

PARSHAS BALAK



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THE SECRET OF THE JEWISH NATION



MOAV'S FEAR OF KLAL YISRAEL

The timeline of our *parshah* took place after Klal Yisrael had conquered the lands of these two supermen, Sichon and Og, and all the lands of the Emorim were in the hands of Klal Yisrael. They were now about to cross the Yarden in order to conquer Eretz Yisrael proper. They were facing the Moavim. By the time Sichon was at war with Klal Yisrael, Moav had already given up half of their land to Sichon, and when Sichon lost the battle with Klal Yisrael, that land of Moav went into the hands of the Bnei Yisrael, and Klal Yisrael became the neighbors of Moav. Moav was looking at their new neighbors. They had no familiarity with the Jewish people. They were holding their heads, trying to figure out how these two giant kings, Sichon and Og, had fallen so easily.

Now you have to know that Sichon and Og were extremely powerful. Chazal tell us that if their cities, which were so fortified, had been filled with no more than mosquitoes, no nation could have conquered them. And they were so powerful that even if there were no fortifications at all and they were open to the whole world and their people were there, it would have been impossible to overcome them. That's how powerful they were. And here comes this nation who were slaves, who have no country, who have no nationality. They're a nation that's been wandering in a desert for forty years. Think about it. It's like a bunch of Bedouins. How would you look at a bunch of ISIS dwellers, people who live in the desert? They don't live in cities and they don't have trained armies. They don't have fortifications, and all of a sudden they take out Sichon and Og, who are the allies of Moav! What happens? They go nuts. They see that they have no chance of stopping the Jews, this young fledgling people, from continuing their conquests. They naturally fear that the Jews will conquer even more nations.

Now, there was a fellow named Balak. Mr. Balak was an intellectual fellow. He decided to make a study to figure out what gave Klal Yisrael their ability to fight. He studied their history, and watched their wars. It says: וירא בלק בן ציפור, *vayar* always means "he saw" (Bamidbar 22:2). What does "saw" mean? It means, he studied. He was *mesbonen*. It wasn't a superficial look. He was *mesbonen* into everything Klal Yisrael did. And now he saw the great fear that Moav had, as it says: ויגר מואב מפני העם מאד, "Moav was alarmed because that people was so numerous" (v. 3). And the *passuk* says ויקץ מואב, "Moav were disgusted." Usually when you have an enemy that you're afraid of, you detest them. But here, they detested themselves! They felt like nothing. They felt they're *gornisht*. They felt inadequate. So Moav turns to Midyan for an *eitzah*, and then the *passuk* says: ובלק בן ציפור מלך למואב בעת ההוא, "and Balak ben Tzipor was the king of Moav at that time" (v. 4). Now it's very interesting because seemingly the *passuk* should have said at the outset that Balak was king of Moav. When the *passuk* introduced us to this fellow Balak, it should have said וירא בלק בן ציפור מלך מואב. But the *pshat* is that Balak wasn't the king until now. Only once he made this analysis, once he did his due diligence on behalf of Moav, and came up with a theory that he understands the power of the Jewish people, was he appointed king. So after they saw who he was, only then does the *pasuk* says: ובלק בן ציפור מלך למואב בעת ההוא.

OUR POWER COMES FROM OUR VOICE

Now, Balak came up with an interesting theory. The *goyim* in those days had force, brute force, physical force. Balak understood that the Jews' conquest had nothing to do with brute force. He realized that the Jewish secret and their power had to come from somewhere else. So he did a study and asked, "Who's in charge of these Jewish people?" They told him, "Oh, a fellow named Moshe." What was Moshe's power? He asked, "Who was this Moshe? Where was he from?" Moshe was a tall, physically strong person, but where did Moshe's power come from? And they determined that Moshe's power did not come from his warfare strategy. It came from his *koach* of his *peh*, from the power of his mouth. He had a certain way of relating to the A-mighty. He had a way of connecting to Hashem, the source of all power. Balak asked about the history. He found out about the Torah, about Moshe Rabeinu giving the Torah. *הי עוז לעמו יתן*, "Hashem grants strength to His people" (Tehillim 29:11). He decided that that was where Moshe's power lay. So what did he decide to do? He decided that he's not going to go up against the Jews with surprise strategic hit-and-run terrorist attacks. He's going to try to employ somebody whose *koach* is also *be'peh*. So he did an analysis looking for someone in the world who has a similar *koach*, who's *יודע דעת עליון*, who has an "in" with Hashem, who we could perhaps bring over to our side. He came up with Bilam. And therefore *וישלח מלאכים אל בלעם בן בעור*, "and they sent messengers to Bilam" (v. 5).

