

# Balak 5775

BS"D Parashat Balak 5775

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

## The Bil'am Syndrome

Albert Einstein once explained that the difference between genius and idiocy is that genius has its limitations.

On a similar note, the difference between genius and anti-Semitism, is that genius has its limitations.

Balak was under great pressure to drive the Jews out of the land of Mo'av.

He sent emissaries to the infamous Bil'am requesting his help in removing the threat of conquest by the Jewish nation through the powers invested in Bil'am to bless and to curse, as the pasuk says (Bamidbar 22:6)

וְעָמְרוּ וְיִקְרְאוּ אֶל בִּלְעָם בֶּן-בְּעוֹרִי מִמִּצְרָיִם כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹאמְרוּ אֵלָיו וְיִקְרָא אֵלָיו וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹאמְרוּ אֵלָיו וְיִקְרָא אֵלָיו וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל  
:וְעָמְרוּ וְיִקְרְאוּ אֶל בִּלְעָם בֶּן-בְּעוֹרִי מִמִּצְרָיִם כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹאמְרוּ אֵלָיו וְיִקְרָא אֵלָיו וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל

*"Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed."*

When HaShem appeared to Bil'am asking him to explain who these emissaries were, Bil'am replied that they were sent by Balak because in the words of Balak...

וְעָמְרוּ וְיִקְרְאוּ אֶל בִּלְעָם בֶּן-בְּעוֹרִי מִמִּצְרָיִם כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹאמְרוּ אֵלָיו וְיִקְרָא אֵלָיו וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל (וְעָמְרוּ וְיִקְרְאוּ אֶל בִּלְעָם בֶּן-בְּעוֹרִי מִמִּצְרָיִם כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹאמְרוּ אֵלָיו וְיִקְרָא אֵלָיו וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל)  
:וְעָמְרוּ וְיִקְרְאוּ אֶל בִּלְעָם בֶּן-בְּעוֹרִי מִמִּצְרָיִם כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹאמְרוּ אֵלָיו וְיִקְרָא אֵלָיו וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל

*“A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away.”*”

Rashi quotes the Midrash that points out the discrepancy between what Balak actually requested and what Bil'am told HaShem.

Balak said: “Then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land”, meaning the land of Moav.

When Bil'am quoted Balak to HaShem, he said: “Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away,” omitting the end of Balak's words “drive them out of the land.”

The Midrash and Rashi deduced that Balak hated the Jews as any goy in good standing would do, but he also feared them for good reason. And Balak would have been satisfied had the Jews just left his “land”.

Bil'am did not mention the “land” but intentionally misquoted Balak saying, “ to drive them away”, meaning not only from the “land” but from the world – in other words the Shoah, holocaust.

Balak's anti-Semitism was immense, but it had a limit. Bil'am's hatred knew no limitations, only total annihilation with not one Jew to be left in the world.

Bil'am, the man, comprised within himself the two evil forces which are threatening the Jewish nation today.

He is the murderous, sadistic Muslim who supported Paro's suggestion to physically enslave the entire Jewish nation. He is the cursing, venomous voice of the United Nation's Security Council, the United Nation's General Assembly, the International Court of Justice, the United Nations Human

Rights Commission and the European Union. He is the voice of BDS, of J Street betrayers and traitors, of the “turn-the-other-cheek” Christian Churches – the one in Rome and the others to the East.

We, the Jewish nation in Eretz Yisrael, will overcome the Bil’ams of the world as we have done in the past, with the help of HaShem. However, humanity as a whole will never be able to rid itself of the Bil’am heritage and restore that which Bil’am destroyed.

When it became apparent to Bil’am that HaShem would not curse the Jewish people, he offered a suggestion to Balak, which in his mind would “circumvent” any veto of the Almighty placing the initiative in Balak’s hands.

Rashi explains that until that time, despite cultural differences between tribes and nations, the world maintained a degree of modesty regarding relations between men and women in the tradition of the seven Noachide commandments.

Bil’am, by suggesting to Balak to use the Moabite and Midianite women to seduce the Jewish men as weapons of war, pushed back the fences of chastity never again to be returned as they were before. The gentile women seduced the Jews first by sexual means and then brought them to idolatry at Baal Peor; 24,000 Jews died for the sins which Bil’am had instigated.

**We are now witnessing a continuation of the Bil’am syndrome** of reducing the world’s moral level on a grand scale. It is being performed by the Supreme Court of the United States, by declaring same-sex marriages to be recognized in all the 50 states of their country. By this legal recognition of perversity, the hands of the clock to gentile obliteration

have edged one minute closer to midnight.

As the world edges closer to suicidal psychopathy, at least we the Jewish nation will know that there is an island of kedusha, sanity and morality here in Eretz Yisrael.

**Excerpt from the book "With All Your Might" on Parashat Balak**

Balak of old, the King of Moav, was a great deal smarter than the evil men we have to deal with today.

