised them only Canaan and would only come to their aid in battles they waged to win *that* land. But when he saw that the Jews had successfully waged war against Sichon and Og—who did not live in Canaan proper—he feared that they would now not hesitate to wage war against the Moabites, as well. And now there was no one to protect them.

3 So Balak told the Moabites that (a) it was clear now that the Israelites were not hesitating to conquer lands other than Canaan proper, and (b) their protectors had been vanquished. The reasons why the Israelites did not attack them previously were thus no longer relevant. Balak's argument did not impress the Moabites, and they continued to think that the Israelites were not interested in their land and therefore would not attack them. However, they were afraid they would now plunder them uninhibitedly.<sup>5</sup> **Moab** therefore now **became terrified of the people, for they were numerous**, and had miraculously not lost any men in their battles against Sichon and Og.<sup>6</sup> **So Moab became** disheartened and **sick of life due to the** threat that the **Israelites** posed.

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### ✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

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3 **So Balak told the Moabites:** Balak had nothing to gain by making the Moabites afraid of the Israelites; he did not ask them to do anything to counter the

Israelites' threat. But inasmuch as "the wicked are ruled by their hearts,"<sup>7</sup> he could not contain himself, and needlessly spread fear amongst the masses

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1. Above, on 20:21. 2. See Rashi on Exodus 15:15. 3. Above, on 21:23. 4. Above, 20:18. 5. Rashi on 31:2, below, and Deuteronomy 2:9. 6. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 141 ff. *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 2, pp. 1115-1116, 1130. 7. *Bereishit Rabbah* 34:10.

ONKELOS

5 ושלח אנגדין לות בלעם בר בעור לפתור ארם דעל פרת ארע בני עמה למקרי לה למימר הא עמא נפק ממצרים הא חפא ית עין שמשא דארעא והוא שרי מלקבלי: 6 וכען איתא בען לוט לי ית עמא הדין ארי תקיף הוא מני מאים אבול לאגחא בה קרב ואתרבה מן ארעא ארי ידענא ית די תבכר מבכר ודי תלוט ליט: 7 ואולו סבי מואב וסבי מדן וקסמיא בידיהון ואתו לות בלעם ומלילו עמה פתגמי בלק: 8 ואמר להון ביתו הקא בליליא ואתיב יתכוון פתגמא כמא דימליל יי עמי ואוריכו רבבני מואב עם בלעם: 9 ואתא מימר מן קדם יי לות בלעם ואמר מאן גבריא האלין דעמך: 10 ואמר בלעם קדם יי בלק בר צפור מלקא דמואב שלח לנותי:

5 וישלח מלאכים אל-בלעם בן-בעור פתורה אשר על-הנהר ארץ בני-עמו לקראלו לאמר הנה עם יצא ממצרים הנה כסה את-עין הארץ והוא ישב ממלי: 6 ועתה לכה-נא ארה-לי את-העם הזה פי-עצום הוא ממני אולי אוכל נפה-בו ואגרשנו מן-הארץ פי ידע-תי את אשר-תברך מברך ואשר תאר יאר: 7 וילכו זקני מואב וזקני מדן וקסמים בידם ויבאו אל-בלעם וידברו אליו דברי בלק: 8 ויאמר אליהם לינו פה הלוי-לה והשבתני אתכם דבר כאשר ידבר יהוה אלי וישבו שרי-מואב עם-בלעם: 9 ויבא אלהים אל-בלעם ויאמר מי האנשים האלה עמך: 10 ויאמר בלעם אל-האלהים בלק בן-צפור מלך מואב שלח אלי:

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עמי". דבר אחר: קסם זה נטלו בידם וקני מדן, אמרו: "אם יבא עמנו בפעם הזאת — יש בו ממש, ואם ידחנו — אין בו תועלת". לפיכך, כשאמר להם: "לינו פה הלוי-לה", אמרו: "אין בו תקנה". הניחוהו והלכו להם, שנאמר: "וישבו שרי מואב עם בלעם" — אבל זקני מדן הלכו להם: 8 לינו פה הלוי-לה. אין רוח הקדש שורה עליו אלא בלילה. וכן לכל נביאי אמות העולם, וכן לכן בחלום הלילה, שנאמר: "ויבא אלהים אל לכן הארמי בחלום הלילה", כאדם ההולך אצל פילגשו בהקבא: כאשר ידבר ה' אלי. אם ימליכני ללכת עם בני אדם כמותכם אלף עמכם, שמא אין כבודו לתתי להלף אלא עם שרים גדולים מכם: וישבו. לשון עכבה: 9 מי האנשים האלה עמך. להטעותו בא, אמר: "פעמים שאין הכל גלוי לפניו, אין דעתו שוה עליו, אף אני אראה עת שאוכל לקלל ולא יבין". 10 בלק בן צפור וגו'. אף על פי שאינו חשוב בעיניו, חשוב אני בעיני המלכים:

5 פתורה. בשלחני הנה שהכל מריצין לו מעות, כך כל המלכים מריצין לו אגרותיהם. ולפי פשוטו של מקרא, כך שם המקום: ארץ בני עמו. של בלק. משם הנה, ונה הנה מתנבא ואומר לו: "עתיד אתה למלך". ואם תאמר: מפני מה השרה הקדוש ברוך הוא שכינתו על גוי רשע? כדי שלא יהיה פתחון פה לאמות לומר: "אלו היו לנו נביאים חורנו למוטב", העמיד להם נביאים והם פרצו גדר העולם, שבתחלה היו גדורים בעריות, וזה נתן להם עצה להפקיר עצמן לזנות: לקרא לו. הקריאה שלו היתה ולהנאתו, שהיה פוסק לו ממון הרבה: עם יצא ממצרים. ואם תאמר: מה מוזיקה? הנה כסה את עין הארץ. סיחון ועוג, שהיו שומרים אותנו, עמדו עליהם והרגום: והוא ישב ממלי. חסר כתיב — "קרובים הם להכריתני", כמו: "כי אמילם". 6 נפה בו. אני ועמי נפה בהם. דבר אחר: לשון משנה היא: מנפה לו מן הדמים, לחסר מהם מעט: פי ידעתי וגו'. על ידי מלחמת סיחון, שעזרתו להכות את מואב: 7 וקסמים בידם. כל מיני קסמים, שלא יאמר: "אין כלי תשמישי

3. תהלים קיח, י. 4. בראשית לא, כד.

5 Since Moses' power was spiritual, Balak understood that military might would prove useless against the Israelites; this was clear from the way they conquered the mighty Sichon and Og. Balak therefore decided that he needed to enlist the services of someone with spiritual power, who would combat Moses with his mouth.<sup>12</sup> **He therefore sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, who was famous for the efficacy of his curses, as has been noted,<sup>13</sup> and whose prophetic powers Balak was familiar with from Petor, which is by the river of Midian, the land of Balak's people.** Balak and Balaam had lived in the same city, and Balaam had prophesied that Balak would one day be a king. Balak had also observed how many kings had asked for Balaam's advice. So he sent messengers to Aram, where Balaam was now living,<sup>14</sup> **to call for him and to promise to pay him well, saying, "A people has come out of Egypt, and behold, they have covered the 'eye' of the land—they have divested the land of its sentinels, Sichon and Og, who were paid to protect it. And they are stationed opposite me, ready to strike.**

6 **So now, please come and curse this people for me, for they are too powerful for me. Perhaps I will be able to strike them and drive them out of the land, or at least reduce their numbers, for I know that whomever you bless is blessed and whomever you curse is cursed."**

7 **So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian went, with all sorts of magic charms in their hands** so Balaam would not be able to say that he lacked his tools, since he had become famous as a sorcerer prior to becoming a prophet.<sup>15</sup> The elders of Midian decided that if Balaam would assent readily, it would be a sign that he could in fact do something, but if not, he would prove ineffectual. **They came to Balaam and conveyed Balak's message to him.**

8 Balaam knew through prophecy that God had forbidden the Israelites to attack Moab, and that therefore Balak had nothing to fear. Nonetheless, he did not reveal this fact to Balak or his messengers, because he hated the Israelites and jumped at this opportunity to curse them.<sup>16</sup> **He said to the messengers, "Lodge here for the night"**—for, as with other gentile prophets, God revealed Himself to him only at night, stealthily, as it were<sup>17</sup>—**"and I will give you an answer in accordance with how God will speak to me.** Perhaps He will tell me that it befits me to go only with dignitaries more distinguished than you." **So the Moabite nobles stayed with Balaam,** but the Midianite elders, seeing that Balaam was uncertain, took it as a sign that he would be ineffectual, and therefore left.

9 **God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"** God intended with this question to simply open the conversation, but Balaam inferred from it that God is not always omniscient, and thus made plans to curse the Israelites by catching God off guard.

10 **Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Tzipor, the king of Moab, has sent them to me,** so You see that kings esteem me, even though You do not. Balak said:

12. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 357 ff. 13. Above, on 21:27. 14. Below, 23:7. 15. *Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:7; above, on 21:27. 16. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 38, pp. 85 ff. 17. Cf. Genesis 31:24.

— ONKELOS —

11 הא עמא דנפק ממצרים ודפא  
 ית עין שמשא דארעא בען איתא  
 לוט לי יתה מאים אכול לאגתא  
 בה קרב ואתרכבה: 12 ואמר  
 יי לבלעם לא תיזיל עמהון לא  
 תלוט ית עמא ארי בריך הוא:  
 13 וקם בלעם בצפרא ואמר  
 לרברבי בלק אזילו לארעכון  
 ארי לית רעוא קדם יי למשבקי  
 למיזיל עמכון: 14 וקמו רברבי  
 מואב ואתו לות בלק ואמרו סרב  
 בלעם למיתי עמנא: 15 ואוסף  
 עוד בלק למשלח רברבין סגיזין  
 ויקריין מאלין: 16 ואתו לות  
 בלעם ואמרו לה בדנן אמר בלק  
 בר צפור לא בען תתמנע מלמיתי  
 לותי: 17 ארי יקרא איקרנך לחדא  
 וכל די תימר לי אעבד ואיתא בען  
 לוט לי ית עמא הדין: 18 ואתיב  
 בלעם ואמר לעבדי בלק אם יתן  
 לי בלק מלי ביתה פסו ודהב לית  
 לי רשו למעבר על גזרת מימרא  
 די? אלהי למעבד זעירתא או  
 רבתא: 19 ובען אוריכו בען הכא  
 אף אתון בליליא ואדע מא יוסף  
 יי למללא עמי: 20 ואתא מימר  
 מן קדם יי לבלעם בליליא ואמר  
 לה אם למקרי לך אתו גבריא קום  
 אול עמהון וברם ית פתגמא די  
 אמלל עמך יתה תעבד:

11 הנה העם היצא ממצרים ויכם את-עין הארץ עתה  
 לכה קבה-לי אתו אולי אוכל להלחם בו וגרשתיו:  
 12 ויאמר אלהים אל-בלעם לא תלך עמם לא תאר  
 את-העם פי ברוך הוא:

◆ שני (חמישי במחוברין) 13 ויקם בלעם בפקר ויאמר אל-  
 שרי בלק לכו אל-ארצכם פי מאן יהוה לתתי להלך  
 עמכם: 14 ויקומו שרי מואב ויבאו אל-בלק ויאמרו  
 מאן בלעם הלך עמנו: 15 ויסף עוד בלק שלח שרים  
 רבים ונכבדים מאלה: 16 ויבאו אל-בלעם ויאמרו לו  
 כה אמר בלק בן-צפור אל-גא תמנע מהלך אלי: 17 כ-  
 כבד אכבדך מאד וכל אשר-תאמר אלי אעשה ולכה-  
 נא קבה לי את העם הזה: 18 ויען בלעם ויאמר אל-  
 עבדי בלק אם-יתן-לי בלק מלא ביתו פסו וזהב לא  
 אוכל לעבר את-פי יהוה אלהי לעשות קטנה או גדולה:  
 19 ועתה שבו נא כזה גם-אתם הלילה ואדעה מה-יסף  
 יהוה דבר עמי: 20 ויבא אלהים אל-בלעם לילה ויאמר  
 לו אם-לקרא לך באו האנשים קום לך אתם ואף את-  
 הדבר אשר-אדבר אליך אתו תעשה:

— RASHI —

”ראוי לו לתן לי כל פסו וזהב שלו, שהרי צריך לשכר  
 חילות רבות, ספק נוצח ספק אינו נוצח, ואני ודאי נוצח“:  
**לא אוכל לעבר**. על פרחו גלה שהוא ברשות אחרים,  
 ונתנבא פאן, שאינו יכול לבטל הברכות שנתברכו  
 האבות מפי השכינה: 19 **גם אתם**. פיו הכשילו: ”גם  
 אתם סופכם לילה בפחי נפש פראשונים“: **מה יסף**. לא  
 ישנה דבריו מברכה לקללה, הלואי שלא יוסיף לברך.  
 פאן נתנבא שעתיד להוסיף להם ברכות על ידו: 20 **אם  
 לקרא לך**. אם הקריאה שלך וסבור אתה לטל עליה  
 שבר, קום לך אתם: **ואף**. על פרחו את הדבר אשר  
 אדבר אליה אותו תעשה, ואף על פי כן ”וילך בלעם“,  
 אמר: ”שמא אפתנו ויתרצה“:

11 **קבה לי**. זו קשה מ”ארה לי“, שהוא נוקב ומפרש:  
 וגרשתיו. מן העולם. ובלק לא אמר אלא ”ואגרשנו מן  
 הארץ“ — ”איני מבקש אלא להסיעם מעלי“, ובלעם  
 הנה שונאם יותר מבלק: 12 **לא תלך עמם**. אמר לו:  
 ”אם פן אקללם במקומי“, אמר לו: ”לא תאר את העם“.  
 אמר לו: ”אם פן אברכם“, אמר לו: ”אינם צריכים  
 לברכתך, כי ברוך הוא“: משל, אומרים לצרעה: ”לא  
 מדבשה ולא מעקצף“: 13 **להלך עמכם**. אלא עם שרים  
 גדולים מכם. למדנו שרוחו גבוהה, ולא רצה לגלות  
 שהוא ברשותו של מקום, אלא בלשון גסות, לפיכך  
 ”ויסף עוד בלק“: 17 **כי כבד אכבדך מאד**. יותר ממה  
 שהיית נוטל לשעבר, אני נותן לך: 18 **מלא ביתו פסו  
 וזהב**. למדנו שנפשו רחבה ומחמד ממון אחרים. אמר:

11 **'Behold the people coming out of Egypt has covered the "eye" of the earth. Come and curse them for me using God's Name: perhaps I will be able to fight against them and drive them out of the world.'** " Balaam hated the Jews more than Balak, for Balak asked Balaam only to invoke an ordinary curse against them, which would drive them away from Moab, but Balaam wanted to curse them using God's Name and annihilate them altogether.

12 **God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them!"** Balaam responded, "So let me curse them right here!" God said back, **"You shall not curse the people!"** Balaam, seeking to save face, said, "So at least let me bless them!" God replied, "No, do not bless them either, **because they are already blessed**; they have no need of you or your blessing."

- ◆ *Second Reading (Fifth when combined)* 13 **When Balaam arose in the morning, he said to Balak's nobles, lying, "Return to your country, for God has refused to let me go with you, but only with dignitaries more distinguished than you."** He thus sought to aggrandize himself in their eyes.

14 **Moab's nobles arose and came to Balak and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us."**

15 **So Balak continued to send dignitaries, more numerous and higher in rank than these.**

16 **They came to Balaam and said to him, "So said Balak the son of Tzipor, 'Please do not hesitate to come to me.**

17 **For I will honor you greatly, paying you more than you have ever been paid for your services before, and will do whatever you tell me to do. So please come and curse this people for me.'** "

18 **Balaam answered and said to Balak's servants, "In fact, Balak should give me all his money, because without me he would have to spend it all on mercenaries to fight the Israelites, and who knows if they would succeed? My curse, however, will certainly succeed. Nonetheless, even if Balak does give me his full storehouse of silver and gold, I cannot do anything small or great that would transgress the word of God, my God. I can only curse if He lets me."** So, now that Balak had forced the issue, Balaam had to admit that his curse was subject to God's approval. And he unknowingly prophesied that he would not be able to nullify the blessing that God had given the patriarchs.

19 He continued, **"Now, you too, although you will probably be as disappointed as the first group of delegates, please remain here overnight, and I will know what more God will add to what He already said, when He will speak with me.** I am sure He will not allow me to curse them; I just hope He won't add to their blessings." Here, too, he prophesied unknowingly that God would give them additional blessings through him.

20 **God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If these men have come to call for you, and you are eager to take your fee, arise and go with them, but be advised that whatever I tell you, you must do."**

— ONKELOS —

21 וְקָם בַּלְעָם בְּצַפְרָא וְרוּז יָת אֲתַנְהּ וְאִזְל עִם רִבְרִבִי מוֹאָב: 22 וְתַקֵּף רִגְזָא דִּי אַרִי אִזְל הוּא וְאֲתַעֲתֵד מִלְאָכָא דִּי בְּאַרְחָא לְשִׁטָּן לָהּ וְהוּא רִכַּב עַל אֲתַנְהּ וְתַרְיֵן עוֹלְמוּדֵי עֵמָה: 23 וְחֹזַת אֲתַנְהּ יָת מִלְאָכָא דִּי מַעֲתֵד בְּאַרְחָא וְתַרְבֵּה שְׁלִיפָא בִּידָה וְסִטַּת אֲתַנְהּ מִן אַרְחָא וְאִזְלַת בְּחַקְלָא וּמְחָא בַלְעָם יָת אֲתַנְהּ לְאַסְטִיּוֹתָהּ לְאַרְחָא: 24 וְקָם מִלְאָכָא דִּי בְּשִׁבִיל כְּרַמֵּיָא אֲתַרְא דְגִדְרָא מִכָּא וְגִדְרָא מִכָּא וְגִדְרָא מִכָּא:

◆ שלישי 21 ויקם בלעם בצפרא ורוז עם שרי מואב: 22 ויחראף אלהים כִּי־הולך הוא ויתלצב מלאך יהוה בדרך לשטן לו והוא רכב על־אתנו ושני נערי עמו: 23 ותרא האתון את־מלאך יהוה נצב בדרך וחרבו שלופה בידו ותט האתון מן־הדרך ותלך בשדה ויך בלעם את־האתון להטתה הדרך: 24 ויעמד מלאך יהוה במשעול הכרמים גדר מזה וגדר מזה:

— RASHI —

שׁיש בו דעת, תטרף דעתו בשיראה מזיקין: וחרבו שלופה בידו. אמר: ״רשע זה הניח כלי אמונתו, שכלי זינן של אמות העולם בחרב, והוא בא עליהם בפיו, שהוא אמונת שלהם, אף אני אפוש את שלו ואבא עליו באמונתו״. וכן היה סופו: ״ואת בלעם בן בעור הרגו בחרב״: 24 במשעול. בפרגומו: ״בשביל״. וכן: ״אם ישפק עפר שמרון לשעלים״ — עפר הנדבק בכפות הרגלים בהלוכן. וכן: ״מי מרד בשעלו מים״ — ברגליו ובהלוכו: גדר מזה וגדר מזה. סתם ״גדר״ של אבנים הוא:

21 ויחבש את אתנו. מכאן שהשנאה מקלקלת את השורה, שחבש הוא בעצמו. אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: ״רשע, כבר קדמך אברהם אביהם, שנאמר: וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבש את חמורו״<sup>5</sup>. עם שרי מואב. לבו כלבם שנה: 22 כי הולך הוא. ראה שהדרך רע בעיני המקום, ונתאנה לילך: לשטן לו. מלאך של רחמים היה, והיה רוצה למנעו מלחטא, שלא יחטא ויאבד: ושני נערי עמו. מכאן לאדם חשוב היוצא לדרך, יוליד עמו שני אנשים לשמשו, וחוזרים ומשמשים זה את זה: 23 ותרא האתון. והוא לא ראה, שנתן הקדוש ברוך הוא רשות לבהמה לראות יותר מן האדם, שמתוך

5. בראשית כב, ג. 6. במדבר לא, ח. 7. מלכים א, כ, י. 8. ישעיה מ, יב.

