



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Parashat Balak

It Would Have Been Worthwhile to Read *Parashat Balak* Twice a Day

The Sages Wanted to Enact Reading *Parashat Balak* in *Kriyat Shema*

Our Sages state in *Masechet Berachot* [12b]: Said R' Avahu ben Zutrati in the name of R' Yehudah bar Zevidah: The Sages wished to place *Parashat Balak* in *Kriyat Shema*, and why didn't they? Because it would be burdensome for the congregation. Why did they wish to place it in *Shema*? Perhaps you will say that it is because it states, "Hashem took them out of *Mitzrayim*." If that is the case, let us say instead the portion of the Torah that deals with usury or weights, which also mentions the exodus from Egypt. [The *Ben Ish Chai* explains that since these Torah portions are shorter than *Parashat Balak*, they are preferable.] Rather, said R' Yosi bar Avin, because this *pasuk* is written in it, "He bent and lay down like a lion, and like a cub – who can stand him up?" Let us simply say this *pasuk* and nothing else? We have learned that any portion of the Torah which Moshe has divided, we divide. But a portion that Moshe has not divided, we, too, do not divide."

Questions:

- 1- What is so special about this *parashah*, that if not for being a burden to the congregation, it deserved to be inserted into *Kriyat Shema* and to be recited twice a day?
- 2- The Torah goes to great lengths to elaborate on each detail of Balak's employment of Bilam, and of their plans and conversations. We know that there is not a crown located on the top of each and every letter in the Torah that is extra. Therefore, it must be understood what we learn from this *parashah*.
- 3- Furthermore, contained within *Kriyat Shema* is acceptance of the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom and the yoke of the mitzvot. How is this relevant to *Parashat Balak*?

Divine Providence over Creation

Indeed, the uniqueness of *Kriyat Shema* is that it constitutes man's acceptance of the Heavenly Kingdom and the yoke of mitzvot. However, a major deterrent in man's acceptance of the yoke of Hashem's Majesty is the world's providence. Man mistakenly thinks that with his strength and wisdom, he conducts the world. Therefore the means by which man can accept upon himself Hashem's Majesty is by strengthening his faith and trust in Hashem, that all is wrought by Him and not by man. Therefore in this *parashah* Hashem wishes to teach us about His providence over creation and particularly over the Jewish Nation, in great detail. By doing so, man will recognize his obligation to serve Hashem with joy. As is well understood, that his is the foundation of *avodat Hashem*, i.e., to believe with total faith that all is wrought by His providence, and that nothing is dependent on the whims of man. As it states in *Chovot Halevavot* [*Shaar Habitachon*] that if the entire world would gather together with the intent of either hastening or delaying anything that was not decreed by Hashem, they would be unable to do so. For Hashem is the cause of each and every item that occurs. There is no happenstance in the world, whether in relation to man's actions or words. Everything is exactly according to His Providence, with each man measured exactly according to his deeds. This is the reason that if not for overburdening the congregation, *Parashat Balak* deserved to be inserted into *Kriyat Shema*, which is primarily focused on faith in Hashem. According to this, we can even understand the Gemara's answer that they did not include only the *pasuk*, "He bent and lay down like a lion, and like a cub – who can stand him up?" because since Moshe did not divide up this *parashah* neither do we. The question is why is this so?

The answer is that if Moshe did not divide it up, it signifies that in order to properly understand the meaning of the *pasuk*, we need the remainder of the *parashah* as well. And indeed, this understanding is only gained when we learn the entire *parashah*, about how Bilam stresses that he cannot even alter his words if it is not the Will of Hashem. This is testimony from the most wicked of men that all is controlled by the Providence of the Creator. It behooves us to contemplate the words of Bilam, who said, "I cannot transgress the word of Hashem, whether a small thing or a great thing." We must ask – if he could not transgress a small item, certainly he could not transgress a great one?



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The Vilna Gaon explains that Bilam knew that there are Names of Hashem which connote His Attribute of Mercy and those which connote His Attribute of Strict Judgment. He knew that the Four-Letter Name represents the Attribute of Mercy and the Name *Elokim*, Strict Judgment. However, if one divides these Names, they will connote the exact opposite. For example, if one takes the *vav* and *hei* of the Four-Letter Name by themselves, they represent Strict Judgment. On the other hand, if one takes the *alef* and *lamed* at the beginning of the Name *Elokim*, he has the Name *Kel*, which connotes Mercy. Bilam, in his trickery, when saying each Name, intended it to hint to the Attribute of Strict Judgment. However, he pretended as if he wished to say the Attribute of Mercy. Against his will, Hashem forced him to say the Attribute of Mercy. When Bilam wished to shorten the Four-Letter Name, Hashem forced him to conclude it, so that it would connote the Attribute of Mercy and not that of Strict Judgment [See the commentary of the *Ben Ish Chai* who explains along these lines.] **This teaches us that even man's speech, which appears to be solely under his control, is truly only controlled by Divine Providence, as is everything else.**