Now, most other people just melted. You know why they melted? Because they *chapped* they have no *shaychus* to this battle. They couldn't figure out the secret of the Jewish people. So they melted. They were full of dread and fear. They had nothing to put in the way of Bnei Yisrael. But Bilam came up with this interesting plan.

The Chasam Sofer writes in a *teshuvah* that there is something very interesting and unique about this *parshah*. There is something unique about the whole founding of the Jewish nation. When you're going to go out there and you're going to engage in your fiery, fiery *kiruv*, you're going to want to turn people around. You're going to be faced with the following question. They're going to ask you, "Rabbi, did you try other religions? Have you looked into my religion? Did you look into Christianity or Episcopalian or 'Deformed,' or 'Destructionist'? Maybe that's the way to go. How do you know?" That's going to be the million-dollar question. And you're going to say, "Hmm, that's a very good question." You're going to stick your thumb in your mouth and you're going to suck on it. He'll say, "Rabbi, what is that, a Jewish custom? When a Jewish rabbi gets stuck, he puts his thumb in his mouth and sucks on it?"

ONLY JUDAISM WAS WITNESSED BY MILLIONS

No, let me tell you what you should say. What is unique about the Jewish religion that is mind-boggling is that it's the only religion that's founded and built upon visual testimony. It's the only religion that's not founded on faith. It's not a faith-based religion. Every other religion in the world is based upon: trust me. The most wacky one has close to 20 million global followers. It's crazy how many millions of adherents it has (i.e. Mormonism). Some guy came back from a walk on a road. And do you know what he said? He said, "I was just given two tablets." I wonder where he got that idea from! He got two tablets, and it was written in Hebrew, of course. Since he didn't know Hebrew, the only way he could understand it was with special glasses. So his god gave him these special glasses, and he put them on upside down. He looked at the tablets standing on his head, and then he came up with this whole religion. This *tipesh* remembered all the laws, and he came and *fakofed* this religion and was a *rasha merusha she'ein kamoso*. He started taking wives away from people. He made Yerushalayim his capital. He came up with the wacky of the wackiest laws. They have literally millions today. They use a lot of missionaries. Then, when the people asked him, "Can we see the tablets?" he walked back down the road and he said, "Oh, they were lost." "Can we see the glasses?" "The glasses were also lost." Could you imagine that anybody who has an IQ of 10 would believe this? I've asked them, "How can you possibly buy into this nonsense?" But millions of people do. And you want to convince me of this?!

Every religion is based on some kind of nonsense like this. Mohammed, who started one of the biggest religions in the world, claimed he was a prophet. They asked, "You're a prophet? What makes you a prophet?" You're a *shikur*. You're not a prophet. You're an adulterer. He was a terrible, terrible person. What makes you a prophet? He said, "If you don't believe me," and took a dagger out from under his clothes. He stuck it into people's hearts, cut off heads. He got a couple of *vilde chevra, vilde Araba* to follow him, wild Arabs. They went around creating havoc. A whole religion is based on this nonsense. It's unbelievable. A world of fools.

And what about Christianity? I met a lot of these guys in my life. I always tell them, "Excuse me, that's our cousin. You're hijacking our cousin." I said Yoshke wasn't a Christian. He was a Jewish person. Do you know about the Last Supper, what are you *hocking a chinok*? He never said he was a god! What do you make him into a god for?! No one in his own *shtetl* knew he was a god. No one dreamed he was a god. But, if you don't believe in him? Bam! They're going to whack your head off, too. And what about the Chinese and Japanese? Japan, a huge country. You have to take your shoes off, even today, when you get to the block of the Japanese emperor's palace. Why? It's considered *kodesh kadoshim* because their great-great-grandmother was *mezaneh* with the gardener on the roof, and she came down pregnant. Then, when she came down pregnant, they said no one was on the roof. How did she get pregnant? Ah, it must have been the sun! So they worshiped the sun. They *pashut* made up a whole religion. I'm thinking to myself: *you know how dumb you have to be to go for that nonsense?* You think in today's world that somebody can sell this nonsense? There must have been somebody. You established a religion based on a *zach* that 'Hashem' came down and married a woman. I mean, I never heard of such insanity! The only place you would hear such things is in a very serious, high maximum security psychiatric ward. The same people who claim to be King Tut and Queen of England. It's *pashut* amazing to me.