24 Further on, the angel of God stood in a path of the vineyards, once more blocking the way, this time with a stone fence on one side and another stone fence on the other side, so there was no way to take a detour.

#### INNER DIMENSIONS

[continued...] When a person transgresses one of the Torah's explicit prohibitions, he augments the power of the three varieties of "pure evil" (the *kelipot teme'ot*). In this case, the person increases the world's enmity toward Divinity, increasing the world's conscious and unconscious hostility to God's intents and purposes. To redeem the power he diverted into this form of evil, the person must motivate his return to God with ardent, overpowering love.<sup>23</sup>

Balaam's exceeding hatred and antagonism toward God may be seen as an allegory for the evil produced by deliberate transgressions of the To-

rah's prohibitions. Abraham's exceeding love of God and enthusiasm in performing His will is then an allegory for the antidote to this poison: repentance and reorientation (*teshuvah*) toward God motivated by love.

Here, at the beginning of Balaam's journey to curse the Israelites, God tells him that he is doomed to fail, for the people have inherited the power to transform the results of his hatred for God into holiness. This transformation of pure evil into good is the theme of the whole episode of Balaam and his curses.<sup>24</sup>

23. Tanya, ch. 7. 24. Likutei Sichot, vol. 28, pp. 163-164.

## Balaam's Journey

◆ *Third Reading* 21 Despite God's words, Balaam still hoped to catch God off guard and curse the people, so **in the morning Balaam arose**, and, enthused with the prospect of cursing the Israelites, **saddled his she-donkey** himself. He also hoped, by demonstrating his own eagerness to do evil, to emphasize how the Jews had repeatedly been eager to rebel against God during their 40 years in the desert, and thereby make God judge them unfavorably. In response, however, God told him that this evil enthusiasm was counter-weighted by the holy enthusiasm Abraham demonstrated by saddling his donkey himself the morning he went to sacrifice Isaac.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Abraham had bequeathed his enthusiastic devotion to God to the Jewish people: this was thus their true nature, and whenever they behaved contrary to this nature, it was just a temporary lapse.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, Balaam **went** on his way, **with** the same evil intentions as **the Moabite dignitaries** escorting him.

22 **God became angry, because Balaam was going** eagerly, even though God had made it clear that He did not want him to curse the Jews. **An angel of God stationed himself on the road to thwart him.** By thwarting Balaam's path, God displayed both His anger—by posing him difficulties, and His mercy—by preventing him from sinning and incurring punishment. Balaam **was riding on his she-donkey, and his two servants were with him**, as befits a distinguished person.<sup>20</sup>

23 If God were to grant humans the perception to see angels, they would perceive see both benevolent and destructive angels (i.e., demons). Since the sight of destructive angels would be too overwhelming for most people,<sup>21</sup> God generally does not grant humans this perception. But since animals do not have free choice and possess less sophisticated consciousness than humans, they are not frightened by the sight of destructive angels, so God allows them to see angels.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Balaam's **she-donkey saw the angel of God stationed on the road with his sword drawn in his hand.** Seeing the angel blocking the way, **the she-donkey turned aside from the road and went into a field.** In not allowing Balaam to remain on the path, forcing him to go around him to either side, the angel was intimating that if Balaam wished to curse Abraham's descendants, he had only two choices: the descendants of Ishmael or the descendants of Keturah; he could not curse Isaac. **Balaam beat the she-donkey to get it back onto the road.**

### INNER DIMENSIONS

[21] **He also hoped:** When a person sins, he augments the power of evil in the world. This can happen in two ways:

When a person indulges in some material or sensual pleasure that is permitted by the Torah but partakes in it for selfish motivations, he augments the power of "neutral evil" (*kelipat nogah*).

He makes the world a coarser, less Divinely-oriented place, but does not increase the spirit of antagonism against Divinity in it. To redeem the power he invested in this form of evil and re-root it in holiness, it is enough for the person to regret and repent of having selfishly indulged in God's gifts.

[continues...]

18. See Genesis 22:3. 19. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, pp. 159-160. 20. Cf. Genesis 22:3. 21. *Berachot* 6a. 22. Cf. *Nachalat Yaakov*.

— ONKELOS —

25 וחזות אתנא ית מלאכא דיי ואדחקת לכתלא ודחקת ית רגלא דבלעם לכתלא ואוסף לממחה: 26 ואוסף מלאכא דיי למעבר וקם באתר עק די לית ארז למסטי לימינא ולשמאלא: 27 וחזות אתנא ית מלאכא דיי ורבעת תחות בלעם ותקף רגזא דבלעם ומחא ית אתנא בחטרא: 28 ופתח יי ית פמא דאתנא ואמרת לבלעם מא עבדית לך ארי מחיתי דנן תלת זמנין: 29 ואמר בלעם לאתנא ארי חבת בי אלפון אית חרבא בידי ארי כען קטלתיך: 30 ואמרת אתנא לבלעם הלא אנא אתנך די רכבת עלי מדאיתך עד יומא הדין המילף אליפנא למעבר לך בדין ואמר לא: 31 וגלא יי ית עיני בלעם וחזא ית מלאכא דיי מעמד בארזא וחרבה שליפא בידי וברע וסגיד לאפוהי: 32 ואמר לה מלאכא דיי על מא מחית ית אתנך דנן תלת זמנין הא אנא נפקית למסטן ארי גלי קדמי דאת רעי למיזל בארזא לקבלי:

25 ותרא האתון את-מלאך יהוה ותלחין אל-הקיר ות- לחין את-רגל בלעם אל-הקיר ויסף להפתה: 26 ויוסף מלאך-יהוה עבור ויעמד במקום צר אשר אין-דרך לנשות ימין ושמאל: 27 ותרא האתון את-מלאך יהוה ותרבין תחת בלעם ויחראף בלעם ויך את-האתון במקל: 28 ויפתח יהוה את-פי האתון והאמר לבלעם מה-עשיתי לך כי הפיתני זה שלש רגלים: 29 ויאמר בלעם לאתון כי התעללת בי לו יש-חרב בידי כי עתה הרגתיך: 30 והאמר האתון אל-בלעם הלא אנכי אתנך אשר-רכבת עלי מעודך עד-היום הוה ההספן הספנתי לעשות לך כה ויאמר לא: 31 ויגל יהוה את-עיני בלעם וירא את-מלאך יהוה נצב בדרך וחרבו שלפה בידו ויקד וישתחו לאפיו: 32 ויאמר אליו מלאך יהוה על- מה הפית את-אתנך זה שלוש רגלים הנה אנכי יצאתי לשטן כיי-רמ הדרך לנגדי:

— RASHI —

בתלמוד: אמרו לה: "מאי טעמא לא רכבת אסוסאי, אמר להון: ברטיבא שדאי לה כו", כדאיתא במסכת עבודה זרה: 32 כי ירט הדרך לנגדי. רבותינו חכמי המשנה דרשוהו נוטריקון: "ירצה, ראתה, נסתה, בשביל שהדרך לנגדי", כלומר: "לקנאתי ולהקניטני". ולפי משמעו: "כי חרד הדרך לנגדי — לשון רטט" — כי ראיתי בעל הדרך שחרד ומהר הדרך, שהוא לכעסי ולהמקראתי". ומקרא קצר הוא, כמו: "ותכל דוד"<sup>14</sup>. לשנא אחריןא: "ירט", לשון רצון, וכן "ועל ידי רשעים ירטני"<sup>15</sup> — מפייס ומנחם אותי על ידי רשעים, שאינן אלא מקניטים:

25 ותלחין. היא עצמה: ותלחין. את אחרים, את רגל בלעם: 26 ויוסף מלאך ה' עבור. לעבר עוד לפניו, להלך להיות לפניו במקום אחר, כמו: "והוא עבר לפניהם". ומדרש אגדה יש בתנחומא<sup>16</sup>: מה ראה לעמד בשלישה מקומות? סימני אבות הראה: 28 זה שלש רגלים. רמו לו: "אתה מבקש לעקר אמה החוגגת שלש רגלים בשנה": 29 התעללת. בתרגומו: לשון גנאי ובזיון: לו יש חרב בידי. גנות גדולה הנה לו דבר זה בעיני השרים: זה הולך להרג אמה שלמה בפיו — ולאתון זו צריך לכלי וין: 30 ההספן הספנתי. בתרגומו, וכן: "הלאל יספן גבר"<sup>17</sup>. ורבותינו דרשו מקרא זה

9. בראשית לג, ג. 10. סימן ח. 11. איוב כב, ב. 12. ד, ב. 13. שבת קה, א. 14. שמואל"ב יג, לט. 15. איוב טו, יא.

32 The angel of God said to him, "Why have you beaten your she-donkey these three times? Behold, I came out to thwart you, for I perceived that you eagerly hastened to set out on the journey in order to go against me — that is, against God, who sent me.

**25 The she-donkey saw the angel of God, and** because the angel was taking up most of the passageway, **she was pressed against the wall** as she passed him. In the process, **she pressed Balaam's leg against the wall, and he beat her again.** By forcing Balaam to one side, the angel was intimating that if Balaam wished to curse Isaac's descendants, he had only one choice: the descendants of Esau; he could not curse Jacob.

**26 The angel of God passed further ahead, and he stood in a narrow place, where there was no room to turn right or left,** thus making it impossible to pass. The angel now was intimating that if Balaam wished to curse Jacob's descendants, there was no possibility at all, since all his children remained loyal to God's calling and therefore could not be cursed.

**27 The she-donkey saw the angel of God, and it crouched down under Balaam. Balaam became angry, and he beat the she-donkey with a stick.**

**28 God opened the mouth of the she-donkey,** enabling her to speak, **and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times [regalim]?"** God, via the donkey's choice of words, intimated that it was useless for Balaam to try to destroy a nation that observes the three pilgrim festivals [regalim].

**29 Balaam said to the she-donkey, "For you have humiliated me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now!"** This statement embarrassed Balaam in front of the Moabite delegation accompanying him, for he was on his way to slay an entire nation with his speech, but required a weapon to do away with a single donkey.

**30** The Moabite delegates asked Balaam, "Why did you take this donkey instead of a horse?" He replied, "I left my horse in the pasture to graze." Upon hearing this, **the she-donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your personal she-donkey,** and is it not true that you have never owned a horse?" Balaam said, "Well, yes, but I only use you for transporting burdens." To this, the donkey answered, "Am I not the donkey **on which you have always ridden?"** Balaam said, "Well, yes, but only once!" Again, the she-donkey said, "Am I not the donkey you have ridden **since you first started** in your career and have continued riding **until now?"** Balaam could not deny this. The donkey continued, "**Have I been accustomed to act disobediently like this to you?" He said, "No."**

**31 God then opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of God standing in the road, with a sword drawn in his hand,** intimating that Balaam was wrong in trying to usurp the Jews' power of the mouth and abandoning the non-Jews' power of the sword, and that in retribution God would have him killed by the means he had abandoned. As will be seen later,<sup>25</sup> this actually happened. Balaam **bowed and prostrated himself on his face.**

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25. Below, 31:8.

ONKELOS

33 וְחֻזְתָּנִי אֶתְנָא וְסַטְת מִן קְדָמִי  
 דְּנָן תַּלְת זְמַנִּין אֲלוּפּוֹן לֹא סַטְת  
 מִן קְדָמִי אַרְבִּי כְּעַן אַף יִתְךָ קְטֻלִית  
 וְיִתְהָ קְדָמִית: 34 וְאָמַר בַּלְעָם  
 לְמַלְאָכָא דִּי חֲבִית אַרְבִּי לֹא יִדְעִית  
 דִּי אַתְּ מַעֲתֵד לְקַדְמוֹתִי בְּאֶרְחָא  
 וְכַעַן אִם בֵּיש בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲתוּב לִי:  
 35 וְאָמַר מַלְאָכָא דִּי לְבַלְעָם  
 אִזּוּל עִם גְּבַרְיָא וְלַחֲדוּ יֵת פְּתֻגְמָא  
 דִּי אֲמַלְל עִמָּךְ יִתְהָ תַמְלִל וְאִזּוּל  
 בַּלְעָם עִם רַבְרָבִי בַּלְק: 36 וְשִׁמְעָה  
 בַּלְק אַרְבִּי אֶתְהָ אֲתָא בַּלְעָם וְנִפְק  
 לְקַדְמוֹתָהָ לְקַרְתָּא דְּמוֹאָב דִּי עַל  
 תְּחוּם אֶרְנוֹן דִּי בְּסַטְר תְּחוּמָּא:  
 37 וְאָמַר בַּלְק לְבַלְעָם הֲלֹא  
 מִשְׁלַח שְׁלַחִית לְוִתְךָ לְמַקְרִי לָךְ  
 לְמָא לֹא אֶתִּית לְוִתִּי הֲבַקְשָׁטָא  
 הַיּוֹת אָמַר לִית אָנָּא יְכִיל לְיַקְרוֹתְךָ:  
 38 וְאָמַר בַּלְעָם לְבַלְק הָא אֶתִּיתִי  
 לְוִתְךָ כְּעַן הַמִּיכַל יְכִילָנָא לְמַלְלָא  
 מִדְּעַם פְּתֻגְמָא דִּישׁוּי יִי כַּפְמִי יִתְהָ  
 אֲמַלְל: 39 וְאִזּוּל בַּלְעָם עִם בַּלְק  
 וְאִתּוּ לְקַרְיַת מְחוּזוֹהִי: 40 וְנִבְס  
 בַּלְק תּוֹרִין וְעָן וְשִׁלַּח לְבַלְעָם  
 וְלַרְבְּרָבִיָּא דִּי עַמָּה:

33 וְתִרְאֵנִי הֵאֲתוֹן וְתַט לְפָנַי זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ רִגְלִים אוֹלִי נִטְתָּה  
 מִפְּנֵי כִי עָתָה גַם־אֶתְכֶּה הֲרַגְתִּי וְאוֹתָהּ הֲחִייתִי: 34 וְיֹאמֶר  
 בַּלְעָם אֶל־מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה חֲטָאתִי כִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי כִי אַתָּה  
 נֹצֵב לְקַרְאתִי בְּדֶרֶךְ וְעָתָה אִם־רַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲשׁוּבָה לִי:  
 35 וְיֹאמֶר מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֶל־בַּלְעָם לָךְ עִם־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְאַפְס  
 אֶת־הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר־אָדַבְר אֵלֶיךָ אִתּוֹ תִּדְבֵר וַיִּלְךְ בַּלְעָם  
 עִם־שָׂרֵי בַּלְק: 36 וַיִּשְׁמַע בַּלְק כִּי־בָא בַלְעָם וַיֵּצֵא לְקַן  
 רֵאשִׁיתוֹ אֶל־עִיר מוֹאָב אֲשֶׁר עַל־גְּבוּל אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בְּקִצְהָ  
 הַגְּבוּל: 37 וַיֹּאמֶר בַּלְק אֶל־בַּלְעָם הֲלֹא שְׁלַח שְׁלַחִתִּי  
 אֵלֶיךָ לְקַרְאֲלֶךָ לָמָּה לֹא־הִלַּכְתָּ אֵלַי הֲאִמְנָם לֹא אוֹכַל  
 כַּבְּדֶךָ: 38 וַיֹּאמֶר בַּלְעָם אֶל־בַּלְק הִנֵּה־בָאתִי אֵלֶיךָ עָתָה  
 הִיכַל אוֹכַל דְּבַר מְאוּמָה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר יֵשִׁים אֱלֹהִים בְּפִי  
 אִתּוֹ אָדַבְר:

◆ רביעי (שישי במחוברין) 39 וַיִּלְךְ בַּלְעָם עִם־בַּלְק וַיָּבֵאוּ  
 קַרְיַת חֲצוֹת: 40 וַיִּזְבַּח בַּלְק בָּקָר וַצֵּאן וַיִּשְׁלַח לְבַלְעָם  
 וְלִשְׂרָיִם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ:

## RASHI

בָּקָר, שְׂאוֹמֵר דָּבָר וּמַלְאָךְ מְחוֹזְרוֹ — אָמַר לְאַבְרָהָם:  
 'קַח נָא אֶת בְּנֶךָ וְגו'<sup>16</sup>, וְעַל יְדֵי מַלְאָךְ בִּטְלָא אֶת דְּבָרוֹ.  
 אַף אֲנִי, אִם רַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ, צְרִיךְ אֲנִי לְשׁוּבִי: 35 לָךְ עִם  
 הָאֲנָשִׁים. בְּדֶרֶךְ שְׂאֵדָם רוֹצֵחַ לִילְךָ, כִּי מוֹלִיכִין אוֹתוֹ:  
 לָךְ עִם הָאֲנָשִׁים. כִּי חֲלַקְךָ עִמָּהֶם, וְסוּפָךָ לְהֶאָבֵד מִן  
 הָעוֹלָם: וְאַפְס. עַל כְּרַחֲמֵיךָ, אֶת הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר אָדַבְר וְגו':  
 עִם שָׂרֵי בַּלְק. שְׁמַח לְקַלְלָם כְּמוֹתָם: 36 וַיִּשְׁמַע בַּלְק.  
 שְׁלַח שְׁלוּחִים לְבַשְׂרוֹ: אֶל עִיר מוֹאָב. אֵלּוּ מְטַרְפוֹלִין  
 שְׁלוֹ, עִיר הַחֲשׁוּבָה שְׁלוֹ, לּוֹמֵר: 'רֵאשִׁית מֵהָ אֵלּוּ מִבְּקֻשִׁים  
 לְעַקְר': 37 הֲאִמְנָם לֹא אוֹכַל בְּדֶרֶךְ. נִתְנַבֵּא שְׁסוּפּוֹ  
 לְצִאת מַעֲמוֹ בְּקִלּוֹן: 39 קַרְיַת חֲצוֹת. עִיר מַלְאָךְ שְׁקוּם,  
 אֲנָשִׁים וְנָשִׁים וְנָשִׁים וְנָשִׁים בְּחוּצוֹתֶיהָ, לּוֹמֵר: רֵאשִׁית וְרַחֵם שְׁלֹא  
 יַעֲקְרוּ אֵלּוּ: 40 בָּקָר וַצֵּאן. דְּבַר מְעֻט, כְּקָר אֶחָד וַצֵּאן  
 אֶחָד בְּלִבָּד:

33 אוֹלִי נִטְתָּה. כְּמוֹ "לוֹלֵא", פְּעָמִים שׁ"אוֹלִי" מִשְׁמַשׁ  
 בְּלִשׁוֹן "לוֹלֵא": גַּם אֶתְכֶּה הֲרַגְתִּי. הָרִי זֶה מְקַרָּא מְסָרִס,  
 וְהוּא כְּמוֹ: "גַּם הֲרַגְתִּי אוֹתְךָ", כְּלוּמַר, "לֹא הֶעֱכַבְהָ  
 בְּלִבָּד קְרָאתְךָ עַל יְדֵי, כִּי גַם הֲרַיְגִיחָ: וְאוֹתָהּ הֲחִייתִי.  
 וְעָתָה מִפְּנֵי שְׂדֵבְרָה וְהוֹכִיחְתָּךְ וְלֹא יִכְלַת לְעַמֵּד  
 בְּתוֹכָתָהּ, כְּמוֹ שְׂכַתוּב: "וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא" — הֲרַגְתִּיךָ,  
 שְׁלֹא יֹאמְרוּ: "זוֹ הִיא שְׁסַלְקָה אֶת בַּלְעָם בְּתוֹכָתָהּ  
 וְלֹא יָכַל לְהַשִּׁיב". שְׁחָס הַמְּקוֹם עַל כְּבוֹד הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וְכֵן:  
 "וַיָּצֵאת הַבְּהֵמָה תְּהַרְגוּ"<sup>17</sup>, וְכֵן: "וְהִרְגַתְּ אֶת הָאִשָּׁה וְאֶת  
 הַבְּהֵמָה"<sup>18</sup>: 34 כִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי. גַּם זֶה גְּנוּתוֹ, וְעַל כְּרַחוּ  
 הוֹדָה. שְׂהוּא הִנֵּה מִשְׁתַּבַּח שְׂיוּדַע דַּעַת עֲלִיוֹן, וּפְּיּוֹ  
 הַעִיד "לֹא יָדַעְתִּי": אִם רַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲשׁוּבָה לִי. לְהַתְרִיס  
 נֶגֶד הַמְּקוֹם הִיא תְּשׁוּבָה זוֹ. אָמַר לוֹ: "הוּא כְּעֵצְמוֹ  
 צוּנֵי לְלִבָּת, וְאִתָּהּ מַלְאָךְ מִבְּטַל אֶת דְּבָרָיו. לְמוֹד הוּא

16. ויקרא כ, טו. 17. שם, טז. 18. בראשית כב, ב.

33 Even your she-donkey sensed that proceeding on this journey was against God's will, and **when the she-donkey saw me, she turned aside these three times. Had she not turned aside before me, I would not only have delayed you, but also killed you now and spared her**, instead of killing her and sparing you. But, now, because you had no defense against her rebuke, I must kill her so people will not be able to identify her as the animal that humiliated you." Even though Balaam was wicked, he was human, and God showed respect for his human dignity. And so the angel killed the donkey.

34 Balaam said to the angel of God, **"I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing on the road before me."** This admission greatly embarrassed Balaam, for he had boasted of his prophetic powers. But he quickly resumed the offensive. He told the angel, **"Now, if it displeases you, I will return.** You, as God's agent, claim to have my interests at heart and that I am acting against God's will, but He has explicitly allowed me to do this! Just as when Abraham was about to slaughter Isaac and an angel cancelled God's order,<sup>26</sup> here, too, God has said one thing to me and you now contravene Him!"

35 **The angel of God said to Balaam, "If, despite all this, you still insist, then go with these men** and join them in their wickedness, **but be advised that the word I will speak to you—that is what you shall speak."** So Balaam went with Balak's dignitaries, still as eager to curse the Jews as they were, and still thinking that he would catch God off guard.

36 Balaam sent messengers to Balak to announce his arrival. When **Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out toward him** to meet him in **the most populous city of Moab**, in order to impress him with the magnitude of destruction the Israelites were about to cause. This city **is on the border of Moab, the Arnon River, which is at the northern edge of Moab's territory.**

37 **Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send dignitaries to you to call you** the first time? **Why did you not come to me then? Am I indeed incapable of honoring you to your satisfaction?"** He unwittingly prophesied that through this undertaking Balaam would become disgraced, rather than honored.

38 **Balaam said to Balak, "Behold, I have come to you now! But beware: do you think I have any power to say anything I like? The word God puts into my mouth—that I will speak."**

◆ *Fourth Reading (Sixth when combined)* 39 **Balaam went with Balak, and they arrived at another populous city, Kiryat Chutzot** ["a city of many outside market-places"]. They hoped that if they asked God to curse the Jews from there, they would be able to arouse His mercy over so many people.

40 **Balak slaughtered a few cattle and sheep and sent some to Balaam and to the dignitaries with him**, even though he had promised to honor him lavishly.<sup>27</sup> Balaam was insulted, and planned revenge.

26. Genesis 22:2. 27. Above, v. 17.

ONKELOS

41 ויהוה בצפרא ודבר בלק ?ת  
בלעם ואסקה לרמת דחלתה ונחזא  
מתמן קצת מן עמא: 23:1 ואמר  
בלעם לבלק בנה לי הכא שבועא  
מדבחין ואתקין לי הכא שבועא  
תורין ושבעא דכרין: 2 ועבר בלק  
במא די מליל בלעם ואסק בלק  
ובלעם תור ודבר על כל מדבחה:  
3 ואמר בלעם לבלק אתעתד על  
עלתך ואהך מאים יערע מימר מן  
קדם ?? לקדמותי ופתגמא דייחזוני  
ואחזין לך ואזול יחידי: 4 וערע מימר  
מן קדם ?? לות בלעם ואמר לה ?ת  
שבועא מדבחין סדרית ואסקית  
תור ודבר על כל מדבחה: 5 ושוי  
?? פתגמא בפמא דבלעם ואמר  
תוב לות בלק וכדין תמלל: 6 ותב  
לותה והא מעתד על עלתה הוא  
וכל רברבי מואב: 7 ונטל מתלה  
ואמר מן ארם דברני בלק מלכא  
דמואב מטורי מדבחה איתא לוט  
לי יעקב ואיתא תרך לי ישראל:  
8 מא אלושה דלא לטיה אל ומא  
אתרבה דלא תרבה ??:

41 ויהוה בפקר ויקח בלק את־בלעם ויעלהו במות בעל  
וירא משם קצה העם: 23:1 ויאמר בלעם אל־בלק בנה  
לי בזה שבועה מזבחת והכן לי בזה שבועה פרים ושׁ  
בעה אילים: 2 ויעש בלק פאשר דבר בלעם ויעל בלק  
ובלעם פר ואיל במזבחה: 3 ויאמר בלעם לבלק התיצב  
על־עלתך ואלכה אולי יקרה יהוה לקראתי ודבר מה  
יראני והגדתי לך וילך שפי: 4 ויקר אלהים אל־בלעם  
ויאמר אליו את־שבעת המזבחת ערכתי ואעל פר ואיל  
במזבחה: 5 וישם יהוה דבר בפי בלעם ויאמר שוב אל־  
בלק וכה תדבר: 6 וישב אליו והנה נצב על־עלתו הוא  
וכל־שרי מואב: 7 וישא משלו ויאמר מן־ארם ינהני  
בלק מלך־מואב מהררי־קדם לכה ארה לי יעקב ולכה  
זעמה ישראל: 8 מה אקב לא קבה אל ומה אזעם לא  
זעם יהוה:

RASHI

ולכה זעמה ישראל. בשני שמותיהם אמר לו לקללם,  
שמא אחד מהם אינו מבקש: 8 מה אקב לא קבה אל.  
בשהיו ישראל ראויים להתקלל, לא נתקללו. כשהזכיר  
אביהם את עונם: "כי באפם הרגו איש"<sup>26</sup>, לא קלל אלא  
אפם, שנאמר: "ארור אפם"<sup>27</sup>. בשנכנס אביהם במרמה  
אצל אביו, היה ראוי להתקלל, מה נאמר שם? "גם  
ברוך יהיה"<sup>28</sup>. במבוכים נאמר: "אלה יעמדו לברך את  
העם"<sup>29</sup>. במקללים לא נאמר "ואלה יעמדו לקלל את  
העם", אלא "על הקללה" — לא רצה להזכיר עליהם  
שם קללה: לא זעם ה'. אני אין כחי אלא שאני יודע  
לכונן השעה שהקדוש ברוך הוא כועס בה, והוא לא  
כעס כל הימים הללו שבאתי אליה. וזהו שנאמר: "עמי  
זכר נא מה יעץ וגו' ומה ענה אתו בלעם וגו' למען דעת  
צדקות ה'"<sup>30</sup>.

41 במות בעל. כתרומה: "לרמת דחלתה" — שם  
עבודה זרה: 3 אולי יקרה ה' לקראתי. אינו רגיל לדבר  
עמי ביום: וילך שפי. כתרומה: "יחידי", לשון שפי  
ושקט, שאין עמו אלא שתוקה: 4 ויקר. לשון עראי,  
לשון גנאי, לשון טמאת קרי, כלומר בקשי ובכזיון. ולא  
היה נגלה עליו ביום, אלא בשביל להראות חבטן של  
ישראל: את שבעת המזבחת. "שבועה מזבחת ערכתי"  
אין פתיב כאן, אלא "את שבעת המזבחת". אמר לפניו:  
"אבותיהם של אלו בנו לפניך שבועה מזבחות, ואני  
ערכתי כנגד בלך" — אברהם בנה ארבעה: "ויבן שם  
מזבח לה' הנראה אליו"<sup>31</sup>, "ויעתק משם ההרה וגו'"<sup>32</sup>,  
"ויאהל אברהם וגו'"<sup>33</sup>, ואחד בהר המוריה<sup>34</sup>. ויצחק בנה  
אחד: "ויבן שם מזבח וגו'"<sup>35</sup>. ויעקב בנה שתיים: אחד  
בשכם<sup>36</sup>, ואחד בבית אל<sup>37</sup>. ואעל פר ואיל במזבחה.  
ואברהם לא העלה אלא איל אחד: 7 ארה לי יעקב

19. בראשית יב, ו. 20. בראשית יב, ח. 21. בראשית יג, יח. 22. בראשית כב, ט. 23. שם כ, כה. 24. בראשית לב, כ. 25. בראשית לה, ו. 26. בראשית מט, ו.  
27. שם, ז. 28. בראשית כז, לג. 29. דברים כז, יב. 30. מיכה ו, ח.

41 In the morning, Balak took Balaam and led him up to the heights where the Moabites worshipped Ba'al, and from there he saw part of the encampment of the Jewish people.

### Balaam's First Oracle

23:1 Intending to make him pay for his stinginess, Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams."

2 Balak did as Balaam had requested, and Balak and Balaam offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

3 Balaam said to Balak, "Remain next to your ascent-offering, and I will go off to meditate. God does not usually communicate with me during the day,<sup>28</sup> but perhaps God will communicate with me, even if reluctantly, and He will show me something that I can tell you." So he went, alone and undisturbed.

4 God indeed communicated reluctantly with Balaam, in order to thwart his plans to curse the Israelites. Balaam said to Him, "Look! I have set up seven altars, in order to neutralize the merit accrued by the seven altars that the patriarchs built,<sup>29</sup> and I have offered up a bull and a ram on each altar, whereas they only offered one ram at a time."<sup>30</sup>

5 God placed His message into Balaam's mouth, i.e., He granted him a prophetic vision, in which He showed Balaam that he cannot curse the people: firstly because God loves and protects them, and secondly because their own merits outweigh the force of any curse he could pronounce.<sup>31</sup> And He said, "Return to Balak and speak thus."

6 When he returned, Balak was standing next to his ascent-offering, together with all the Moabite dignitaries.

7 Balaam began to recite his parable, and said, "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, from the mountains of the east, saying, 'Come, curse Jacob for me, and come, invoke God's wrath against Israel!' He had me refer to them by both of their ancestor's names, so there should be no doubt as to whom the curse was directed.

8 But how can I curse whom God has not cursed? When Jacob should have cursed Simeon and Levi for wiping out the city of Shechem,<sup>32</sup> he only cursed their anger, not them.<sup>33</sup> When Jacob tricked Isaac and deserved to be cursed, God arranged for him to be blessed.<sup>34</sup> When God will give them directions regarding how to seal His covenant with them through blessings and curses, He will describe the blessing as being directed at the people but will mention the curse only in general.<sup>35</sup> All I can really do is determine when God gets angry with the Israelites, and then take advantage of the moment to pronounce my curse. But now, how can I invoke God's wrath? God has not been angered at all since I have been hired!

28. Above, 22:8. 29. Genesis 12:7, 12:8, 13:18, 22:9, 26:25, 33:20, 35:7. 30. The Torah only mentions what Abraham offered as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:13)—one ram. Since the Torah never mentions that the patriarchs ever offered more than this at one time, we may presume that this was the norm. 31. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 38, pp. 90-91. 32. Genesis 34. 33. *Ibid.* 49:6. 34. *Ibid.* 27:33. 35. Deuteronomy 27:12-13.

— ONKELOS —

9 אָרִי מְרִישׁ טוֹרִיאַ חַיִּיתָהּ  
וּמְרִמָּתָא סְכִיתָהּ הָא עֲמָא  
בְּלַחֲזֵיהוֹן עֲתִידִין דִּיחֲסוֹן עֲלֵמָא  
וּבְעֲמִמָּא לֹא יִתְדַנּוּן גְּמִרָא:  
10 מֵאן יָכוֹל לְמַמְנֵי דְעֲדָקִיא  
דְּבֵית יַעֲקֹב דְּאָמִיר עֲלִיהוֹן יִסְגּוֹן  
בְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא אוּ חֲדָא מֵאַרְבַּע  
מִשְׁרֵיתָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל תְּמוֹת נַפְשֵׁי  
מוֹתָא דְקִשְׁטוּהֵי וַיְהִי סוֹפֵי  
כְּוַתְּהוֹן:

9 כִּי־מְרִאשׁ צָרִים אֲרָאֲנוּ וּמִגְבָּעוֹת אִישׁוֹרְנוּ הַן־עַם לְבָדָד  
יִשְׁכְּן וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשְׁבּ׃ 10 מִי מִנְּהָ עֵפֶר יַעֲקֹב וּמִסֶּפֶר  
אֶת־רַבֵּעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּמוֹת נַפְשֵׁי מוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרֵיתִי  
כְּמֹהוּ:

— RASHI —

וְאָחָד וְאֵין עוֹלָה לָהֶם מִן הַחֶשְׁבּוֹן, וְוָהוּ "וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא  
יִתְחַשְׁבּ׃" 10 מִי מִנְּהָ עֵפֶר יַעֲקֹב וּגוֹ'. כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ: "דְּעֲדָקִיא  
דְּבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְכו' מֵאַרְבַּע מִשְׁרֵיתָא" — מֵאַרְבַּע דְּגֻלִּים.  
דְּבַר אַחֲרֵי: "עֵפֶר יַעֲקֹב", אֵין חֶשְׁבּוֹן בְּמִצּוֹת שְׁהֵם  
מְקַזְּמִין בְּעַפְרָא — "לֹא תִחַרֶשׁ בְּשׂוֹר וּבְחִמְרִים"<sup>33</sup>, "לֹא  
תִזְרַע בְּלֵאִים"<sup>34</sup>, אֶפֶר פְּרָה, וְעֵפֶר סוּטָה, וְכִיּוֹצֵא בְהֵם:  
וּמִסֶּפֶר אֶת רַבֵּעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל. רְבִיעוּתֵיהוֹן — זֵרַע הַיּוֹצֵא מִן  
הַתְּשֻׁמִּישׁ שֶׁלָּהֶם: תְּמוֹת נַפְשֵׁי מוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל. שְׁבָהֶם:

9 כִּי מְרִאשׁ צָרִים אֲרָאֲנוּ. אָנִי מִסְתַּכֵּל בְּרִאשֵׁיתָם  
וּבַתְּחִלַּת שְׂרָשֵׁיהֶם וְאָנִי רוֹאֶה אוֹתָם מִיִּסְדִּים וְחֻקִּים,  
בְּצוּרִים וּגְבָעוֹת הַלָּלוּ, עַל יְדֵי אַבּוֹת וְאִמּוֹת: הֵן עַם  
לְבָדָד יִשְׁכְּן. הוּא אֲשֶׁר וְכוּ לוֹ אַבּוֹתָיו — לְשַׁכְּן בְּדָה,  
כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ: וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשְׁבּ׃ כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ: לֹא יִהְיוּ נֶעֱשִׂין  
בְּלָהָ עִם שְׂאֵר הָאֻמוֹת, שְׁנֹאֲמַר: "כִּי אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּלָהּ בְּכָל  
הַגּוֹיִם וּגוֹ"<sup>31</sup> — אֵינֶן נִמְנִין עִם הַשְּׂאֵר. דְּבַר אַחֲרֵי: כְּשֶׁהֵן  
שְׂמֵחִין אֵין אִמָּה שְׂמֵחָה עִמָּהֶם, שְׁנֹאֲמַר: "ה' בְּדָד  
יִנְחֵנוּ"<sup>32</sup>. וּכְשֶׁהָאֻמוֹת בְּטוֹבָה, הֵם אוֹכְלִין עִם כָּל אֶחָד

31. ירמיה ל, יא. 32. דברים לב, יב. 33. דברים כב, י. 34. ויקרא יט, יט.

tion of righteous individuals. **May my soul die the death of the upright of Israel, and let my end be like theirs!**" When Balaam heard himself say that God counts the vital seed produced in the Israelites' marital relations, he was disgusted. "Is it proper," he thought, "for the holy God to be so prurient?" Because he looked disparagingly at the holiness of marital relations and implied that God misused His sight, Balaam went blind in one of his eyes. This eye was later removed, exposing the socket.<sup>45</sup>

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

9 **As sturdy as mountain peaks...as sturdy as hills:** The "sturdiness" referred to here is the Jewish people's abiding and unwavering selfless devotion to God, including their willingness to lay down their lives, if necessary, rather than betray this devotion. We inherit this quality from the patriarchs and matriarchs, who internalized this devotion so intensely that it became part of their very being, which was in turn passed on to their progeny.

This intensity of devotion is an expression of the Divine soul, for the natural soul is not capable of sacrificing its own existence for a higher purpose that contradicts its own, material interests.

Furthermore, the *persistence* of this trait in the Jewish people is also an expression of their Divine soul,

for the natural order dictates that cultural ideals get weaker as the generations progress.

Since this devotion distinguishes the Jewish people from the rest of humanity, the verse continues, "See, they are a nation that dwells alone..."<sup>46</sup>

10 **Has anyone counted the dirt of Jacob:** The Jewish people are here compared to the dirt. Just as there are hidden treasures buried in the earth, so are there treasures of pure faith in God and deep love and fear of Him hidden in every Jew. These treasures may at times be hard to uncover, just as the treasures buried in the earth are often buried deep below the surface. But they are there, nonetheless, and with sufficient effort they can be revealed.<sup>47</sup>

45. Rashi on 24:3, below. 46. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, pp. 171-173. 47. *Keter Shem Tov*, Addendum 44

9 **For from their beginning** as a nation, **I see them** as sturdy as **mountain peaks** in the merit of their patriarchs, **and I behold them** as sturdy as **hills** in the merit of their matriarchs. **See**, they are **a nation that** in the ultimate future **will dwell alone**, for they alone will inherit the earth. They **will not be reckoned among** all **the other nations** when the nations will be punished. Nor will their enjoyment of God's goodness **along with the other nations be reckoned** and deducted from their reward in the future, when **they will rejoice alone**.

10 Furthermore, not only are they impervious to curses because of the sturdiness they have inherited from their forefathers; they also have their own merits and qualities that render them invulnerable. This invulnerability is not due to their physical numbers, for although they are indeed numerous, they are, after all finite, and there are many nations more numerous than they. Rather, **has anyone counted** the descendants of **Jacob**, thinking that their number expresses the sum total of their merit? When God blessed them to be as uncountable as the dust of the earth,<sup>36</sup> He meant that they possess intrinsic, essential *quality*, which transcends mere *quantity*. Therefore, God loves them unconditionally, as if they were His **young children**. **And** does anyone think that the Jewish people's uniqueness can be expressed by counting **the number of** people in **one of the four** divisions of the camp of **Israel**? Their uniqueness lies in their essential *quality*, which God has indicated by arranging them in four distinct divisions, similar to the formation of the angelic hosts.<sup>37</sup> Their intrinsic quality is also expressed by the constant nature of some of the commandments they perform. Thus: **has anyone counted** the *number* of commandments God has commanded the descendants of **Jacob** to perform, thinking that this is how they accrue merit? By performing the commandments, they accrue uninterrupted, *infinite* merit, as can be seen with the commandments they perform with the **dirt of** the earth: They till the earth constantly, and whenever they do so without harnessing an ox and a donkey together, they are fulfilling a commandment!<sup>38</sup> They sow their fields and vineyards constantly, and whenever they do so without mixing species together, they are fulfilling a commandment!<sup>39</sup> They constantly keep the liquid solution made from the dust of the red cow ready to sprinkle on someone who has become defiled by contact with a corpse, and they constantly keep some of it preserved as a keepsake.<sup>40</sup> Even the effects of the liquid solution used in the trial of the suspected adulteress, prepared from the dirt of the Tabernacle floor, are continuous: if she is proven guilty, everyone learns from her example; if she is proven innocent, her marital harmony and fertility are enhanced.<sup>41</sup> The same may be said of other commandments they perform with dirt: not plowing on the Sabbath or in the Sabbatical year, not sowing on the Sabbath or in the Sabbatical year,<sup>42</sup> covering the blood,<sup>43</sup> with dirt after slaughtering an animal,<sup>43</sup> and using dirt to plaster a house being inspected for contamination.<sup>44</sup> **And** has anyone counted **the number of the vital seed of Israel**, thinking that their number expresses their merit? God counts them because he anxiously awaits the concep-

36. Genesis 13:16. 37. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 38, pp. 93-94. 38. Deuteronomy 22:10. 39. Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:9. 40. Above, ch. 19. 41. Above, 5:11-31. 42. Leviticus 25:4. 43. Leviticus 17:13. 44. Leviticus 14:42.

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11 ואמר בלק לבלעם מא עבדת לי למילט סנאי דברתיך והא ברבא מברכת להון: 12 ואתיב ואמר הלא ית דישוני יי בפמי יתה אטר למללא: 13 ואמר לה בלק איתא כען עמי לאתר אחון דתחזונה מתמן לחוד קצתה תחזי ובלה לא תחזי ותלוטה לי מתמן: 14 ודברה לחקל סכותא לריש רמתא ובנא שבקא מדבזין ואסק תור ודבר על כל מדבחה: 15 ואמר לבלק אתעתד הקא על עלתך ואנא אתמטי עד כא: 16 וערע מימר מן קדם יי לבלעם ושו פונמא בפמה ואמר טוב לנת בלק וכדין תמלל: 17 ואתא לנתה והא הוא מעתד על עלתה ורברבי מואב עמה ואמר לה בלק מא מליל יי: 18 ונטל מתלה ואמר קום בלק ושמע אצית למימרי בר צפר: 19 לא כמלי בני אנשא מימר אלהא בני אנשא אמרון ומכדין ואף לא כעובדי בני בשרא די אנון גזרון למעבד ותיבין ומתמלכין דהוא אמר ועבד וכל מימרה מתקום:

11 ויאמר בלק אל-בלעם מה עשית לי לקב איבלי לקח חתיך והנה ברכת ברה: 12 ויען ויאמר הלא את אשר ישים יהוה בפני אתו אשר לך דבר:

13 חמישי ויאמר אליו בלק לך-נא אתי אל-מקום אחר אשר תראנו משם אפס קצתו תראה וכלו לא תראה וקבנו-לי משם: 14 ויקח-הו שדה צפים אל-ראש הפסגה ויבן שבעה מזבחת ויעל פה ואיל במזבחת: 15 ויאמר אל-בלק התיצב פה על-עלתך ואנכי אקרה פה: 16 ויקר יהוה אל-בלעם וישם דבר בפיו ויאמר שוב אל-בלק וכה תדבר: 17 ויבא אליו והנו נצב על-עלתו וישרי מואב אתו ויאמר לו בלק מה-דבר יהוה: 18 וישא משלו ויאמר קום בלק ושמע האזינה עדי בנו צפר: 19 לא איש אל ויכזב ובן-אדם ויתנחם ההוא אמר ולא יעשה ודבר ולא יקימנה:

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תשוב אל בלק: 17 ושרי מואב אתו. ולמעלה הוא אומר: "וכל שרי מואב" — פיון שראו שאין בו תקוה, הלכו להם מקצתם ולא נשארו אלא מקצתם: מה דבר ה'. לשון צחוק הוא זה, כלומר: אינה ברשותה: 18 קום בלק. פיון שראו מצחק בו, נתפנו לצערו: "עמד על רגליך, אינה רשאי לישוב, ואני שלוח אליך בשליחותי של מקום": בנו צפר. לשון מקרא הוא זה, כמו: "חיתו יער"<sup>35</sup>, "וחיתו ארץ"<sup>36</sup>, "למענינו מים"<sup>37</sup>: 19 לא איש אל וגו'. כבר נשבע להם להביאם ולהורישם ארץ שבע אמות, ואתה סבור להמיתם במדברך: ההוא אמר וגו'. בלשון תמה, ותרגומו: "ותיבין ומתמלכין" — חוזרים ונמלכין לחזור בהם:

13 וקבנו לי. לשון צווי — קללהו לי: 14 שדה צפים. מקום גבוה היה, ששם הצופה עומד לשמר אם יבא חיל על העיר: ראש הפסגה. בלעם לא היה קוסם כבלק, ראה בלק שעתידה פרצה להפרץ בישראל משם, ששם מת משה. כסבור ששם תחול עליהם הקללה, וזו היא הפרצה שאני רואה: 15 אקרה פה. מאת הקדוש ברוך הוא: אקרה. לשון אתפעל: 16 וישם דבר בפיו. ומה היא השימה הזאת, ומה חסר המקרא באמרו: "שוב אל בלק וכה תדבר"? אלא, כשהיה שומע שאינו נרשה לקלל, אמר: "מה אני חוזר אצל בלק לצערו"? ונתן לו הקדוש ברוך הוא רסן וחכה בפיו, באדם הפוקס בהמה בחכה להוליכה אל אשר ירצה, אמר לו: "על ברהך

35. תהלים קד, כ. 36. בראשית א, כד. 37. תהלים קד, ח.

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**16 God again communicated:** In both Balaam's first and second visions, he mentions God's love for the Jews as well as their own merit. The point communicated in the first vision, however, is that it is impossible to curse the Jews, so Balaam there-

fore emphasizes God's protective love. In the second vision, he points out that the Jews in fact deserve to be *blessed*, and therefore emphasizes their own merits.<sup>51</sup>

11 Hearing what Balaam said, **Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed, yes, blessed them!"**

12 He answered, saying, **"Is not what God puts into my mouth what I must take care to say?"**

### **Balaam's Second Oracle**

- ◆ *Fifth Reading* 13 **Balak said to him, "As you have told me, we cannot curse the entire people because they collectively enjoy God's protective love and their collective merit renders them immune to curses. Therefore, come with me to another place from where you will see them; however, you will see only a part of them, not all of them.** If you do not see all of them at once, you will regard them as individuals, and since there are surely individuals amongst them of lesser merit, **you will be able to curse at least these individuals for me from there.**"<sup>48</sup>

14 **He took him** outside the present borders of Moab altogether, **to the field of the lookouts**, where guards watched to see if invaders were approaching, and which was on **the peak of the summit** of Mount Nebo, where Moses would die. Balak's powers of divination were superior to Balaam's, and he foresaw that misfortune would befall the Jewish people at this location. But he mistakenly thought that this misfortune would be due to Balaam's curse. As before, Balak **built seven altars and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.**

15 Balaam **said to Balak, "Remain here next to your ascent-offering and perhaps I will again be reluctantly communicated with by God here."**

16 **God** again **communicated reluctantly with Balaam and placed a second message into his mouth.** In this vision, God showed Balaam that not only can he not curse the people, but that they in fact deserve to be blessed,<sup>49</sup> because of their own merits and because God loves them.<sup>50</sup> When Balaam saw that God was again going to use him to bless the Israelites, he decided not to return to Balak. But God forced him: **He said, "Return to Balak and speak thus."**

17 **When he came to him, he was standing next to his ascent-offering, and some of the Moabite dignitaries were with him,** for the others had left when they saw that Balaam was not going to succeed in cursing the Israelites. **Balak said to him mockingly, "What did God say? You are just a puppet; you cannot do what you want."**

18 Balaam responded to Balak's mocking tone by trying to vex him. **He began to recite his parable and said, "Arise, Balak, and hear! You have no right to remain sitting while I deliver God's message to you! Listen closely to me, son of Tzipor.**

19 **God is not a man that He should lie, nor is He a mortal that He should reconsider His decisions.** He promised to give the Israelites the Land of Israel, so it is useless for you to try to oppose His word. Do you think **He would say** that He would do something **and not do it?** that He would **speak and not fulfill** what He said?

48. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 33, p. 151, note 19, after Seforno. 49. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 38, p. 91. 50. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 33, pp. 150-151.

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20 הא ברך קבלית ואברכנה לישראל ולא אתיב ברבתי מנה: 21 אסתכלית לית פלחי גולין בדבית יעקב ואף לא עבדי לאות שקר בישראל מימרא די אלהון בסעדהון ושכינת מלכהון ביניהון: 22 אלה דאפקנז ממצרים תקפא ורומא דילה: 23 ארי לא נחשיא צבן דייטב לדבית יעקב ואף לא קסמיא רען ברבות בית ישראל בעדן יתאמר ליעקב ולישראל מא עבד אלהא:

20 הנה ברך לקחתי וברך ולא אשיבנה: 21 לא הביט און ביעקב ולא ראה עמל בישראל יהוה אלהיו עמו ותרועת מלך בו: 22 אל מוציאם ממצרים בתועפת ראם לו: 23 כי לא נחש ביעקב ולא קסם בישראל בעת יאמר ליעקב ולישראל מה פעל אל:

RASHI

**ממצרים.** אתה אמרת: "הנה עם יצא ממצרים", לא יצא מעצמו, אלא האלהים הוציאם: **בתועפת ראם לו.** כתקף רום וגבה שלו. וכן: "וכסף תועפות"<sup>46</sup> — לשון מעוז המה. ואומר אני, שהוא לשון "יעוף יעופף"<sup>47</sup>, המעופף ברום וגבה, ותקף רב הוא זה, "תועפת ראם" — עפית גבה. דבר אחר: "תועפת ראם", תקף ראמים. ואמרו רבותינו<sup>48</sup>: אלו השדים: **23 כי לא נחש ביעקב.** כי ראויים הם לברכה, שאין בהם מנחשים וקוסמים: **בעת יאמר ליעקב וגו'.** עוד עתיד להיות עת בעת הזאת, אשר תגלה חבתן לעין כל, שהן יושבין לפניו ולומדים תורה מפיו ומחצתן לפנים ממלאכי השרת. והם ישאלו להם: "מה פעל אל", וזהו שנאמר: "והיו עיניך ראות את מוריק"<sup>49</sup>. דבר אחר: "יאמר ליעקב", אינו לשון עתיד, אלא לשון הוה — אינן צריכים למנחש וקוסם, כי בכל עת שצריך להאמר ליעקב ולישראל מה פעל הקדוש ברוך הוא ומה גזרותיו במרום, אינן מנחשים וקוסמים, אלא נאמר להם על פי נביאיהם מה היא גזרת המקום, או אורים ותמים מגידים להם. ואנקלוס לא תרגם כן:

20 הנה ברך לקחתי. אתה שאלני: "מה דבר ה"? קבלתי ממנו לברך אותם: ברך. כמו "לברך": וברך ולא אשיבנה. הוא ברך אותם, ואני לא אשיב את ברכתו: וברך. כמו "וברך", וכן הוא גזרת ר"ש, כמו: "אויב חרף"<sup>38</sup>, כמו "חרף". וכן: "ובצע ברך"<sup>39</sup> — המהלל ומברך את הגזול, ואומר: "אל תירא כי לא תענש, שלום יהיה לך" — מרגיז הוא להקדוש ברוך הוא. ואין לומר "ברך" שם דבר, שאם כן היה נקוד בפתח קטן<sup>40</sup> וטעמו למעלה, אבל לפי שהוא לשון "פעל", הוא נקוד קמץ קטן<sup>41</sup> וטעמו למטה: **21 לא הביט און ביעקב וגו'.** בתרגומו. דבר אחר: אחרי פשוטו הוא נדרש מדרש נאה: לא הביט הקדוש ברוך הוא און שביעקב — כשהן עוברין על דבריו, אינו מדקדק אחריהם להתבונן באוניות שלהם ובעמלן שהן עוברים על דתו: **עמל.** לשון עברה, כמו: "והרה עמל"<sup>42</sup>, "כי אתה עמל וכעס תביט"<sup>43</sup>, לפי שהעברה היא עמל לפני המקום: **ה אלהיו עמו.** אפלו מכעיסין וממרים לפניו, אינו זן מתוכן: **ותרועת מלך בו.** לשון חבה ורעות, כמו: "רעה דוד"<sup>44</sup> — אוהב דוד. "ויתנה למרעהו"<sup>45</sup>. וכן תרגם אנקלוס: "ושכינת מלכהון ביניהון": **22 אל מוציאם**

38. תהלים עד, יח. 39. תהלים י, ג. 40. סגול. 41. צירי. 42. תהלים ז, טו. 43. תהלים י, יד. 44. שמואל ב טו, לו. 45. שופטים טו, ו. 46. איוב כב, כה. 47. בראשית א, כ. 48. גיטין סח, ב. 49. ישעיה ל, כ.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

**versity in Israel; God, their God, is with them:** "Jacob" refers to the Jew as he is involved in the mundane reality of the workweek, while "Israel" refers to the Jew in his transcendent state on the Sabbath. When we attempt to pray during the week, we must strive to overcome the many confusing and distracting thoughts that intrude from our involvement in worldly affairs. We are only able to succeed in this

struggle because "God, their God is with them." On Shabbat, however, we do not have to expend any effort to rise above the distractions of the mundane world;<sup>56</sup> all we need to do is cultivate sensitivity to the special illumination of our soul that is revealed on Shabbat. This is the meaning of the phrase "God, their God is with them" that applies to Shabbat.<sup>57</sup>

56. This is alluded to by the fact that the word for "perversity" (*amal*) in this verse also means "effort," rendering the phrase: "... and sees no effort [on the Sabbath, when the Jew is] Israel." 57. *Likutei Torah* 3:70c.

**20 I have received an instruction to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot retract it, because**

**21 I have looked and not found any idolaters in them, Jacob's descendants, and no dishonest workers in them, Israel's descendants.** This alone makes them worthy of being blessed. Moreover, whenever they *do* transgress God's will, He overlooks it: **He does not look at whatever evil there is in the actions of the people, Jacob's descendants, and sees no perversity in the actions of the people, Israel's descendants.**<sup>52</sup> **God, their God, is with them** even when they provoke Him, and even then **they retain the King's friendship.**

**22** They did not leave Egypt on their own, as you implied,<sup>53</sup> but **God brought them out of Egypt with the strength** He possesses because of **His loftiness**, His ability to **fly above** worldly power, and His **power over demons.**

**23** The Israelites are also worthy of blessing **because there are no diviners in Jacob and no soothsayers in Israel.** Now, this indicates that a soothsayer is a bad thing, but that is not why I, who am a soothsayer, cannot curse them; it is because they have their own merits that make them worthy of being blessed. God manifested His affection for them openly when He gave them the Torah and spoke to them personally. **Just like** He taught them His cherished Torah **then**, He will do so again in the messianic future, when He will seat them closer to Him than His ministering angels and teach them the innermost teachings of the Torah. **It will then be said to Jacob and Israel** by these angels, when they want to know what God has said, **'What has God wrought?'**—for the Israelites will have more intimate access to God's ways than they. Even now, God manifests His affection for the Israelites by letting them know directly whenever He is displeased with their conduct, so they can repent and avoid punishment. Thus, **there is no need for diviners in Jacob and no need for soothsayers in Israel: whenever they need to know His will, it is communicated to Jacob and to Israel what decrees God has enacted** by their prophets, or, if they are unworthy of a direct prophetic communication, via the *urim* and *tumim*.<sup>54</sup>

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∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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**21 He does not look at evil in Jacob:** The reason God does not look at the evil in Jacob is because He looks at the Jew as having already fulfilled his potential to reorient the animal concerns of his consciousness (his animal "soul") toward Divinity. He thus transforms the animal soul into a positive force in his Jewish life, harnessing its raw power to pursue its interests in the service of his higher, Divine consciousness (his "Divine soul"). This is certainly not easy; what enables the Jew to effect this transformation is his Divine soul. Since God is omnipotent,

the Jew, possessing a spark of Divine consciousness within him, possesses the power to overcome the down-sliding entropy of the animal soul.

This is the inner meaning of this verse:

*He does not look at evil in Jacob:* i.e., God sees that the Jew can conquer his animal soul, because—

*God is with him,* i.e., within him, referring to the Divine soul, which enables the Jew to transform his animal soul.<sup>55</sup>

**He does not look at evil in Jacob, and sees no per-**

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<sup>52</sup> See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 33, p. 150. <sup>53</sup> Above, 22:5. <sup>54</sup> Exodus 28:30. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 262-267. <sup>55</sup> *Hitva'aduyot* 5743, vol. 4, p. 1777.

— ONKELOS —

24 הָא עֲמָא כְּלִיתָא שְׂרִי וּכְאֲרִיא  
 יתְנַטֵּל לֹא יִשְׂרִי בְּאַרְעָה עַד  
 דִּיקְטוּל קְטוּל וְנִכְסֵי עֲמִמָּיָא  
 זִירָתָ: 25 וְאָמַר בֶּלְק לְבִלְעָם  
 אָף מַלְט לֹא תְלוּטְנִן אָף בְּרָכָא  
 לֹא תִבְרַכְנוּן: 26 וְאִתִּיב בִּלְעָם  
 וְאָמַר לְבִלְק הֲלֹא מִלְלִית עִמָךְ  
 לְמִימְרָ בַל דִּימְלַל יִי יְתָה אֲעֵבֵד:  
 27 וְאָמַר בֶּלְק לְבִלְעָם אֵיתָא  
 כְּעַן אֲדַבְרֵנָךְ לְאַתְרָ אַחֲרֵן מְאִים  
 יְהִי רַעְוָא מִן קָדָם יִי וְתִלוּטָה לִי  
 מִתְמָן: 28 וְדַבֵּר בֶּלְק יֵת בִּלְעָם  
 רִישׁ רַמְתָּא דְמִסְתַּכִּיא עַל אִפֵּי בֵית  
 יְשִׁימוּן: 29 וְאָמַר בִּלְעָם לְבִלְק בְּנֵה  
 לִי הֲכָא שְׁבַעַא מִדְּבַחִין וְאִתְקִין לִי  
 הֲכָא שְׁבַעַא תּוֹרִין וְשְׁבַעַא דְכַרְוִין:  
 30 וְעֵבֵד בֶּלְק כְּמָא דִּי אָמַר בִּלְעָם  
 וְאִסַּק תּוֹר וְדַכַר עַל כָּל מִדְּבַחָא:  
 24:1 וְחֹזָא בִלְעָם אֲרִי תִקִּין קָדָם  
 יִי לְבָרְכָא יֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא הֲלַךְ  
 כּוֹמֵן בּוֹמֵן אֲלֵהִין לְקַדְמוֹת נְחִישָׁיָא  
 וְשׁוּי לְקַבֵּל עֲגָלָא דְעֵבְדוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 בְּמִדְּבַרְא אִפּוּהִי: 2 וְזָקַף בִּלְעָם  
 יֵת עֵינָוְהִי וְחֹזָא יֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁכֹן  
 לְשִׁבְטֵיהִי וְשַׁרְתָּ עֲלוּהִי רוּחַ נְבוּאָה  
 מִן קָדָם יִי:

24 הֲזֵן עִם כְּלָבִיא יָקוּם וּכְאֲרִי יִתְנַשֵּׂא לֹא יִשְׁכַּב עַד-  
 וְאִכַּל פֶּרֶף וְדַם-חֲלָלִים יִשְׁתֶּה: 25 וַיֹּאמֶר בֶּלְק אֶל-  
 בִּלְעָם גַּם-קָב לֹא תִקְבְּנוּ גַם-פֶּרֶף לֹא תִבְרַכְנוּ: 26 וַיַּעַן  
 בִּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-בֶּלְק הֲלֹא דִבַּרְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר כָּל  
 אֲשֶׁר-יִדְבַר יְהוָה אֵתוּ אֲעִשֶׂה:

◆ שִׁישִׁי (שְׁבִיעִי בַמְּחֻבְרִין) 27 וַיֹּאמֶר בֶּלְק אֶל-בִּלְעָם לְכֹה-  
 נָא אֶקְחֶךָ אֶל-מָקוֹם אַחֵר אוּלַי יִישַׁר בְּעֵינֵי הָאֱלֹהִים  
 וְקִבְּתוּ לִי מַשֶּׁם: 28 וַיִּקַּח בֶּלְק אֶת-בִּלְעָם רֹאשׁ הַפְּעֹר  
 הַנִּשְׁקָף עַל-פְּנֵי הַיְשִׁימוֹן: 29 וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְעָם אֶל-בֶּלְק בְּנֵה-  
 לִי בֹוֶה שְׁבַעָה מִזְבַּחַת וְהִכֵּן לִי בֹוֶה שְׁבַעָה פָּרִים וְשְׁבַעָה  
 אֵילִם: 30 וַיַּעַשׂ בֶּלְק כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר בִּלְעָם וַיַּעַל פָּר וְאֵיל  
 בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ: 24:1 וַיֵּרָא בִלְעָם כִּי טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה לְבָרַךְ אֶת-  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא-הִלְךְ כְּפַעַם-בְּפַעַם לְקַרְאֵת נְחֻשִׁים וַיִּישַׁת  
 אֶל-הַמִּדְבָּר פָּנָיו: 2 וַיֵּשֶׂא בִלְעָם אֶת-עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת-  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁכֹן לְשִׁבְטָיו וְתַהִי עֲלָיו רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים:

— RASHI —

28 **ראש הפעור.** קוסם היה בֶּלְק, וְרָאָה שְׁהֵן עֲתִידִין  
 לְלָקוֹת עַל יְדֵי פְעוֹר, וְלֹא הִיָּה יוֹדֵעַ בְּמָה. אָמַר: "שְׁמָא  
 הַקְּלָלָה תְּחוּל עֲלֵיהֶם מַשֶּׁם". וְכֵן כָּל הַחֻזִּים בְּכוּכְבָּים  
 — רוֹאִים וְאֵינָם יוֹדְעִים מֵה רוֹאִים: 1 **וַיֵּרָא בִלְעָם כִּי  
 טוֹב וְגו'.** אָמַר: "אֵינִי צָרִיךְ לְבַדֵּק בְּהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא,  
 כִּי לֹא יִחַפֵּץ לְקַלְלָם". וְלֹא הֲלַךְ כְּפַעַם בְּפַעַם. כַּאֲשֶׁר  
 עָשָׂה שְׁתֵּי פְעָמִים: **לְקַרְאֵת נְחֻשִׁים.** לְנַחֵשׁ, אוּלַי יִקְרָה  
 ה' לְקַרְאֵתוֹ כְּרַצוֹנוֹ, אָמַר: "רוֹצֵה וְאֵינִי רוֹצֵה לְקַלְלָם,  
 אֲזַכִּיר עֲוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם וְהַקְּלָלָה תְּחוּל עַל הַנְּכַרְתָּ הַעֲבִירָה":  
**וַיִּשַׁת אֶל הַמִּדְבָּר פָּנָיו.** כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ: 2 **וַיֵּשֶׂא בִלְעָם אֶת  
 עֵינָיו.** בְּקֶשׁ לְהַכְנִיס בְּהֶם עֵין רָעָה, וְהִרִי יֵשׁ לָהּ שֵׁלֵשׁ  
 מִדוּתָיו: עֵין רָעָה, וְרוּחַ גְּבוּהָה וְנִפְשׁ רַחֲבָה הָאֲמוּרִים  
 לְמַעְלָה: **שְׁכֹן לְשִׁבְטָיו.** רָאָה כָּל שְׁבֵט וְשֵׁבֵט שׁוֹכֵן  
 לְעַצְמוֹ וְאֵינָן מְעַרְבִין, רָאָה שְׂאִין פְּתוּחֵיהֶם מְכוּנִין זֶה  
 כְּגֹנֵד זֶה, שְׁלֹא יִצְיִץ לְתוֹף אֶהֱל חֲבָרוֹ: **וְתַהִי עֲלָיו רוּחַ  
 אֱלֹהִים.** עֲלָה בְּלָבוֹ שְׁלֹא יִקְלָלָם:

24 **הֲזֵן עִם כְּלָבִיא יָקוּם וְגו'.** בְּשִׁהֵן עוֹמְדִין מִשְׁנֵתָם  
 שְׁחִירִית, הֵן מִתְגַּבְּרִים כְּלָבִיא וּכְאֲרִי, לְחַטֵּף אֶת הַמִּצּוֹת:  
 לְכַבֵּשׁ טְלִית, לְקַרְא אֶת שְׁמַע וְלַהֲנִיחַ תְּפִלִּין: **לֹא יִשְׁכַּב.**  
 בְּלִילָה עַל מִטָּתוֹ, עַד שְׁהוּא אוֹכַל וּמִחַבֵּל כָּל מוֹזִיק הֲבָא  
 לְטָרְפוֹ. כִּיצַד? קוֹרָא אֶת שְׁמַע עַל מִטָּתוֹ, וּמִפְקִיד רוּחוֹ  
 בְּיַד הַמָּקוֹם. בָּא מִחֲנֵה וְגִיס לְהוֹיָקִם — הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ  
 הוּא שׁוֹמְרָם, וְנִלְחָם מִלְחָמוֹתֵיהֶם וּמִפִּילֵם חֲלָלִים. דְּבַר  
 אַחֵר: "הֲזֵן עִם כְּלָבִיא יָקוּם וְגו'", כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ: **וְדַם חֲלָלִים  
 יִשְׁתֶּה.** תְּנַבֵּא שְׂאִין מִשָּׂה מַת עַד שִׁפִּיל מַלְכֵי מִדְּנָן  
 חֲלָלִים, וְהִרְגָה הוּא עֲמָהֶם, שְׁנַאֲמַר: "וְאֵת בִּלְעָם בֵּן  
 בְּעוֹר הַקּוֹסֶם הִרְגוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחָרֵב אֶל חֲלָלֵיהֶם"<sup>50</sup>:  
 25 **גַּם קָב לֹא תִקְבְּנוּ.** "גַּם" רֹאשׁוֹן מוֹסִיף עַל "גַּם"  
 הַשְּׁנִי וְ"גַם" הַשְּׁנִי עַל "גַּם" רֹאשׁוֹן. וְכֵן: "גַּם לִי גַם לָךְ  
 לֹא יִהְיֶה"<sup>51</sup>, וְכֵן: "גַּם בַּחוּר גַּם בְּתוּלָה"<sup>52</sup>: 27 **וְקִבְּתוּ לִי.**  
 אֵין זֶה לְשׁוֹן צוּוּי כְּמוֹ "וְקִבְּנוּ", אֶלָּא לְשׁוֹן עֲתִיד: אוּלַי  
 יִישַׁר בְּעֵינָיו וְתִקְבְּנוּ לִי מַשֶּׁם, מִלְדִיר"ש ל"וִי בִלְעָזָה:<sup>53</sup>

50. יחושע יו, כב. 51. מלכים א ג, כו. 52. דברים לב, כה. 53. תקלל אותו.

**24 Behold**, the Israelites deserve to be blessed because they are **a people that rises in the morning like a lion, and raises itself like a lion** to do God's will fearlessly. Their first acts in the morning all express their complete devotion to His will. They dress themselves in their ritually-tasseled garments,<sup>58</sup> which remind them to observe all of God's commandments. They then recite the *Shema*,<sup>59</sup> which contains the fundamental concepts of the Jew's relationship to God. They put on *tefilin*,<sup>60</sup> which reminds them of the Exodus from Egypt, the source of their spiritual freedom. Also, **they do not lie down** to sleep at night **until they** recite the *Shema*, and in return for dedicating themselves to God in this way, God fights their enemies, **consumes** those who seek to **prey** upon them, **and drinks the blood of their slain** enemies. Furthermore, **they will not settle** in their land **until they consume** the nations they will dispossess **and inherit the spoil of the slain**. And finally, Moses **will not die until he kills me**—who is trying to **prey** upon him—when **he kills** the princes of Midian whom **he will also slay**.<sup>61</sup>

**25 Balak said to Balaam, "You shall neither curse them nor bless them! If you cannot curse them, don't say anything!"**

**26 Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Have I not spoken to you, saying, 'Everything GOD speaks to me about is what I must do' "?**

### Balaam's Third Oracle

◆ *Sixth Reading (Seventh when combined)* **27** But then Balak had another idea. **Balak said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take you to a different place. Perhaps God will assent that you curse them for me from there."**

**28 So Balak took Balaam to the peak of Peor, overlooking the wastelands**, where they would succumb to idolatry and be punished for doing so.<sup>62</sup> Here, too, he foresaw that misfortune would befall the Jewish people at this location, and thought that it would result from Balaam's curse.

**29** Once again, **Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams."**

**30 Balak did as Balaam told him, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.**

**24:1** By this time **Balaam saw that it only pleased God to bless Israel** and that he would not be able to catch God off guard and convince Him to curse them, **so he did not go off to practice meditative divinations** in order to influence God to communicate with him **as he had done once and again**. Instead, he decided to mention the Israelite's past sins explicitly, and thus his curse would befall them whether or not God wanted. **He turned his face** to gaze first **toward the Sinai desert**, where they had committed the sin of the Golden Calf.

**2 Balaam raised his eyes** in order to look at the entire Israelite camp in order to be jealous of their prosperity. He assumed that his jealousy would make God reconsider whether or not the Israelites deserved this prosperity. Deliberately feeling

58. Above, 15:37-41. 59. See Deuteronomy 6:4 ff. 60. Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8. 61. Below, 31:8; Joshua 13:22. 62. Below, 25:1 ff.

## ONKELOS

3 ונטל מתלה ואמר אמר בלעם  
 ברה בעור ואמר גברא דשפיר חזי:  
 4 אמר דשמע מימר מן קדם אל  
 וחזו מן קדם שדי חזי שכביב ומתגלי  
 לה: 5 מא טבא משכניך יעקב  
 בית מישריך ישראל: 6 בנתליון  
 דמדברין בגנת שקיא דעל פרת  
 כבוטמא דנצב יי בארזין דנציבין  
 על מיא:

3 וישא משלו ויאמר נאם בלעם בנו בער ונאם הנגבר  
 שתם העיני: 4 נאם שמע אמריאל אשר מחזה שדי  
 יחזה נפל וגלוי עינים: 5 מהטבו אהליך יעקב משכ-  
 נתיך ישראל: 6 בנתלים נטעו פגנת עלי נהר פאהלים  
 נטע יהודה פארזים עלימים:

## RASHI

לפניו: 5 מה טבו אהליך. על שראה פתיחהם שאינו  
 מקונין זה מול זה: משכנתיה. חניוניה, בתרגומו.  
 דבר אחר: "מה טבו אהליך", מה טבו אהל שילה  
 ובית עולמים בישובך, שמקריבין בהן קרבנות לכפר  
 עליהם: משכנתיה. אף כשהן חרביין, לפי שהן משכונ  
 עליהם, וחרבנן כפרה על הנפשות, שנאמר: "כלה ה'  
 את חמתו"<sup>59</sup>, ובמה כלה? "ויצת אש בציון" 6 בנתלים  
 נטעו. שנארכו ונמשכו לנטות למרחוק. אמרו רבותינו:  
 מברכותיו של אותו רשע אנו למדים מה היה בלבו  
 לקללם כשאמר להשית אל המדבר פניו, וכשהפך  
 המקום את פיו, ברקם מעין אותם קללות שבקש לומר  
 כו', כדאיתא ב"חלק"<sup>60</sup>: פאהלים. בתרגומו, לשון "מור  
 ואהלות"<sup>61</sup>: נטע ה'. בגן עדן. לשון אחר: "כפאהלים  
 נטע ה'", כשמנים המתוחזין באהל, שנאמר: "וימתחם  
 באהל לשבת"<sup>62</sup>: נטע ה'. לשון "נטיעה" מצינו באהלים,  
 שנאמר: "ויטע אהלי אפדנו"<sup>63</sup>:

3 בנו בער. כמו: "למענינו מים"<sup>54</sup>. ומדרש אגדה<sup>55</sup>:  
 שניהם היו גדולים מאבותיהם: בלק בנו צפור — אביו  
 בנו הוא במלכות, ובלעם גדול מאביו בנביאות, מנה בן  
 פרס היה: שתם העיני. עינו נקרה ומוצאת לחוץ וחרור  
 שלה נראה פתוח. ולשון משנה הוא: "כדי שישתם  
 ויסתם ויגב"<sup>56</sup>. ורבותינו אמרו<sup>57</sup>: לפי שאמר: "ומספר  
 את רבע ישראל" — שהקדוש ברוך הוא יושב ומונה  
 רביעותיהן של ישראל, מתי תבוא טפה שנולד הצדיק  
 ממנה, אמר בלבו: "מי שהוא קדוש ומשרתיו קדושים,  
 יסתכל בדברים הללו?" ועל דבר זה נסמית עינו של  
 בלעם. ויש מפרשים: "שתם העיני", פתוח העיני, כמו  
 שתרגם אנקלוס. ועל שאמר "שתם העיני", ולא אמר  
 "שתם העינים", למדנו שסומא באחת מעיניו היה:  
 4 נפל וגלוי עינים. פשוטו בתרגומו, שאין נראה עליו  
 אלא בלילה, כשהוא שוכב. ומדרשו<sup>58</sup>: כשהיה נגלה  
 עליו לא היה בו כח לעמוד על רגליו, ונפול על פניו,  
 לפי שהיה ערל ומאוס להיות נגלה עליו בקומה זקופה

54. תהלים קיד, כ. 55. תנחומא יג. 56. עבודה זרה ט, א. 57. נדה לא, א. 58. עיין ברייתא דרבי אלעזר פרק כט. 59. איכה ד, יא. 60. סנהדרין קה, ב.  
 61. תהלים מה, ט. 62. דניאל יא, מה.

## CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

curse (or an accursed situation) into a blessing (or a blessed one).

And lest we think that this alertness to the details of modesty is only required in our day-to-day behavior but not in temporary situations (such as when we are on vacation), we see here that the tremendous power of even the minor details of modest conduct was demonstrated when our forefathers lived in tents, their temporary homes in the desert.<sup>71</sup>

**O Jacob...O Israel:** Both names of the patriarch Jacob—Jacob and Israel—refer to the Jewish people as a nation. "Jacob" refers to them in their role as God's servant (as in the verse, "fear not, My servant Jacob"<sup>72</sup>), while "Israel" refers to them in their role as God's children (as in the verse, "Israel is My first-born son"<sup>73</sup>). We all play both roles, sometimes one

at a time, sometimes simultaneously while emphasizing one or the other.

The servant serves his master because he fears him, while the child we are speaking of here is devoted to his parents out of love for them. Thus, the relationship between a servant and a master is superficial; the servant would rather not perform his service, but he does so because he has no choice. A child, in contrast, has internalized his parents' values; they have successfully inculcated their child with an appreciation of what they are working for and the child therefore helps them willfully.

Thus, "tents" are mentioned in connection with Jacob and "sanctuaries" with Israel. A tent is an external, protective covering, while a sanctuary is the actual home-structure that the tent protects. When

71. Likutei Sichot, vol. 13, p. 84. 72. Isaiah 44:2, et al. 73. Exodus 4:22.

jealous in order to deprive others of what they possess is called “casting the evil eye” on them.<sup>63</sup> Thus, Balaam showed himself to be maliciously jealous, conceited,<sup>64</sup> and greedy.<sup>65</sup> **But** when he looked, he **saw Israel dwelling** orderly **according to its tribes**, and he realized that this was possible only because the people had been scrupulous about their marital fidelity. Moreover, in order to safeguard everyone’s privacy, they pitched their tents such that their openings did not face one another. When he saw how much they valued controlling and properly channeling their carnal drive, his attitude changed: his spirit **aligned with the spirit of God** and he decided to bless them of his own accord.<sup>66</sup>

**3 He began to recite his parable and said, “This is the word of Balaam the son of Beor, the word of the man with only one open, seeing eye,<sup>67</sup> but whose other eye sees prophetically.**

**4 The word of the one who hears God’s sayings, who sees the vision of the Almighty.** True, God reveals Himself to me only when I am **lying down**, both because He usually comes to me stealthily, when I am in bed at night,<sup>68</sup> and because I am uncircumcised and it would disgust Him to appear to me when I am standing up.<sup>69</sup> But I still see the vision He grants me clearly, as if **with open eyes**.

**5 I wanted to mention the Israelites’ sins so my curse would befall them, but how can I? How good are your tents, O Jacob:** their openings do not face one another, indicating how you value modesty and privacy! How good are **your encampments, O Israel:** you are organized into orderly divisions, indicating your carnal self-discipline and marital fidelity! This merit certainly outweighs any other sins you may be guilty of. And anyway, even if you do sin, **how good are your Sanctuaries, O Jacob!** Your Tabernacle and your Temple atone for your sins: when they are standing, you can offer sacrifices to atone for some of them, and when they will be in ruins, they will serve as **collateral for you, O Israel**, and atone for all the rest!<sup>70</sup>

**6 Therefore, I bless you: Your kingdoms will extend far into the future, like streams; your olive trees and vineyards will flourish like gardens by the river; your fame will spread like the fragrance of aloes that grow in the Garden of Eden, which God Himself planted, and extend like the tent of heaven, which God Himself pitched; you will have kings as upright as cedars growing by the water.**

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**5 How good are your tents:** The fact that the Jews camped such that no one would accidentally look into another family’s tent would seem to be much less significant than the fact that they actually preserved the integrity of their family lineages by confining their carnal activity within its prescribed limits. Yet Balaam mentioned the seemingly incidental fact first, indicating that it was chiefly the people’s

attention to detail in their modest conduct that impressed him.

The lesson for us here is that we must never think that it is important to be strict only about the “larger” issues of modesty and that we can be lax about the “smaller” details. Rather, we must recall that even the smaller details of modesty are important, and important enough to be able to transform a

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<sup>63</sup>. See Genesis 21:14. <sup>64</sup>. Above, 22:13. <sup>65</sup>. Above, 22:18. <sup>66</sup>. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, pp. 79-80. <sup>67</sup>. Above, 23:10. <sup>68</sup>. Above, 22:8 and 23:3. <sup>69</sup>. The ancient prophets typically disrobed when God addressed them (see 1 Samuel 19:22-23), for in receiving prophecy they attained the spiritual level of Adam and Eve before the sin (*Bati LeGani* 5). <sup>70</sup>. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, pp. 78-83.