His Mouth Caused Him to Stumble

We find additional places in our *parashah* where it is expounded upon how Bilam stumbled with his mouth and could not control it. In the *Midrash Aggadah* [*Balak siman 37*], it states on the *pasuk*, "Am I not able to honor you?" that "His mouth caused him to stumble, for he left him dejectedly, since he did not honor him." Furthermore, Rashi comments on Bilam's words [22:19], "Now also you return," that "His mouth caused him to stumble. [His words implied,] also you will ultimately leave dejectedly like the first ones." Furthermore the *Baal Haturim* writes on the words, "Curse for me," that "His mouth caused him to stumble, for in the end he cursed him." [Also see the *Ohr Hachayim* who writes similarly.] It also states in *Masechet Gitten* [57a] about Bar Daroma that his mouth caused him to stumble and he died. He said [*Tehillim* 108:12] "Is it not you Hashem, Who has until now forsaken us, and does not go, O G-d, with our legions?" He entered the washroom; a snake bit him and he died. [Also see *Tzidkat Hatzaddik* [116] of Rebbi Tzadok Hakohen who writes similarly.]

From Hashem Comes the Tongue's Reply

Shlomo Hamelech states in *Mishlei* [16:1], "To man is the heart's arrangements, but from Hashem comes the tongue's reply." On this, our Sages comment in several places that even man's speech is dependent on Divine Providence. This *pasuk* is expounded upon in *Midrash Mishlei* [16:1], "This is to inform you that all is from the Hand of Hashem and not man. Not the thoughts of the heart, and not the speech of the tongue, as it states, 'From Hashem Comes the tongue's reply.'"

It is written that even man's prayers are dependent upon Heaven. This is as it states in *Masechet Berachot* [34b] in the *Mishnah*, that if someone prays and errs it is an unfavorable sign for his congregation. It states about R' Chaninah ben Dosa that when he prayed for the ill, he would say afterwards who would live and who would die. When he was asked how he knew, he responded that if his prayer was recited fluently then he knew that it was accepted, but if not, he knew that it wasn't.

The Mouth of the Donkey

In *Pirkei Avot* [5:6] it states that ten things were created on *erev Shabbat* at twilight. Amongst them was the mouth of Bilam's donkey. In the *sefer Avodat Yisrael* [*Likutim leAvot* 5:6] it comments that the *Mishnah* teaches us that man should not grow haughty through his deeds and actions, since they are empowered by Hashem. Bilam's power was in his mouth, and therefore he became haughty on account of his mouth. Therefore Hashem hinted to him that it was He Who gave Bilam his power. As we see, when Hashem wanted, the donkey was able to speak and defat Bilam with his words. This is written even more clearly in the *Midrash* [*Bamidbar Rabbah*] on the *parashah*, which states that we learn from the episode with the donkey, that the mouth and the tongue are under Hashem's dominion. Additionally, it states in the *sefer Brit Shalom* [*Balak*] that this is illustrated in the words of our Sages [*Sanhedrin* 65b] who state that Rava created a human being (Rashi: by using the *Sefer Yetzira*, which taught him how to combine the letters of Hashem's Names in order to create a human being). He sent him before Rebbi Zeira. Rebbi Zeira spoke with this being, but he did not answer him (- as he lacked the ability to speak).



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Seeing this, Rabbi Zeira commanded him to return to the state of dirt from which he had originated. We see from here that while man has the ability to create whatever he wants – even a human being - by combining the letters of the Divine Names, however, he cannot give him the ability to speak. Only Hashem has the ability to grant the power of speech.

