

BS"D Parashat Balak 5785

Taking Time Out to Think

PART ONE

It is now Wednesday morning, the 13th of Tamuz (July 9th) and our Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu is in Washington meeting with the United States President Donald Trump, for the purpose of carving out new realities in the Middle East and elsewhere.

It's too early to know the outcome; nevertheless, the scenario is somewhat similar to what we will be reading from the Torah this coming Shabbat, parashat Balak.

The Parasha's story line is as follows:

The king of nation #1 invites *B*, a well-known wizard, to condemn and malign nation #2.

B arrives with full intentions to cause irreparable harm to nation #2.

But the fortunes of nation #2 turned out to be far, far better, and the wizard had no choice but to accept the reality and say AMEN and go home.

In our scenario, President Trump invited our PM to Washington for talks regarding the Iranians, Hamas of Gaza, Hezbollah of Lebanon, and Yemen. The PM came with the intention to underscore the evils inherent in those people and to seek extreme sanctions against them.

However, as matters proceeded, the President initiated a different set of plans: to make deals with all these enemies of morality and goodness in the world, to last for at least

another three years.

And our PM would have to sign on and say AMEN and go home.

And the Nobel Prize committee, sitting in October, will award the Nobel Peace Prize to the President for presenting these enemies of good the oxygen to stay alive, to regroup their armies and develop the means of mass destruction, without interference.

But HaShem turns bad into good, and good into better and best, and we will all cry out AMEN as our fathers and mothers have done in the past in the face of danger when HaShem performed miracles for His chosen people.

PART TWO

A: Introduction

Tehillim (105,8)

זָכוֹר לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם
לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם
לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם

He hath remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations.

The Gemara (Chagiga 13b) explains this pasuk. HaShem recalls (is forever aware of) the bond He made with Avraham to reveal the Torah to his descendants (through Yitzchak and Ya'akov) at the 1000th generation of the world's existence. However, HaShem knew that the world could not exist that long without Torah, so He kept the Torah 974 generations in abeyances before creating the world, and with the 26th generation left to the number 1000 created the world with Adam and Chava and at the 26th generation, at Mount Sinai presented the Torah to

Am Yisrael.

B: Time Out to Think

Because of the ongoing political-military-religious fireworks our concentration becomes distorted, and we are often oblivious to that factor which is closest to us, namely – ourselves.

1- Who are we, each and every individual Jew? And what is our role as vital parts of HaShem's collective chosen nation?

2- What are we supposed to do in the fleeting seconds within infinite time that HaShem has allotted to each of us in this transient world?

I suggest:

When studying our sources and learning from prestigious rabbis, it is obvious that Judaism points in one direction: that every Jew and Jewess is an MMM – a Mitzva Making Machine and in Ivrit מייצב מציב מציב.

To be sure, not your ordinary machine, but a **perpetual motion machine** that man cannot produce due to the limitations imposed by the basic laws that control nature, specifically the laws of thermodynamics.

These laws dictate that energy cannot be created or destroyed (but only transferred. For example, electricity to create heat and light; whereas a perpetual motion machine, by definition, would need to produce more energy than it consumes, which violates this principle. In addition, all systems experience energy losses due to friction, heat, and other factors, leading to a decrease in usable energy over time. A perpetual motion machine would need to reverse these phenomena, which is not possible.

Nevertheless, the Creator of all that exists, who designated

the guidelines of natural law, is not subject to these laws. And indeed, HaShem has created a perpetual motion machine; it is called Am Yisrael – the Jewish nation.

What does this mean?

The Zohar (parashat Teruma) states:

הַקָּדוֹשׁ הַיָּחִיד הַבְּרוּךְ הַיֵּשׁוּב בְּעוֹלָם הַקְּדוֹשִׁים

The holy one, blessed be He, after bringing forth the Torah, used it as a blueprint for all creation. From one of the largest objects in infinite space designated as UY Scuti, a red hypergiant star, with a radius about 1,700 times that of our sun and so immense that nearly 5 billion of our suns could fit inside of it, down to the smallest sub-atomic particle or wave.

And the Midrash states that HaShem imposed a condition with created matter, that if the Jewish nation at Sinai agrees to accept the role of chosen nation, with all its implications, then there will be a spiritual justification for creation; however, if the nation refuses to accept the yoke of the holy Torah, there would be no reason to create matter and all will revert back to nothingness.

In short: The descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov were chosen to actualize the potential that HaShem placed in His Torah in a world far away from spirituality. While the other races and nations were brought on the scene to create a living, breathing world of billions of individuals to create the background upon which the Jewish nation will keep HaShem's Torah.

Now what about the Jewish perpetual motion machine?

Pirkei Avot (chap. 4) states:

הַקָּדוֹשׁ הַיָּחִיד הַבְּרוּךְ הַיֵּשׁוּב בְּעוֹלָם הַקְּדוֹשִׁים

A mitzvah begets a mitzvah

A single mitzva engenders another mitzva – even one which requires a greater degree of physical and spiritual energy; hence a Jewish perpetual motion machine that creates new and more powerful energy.

C: The Great Lesson of a Hospital

Several years ago, I spent a few days in Sha'arei Tzedek hospital. On the second day, a distinguished looking gentleman entered the room and introduced himself as Prof. Marin, Director of the hospital, and asked if I was Rabbi Kahana. We began talking and I told the Professor that during my stay I was learning what a hospital is all about. Obviously, it is to restore wellness to the sick. But that's only half the story. The great lesson of a hospital is, in my eyes as a rabbi, to educate people to value the importance of an ordinary so called mundane day in one's life, for two reasons. For the secular person, because the alternative of one more dull day could be a stay in the hospital; and for the Torah observant Jew there are no boring days in life; for every moment one can, and is expected, to be involved in performing mitzvot.

We parted, both more enriched for the half hour that we talked.

I recall often walking along Jaffa Road towards the Old City, consciously seeking opportunities to offer assistance to a passerby. Inevitably, I would come home richer in mitzvot than when I had left.

In Eretz Yisrael we are especially gifted in that we are living in an atmosphere of one big mitzvah – to be present in HaShem's holy acre even when sitting and daydreaming.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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