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7 יִסְגִי מַלְכָא דִּיתְרַבָּא מִבְּנֵיהּ וְיִשְׁלוֹט בְּעַמְמִין סְגִיאִין וְיִתְקוֹף מֵאֲגַג מַלְכָּה וְתִתְנַטֵּל מִלְכוּתָהּ: 8 אֵלֶּה דְאַפְקוּן מִמְצָרִים תְּקַפָּא וְרוּמָא דִּילָהּ יִיבְלוּן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נְכִסֵי עַמְמִיא סְגִיאִהוֹן וּבְבוֹת מַלְכִּיהוֹן יִתְפַּנְקוּן וְאַרְעֵתְהוֹן יִחְסוּן: 9 יְנוּחַ יִשְׂרָי בַתְּקוֹף כְּאַרְיָא וּבְלִיתָא וְלִית מַלְכוּ דְתוֹעֲזוּעָה מְבַרְכִין יְהוֹן בְּרִיכִין וְלִישִׁין יְהוֹן לִישִׁין: 10 וְתַקְףָּ רְגֵזָא דְבַלְק בְּבַלְעִם וְשִׁקְפָּנִין לִידוּהֵי וְאָמַר בְּלַק לְבַלְעִם לְמַלְט סְגִיאִ קְרִיתָךְ וְהָא בְּרַבָּא מְבַרְכַת לְהוֹן דְּנִן תְּלַת זְמַנִין: 11 וּבְעֵן זֵיל לָךְ לְאַתְרָךְ אֲמַרִית יִקְרָא אֲיִקְרָנָךְ וְהָא מְנַעַךְ יִי מִן יִקְרָ: 12 וְאָמַר בְּלַק דְּבַלְק הָלָא אִף לְאַזְגִידִךְ דִּי שְׁלַחַת לְוֹתֵי מַלְלִית לְמִימְרָ: 13 אִם יִתֵּן לִי בְּלַק מוֹלֵי בֵיתָה כְּסָף וְדָהָב לִית לִי רְשׁוֹ לְמַעֲבַר עַל גֹּזְרַת מִימְרָא דִּי לְמַעֲבַד טְבַתָּא אוֹ בְּשַׁתָּא מְרַעוּתֵי דִּימַלְלֵי יִי יִתָּה אֲמַלְלֵי:

7 יִזְל־מִים מִדְּלִיו וְזָרְעוּ בְּמִים רַבִּים וְיָרִם מֵאֲגַג מַלְכֹו וְתִנְשָׂא מַלְכָתּוּ: 8 אֵל מוֹצִיאֹ מִמְצָרִים כְּתוֹעֲפַת רָאִם לֹו יֹאכֵל גּוֹיִם צָרִיו וְעֲצַמְתֵיהֶם יִגְרֵם וְחֲצִיו יִמְחִין: 9 כָּרַע שָׁכַב כְּאַרְי וּבְלָבִיא מִי יִקִּימֵנוּ מְבַרְכִיד כְּרוּךְ וְא־רִיד אָרוּר: 10 וְיִחַר-אַף בְּלַק אֶל-בַּלְעָם וַיִּסְפַּק אֶת-כַּפָּיו וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלַק אֶל-בַּלְעָם לָקַב אֵיבִי קְרָאתִיד וְהִנֵּה בְּרַכְתָּ כְּרוּךְ זֶה שְׁלַשׁ פְּעָמִים: 11 וְעַתָּה בְּרַח-לָךְ אֶל-מְקוֹמֶךָ אֲמַרְתִּי כִּי בְּיַד אֲכַבְדְּךָ וְהִנֵּה מְנַעַךְ יְהוָה מִכְּבוֹדֶךָ: 12 וַיֹּאמֶר בַּלְעָם אֶל-בְּלַק הֲלֹא גַם אֶל-מְלֹאכִיד אֲשֶׁר-שְׁלַחַתָּ אֵלַי דִּבַּרְתִּי לֵאמֹר: 13 אִם-יִתְּנֶנְךָ לִי בְּלַק מְלֹא בֵיתוֹ כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב לֹא אוֹכַל לְעַבֵּר אֶת-פִּי יְהוָה לְעַשׂוֹת טוֹבָה אוֹ רָעָה מִלְבִּי אֲשֶׁר-יִדְבֵּר יְהוָה אֵתוֹ אֲדַבֵּר:

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אֲנָלוֹס תְּרַגֵּם: חֲצִיו שֶׁל צָרִים — הַלְקָה שְׁלֵהֶם, כְּמוֹ: "בְּעַלֵי חֲצִים" — "מְרֵי פְלוּגוּתָא", לְשׁוֹן הַלְקָה וְחֲצִיָּה. וְכֵן "יִמְחִין", לְשׁוֹן "וַיִּמְחַצֵּה וְחִלְפָה רַקְתוֹ" — שִׁיחֲצוּ אֶת אֶרְצָם. וַיֵּשׁ לְפַתֵּר לְשׁוֹן חֲצִים מִמֶּשׁ — חֲצִיו שֶׁל הַקְדוּשׁ כְּרוּךְ הוּא יִמְחֵץ בְּדָמָם שֶׁל צָרִים, יִטְבֵּל וְיִצְטַבַּע בְּדָמָם, כְּמוֹ: "לְמַעַן תִּמְחֵץ רִגְלֶךָ בְּדָם" — וַאֲיִנוּ זֶו מִלְשׁוֹן מִכָּה, כְּמוֹ "מְחַצְתִּי"<sup>67</sup>, שֶׁחֲצִיבּוּעַ בְּדָם נִרְאֶה כְּאִלוּ מְחוּץ וְנִגּוּעַ: 9 כָּרַע שָׁכַב כְּאַרְי. כְּתִירוּמוֹ: יִתְנַשְׁבוּ בְּאַרְצָם בְּכַח וּבְגִבוּרָה: 10 וַיִּסְפַּק. הִכָּה זֶו עַל זֶו: 13 לְעַבֵּר אֶת פִּי ה'. כָּאֵן לֹא נֶאֱמַר "אֶלְהִי", כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּרֵאשׁוֹנָה, לְפִי שִׁדְעָ שֶׁנִּבְאֵשׁ בְּהַקְדוּשׁ כְּרוּךְ הוּא וְנִטְרַד:

7 מִדְּלִיו. מִבְּאֲרוֹתָיו. וּפְרוּשׁוֹ כְּתִירוּמוֹ: וְזָרְעוּ בְּמִים רַבִּים. לְשׁוֹן הַצְלָחָה הוּא זֶה — וְזָרְעוּ בְּכָרַע הַזָּרוּעַ עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: וְיָרִם מֵאֲגַג מַלְכֹו. מִלְךְ רֵאשׁוֹן שְׁלֵהֶם יִכְבֹּשׁ אֶת אֲגַג מִלְךְ עַמְלֶק: וְתִנְשָׂא מַלְכָתּוּ. שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב יוֹתֵר וְיוֹתֵר, שִׁיבָא אַחֲרָיו דָּוִד וּשְׁלֹמֹה: 8 אֵל מוֹצִיאֹ מִמְצָרִים. מִי גֹרֵם לָהֶם הַגְּדָלָה הַזֹּאת? אֵל הַמוֹצִיאִם מִמְצָרִים בַּתְּקוֹף וְרוּם שְׁלוֹ יֹאכֵל אֶת הַגּוֹיִם שֶׁהֵם צָרִיו: וְעֲצַמְתֵיהֶם. שֶׁל צָרִים: יִגְרֵם. מִנְחָם פֶּתַר בּוֹ לְשׁוֹן שְׁבִירָה, וְכֵן: "לֹא גִרְמוּ לְבַקֵּר"<sup>64</sup>, וְכֵן: "וְזֹאת חֲרָשִׁיהָ תִגְרַמִּי"<sup>65</sup>. וְאַנִּי אוֹמֵר לְשׁוֹן "עֲצָם" הוּא, שֶׁמְגַרֵּר הַבֶּשֶׂר בְּשִׁנּוּי מְסַבֵּב וְהַמּוֹחַ שֶׁבְּפָנִים, וּמַעֲמִיד הָעֲצָם עַל עַרְמִימוֹתָיו: וְחֲצִיו יִמְחִין.

63. צַנְנִיָּה ג, ג. 64. יִחוּקָאֵל כג, לד. 65. בְּרֵאשִׁית מט, כג. 66. שׁוֹפְטִים ה, כו. 67. תְּהִלִּים סח, כד. 68. דְּבָרִים לב, לו.

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because this word is related to the word for "roof" (*gag*), the part of the house that shields the people in it from the atmosphere above them. The nation of Amalek embodied the evil of haughtiness and egocentricity, rebelling against God above out of simple

effrontery. In effect, they wished to ignore God and shield themselves from the bothersome presence of heaven in their lives. As such, the name for their kings was derived from the word for "roof."<sup>80</sup>

80. *Likutei Levi Yitzchak, Igrot*, p. 295.

**7 Water will flow from your wells**, i.e., your king's dynasty will continue uninterrupted. **Your seed shall have abundant water**, i.e., your kingdom will prosper materially and rule over others. **Your first king**, Saul, **shall be bold enough to be raised over** and conquer **Agag**, the king of the Amalekites.<sup>74</sup> Your succeeding two kings, David and Solomon, will aggrandize your monarchy so much that **your kingdom will be exalted** and dreaded by the other nations.

**8 God**, who has given you this greatness, and **who has brought you out of Egypt with the strength** He possesses because of **His loftiness**,<sup>75</sup> **shall consume the nations that are your adversaries, skin their bones, dye His arrows in their blood**, and divide up their land.

**9 You will rest and dwell in your land in strength like a lion, like a lion; who will dare rouse you? Those who bless you shall be blessed, and those who curse you shall be cursed."**

**10 Balak became angry with Balaam, and he clapped his hands in frustration. Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times.**

**11 Now, flee back to your place. I said I would honor you greatly, but God has prevented you from receiving any honor from me."**

**12 Balaam said to Balak, "But I even told the messengers you sent to me in the very beginning,**<sup>76</sup>

**13 'If Balak gives me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the word of God to do either good or evil on my own; I can speak only what God speaks.'**" But then, Balaam called God "my God," whereas here he did not call Him "my God," for he knew that by this time he had disgusted God and repelled Him.

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— ❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧ —

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we serve God as "Jacob," as disciplined, faithful servants, even though at that moment our animal side is ascendant and we would rather be doing other things, we make "tents," protective "force-fields" that shield the Divine life we have so far built for ourselves from the intrusion of evil, negative, or animalistic consciousness. When we serve God as "Israel," as loving, devoted children, we make our lives into a "sanctuary" for God, enhancing our Divine consciousness and identifying with God's values and dreams for His world.<sup>77</sup>

**How good are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel:** The names "Jacob" and "Israel" also refer to the ways different kinds of Jews fulfill the commandment to study the Torah. "Jacob"

refers to those of us who are principally involved in worldly matters; for these people, learning is a part-time venture, just as a tent is a part-time structure. "Israel," in contrast, refers to those of us for whom study is a full-time occupation, their full-time dwelling place.

The Torah informs us here that both the "tents of Jacob" and the "dwelling places of Israel" are "good" and beloved by God. But this is only true when our learning is imbued with selfless devotion.<sup>78</sup>

**7 Your king shall be raised over Agag:** All the kings of Amalek are called Agag, just as the kings of Egypt are called Pharaoh and the kings of Philistia are called Avimelech.<sup>79</sup> The reason why the kings of Amalek are known by the generic name "Agag" is

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<sup>74</sup> 1 Samuel 15:18. <sup>75</sup> Above, 23:22. <sup>76</sup> Above, 22:18. <sup>77</sup> *Sefer HaMa'amarim Yiddish*, p. 122. <sup>78</sup> This being alluded to by the fact that the word for "how" (כִּי) that begins this verse indicates selflessness (cf. Exodus 16:7; *Tanya*, ch. 19 [24b]). *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5689, pp. 207-208; *Sefer HaMa'amarim Kuntresim*, vol. 1, 50a. <sup>79</sup> Rashbam.

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14 ובען הא אָנא אָל לעמי איתא  
אמלכנך מא דתעבד ואחוי לך מא  
דיעבד עמא הדין לעמך בסוף  
יומיא: 15 ונטל מתלה ואמר אמר  
בלעם ברה בעור ואמר גברא  
דשפיר חזי: 16 אמר דשמע מימר  
מן קדם אל וידע מדע מן קדם  
עלאה חזו מן קדם שדי חזי שכבי  
ומתגלי לה: 17 חזיתה ולא כען  
סכיתה ולא איתוהי קריב פד יקום  
מלכא מעקב ויתרבא משיחא  
מישראל ויקטול רבבני מואב  
וישלוט בכל בני אנשא: 18 ויהי  
אדום יתא ויהי יתא שעיר  
לבעלי דבבוהי וישראל יצלח  
בנקסין: 19 ויחות חד מדבית יעקב  
ויובידי משיבו מקרית עממיא:

◆ שביעי 14 ועתה הנני הולך לעמי לכה איצעך אשר יעשה  
העם הזה לעמך באחרית הימים: 15 וישא משלו ויאמר  
נאם בלעם בנו בער ונאם הגבר שתם העין: 16 נאם  
שמע אמרי אל וידע דעת עליון מחזה שדלי יחזה נפל  
ונלוי עינים: 17 אראנו ולא עתה אשורנו ולא קרוב דרך  
פוכב מעקב וקם ישבט מישראל ומחין פאתי מואב  
וקרקר כל בני שת: 18 והיה אדום ירשה והיה ירשה  
שעיר איביו וישראל עשה חיל: 19 וירד מעקב והאביד  
שריד מעיר:

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“דרך קשתו”<sup>73</sup>, שהכוכב עובר כחץ. ובלעז דישטיניט, כלומר, יקום מזל: וקם שבט. מלך רודה ומושל: ומחין פאתי מואב. זה דוד, שנאמר בו: “השכב אותם ארצה, וימדד שני חבלים להמית וגו”<sup>74</sup>. וקרקר. לשון קורה, כמו: “אני קרתי”<sup>75</sup>, “ואל מקבת בור נקרתם”<sup>76</sup>, “קרוה ערבי נחל”<sup>77</sup>. פוריי”ר בלעז<sup>78</sup>: כל בני שת. כל האמות, שבלם יצאו מן שת בנו של אדם הראשון: 18 והיה ירשה שעיר. לאויביו ישראל: 19 וירד מעקב. ועוד יהיה מושל אחר מעקב: והאביד שריד מעיר. מעיר החשובה של אדום והיא רומי. ועל מלך המשיח אמר כן, שנאמר בו: “וירד מים עד ים”<sup>79</sup>, “ולא יהיה שריד לבית עשו”<sup>80</sup>.

14 הולך לעמי. מעתה הריני כשאר עמי, שנסתלק הקדוש ברוך הוא מעליו: לכה איצעך. מה לך לעשות, ומה היא העצה? אלהיהם של אלו שונא ומה הוא וכו', כדאיתא ב"חלק"<sup>80</sup>. תדע שבלעם השיא עצה זו להכשילם בזמה, שהרי נאמר: “הן הנה היו לבני ישראל בדבר בלעם”<sup>81</sup>: אשר יעשה העם הזה לעמך. מקרא קצר הוא זה: “איצעך להכשילם, ואמר לך מה שהן עתידין להרע למואב באחרית הימים: ומחין פאתי מואב”<sup>82</sup>. התרגום מפרש קצר העברי: 16 וידע דעת עליון. לכונן השעיה שכועס בה: 17 אראנו. רואה אני שברחו של יעקב וגדלתו, אף לא עתה היא אלא ללאחר זמן: דרך פוכב. בתרגומו: דרך פוכב. לשון

69. סנהדרין קו, א. 70. במדבר לא, טו. 71. פסוק יו. 72. איכה ב, ד. 73. שמואל ב, ח, ב. 74. מלכים ב, יט, כד. 75. ישעיה נא, א. 76. משלי ל, יו. 77. לנבב, לקדמ. 78. תהלים עב, ח. 79. עובדיה א, יח.

shall become the possession of Israel, his enemies. And Israel shall prosper.

19 This will happen when, besides King David, another ruler shall come out of Jacob—the Messiah. He shall destroy the remnant of Rome, the capital city of the Romans, who are descended from Esau/Edom.”<sup>88</sup>

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19 A ruler shall come out of Jacob and destroy the remnant of the city: One of the defining characteristics of the messianic era is described by the prophet Isaiah: “Kings will tutor your children and their princesses will be your wet nurses.”<sup>89</sup> The members of a royal family are normally the national figures who are the most steeped in the cultural values of their society—and who most proudly and loyally identify with it, as well. As such, it would seem that these would be the last people to whom we should

entrust the care and education of our tiny, impressionable children! But in the messianic era, the nations of the world will be purified of their dross and, awakened to the value of the Jewish people, transformed from adversaries into supporters.

This emphasizes once more the connection between Balaam’s prophecies and the messianic era. Balaam himself symbolizes this transformation as his attempted curses were transformed into great blessings of praise.<sup>90</sup>

88. Genesis 36:1, and on 36:43. Cf. Genesis 15:19; Obadiah 1:18. 89. Isaiah 49:23. 90. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 23, p. 171.

## Balaam's Prophecy

- ◆ *Seventh Reading* 14 Balak was now finally convinced that Balaam could not help him overcome the Israelites. But, aware that only spiritual means could prevail over them, he still thought that someone with greater spiritual stature than Balaam could succeed. Balaam therefore continued, “**And now** that I have lost favor with God and will soon lose my prophetic gifts, **I am going to my people** and will become an ordinary person, like them. I will use my talents to be a soothsayer, like my father.<sup>81</sup> But in the meantime, **come**, and **I will advise you** how to conquer the Israelites. Forget about outweighing their spiritual merits. Even the most moral and praiseworthy of the Egyptians—the ones who took God seriously and thereby saved their animals from the plagues—could not overcome them, and drowned in the Sea of Reeds.<sup>82</sup> Instead, I advise you to lure the Israelites into sin, so that God will have to punish them. Their God abhors carnal licentiousness, and they prize linen garments. So set up a market place, and include among the vendors old women selling linen garments at open stalls. The Jews will not be wary of talking to old women. Have the old women advise the Jews that the same garments are being sold at a discount in the tents. Have pretty, young women selling inside the tents. Once the Israelite men are inside the tents, have the young women offer them some wine, so that they lower their guard and succumb to their amorous overtures. The women will then be able to both seduce them and induce them to worship their idols, and God will punish them for both their immorality and their idolatry. As for you, I will now prophecy **what this people will do to your people at the end of days**, that is, in the distant future.”

15 He began to recite his parable and said, “This is the word of Balaam, son of Beor, the word of a man with only one open, seeing eye, but whose other eye sees prophetically.<sup>83</sup>

16 The word of the one who hears God's sayings and knows when the mind of the Most High is angry<sup>84</sup>; who sees the vision of the Almighty, fallen yet with open eyes.<sup>85</sup>

17 I do indeed see the Israelites conquering Moab, but not now; I behold it, but not soon. Therefore, you need not feel threatened by them or that your attempt to protect yourself by hiring me was a total failure. They will only conquer you when an auspicious star of good fortune will shoot forth from God for Jacob; this will be when a king, who wields an authoritative staff, will arise from Israel. This king, David, will strike and kill the princes of Moab,<sup>86</sup> and also undermine the autonomy of all the descendants of Seth, that is, of all humanity, who are all descended from Adam's son Seth (through Noah, Adam's only surviving male descendant).<sup>87</sup>

18 Having described how the Israelites will conquer Moab in the time of King David, Balaam turned to focus on the future awaiting the Israelites' other neighbors. “Edom shall be possessed by the Israelites; Mount Seir, the location of Edom,

81. *Sanhedrin* 106a. 82. Exodus 9:20, 14:7. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 357 ff. 83. Above 23:10, 24:3. 84. Above, 23:8. 85. Above, 24:4. 86. 2 Samuel 8:2. 87. Genesis 5. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, pp. 85-89.

## ONKELOS

20 וְחָזָא יְת עֲמִלְקָא וְנָטַל מִתְּלָה וְאָמַר רִישׁ קַרְבֵּינֵי דְיִשְׂרָאֵל הָוֵה עֲמִלְקָא וְסוּפָה לְעִלְמָא יִיבָד; 21 וְחָזָא יְת שְׁלֵמָאָה וְנָטַל מִתְּלָה וְאָמַר תְּקִיף בֵּית מוֹתֶבֶךְ וְשׁוֹי בְּכַרְךָ תְּקִיף מְדוּרְךָ; 22 אָרִי אִם יְהִי לְשִׁיפָאָה שְׁלֵמָאָה עַד מָא אֲתוּרָאָה יִשְׁבֹּנְךָ; 23 וְנָטַל מִתְּלָה וְאָמַר וַיְיָ חֲבִיבֵי דִיחֹן כִּד יַעֲבֵד אֱלֹהֵי יְת אֱלִי; 24 וְסִיעֵן יַעֲבֵדוֹן מְרוּמָאֵי וַיַּעֲנוֹן לְאֲתוּר וַיִּשְׁעֵבְדוֹן לְעֵבֶר פֶּרֶת וְאָף אֲנֹן לְעִלְמָא יִיבָדוֹן; 25 וְקַם בְּלַעַם וְאָזַל וְחָב לְאֲתָרָה וְאָף בְּלַק אָזַל לְאֲרָחָה;

20 וַיֵּרָא אֶת־עַמְלֶק וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עַמְלֶק וְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ עַדִּי אֲבֹד: 21 וַיֵּרָא אֶת־הַקִּינִי וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵיתָן מוֹשֶׁבֶךְ וְשִׁים בְּפִלְעַ קִנְדָּ: 22 כִּי אִם־יִהְיֶה לְבַעַר קִינִי עַד־מָה אֲשׁוּר תִּשְׁבֹּכֶךָ: 23 וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֹוִי מִי יִחְיֶה מִשְׁמוֹ אֵל: 24 וְצִים מִיַּד כַּתִּים וְעִנּוֹ אֲשׁוּר וְעִנּוֹ־עֵבֶר וְגַם־הוּא עַדִּי אֲבֹד: 25 וַיִּקָּם בְּלַעַם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיֵּשֶׁב לְמִקְוֹ וְגַם־בְּלַק הֵלֵךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ: פ

## RASHI

שְׁנַת־שִׁבְתָּ שָׁם, מַה בְּכָךְ: עַד מָה אֲשׁוּר תִּשְׁבֹּכֶךָ. עַד הֵיכָן הוּא מְגַלָּה אוֹתָךְ, שְׁמָא לְחַלּוּחַ וְחִבּוּר? אֵין זֶה טְרוּד מִן הָעוֹלָם, אֲלָא טְלִטוּל מִמְקוֹם לְמִקוֹם, וְתָשׁוּב עִם שְׂאֵר הַגְּלִיּוֹת: 23 וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּגֵ: כִּי־וַיִּשְׁבֹּכֶךָ אֶת שְׁבִית אֲשׁוּר, אָמַר: אֹוִי מִי יִחְיֶה מִשְׁמוֹ אֵל. מִי יְכוּל לְהַחֲיוֹת אֶת עֲצָמוֹ מְשׁוּמוֹ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי שְׁלֵא וְשִׁים עָלָיו הַגּוֹזֵר אֶת אֱלֹהֵי — שְׁיַעֲמֵד סְנַחְרִיב וַיְבַלְבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאֲמוֹת. וְעוֹד, יְבוֹאוּ "צִים מִיַּד כַּתִּים" — וַיַּעֲבְרוּ כַּתִּים שְׁחָן אֲרַמִּיִּים בְּבִירְנֵיּוֹת גְּדוּלוֹת עַל אֲשׁוּר: 24 וְעִנּוֹ עֵבֶר. וְעִנּוֹ אוֹתָם שְׁבַעֲבָר הִנְהָר: וְגַם הוּא עַדִּי אֲבֹד. וְכֵן פֶּרֶשׁ דְּנִינְאֵל: "עַד דִּי קִטִּילַת חֵיוֹתָ וְהוּבַד גְּשָׁמָה"<sup>85</sup>: וְצִים. סְפִינּוֹת גְּדוּלוֹת, כְּדַכְתִּיב: "וְצִי אֲדִיר"<sup>86</sup> — תִּרְגוּמוֹ: "וּבוֹרְנִי רַבְתָּא":

20 וַיֵּרָא אֶת עַמְלֶק. נִסְתַּבֵּל בְּפִרְעוֹנוֹתוֹ שֶׁל עַמְלֶק: רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עַמְלֶק. הוּא קִדְּם אֶת כָּל־סְלֵם לְהַלְחֵם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, וְכֵן תִּרְגָּם אֲנָקְלוֹס: וְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ. לְהַאֲבִד בְּיָדָם, שְׁנַאָמַר: "תִּמְחָה אֶת זְכַר עַמְלֶק"<sup>81</sup>: 21 וַיֵּרָא אֶת הַקִּינִי. לְפִי שְׁהִיָּה קִינִי תְּקוּעַ אֲצֵל עַמְלֶק, כְּעִנּוֹן שְׁנַאָמַר: "וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוּל אֵל הַקִּינִי וַיִּגּוֹ"<sup>82</sup> — הַזְּכִירוּ אַחֲרַי עַמְלֶק. נִסְתַּבֵּל בְּגְדֻלְתָּן שֶׁל בְּנֵי יִתְרוֹ, שְׁנַאָמַר בָּהֶם: "תִּרְעַעְתִּים שְׁמַעְתִּים שׁוֹכְתִים"<sup>83</sup>: אֵיתָן מוֹשֶׁבֶךְ. תְּמַדָּה אָנִי, מִהֵיכָן זְכִיתָ לְכָךְ, הֲלֹא אֲתָה עִמִּי הֵייתָ בְּעֵצַת "הִבְהָה נִתְחַכְּמָה לוֹ"<sup>84</sup>, וְעַתָּה נִתְיַשְׁבֶּת בְּאֵיתָן וּמַעוֹז שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל: 22 כִּי אִם יִהְיֶה לְבַעַר קִינִי וַיֹּגֵ: אֲשֶׁרִיךְ שְׁנַתְּקַעְתָּ לְתַקְּףָהּ וְהֵ, שְׁאִינְךָ נִטְרָד עוֹד מִן הָעוֹלָם, כִּי אִף אִם אֲתָה עֲתִיד לְגַלוֹת עִם עֲשָׂרַת הַשְּׁבָטִים וְתִהְיֶה לְבַעַר מִמְקוֹם

80. דברים כה, יט. 81. שמואל א טו, ו. 82. דב"ח א, ב, נח. 83. שמות א, י. 84. דניאל ז, יא. 85. ישעיה לג, כא.

## CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

20 **When he saw Amalek:** The Jews were commanded to displace seven Canaanite nations in the Land of Israel: the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites.<sup>96</sup> These seven nations embodied the seven emotions (love, fear, mercy, trust, sincerity, fidelity, and lowliness) when they become misdirected and therefore evil. The commandment to conquer the seven nations is thus spiritually a commandment to control and reorient the emotions toward their intended, Divine focus.

Amalek was not one of these nations, but was in the spiritual sense their progenitor. As we said, the evil he embodied was that of haughtiness and egocen-

tricity. Egocentricity is the root of all the evil emotions. When a person is focused on himself, he loves the wrong things, fears the wrong things, is merciful to the wrong things, and so on. By meditating on Divinity properly, a person can neutralize his ego and thereafter his emotions will fall into place.<sup>97</sup>

Egocentricity is simple brazenness and effrontery. Since there is no such thing as "good egocentricity," there is nothing that can be done with it other than eliminating it. Therefore, Amalek's end is utter destruction. In contrast, the seven misdirected emotions personified by the seven Canaanite nations can be rehabilitated.<sup>98</sup>

96. Deuteronomy 7:1, etc. 97. Torah Or, p. 95. 98. Sha'arei Orah, Purim 97.

20 **When** Balaam prophetically saw the punishment destined for Amalek, he began to recite a parable about them, and said, “Amalek was the first of the nations to attack the Israelites, and his end shall be everlasting destruction at the Israelites’ hands, as they fulfill God’s commandment to wipe them out.”<sup>91</sup>

21 **When he** prophetically saw the future of the descendants of Jethro, the Kenites,<sup>92</sup> who lived near the Amalekites,<sup>93</sup> he began to recite a parable about them, and said, “How firm is your dwelling place, and your nest<sup>94</sup> is set securely in a cliff! Some

of you sit in the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Israelites! How did you merit this? After all, your ancestor, Jethro, sat together with me when we advised Pharaoh to enslave them!<sup>95</sup>

22 Your merit will protect you, for even if the Kenite homeland will be laid waste, as it will, and the Assyrians exile you with the 10 northern tribes of Israel, how far, after all, will Assyria take you captive? You will still survive, and you will return with the other exiles (See Figure 1).”

23 Having mentioned the Assyrian exile, he began to recite a parable about the future upheavals, and said, “Alas! Who can survive when God will impose these things? Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, will exile and dislocate every nation in his empire.

24 After him, ships will come from the land of the Kittites, that is, from Rome, and afflict the empires that will succeed Assyria, and then proceed to afflict those on the other, eastern side of the Euphrates (See Figure 2). But in the end, Rome, too, will perish forever.”

25 Having finished his oration, Balaam arose, went, and returned home, and Balak went on his way. He returned to Moab and enlisted his people in executing Balaam’s plan for causing the Israelites to sin. He enlisted the help of the Midianites, as well, and they readily consented, sending their daughters to entice the Israelite men. They even sent the girls of their ruling houses to try to seduce the distinguished Israelites.

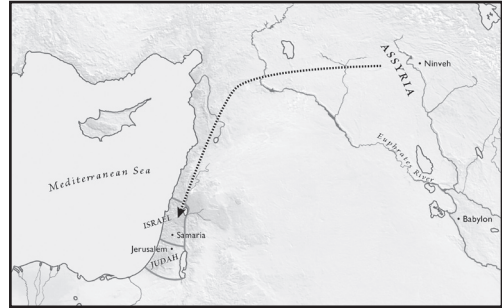


Figure 1: The Assyrian Conquest of the Kingdom of Israel



Figure 2: The Roman Empire at its Greatest Extent (under Trajan, 106-117 CE)

91. Exodus 17:14; Deuteronomy 25:19. 92. Judges 1:16. 93. 1 Samuel 15:6. 94. The word for “nest” is *kin*, so this verse is a play on the word *Kenite*. 95. See on Exodus 1:10.

— ONKELOS —

25:1 ויתב ישראל בשטין ושרי  
 עמא למטעי בתר בנת מואב:  
 2 וקרָאָה לעמא לדבחי טעותהון  
 ואכל עמא וסגידו לטעותהון:  
 3 ואתחבר ישראל לבעלא פעור  
 ותקף רגזא דיי בישראל: 4 ואמר  
 יי למשה דבר ית כל רישי עמא  
 ודון וקטול דחיב קטול קדם יי  
 לקבל שמשא ויתוב תקוף רגזא  
 דיי מישראל:

25:1 וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשִׁטִּים וַיַּחֲלֵהֶם לְזִנוּת אֶל-בְּנוֹת  
 מוֹאָב: 2 וַתִּקְרְאוּן לָעָם לְזִבְחֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶן וַיֹּאכְלֵהֶם הָעָם וַיִּשְׁ-  
 תַּחֲווּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶן: 3 וַיִּצְמַד יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר וַיַּחֲרֵאֶף  
 יְהוָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: 4 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה קַח אֶת-כָּל-  
 רְאִישֵׁי הָעָם וְהוֹקַע אוֹתָם לַיהוָה נִגְדַּד הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב הָרוֹן  
 אֶף-יְהוָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:

— RASHI —

העובדים לפעור: והוקע אותם. את העובדים. "והוקע"  
 — היא תליה, כמו שמצינו בבני שאול: "והוקענום  
 לה"<sup>88</sup>, ושם תליה מפרשת. בעבודתה ורה — בסקילה,  
 וכל הנסקליו נתליו: נגד השמש. לעין כל. ומדרש  
 אגדה<sup>89</sup>: השמש מודיע את החוטאים — הענן נקפל  
 מכנגדו והחמה זורחת עליו:

1 בשטים. כך שמה: לזנות אל בנות מואב. על ידי  
 עצת בלעם, כדאיתא ב"חלק"<sup>90</sup>: 2 וישתחוו לאלהיהן.  
 כשתקף יצרו עליו ואומר לה: "השמעי לי", והיא  
 מוציאה לו דמות פעור מחיקה ואומרת לו: "השתחווה  
 לזה": 3 פעור. על שם שפוערין לפניו פי הטבעת  
 ומוציאין רעי, וזו היא עבודתו: ויחר אף ה' בישראל.  
 שלח בהם מגפה: 4 קח את כל ראשי העם. לשפט את

86. סנהדרין קו, א. 87. שמואלב כא, ו. 88. תנחומא יט.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

one could taste the manna practically any taste one desired, but its deliciousness did not impart any sense of self-orientation independent of the Divinity that created it; one never developed a lust for manna.

Normal food, drink, clothing, and all other aspects of material life, while capable of being sublimated into holiness, may also become the focus of self-serving sensual desire. According to Chasidic teachings, this aspect of normal physicality is just the rejected impurities eliminated from the higher, spiritual levels of creation from which the physical object derives.

This was the essential meaning of the Peor cult: by relieving oneself before this idol, the worshipper was expressing his focus on and devotion to the ideal of hedonism.

On one level, this is why the spies were afraid to leave the idyllic spiritual setting of the desert and enter the Land of Israel. The Talmud tells us,<sup>108</sup> in fact, that excessive indulgence in hedonistic pleasures is what corrupted the ten tribes and led to their exile.

The challenge of life is not to succumb to this self-focused sensuality that inheres in every aspect of physicality, but rather to "know Him in all your ways."<sup>109</sup> In this way, the person *elevates* the physical entity he is dealing with instead of only *receiving* from it.<sup>110</sup> If his usage of the physical entity is solely for satisfying his lusts, however, he only *receives*

from the entity. Not only does he fail to elevate it, but he causes it to descend with him into the realm of evil.

This is what happened to the Jews at Shitim. They were on the threshold of a new type of life, which involved direct and intense involvement with the physical world. It was perhaps unavoidable that at their first encounter with true physicality, which contained within it the allure of unadulterated sensual delight, they became curious about this novel aspect of reality.

The first sin, that of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, also came about because "the woman saw that the tree was good to eat," i.e., she felt that she was missing something that the tree could offer her. All lusts and sins begin from this illusory sense of lacking something.<sup>111</sup>

Thus, "the people began to commit harlotry," first only in the allegorical sense of going "after your eyes and after your heart, by which you go astray."<sup>112</sup> But eventually, one thing lead to another, until they reached the apex of self-focused pursuit (at least in the context of carnality) and "began to commit harlotry" in the literal sense as well. This is why the place where this happened was called "Shitim," since this word is cognate to the word for "deviation" (*listot*). All sin begins as a slight deviation from the proper path, just as getting lost in the dark forest begins as a slight departure from the main road.

108. *Shabbat* 147b. 109. Proverbs 3:6; see *Mishneh Torah*, *Deiot* 3:2-3. 110. See *Kuntres uMa'ayan*, beginning. 111. *Torah Or* 79d. 112. Numbers 15:39. The Hebrew word *zenut* means both "harlotry" and "going astray."

## The Incident of Ba'al Peor

**25:1 Israel settled in Shitim**, an area in the plains of Moab.<sup>99</sup> Their overconfidence after their successful campaigns against the Amorite kings and the excessive booty they plundered made them lose some of their sense of discretion.<sup>100</sup> **The people** began to frequent the marketplaces Balak had set up according to Balaam's plan. Within a short time, the men **began to commit harlotry with the daughters of the Moabites**.

**2** The Moabite girls **invited the people to the feast-offerings of their gods, and 157,200 of the people ate of the offerings and prostrated themselves to their gods** on the urging of the Moabite girls. Whenever a Moabite girl would seduce an Israelite man and they were on the verge of carnal relations, the girl would take an idol out of her garment and tell the man to worship it first. The Moabite idol was named *Ba'al Peor* ("the Master of Baring"), for they worshipped it by baring the fundament and defecating in front of the idol.

**3** Thus, through Balaam's scheme, **Israel became attached to Ba'al Peor. God became angry with Israel** and unleashed a plague against them, which struck the innocent as well as the guilty.<sup>101</sup>

**4** In order to stop the plague, **God said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people, and assemble them as a court to judge those who worshipped the idol. Witnesses are usually required to try idolaters, but here the guilty parties sinned privately, in the Moabite tents. So, in order to enable the judges to convict and sentence them, I will roll back the cloud over the guilty people and the sun will shine on them directly. Stone those found guilty and hang them<sup>102</sup> before God, facing the sun, so that everyone can identify them clearly and learn not to imitate their deeds. Then God's anger will be removed from Israel and the plague will cease."**

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### — CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

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**1 Israel settled in Shitim:** This area was at the edge of the Jews' last encampment before entering the Land of Israel.<sup>103</sup> They were at the end of both their physical and spiritual journey from the decadence of Egypt; they were thus on a very high spiritual level at that time.<sup>104</sup>

The obvious question, then, is how did they fall into the sins of illicit carnal practices and idolatry, then of all times? This is especially difficult to fathom when we consider that the Peor cult was the most debased form of idolatry ever practiced.<sup>105</sup>

All other forms of idolatry derive from the same basic intellectual misjudgment: ascribing autonomy to the various forces God uses to run the world and distribute His benevolence to it.<sup>106</sup> The cult of Peor, however, centers on human excrement, which is what remains of God's beneficence after all the elements that can directly benefit man have been

removed. Thus, there is no way one can err with regard to this and try to elicit benefit from something from which no direct benefit can be derived! So how did the Jews nonetheless become ensnared in this repulsive cult?

As we know, throughout their trek through the desert, the Jews did not have to be involved in the normal necessities of physical existence. Their food, drink, and clothing were tended to by the manna, the well of Miriam, and the clouds of glory.<sup>107</sup> Inasmuch as all these provisions were furnished from heaven, they contained no impurities, and in fact, during the entire forty-year period of wandering, the Jews did not need to excrete any bodily waste products.

These provisions were pure spiritually as well as physically, meaning that they contained no element that could serve as a focus for sensual lust. True,

<sup>99</sup>. Below, 33:49. <sup>100</sup>. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 357 ff. <sup>101</sup>. See on Exodus 12:22. <sup>102</sup>. *Sanhedrin* 45b; Rashi on Deuteronomy 21:22. <sup>103</sup>. See Numbers 33:49. <sup>104</sup>. See Rashi on Numbers 20:22: "They were complete [or: 'perfect'] and poised to enter the land." According to Chasidic teachings, they had traversed all forty-nine stages of the Exodus from Egypt, Egypt being synonymous with spiritual limitations and boundaries. <sup>105</sup>. *Sanhedrin* 24a. <sup>106</sup>. *Avodah Zarah* 55a; *Mishneh Torah*, *Avodah Zarah* 1; *Derech Mitzvotecha*, *Milah* ch. 3. <sup>107</sup>. *Yoma* 75b; *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana*, *Beshalach* (quoted in *Yalkut Shimoni* 850 and Rashi on Deuteronomy 8:4); *Ta'ani* 9a.