"And now you wonder why I didn't study your religion?! Do I look cuckoo to you?!" That's what I would say to them. You know you don't have a religion. You have a comic book religion. All it's based on, if anybody questioned it, is that you *shechted* people. You slaughtered Jews. You slaughtered other people. You called anybody who had a question about your religion an "infidel." Jews never slaughtered anybody. You know why? They didn't have to slaughter people. If somebody questioned Judaism, you know what Jewish people would say? Have a *refuah sheleimah*. You should have a speedy recovery and get better quickly. We're telling you facts.

FACTS ARE UNDENIABLE

I had a story many years ago. I was on a plane. There was a guy wearing a white thing under his neck. I thought maybe he was a barber or something. He told me he was a priest. I thought it would be an interesting conversation. So we started to talk. I said, "Would you like to make a lot of money?" He said, "Why do you ask?" I said, "I have a suggestion for you. You know the Jews know how to make money. So, I'm going to give you a tip. Write a book and call it *The Hoax*." I said, "For 1,900 years, the Catholic Church has been trying to dismiss the Jewish people and figure out how to say the Jews are not the chosen nation anymore. They came up with this tremendous *chiddush* that Jews worship the devil. Devil worshipers. Why don't you say we worship daffodils? Make us rose worshipers. Devil worshipers? That's an absurd, silly thing."

"Then they came up with another *shtus*. What was the biggest folly they ever came up with? That Jews slaughter Christian kids and put their blood in matzah. You know, Jews never eat blood. We're the only nation that does not eat blood. Every nation in the world are 'blood suckers.' They love blood. They drink blood. They cook in blood. They don't remove the blood from the meat. Jews remove the blood from meat before eating it. Blood is abhorrent to a Jew. If you said they put blood in chopped liver or they put blood in cholent, okay. Maybe that I can understand because people put all kinds of *chazarei* in cholent. You don't know what's in it. But then, of all things, to say they put it in matzah? Matzah is pure water and flour. If the slightest impurity gets in, if the guy puts a milligram of salt in that matzah, that matzah cannot be used for Pesach at all! Do you realize that? That's amazing. You hear that?"

I told him, "I'm going to tell you what you should write in the book. Call it 'The Jewish Hoax.' Write in that book that the Jews made up a *bubbe ma'aseh*. The whole story of Mount Sinai was baloney. Whoever heard of a G-d coming down and talking to people live? Whoever heard of that? Millions of people. No religion ever had it. Why don't you say that? It'll sell well." I said, "A lot of secular Jews tell me, 'I'm not sure if it's true. I have my doubts. I have my questions.' Why don't you write about that?"

You know what he told me? He said, "That's a fact. Facts are undeniable." You know what he was telling me? That it's such a *pashute* fact, you'd have to be a cuckoo to deny it. It's better to say that they take Christian kids and put their blood in the matzos than to say that Har Sinai never happened. Everybody knows about the Exodus from Egypt. Yet the Quran, for example, in multiple places, mentions Haman as a member of Pharaoh's court and his personal advisor. There is a verse in the Quran which says that Pharaoh, Haman and their soldiers pursued the Jews into the Red Sea and were all drowned. Amazing, no? My Zeida said that guy, Mohammad, used to be a cleaner. He cleaned up Jewish *batei medrashim* and *batei kenesios*, and he heard bits and pieces of Judaism. He heard about Haman, and he heard about Pharaoh. My Zeida said that's like the *alef beis*. Every *goy* in the world knows that Pharaohs lived in Egypt and Haman lived in Persia - about 900 years after Yetzias Mitzrayim.

Now, the Chasam Sofer talks about this week's parshah in a *teshuvah*.¹ He makes a very interesting point. He says everything in the Torah, we witnessed with our own eyes. The only exception is the episode involving Balak and Bilam. The Torah here tells us what Balak thought, what he was afraid of, and how he planned to overcome that fear, along with everything that happened between him and Bilam. But who told us they were afraid? Who told us what they were thinking? It wasn't a known fact. This wasn't in the newspapers. The answer is: Hashem revealed all this to us behind the scenes! Hashem said: "I know it all, and I'm telling you this is what he said, this is what he thought, and this is what he planned. Balak came up with this plan that you need *koach bepeh* and you need a Bilam." It's all Hashem revealing to us this secret that wasn't known to mankind. I'm sure if we would have met these folks and told them this, they would have denied it. They would have said: "Fake news!" But we know it's real news because it's from Hashem.

HASHEM REDEAMS AM YISRAEL EVERY SINGLE DAY

Now, what is the reason the Torah tells us this? Why does the Torah tell us how the *goyim* viewed the Jews, thought about the Jews, and how they wanted to deal with the Jews? The answer to that question is found in the *Ya'aros Devash*

¹ ויש לי לעורר בדבר אחד הנה אין לנו בכל התורה שום דבר שאין אנוחם בעצמנו עידי ראייה חוץ מפ' בלעם כי כל מופת מצרים ומדבר את הכל ראו עינינו ונעשה לפני ס' רבוא ולא נשאר א' מכל ישראל בחוץ שלא ראה חוץ למ"ד יתרו אחר מ"ת בא נשאר בני משה מבחוץ זולת זה לא נשאר אחד שלא ראה בעיניו ואין האבות מנחילים שקר לבניהם וה"ל כאלו ראינו בעינינו ואפילו חידוש עולם ומעשה נחש בג"ע והמבול והפלגה כבר כ' רמב"ן בס' דרשות הרמב"ן הרי אד"ה ראה עצמו יחיד בלי אב ואם ומעשה ג"ע וגירושיו והוא דיבר פ"א עם שם בן נח רבו של יעקב אבינו ע"ה כי בן חמשים ה' יעקב כשמת שם וקיבל ממנו כל הנ"ל עם מעשה מבול והפלגה והוא סיפר לבניו ועמרם שמע מלוי ואמר לבניו משה ואהרן וכל הדור ההוא קבלו כן מאבותיהם ובכל הדורות כל הנעשה לזקן זקנים הרי הוא כאלו נעשה בפניהם ממש וא"א להכחיש זהו במעשיות וספורי תורה. ואמנם כל סידורי מצות נ"ל כשגעון מי שיאמר שבא' מהדורות קם א' והמציא להניח תפילין ויצא בקרן א' על מצחו והטעה העולם לומר זהו טוטפת האמור בקרא הלא ירגמוהו העם ויאמרו זה לא שמענו ולא ראינו מאבותינו מיום עמדנו על הר סיני ועמנו מרע"ה ואחריו יב"נ זקנים ונביאים מי ימלא לבו לחדש דבר וכן בענין סוכה וד' מינים וכל מעשה קרבנות מי יכול לשנות הדבר בענין הנהוג בכל יום ויום לפני זקנים ונביאים אם לא כך ראינו בעינינו מרע"ה ותלמידי ותלמידי תלמידי עד היום הזה ויסכר פי דוברי שקר הקראים הרעים מ"ש שאירע בימי שמעון בן שטח ויהודה בן טובאי תמק לשונם בחכם כלה עני וילך יורד שאול לא יעלה. נחזור להנ"ל כל התורה כולה ראינו בעינינו חוץ מפ' בלעם מי הגיד לנו מה ה' בין מלך מואב ובין קוסם אחד בלעם שראו אליו אל ארצו ולמה בא ומי הביאו ומי ידע שבנה מזבחות ושרצה לקלל ונהפך לברכה מי בא בסודם וישראל היו שרויים במדבר ואם הם עמדו בארץ מואב בראש הפסגה וראו למטה אל המדבר למרחוק מאין ידעו יושבי מדבר שמביטים עליהם מראש ההר הזה ושמתשים עליהם ואפי' מרע"ה לא ידע ורק מפה הקב"ה ית"ש נכתבו הדברים והנביא צווח זכר נא מה יעץ בלך וגו' והנה המאמין בכל התורה ובמצותיה רק מסתפק בפ' בלעם הרי הוא כופר בה' אלוקיו ה' אחד ולא יאמר אדם שפ' בלעם היא עיקר מעיקרי התורה שבו עליו בנין ומ"מ הכופר בה כופר בעיקר וה"ה ומכ"ש בגאולה אחרונה המפורשת מפ' ה' למרע"ה אם ית' נדחך בקצה השמים וגו' וכפר אדמתו עמו וכיוצא בו. - ה' הטוב והמטיב יטיב לנו ויורנו מארחותינו, ונלכה בדרכיו, ונהי' ממבוכינו, לשמור תורותינו וחוקותינו, ועלה לציון ברננים ודבר אלוקינו נשמע פנים אל פנים. (שו"ת חתם סופר, יורה דעה שני")

that they try to destroy us constantly, and Hashem saves us. Maybe if you'd put a drop more *kavanah* into your request that Hashem should help us *כי גואל חזק אתה*, perhaps you would save somebody else! Especially if you *daven berabim*. You *daven* so fast (speaking to a talmid). When I'm at *קדוש אתה* you're already making *שלום במרומוי*. A person has to know this. It is very important. You can't take things for granted.