Balak knew that militarily there was no way he could defeat the Jewish people, so he sought to upgrade the level of engagement from the physical to the metaphysical.

Towards this end, he had to bring in the only man in his time who was connected to the source of the metaphysical – and this was the prophet Bil'am.

Rabbi Yochanan (Sanhedrin 105:b) reveals the workings of the malevolent mind of this arch anti-Semite, Bil'am. Behind the impressive rhetoric were the most menacing and forbidding thoughts against God's chosen people.

Bil'am looked out over the Israelite camp and said:

:אֲנִי אֶשְׁפָּט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי-יִשְׁבְּעוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר

:אֲנִי אֶשְׁפָּט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי-יִשְׁבְּעוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר

:אֲנִי אֶשְׁפָּט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי-יִשְׁבְּעוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר

אֲנִי אֶשְׁפָּט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי-יִשְׁבְּעוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר  
:אֲנִי אֶשְׁפָּט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל

:אֲנִי אֶשְׁפָּט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי-יִשְׁבְּעוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר )

*How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel! Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters.*

*Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water.*

*Their king will be greater than Agag; their kingdom will be exalted.*

*Like a lion they crouch and lie down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse them?*

*“May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!”*

And Rabbi Yochanan explains what Bil'am really meant:

**“How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel! “**

(May they not have synagogues and the Divine Presence should not dwell among them)

**“Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters.”**

(May their monarchy not extend, and may they not have olives nor vineyards, and may their kings not be prominent)

**“Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water.”**

(May they not have succession of kings, and may their kings not rule over other peoples)

**“Their king will be greater than Agag; their kingdom will be exalted. “**

(May their kings be weak and their enemies unafraid of them)

**“Like a lion they crouch and lie down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse them?**

**May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!”**

(May they never be confident as a lion, and may those who curse them be blessed)

If we consider all of Bil'am's curses together, they create a definite pattern. He wanted to see the Jewish people and our leaders as being meaningless, sordid, cowardly, irrelevant, immaterial, inconsequential, insignificant, nonessential, peripheral, and pointless.

Hashem reversed his curses and blessed us to be a great, monumental and historic nation – the soul and conscience of humanity.

Notwithstanding these blessings, Bil'am's curses have had an impact on us, as R. Aba bar Kahana says in Sanhedrin 105b:

וְכָל הַבְּרָכוֹת שֶׁבִּלְאָם בָּרַךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, חוּץ לְבְרַךְ אֶת הַבְּיָמוֹת וְאֶת הַבְּיָשִׁיבוֹת. וְכָל הַבְּרָכוֹת שֶׁבִּלְאָם בָּרַךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, חוּץ לְבְרַךְ אֶת הַבְּיָמוֹת וְאֶת הַבְּיָשִׁיבוֹת.

***They all returned to be curses, except the curse to abolish our synagogues and yeshivot***

But I am not sure that this is an accurate assessment of today's reality.

It would not be far-off to say that even our houses of prayer and yeshivot are infected with the curse of mediocrity – if

not worse.

The curse was that the people of Israel will not have the desire to be anything more than irrelevant. The innate desire for greatness, which Hashem placed in every Jew when we received the Torah, and the energy to rise above the mundane and achieve greatness, have dissipated into mediocrity.

The energy to achieve more than mere existence is lacking in most Jews today. We have all seen photos of Jews in the shtetls with the peddlers selling herring in the marketplace, and the cart pushers rushing to their destinations. They were satisfied with the life they led. Each had his little shack, a little income, his shtiebel to daven in three times a day – what was missing? If the day passed without being beaten by the local Gentiles, it was a blessed day.

Did they ever dream that the Divine prediction of the prophets would be realized, and that the Jewish nation would return to our ancient homeland? Where were the dreams of the Beit HaMikdash rebuilt anew on the Temple Mount; the Sanhedrin in the Lishkat Hagazit and the restoration of the Davidic monarchy? The Jews of the shtetl could not break out of the limited ambitions imposed on them by the galut.

The Jewish energy was depleted in the security of the shtetlekh.

But are we any different? The homes we own in the galut are not the shacks of the shtetlekh, but the mindset is the same. Millions of Jews are seduced by the security of their four walls, a little nest egg in the bank and a 9-to-5 job. Where are the big dreams of God's Chosen People?

Are the yeshivot educating their thousands of students to dream the great dream? Are they being taught the details of the Beit Hamikdash and its service? Do they know the history and geography of God's holy land? Are the yeshivot preparing their students for the day when we will have to take over the

leadership of this land?

Bil'am succeeded more than he could ever have hoped. By staying in the galut, the Jew is renouncing and abdicating the great energy of holiness which is his God-given gift.

You are no more than the desires of your heart, just as everything else in the world.

Where do your desires take you – to be part of God's greatest miracle since the Exodus, or to cling to the mediocrity of your lives in the exile?

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5775/2015 Nachman Kahana