— ONKELOS —

5 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְדִינֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 קְטוּלוֹ גִבֵּר וְגִבְרֹהֵי דְאִתְחַבְּרוּ  
 לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר: 6 וְהָאֵשׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּאֵשׁ  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲתָא וְקָרַב לֹת אַחוּהֵי יִתְּ  
 מִדִּינֵיתָא לְעֵינֵי מֹשֶׁה וְלְעֵינֵי כָל  
 בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָנּוּן בְּכֹן  
 בְּתַרְע מִשְׁבֵּן זְמַנָּא: 7 וְחֹזָא פִּינְחָס  
 בַּר אֱלֶעָזָר בַּר אַהֲרֹן כֹּהֵנָא וְקָם  
 מִגּוֹ כְּנֻשָׁתָא וְנִסִּיב רַמְחָא בִּידָהּ:

5 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־שֹׁפְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲרֹגוּ אִישׁ אֶנְשֵׁי הַנִּי־  
 צְמֻדִים לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר: 6 וְהָיָה אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּאֵשׁ  
 רַב אֶל־אָחִיו אֶת־הַמְדִינִית לְעֵינֵי מֹשֶׁה וְלְעֵינֵי כָל־עַדְת  
 בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָמָּה בְּכִים פָּתַח אֶהֱל מוֹעֵד:

◆ מפטיר 7 וַיֵּרָא פִּינְחָס בֶּן־אֱלֶעָזָר בֶּן־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּקָּם  
 מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה וַיִּקַּח רַמַח בְּיָדוֹ:

— RASHI —

כְּדַאיִתָּא הָתָּם: וְהָמָּה בְּכִים. נְתַעְלְמָה מִמֶּנּוּ הַלְכָּהּ, כָּל  
 הַבּוֹעֵל אֶרְמִית קְנָאִים פּוֹגְעִים בּוֹ. גְּעוּ כִּלְמֵ בְּבִכְיָה.  
 בְּעֵגְלָא עֵמֵד מֹשֶׁה כְּנֵגְדַ שְׁשִׁים רַבּוּא, שְׁנַאָמַר: "וַיִּטְהַר עַד  
 אֲשֶׁר דָּק וְגו'"<sup>120</sup>, וְכָאן רַפּוּ יָדָיו, אֶלָּא כְּדִי שְׂיָבֵא פִּינְחָס  
 וַיִּטַּל אֶת הָרְאוּי לּוֹ: 7 וַיֵּרָא פִּינְחָס. רָאָה מַעֲשֵׂה וְנִזְכַּר  
 הַלְכָּהּ, אָמַר לּוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה: "מִקְּבֻלְנִי מִמָּה: הַבּוֹעֵל אֶרְמִית  
 קְנָאִין פּוֹגְעִין בּוֹ". אָמַר לּוֹ: "קְרִינָא דְאֶגְרָתָא אִיהוּ לְהֹוִי  
 פְּרוֹנְקָא". מִיָּד "וַיִּקַּח רַמַח בְּיָדוֹ וְגו'":

5 הֲרֹגוּ אִישׁ אֶנְשֵׁי. כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִדִּינֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה  
 הוֹרֵג שְׁנַיִם, וְדִינֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁבַעַת רַבּוּא וְשִׁמּוֹנַת אֲלָפִים,  
 כְּדַאיִתָּא בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין:<sup>120</sup> 6 וְהָיָה אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּאֵשׁ.  
 נִתְקַבְּצוּ שְׁבֻטוֹ שֶׁל שְׁמֵעוֹן אֶצֶל זְמֵרִי, שְׁהִיָּה נְשִׂיא  
 שְׁלָהֶם. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: "אָנּוּ נְדוֹנִין בְּמִיתָה וְאִתָּה יוֹשֵׁב וְכוּ",  
 כְּדַאיִתָּא בְּ"אֵלוֹ הֵן הַנְּשָׁרְפִין"<sup>121</sup>: אֵת הַמְדִינִית. כְּנֻבֵי בַת  
 צוֹר: לְעֵינֵי מֹשֶׁה. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: "מֹשֶׁה, זֶה אֶסְוֶרָה אוֹ מִתְרַת?  
 אִם תֹּאמַר: אֶסְוֶרָה, בַּת יִתְרוֹ מִי הַתִּירָה לָךְ? וְכוּ",

89. יח, א. 90. סנהדרין פב, א. 91. שמות לב, כ.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

On the other hand, it is Moses whose merit protects us from falling into this sin again, as it says, "And He buried him [Moses] in the glen in Moab opposite the site of [the cult of] Peor,"<sup>120</sup> "in order to atone for the incident of Peor."<sup>121</sup> This is because Moses personifies the trait of humility and selflessness. One who possesses these traits is immune to the egocentric feeling of having to lack nothing, which is the beginning of sin, and in addition will retain the consciousness of God's presence that prevents him from becoming enticed by the sensual lures of physicality.<sup>122</sup>

**7 Pinchas the son of Eleazar:** Why was Pinchas the one to stand up to Zimri and put an end to the plague that was decimating the Jewish people and not Moses or Eleazar (Aaron's son and Pinchas' father), who was then the high priest?

The most reasonable explanation seems to be as follows: When he brought Kozbi before Moses, Zimri's argument for permitting relations with her was, "If you say that she is forbidden, who permitted Zipporah to you?"<sup>123</sup> Moses was thus personally involved in this case, and as such, he was by that very fact disqualified from adjudicating it. We know that legally, a judge may not judge a case if he has a stake in its outcome being one way or the other.<sup>124</sup>

Eleazar could also not be legally impartial here,

since as we know, "Eleazar the son of Aaron took for himself one of the daughters of Putiel for a wife."<sup>125</sup> Inasmuch as Putiel was in fact the idolatrous priest Jethro, Eleazar was in the same position as Moses, having taken a gentile wife.

Understanding that his great-uncle Moses and his father Eleazar were disqualified from judging this case, Pinchas realized that it was up to him to take the initiative.

Still, one could argue that Pinchas was also disqualified from judging this case, since whether or not his father was allowed to marry Jethro's daughter was determinative with regard to his status as well. The law states that the son of a priest and a gentile woman may not serve as a priest.<sup>126</sup> Pinchas, it would seem then, had quite a stake in the outcome of this trial.

There are two answers to this: First, the priesthood did not become hereditary until Aaron and his sons were anointed at the inauguration of the Tabernacle.<sup>127</sup> At that time, Pinchas was already born, and since he was not anointed (since he was Aaron's grandson, not his son), he did not become a priest. Thus, it is stated explicitly in the Talmud:<sup>128</sup> "Pinchas did not attain priesthood until he slew Zimri." Thus, before he killed Zimri, Pinchas was not a priest and the purity of his lineage was not a concern for him.

120. Deuteronomy 34:6. 121. Sotah 14a. 122. Reshimot #50. 123. Sanhedrin 82a; Rashi on Numbers 25:6. 124. Bava Kama 27b, et al. 125. Exodus 6:25. 126. Mishneh Torah, Isurei Biah 19:5-6. 127. Exodus 28:40-41. 128. Ze'achim 101b. See Rashi on Numbers 25:13.

5 The 157,200 guilty Israelites were exposed, tried, and convicted this way. **Moses** then **said to the 78,600<sup>113</sup> judges of Israel**, “**Each of you shall kill two men who became attached to Ba’al Peor** by stoning and hanging them.”

6 The offenders from the tribe of Simeon then approached one of their princes,<sup>114</sup> Zimri son of Salu, and complained, “We are being sentenced to death! Why don’t you do something to defend us?” So this **Israelite man**, Zimri son of Salu, **came** from this call to action, assembled 24,000 Israelites, and went with them to Kozbi, the daughter of Tzur,<sup>115</sup> the chief king of the Midianite confederation,<sup>116</sup> and told her to come with him. Kozbi at first refused, arguing that her father, the chief of the Midianites, had told her to seduce none other than Moses. But Zimri pointed out to her that his lineage was superior to Moses’ since he was a prince of Simeon, the second son of Jacob, while Moses was a descendant of Levi, the third son of Jacob. **He brought the Midianite woman to his brethren**, the members of his tribe, who were assembled **before the eyes of Moses**, showing them that he was doing something on their behalf. He confronted Moses **before the eyes of the entire congregation of the Israelites**, asking him, “Is this Midianite woman forbidden or permissible to marry? If you say she is forbidden, then by what right did you marry Zipporah, who is also a Midianite?” This was a senseless argument, because Moses married Zipporah before the Torah was given, and thus before marriage between Jews and non-Jews became forbidden. As we have seen,<sup>117</sup> it was only at the giving of the Torah that the Jews became legally obligated to observe God’s commandments, and the same was true of the mixed multitude and the other non-Jews (such as Zipporah) that chose to join the Jewish people at that time. But Zimri did not wait for an answer, and to prove his point, took Kozbi into a tent and proceeded to have intercourse with her. Moses forgot the law regarding what should be done in such a case, and because he seemed powerless to stop this insurrection, the loyal Israelites started **weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting**. Moses’ inability to act now contrasted sharply with his strong and decisive reaction to the sin of the Golden Calf. In fact, however, God made Moses forget the law so that Aaron’s grandson, Pinchas, could rise to the occasion and earn the distinction he deserved.

- ◆ **Maftir 7 Pinchas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest saw** what Zimri did and said to Moses, “Didn’t you teach us that if someone sees another person having intercourse publicly with a gentile woman and is overcome by righteous indignation, he may warn him and, if he does not stop, execute him without trial?” Moses replied, “You are correct! If you qualify, then since you remembered this law, you deserve the honor of fulfilling it!” So Pinchas **arose from the congregation, and took a spear in his hand**.

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∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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This is why the one who successfully challenged and combated the Jews’ descent into the Peor cult was Pinchas. The Talmud tells us that “the hatchet

is made from the trees of the very forest it is used to cut.”<sup>118</sup> Pinchas was descended from Jethro,<sup>119</sup> who was a priest of an idolatrous cult.

<sup>113</sup>. See Exodus 18:21. <sup>114</sup>. Below, 25:14. <sup>115</sup>. Below, 25:15. <sup>116</sup>. Below, 31:8; Rashi on 25:15. <sup>117</sup>. On Exodus 19:5. <sup>118</sup>. *Sanhedrin* 39b; see *Tanya*, ch. 31. <sup>119</sup>. Exodus 6:25; *Bava Batra* 109b.

— ONKELOS —

8 וְעַל בְּתֵר גִּבְרָא בֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 לְקַבְּתָא וּבִזְעָת תְּרִיחִין יֵת גִּבְרָא  
 בֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיֵת אֲתָתָא לְמַעְהָא  
 וְאֲתִבְלִי מוֹתְנָא מַעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
 9 וְהוּוּ דְמִיתוּ בְּמוֹתְנָא עֲשְׂרִין  
 וְאַרְבַּעַא אֲלַפִּין:

8 וַיָּבֵא אַחֲרַיִם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הַקְּבָה וַיִּדְקֹר אֶת־שְׁנֵיהֶם  
 אֶת אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־הָאִשָּׁה אֶל־קְבָתָהּ וְהִתְעַצֵּר הַמַּ־  
 גִּבָּה מַעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 9 וַיְהִיו הַמִּתִּים בַּמִּגְפָּה אַרְבָּעָה  
 וְעֶשְׂרִים אֲלָפִים:

ק"ד פסוקים. מנ"ח סימן.

— RASHI —

כְּדֵאִיתָא הָתָם:<sup>94</sup>  
 חסלת פרשת בלק

8 אֶל הַקְּבָה. אֶל הָאֵהָל: אֶל קְבָתָהּ. כְּמוֹ "וַיִּהְיוּ  
 וַיִּהְיוּ" — כִּי בְּתוֹךְ זְכוּרֹת שֶׁל זְמִירֵי וְנִקְבוֹת שְׁלֵה,  
 וְרָאוּ כֻלָּם שְׁלֵה לְחֻנָּם הַרְגָּם, וְהִרְבֵּה נִסִּים נַעֲשׂוּ לוֹ וְכוּ',

92. דברים יח, ג. 93. סנהדרין פב, ב.

**8 He went after the Israelite man, Zimri son of Salu, into the tent,** warned them that he was about to kill them for their act, **and** miraculously, Zimri and Kozbi did not disengage (for then it would have been forbidden for Pinchas to slay them without trial). Miraculously, he **pierced both of them** with his spear; **the Israelite man** through his reproductive organ, **and the woman Kozbi through her** reproductive organ, and Zimri did not cry out for help. More miracles: Pinchas lifted them up on his spear and they did not slip off, an angel lifted the frame of the doorway to the tent so he could carry them out as they were, so it was clear to all that he killed them justly. **So,** now that Zimri's uprising was quashed, **the judges** were able to finish executing those guilty of idolatry, and thus **the plague ceased from the Israelites.**

**9 Those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.**

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Balak* may be found on p. 248.




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CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

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Secondly, both Zipporah and Eleazar's wife certainly converted, and therefore Pinchas was born of a Jewish mother.

On the other hand, if these women converted, it seems we are faced with another difficulty, since a priest is forbidden to marry a convert!<sup>129</sup> This problem applies not only to Eleazar, Aaron's son, but to Moses as well. True, his sons were Levites<sup>130</sup> and not priests. But he himself, having served as a priest during the inauguration rites of the Tabernacle, retained his status as priest for the rest of his life.<sup>131</sup> How then, could either Moses or Eleazar have married proselytes?

The answer is that both their marriages occurred before the Torah was given on Mt. Sinai, and until

that time the priesthood was held not by Aaron and his descendants, but by the firstborn.<sup>132</sup> Since neither Moses nor Eleazar were firstborn,<sup>133</sup> they were permitted to marry converts.<sup>134</sup>

Now that we have stated that Moses and Eleazar were priests when the incident with Zimri occurred and Pinchas was not, we can offer another, supplementary explanation why it was only he who could oppose Zimri. Zimri was committing a crime for which he was allowed to be killed by the one who pronounced the sentence against him. Since Moses and Eleazar were priests, they could not sentence Zimri and thus be obligated to kill him, since they would thereby be likely to become defiled by his corpse, which it is forbidden for priests to do.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129.</sup> *Yevamot* 60b. <sup>130.</sup> 1 Chronicles 23:14. <sup>131.</sup> *Zevachim* 102a. <sup>132.</sup> *Zevachim* 112b. <sup>133.</sup> Moses was the third child in his family and Eleazar was the third son in his. <sup>134.</sup> On the entire matter, see further *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, p. 285ff. <sup>135.</sup> *Reshimot* #50

## Haftarah for Balak

Micah 5:6–6:8

*Parashat Balak* recounts how King Balak of Moab and the soothsayer Balaam tried to annihilate the Jewish people. In the *haftarah*, the prophet Micah contrasts the Jewish people's infidelity with God's concern for them—of which a primary example is how He thwarted the designs of Balak and Balaam.

5:6 The following is the conclusion of a messianic prophecy transmitted by the prophet Micah: **“The remnant of Jacob that will witness the advent of the Messiah shall be distinguished in the midst of the many other peoples on earth by the fact that they will not seek assistance of other peoples to resist their enemies. They will ask only God’s assistance, which is like dew: it is sent directly by God, unlike rain, which depends on man’s prayers. God’s assistance is like raindrops upon vegetation, which no one hopes for from any man and no one waits for from the sons of men. 7 The remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, if it passes through, treads down other animals to eat their food and tears them to pieces and takes them home to feed his mates and cubs. No one can save anything. 8 O Israel, your hand shall be raised above your oppressors; all your enemies shall be destroyed. 9 It shall come to pass on that day,”** says God, **“that I will eliminate your horses out of your midst, which you imported from Egypt for your chariots; I will destroy your chariots, for you will no longer need them. 10 I will destroy the fortified cities of your land, I will break down all your fortresses, for they, too, will be unnecessary. 11 I will destroy witchcraft from your hand; you will have no soothsayers. 12 I will destroy your graven images and your monuments from your midst; you shall no longer prostrate yourself to your own handiwork. 13 I will uproot your asherah-idols from your midst; I will destroy your enemies. 14 In anger and fury I will execute vengeance upon the nations who have paid no heed.”** 6:1 Micah now chastises the Jewish people for their present infidelity to God. **“Hear now what God says to me: ‘Rise! Contend with the patriarchs, who are likened to mountains,<sup>27</sup> let the matriarchs, who are likened to hills,<sup>28</sup> hear your voice.’**

5:6 וְהָיָה | שְׂאֵרֵי יַעֲקֹב בְּקֶרֶב עַמִּים רְבִים כְּמַלְמַל מֵאֵת יְהוָה כְּרִבִּיּוֹת עָלַי עֵשֶׂב אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִקְוֶה לְאִישׁ וְלֹא יִיחַל לְבַנֵּי אָדָם: 7 וְהָיָה שְׂאֵרֵי יַעֲקֹב בְּגוֹיִם בְּקֶרֶב עַמִּים רְבִים כְּאֲרִיָּה בְּבִהְמוֹת יַעַר כְּכַפִּיר בְּעֵדְרֵי צֶאֱן אֲשֶׁר אִם-עֵבֶר וְרִמָּס וְטָרַף וְאִין מִצִּיל: 8 תָּרַם יָדְךָ עַל-עֲרִיף וְכָל-אֵיבֶיךָ יִכְרֹתוּ: 9 וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם-הַהוּא נְאֻם-יְהוָה וְהִכְרַתִּי סוּסֶיךָ מִקְרַבְךָ וְהִאֲבֹדְתִי מִרְכַבְתֶּיךָ: 10 וְהִכְרַתִּי עָרֵי אֲרָצְךָ וְהִרְסֹתִי כָל-מִבְּעֲרִיךָ: 11 וְהִכְרַתִּי כְשָׁפִים מִיָּדְךָ וּמַעֲוֹנָנִים לֹא יִהְיוּ לְךָ: 12 וְהִכְרַתִּי פְסִילֶיךָ וּמַצֻּבוֹתֶיךָ מִקְרַבְךָ וְלֹא-תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה עוֹד לְמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ: 13 וְנִתְּשֹׁתִי אֲשֵׁרֶיךָ מִקְרַבְךָ וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי עֲרִיף: 14 וְעָשִׂיתִי בְּאַף וּבַחֲמָה נֶקֶם אֶת-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא שָׁמְעוּ: 6:1 שְׁמַעוּ-נָא אֵת אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אָמַר קוֹם רִיב אֶת-הַהָרִים וְתִשְׁמַעְנָה הַגְּבָעוֹת קוֹלְךָ:

27. See on Numbers 23:9. 28. Ibid.

2 Hear, O mountains, the argument of God; and you mighty ones, the foundations of the earth! For God has an argument with His people; He will contend with Israel, as follows: 3 ‘O My people, look at all I have done for you! How have I wearied you with worshipping Me? Testify against Me. 4 For although I brought you up out of the Land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, I did not make excessive demands on you. To make My service easier, I sent before you Moses to teach you, Aaron to atone for your sins, and Miriam to teach the women. 5 My people, remember now what Balak, the king of Moab planned—to wipe you out—and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him: that he could not curse you because I was not angry with you for all that time.<sup>29</sup> Remember that I was faithful to you from the time you were camped at Shitim and betrayed Me<sup>30</sup> to the day I brought you to Gilgal, your first camp in the Land of Israel,<sup>31</sup> so that you may recognize the righteous deeds of God. 6 You may ask, “With what shall I come before God, bow humbly before the Most High God? Shall I come before Him with ascent-offerings, with year-old calves? 7 Will God be pleased with thousands of rams, with myriad streams of oil for grain-offerings? Shall I give my firstborn as a sacrifice for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” 8 But, in fact, He has told you, O man, what is good for you to do, and what God demands of you: only to do justice, to love loving-kindness, and to walk modestly as an expression of your awareness of living in the presence of your God. And although, when you slight a mortal person, he is likely to refuse your apology unless you offer it in the presence of those before whom you slighted him, God is not like that. He is quite satisfied if you apologize to him privately.”

2 שִׁמְעוּ הָרִים אֶת־רִיב יְהוָה וְהָאֲתָנִים  
מִסְדֵי אָרֶץ כִּי רִיב לַיהוָה עִם־עַמּוֹ וְעִם־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתּוֹכַח: 3 עַמִּי מַה־עָשִׂיתִי לָךְ  
וּמַה הִלְאַתִּיךָ עֲנֵה בִי: 4 כִּי הֵעֵלְתִיךָ  
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּמִבֵּית עַבְדִּים פְּדִיתִיךָ  
וְאֶשְׁלַח לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת־מֹשֶׁה אֶהְרֹן וּמִרְיָם:  
5 עַמִּי זָכַר־נָא מַה־יַּעֲזִיב בְּלֶקַּח מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב  
וּמַה־עָנָה אֹתוֹ בַּלְעָם בֶּן־בְּעוֹר מִן־  
הַשְּׂטִימִים עַד־הַגִּלְגָּל לְמַעַן דַּעַת צְדָקוֹת  
יְהוָה: 6 בַּמָּה אֶקְדָּם יְהוָה אֶכְפֹּף לְאֱלֹהֵי  
מָרוֹם הָאֶקְדָּמְנוּ בְּעוֹלוֹת בַּעֲגֻלִים בְּנֵי  
שָׁנָה: 7 הִירְצָה יְהוָה בְּאַלְפֵי אֵילִים  
בְּרִבְבוֹת נְחֹלֵי־שֶׁמֶן הָאֵתָן בְּכוֹרֵי פִשְׁעֵי  
פְּרִי בִטְנֵי הַטָּמֵאת נַפְשֵׁי: 8 הֲגִיד לָךְ אֲדָם  
מַה־טוֹב וּמַה־יְהוָה דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמּוֹךְ כִּי אִם־  
עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת הַסֵּד וְהִצַּנֵּעַ לְכַת  
עִם־אֱלֹהֶיךָ:



29. See on Numbers 23:8. 30. Numbers 25:1-15. 31. Joshua 4:19.

*Dedicated in honor of our children*

**Nathan, Yitzchok,  
Moshe Lev,  
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways  
of our holy Torah*

**Yuri and Deana Pikover**