It's especially important for you to internalize this if you think everything is fine in Eretz Yisrael. You know, there are fools there. They say, "It's our country. It's a Jewish country. Who wants to make *gezeiros* against us?!" Firstly, the 40 million Arabs that are all around us want to destroy us. That's for sure. That's a given. And *מְהַרְסֵיךָ וּמְהַרְבֵיךָ*, "Those who ravaged and ruined you," (Isaiah 49:17), our destroyers come from the government, from the leftists, from the Zionists. They don't want to destroy us?! They want nothing more than to destroy us! You have to realize that a person fools himself when it's quiet. They live in a little quiet place like this, and think nothing can go wrong. But then, suddenly, something happens.

Just two years ago, in New York, Hashem shook it up a little bit. He showed He's in charge. There began a *minhag* of dark people, *tinkele mentschen*, like they call them on Kol Hamevaser. What was their '*minhag*'? They started a *minhag* of going around the street and surprising random people whom they had no *shaychus* to, to try to knock them out with one, quick and unexpected punch. They did it to old ladies, to young ladies, to old men. They tried to surprise you and come around. That was the game. A 'Knockout Game.' Knock the person out with a punch. It wasn't only Yidden, but there were relatively a lot of Yidden involved. You know what Hashem was telling us? In one second, people can go *meshuge*. Hashem was saying: "I control the world." You think it's a joke? People were petrified to walk in the street. They looked around. They didn't want to be surprised. But looking around is not going to save them. Maybe some people got some pepper spray. They thought it would save them. But the idea there was to get you by surprise.

A person has to know that our *matzav* in this world is precarious. There are many Balaks lurking around. There are many Moavs plotting against us. There are all kinds of *umos haolam* who want to rid the world of us, and it's only by the *nissim*, the *chasdei Hashem*, and the *tovos* of Hashem that we're still around, and we have to recognize that, rabbosai! Many people don't like to hear this because it makes their lives uncomfortable. They want to go on vacation. They want to go on and do what they want and how they want. They don't want to think negative thoughts. This is called reality.

I always think about that tragic story in Eretz Yisrael, at a *chasunah* in that huge hall, the Versailles Hall, in May 2001. The people were dancing away and having a blast when suddenly the whole floor collapsed. I was thinking that if someone would have come to them a minute before and said, "I want to let you know, my friend, that I think in about five minutes, you're toast." "What's going to happen?" "The floor is going to collapse on you. Come on. Come on. Don't you feel it?" People afterwards wrote that they felt the floor giving way. They weren't dancing on the ground floor. They were dancing upstairs. I don't remember how many *korbanos* there were, but it was a traumatic experience. It changed my life. After that, for a long time, when I went to places, I said, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I appreciate that You make the ground under me solid. *רוקע הארץ על המים*. And the only reason I'm not falling through to the water is because You, Hashem, are keeping this solid."

Hakadosh Baruch Hu should help us keep our awareness and *daven* to Him, and hopefully affect *devarim tovim*.

IN CONCLUSION

What's unique about the Torah and *Yiddishkeit* is that Hashem revealed Himself to us and gave us the Torah and that it was witnessed by many people; we believe that what Hashem tells us in the Torah is the accurate, undeniable truth. The Chasam Sofer discusses how the *pesukim* in this week's *parshah* reveal the secret thoughts and plans of the people of Moav and what motivated them to attack Klal Yisrael. We learn from this how the *goyim* view the Jews, and how they want to deal with the Jews - as a rule. It's only by the constant *nissim*, *chasdei Hashem*, and *tovos* of Hashem that we're still around. The Ya'aros Devash says that Hashem does *geulos* for us every single day. Hashem hears our *tefillos*, specifically accepting *tefillas harabim*. *Tefillah* is our *koach*. Even when it is an *eis tzarah l'Yaakov*, we know that *re'eh na b'onyeinu* - Hashem sees our afflictions - even when we are not aware of them. He is constantly saving us. We should be aware that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is being *goel* right now. This week (*bli neder*), I will recognize the *koach* of *tefillah* and put more *kavanah* into my request that Hashem should make *geulos* for us because, *כי גואל חזק אתה* - He is the only address to turn to.