A Story Which Teaches that Even Speech is Controlled by Divine Providence

I read a story that was quoted in the newspaper *Be'mishpacha Be'tekufateinu*. There was a wealthy man who lived in *chutz la'aretz*, and managed a successful business. However, he wished to benefit his soul as well, so he emigrated to *Eretz Yisrael*. He decided to offer his assistance whenever the opportunity arose. He therefore opened a *gemach* and distributed money to those in need. Understandably, his money soon began to be depleted, because he was not accruing any profit. However, he persisted on his mission and even began to help bolster struggling *batei knessiot*. He exerted much effort in binding *siddurim* and *chumashim* in the *batei knessiot* and would give them money if he saw a need. However, since his money had diminished, he wished to go out and collect money from his friends from *Chutz La'eretz*, in order to benefit the impoverished. He was in need of a certain amount of money for the *chagim*. One time, he arranged with one of his friends to meet. His friend agreed and informed him that he even reserved him a room in a hotel. When he got to the luxury hotel, he saw that his friend had ordered him an expensive suite. However, it pained him – *what a waste of money*, he thought. *With the money spent on this room, I could have supported several families*. With no other choice, however, he approached the front desk, and they gave him the key to his room. When he entered the room, he immediately discovered a wallet that was literally stuffed with money. Upon further investigation, he saw that it belonged to an Arab from Dubai. He decided that this was a lost-item belonging to a gentile, which, from a *halachic* standpoint, was not obligated to be returned. Amazingly, he saw that the money contained in the wallet was the exact amount that he needed for the *chagim*! He saw this as a Heavenly sign. He therefore took out the money, tore up the wallet and threw it in the garbage, so that there would be no trace of it. After some time, there was a knock on the door, and when he opened it he saw a police officer escorting an Arab. The officer politely asked him if he had seen a wallet, to which the man replied that he hadn't. They asked if they could enter the room and check, an indeed, they found nothing. They left dejectedly. But the Arab insisted that the wallet could only be in that room. The officer took out a search-warrant and once again gently said that he was forced to conduct a search. The man agreed, and after he took everything out of his pockets and clothing, the officer saw that his wallet contained an enormous amount of money. He somewhat suspected the man, but he told the officer that he was a businessman, and he could show him his passport. This would be proof that he regularly travelled around the world on business matters. However, the officer asked him if there was a renowned wealthy individual who knew him and could vouch for him. At that moment, the name of a particular wealthy acquaintance popped into his head, and his name quickly escaped him mouth. However, after the officer left, he regained his composure and smacked himself in the head. *How did that person's name leave my mouth?* he wondered. After all, this particular individual was truly his enemy who hated him, and knew well that he went from place to place actually collecting money for his *gemach*. Who knows what that man would say about him? Now, he feared, they would certainly apprehend him, and what would be his fate? However, there was no way to rectify the matter; rather, he prayed to Hashem. After all, everything he did was for the needy and not for personal gain. He trusted that Hashem would therefore save him from this trouble that had befallen him. They jotted down this acquaintance's phone number and called him to discover how he knew this man. Since he hated him, he decided that he would ruin him. He understood that if they were calling from *Chutz La'aretz* it was because they wished to clarify if he was really in a trying predicament and needed help for his *gemach*. He therefore decided to say the opposite! He told them that he was really a wealthy man who constantly travelled on business to *Chutz La'aretz*, and that it was possible to verify this by examining his passport ... Once the police heard what he had to say, they came to the conclusion that there was no reason for suspicion. On the contrary, they apologized for the needless inconvenience they had caused him. Only afterwards did he understand the



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Divine Providence vested in this episode that had caused him to "mistakenly" utter the name of his enemy who wished to harm him. This was precisely what had helped him. If he would have given the name of a friend, his end would have been a bitter one. We see from here that even regarding man's words, there is no mistake or mere coincidence. Rather, all transpires with Divine Providence, even when man errs.

Even When We Lie, Hashem Guards Us

Accordingly, we can now understand that all of this is alluded to in the *pasuk*, "He bent and lay down like a lion, and like a cub – who can stand him up?" In other words, the Jewish Nation, even when they are simply lying down and are inactive, are still like a lion or a cub who no one dares to make rise. This is because Hashem is constantly guarding the Jews. So explains the *Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh*, whose day of passing falls out this week, *zechuto yagen aleinu*. We also learn another lesson from the *parashah*: All of the plans of these two wicked men were contrived secretly inside the royal palace, and not publicly. Certainly, the Jewish Nation and Moshe Rabbeinu were unaware of what was transpiring. They were not defending themselves in any way, whether physically or spiritually. Yet Hashem was guarding over them and wrecking Balak and Bilam's plans. He even confused and reversed Bilam's speech in order that they should not harm the Jewish people. This fundamental idea is mentioned and repeatedly stressed throughout the *parashah*, i.e., that there is no possibility to do anything against the Will of Hashem. This was stated by Bilam, a prophet of the gentiles whose prophesy was on par with that of Moshe. Bilam said, "I cannot transgress the word of Hashem whether a small thing or a great thing, good or bad on my own. That which Hashem speaks, will I speak. Even if Balak will give me a house full of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem my G-d."

Words of Mussar

You see from the above that every Jew is guided by individual Divine Providence, and there is no creation in the world which can harm him or help him if Hashem does not will it. This is to the extent that even man's speech is not in his hands; rather, it is controlled by Hashem. When man truly believes this, he will not be deterred from fulfilling Torah and mitzvot. Rather, he will constantly try to discern if his actions and words are found favorable before Hashem or whether it opposes the Will of Hashem. By doing so, he will be successful in all of his ways. Amen.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka