

פְּרָשָׁת  
בַּלַּק  
Parashat Balak

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*Bamidbar / Numbers 22:2-25:9, Micah 5:6-6:8  
Mark 11:12-26*

### Living against God's Will

In this week's Torah portion, we read the following, *Bamidbar / Numbers 22:6*, וְעַתָּה לְכֵה-נָא אֶרְה־לִי אֶת-הָעַם הַזֶּה כִּי-עֲצוּמִים הוּא מִמֶּנִּי, אִוְלִי אוֹכֵל נֶכֶה-בּוֹ וְאֶגְרָשְׁנוּ מִן-הָאָרֶץ כִּי יַדְעֹתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר-תְּבַרֵךְ מִבְּרַךְ: 22:6 *Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed. (ESV)* Notice how Balak recognized that his power and protection had been removed, he says “*they are too mighty for me.*” Also, based upon Parashat Lech Lecha, Balak asking Bilam to bless and curse saying, “*he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed*” this parallels Balak ascribing God's role of blessing and cursing to Bilam. This parallels the blessing and cursing that we see going on when God called Abraham out to be a people and a nation according to *Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-3*.

#### *Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-3*

*12:1 Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; 12:2 And I*

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*will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.* (NASB, א ויאמר יהוה אל- אברם לה-לה מארצה וממולדתה ומבית אביה אל-הארץ אשר ארצה: ב ואעשה לגוי גדול ואברכה ואגדלה שמה והיה ברכה: ג ואברכה מברכה ומקלה אאר ונברכו בה: (כל משפחת האדמה:)

Notice how Parashat Lech Lecha states that God will bless those that bless Israel and curse those that curse Israel. In addition, it says that all of the families of the earth will be blessed in Israel (12:3). The idea here by Balak calling Bilam to curse Israel, he is essentially telling Bilam to curse himself since God will curse those who curse Israel. (see *Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Balak 17:5*, note how those who love God and Yeshua also love Israel!) Could this also parallel disobedience as cursing one's self?

ו ועתה לכה- In *Bamidbar / Numbers 22:6*, we read the following, נא ארה-לי את-העם הזה כי-עצום הוא ממני אולי אוכל נכה-בו ואגרשנו: 22:6 Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed. (ESV) The phrase אולי אוכל נכה-בו “perhaps I can inflict a defeat on it,” here the word נכה means “to strike down, to kill” Balak was looking for a way to inflict defeat by engaging in spiritual warfare. According to *Jeremiah 18:18* we read “18:18 Then they said, “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the sage, nor the divine word to the prophet! Come on and let us strike at him with our tongue, and let us give no heed to any of his words.” (NASB, יח ויאמרו לכו, ונחשבה על-ירמיהו מחשבות כי לא-תאבד תורה מפהו ועצה מחכם ודבר: (מנביא לכו ונכהו בלשון אל-נקשיבה אל-כל-דבריו: The phrase לכו בלשון ונכהו has the similar use of the word נכה stating that they want

to strike down Jeremiah using their tongue. This illustrates the power of our words to kill.

Rashi states the following:

***Rashi on Bamidbar / Numbers 22:6 Part 1***

*נכה בו (this may mean, “we may smite them”) I and my people may smite them. — Another explanation is that this is a Mishnaic Hebrew expression as in (Bava Metzua 105b) “he deducts (מנכה) for him something from the price”, so that it means: [perhaps I may be able] to reduce them a little in numbers (Midrash Tanchuma, Balak 4).*

The idea is Balak had in mind to diminish them in number little by little, and we eventually see how Moab does this, through sin (see Parashat Pinchas). The commentary *Or HaChaim on Bamidbar / Numbers 22:6 Part 3* states that Bilam knew the precise moment when to strike Israel, when God became angry due to Israel’s sin. (see the *Talmud Bavli Berachot 7a*) Bilam realized through this week’s Torah portion that both Israel and the God of Israel are not to be messed with. He is not to follow misguided and idolatrous philosophies developed or inspired by the gentile nation of Moab. He was instructed by God to do only what the Lord commands. When Bilam went against what the Lord had commanded, he almost died, saved by the hand of a donkey. This is a strong warning for us to live according to all of God’s word and not just according to the parts (portions of Scripture) we choose because they make us feel good. Moshe’s message in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 4* was asking the second generation of people are they willing to obey the Word of God. Are they willing to listen to what God is saying, or were they going to compromise and be accepted by the nations? Moshe calls to the people to choose life that is found in God’s ways, believing in the Messiah Yeshua and walking in the way Yeshua taught us to walk, according to the Torah. As God’s people, we choose life as opposed to death which is the way of the world. Moshe begged his people to choose life, to repent, and to turn from their sins. This same mandate applies to us today, to choose life, to believe in God’s Messiah, to repent, and to turn from sin. With God’s

help, by the power of His Spirit that dwells within us, we are able to overcome anything this world brings against us!

The Scriptures we are looking at for this week are from *Bamidbar / Numbers 22:2-22*.

***Bamidbar / Numbers 22:2-22***

*22:2 Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 22:3 So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel. 22:4 Moab said to the elders of Midian, 'Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field.' And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. 22:5 So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the River, in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, 'Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me. 22:6 'Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.' 22:7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam and repeated Balak's words to him. 22:8 He said to them, 'Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you as the Lord may speak to me.' And the leaders of Moab stayed with Balaam. 22:9 Then God came to Balaam and said, 'Who are these men with you?' 22:10 Balaam said to God, 'Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent word to me, 22:11 'Behold, there is a people who came out of Egypt and they cover the surface of the land; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I may be able to fight against them and drive them out.' 22:12 God said to Balaam, 'Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they*

are blessed.' 22:13 So Balaam arose in the morning and said to Balak's leaders, 'Go back to your land, for the Lord has refused to let me go with you.' 22:14 The leaders of Moab arose and went to Balak and said, 'Balaam refused to come with us.' 22:15 Then Balak again sent leaders, more numerous and more distinguished than the former. 22:16 They came to Balaam and said to him, 'Thus says Balak the son of Zippor, 'Let nothing, I beg you, hinder you from coming to me; 22:17 for I will indeed honor you richly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Please come then, curse this people for me.' 22:18 Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, 'Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the Lord my God. 22:19 'Now please, you also stay here tonight, and I will find out what else the Lord will speak to me.' 22:20 God came to Balaam at night and said to him, 'If the men have come to call you, rise up and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you shall you do.' 22:21 So Balaam arose in the morning, and saddled his donkey and went with the leaders of Moab. 22:22 But God was angry because he was going, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him. (NASB)

ב וַיִּרְא בָּלָק בְּנֵי-צִפּוֹר אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה יְשׁוּרָאֵל לְאֶמְרָי:  
 ג וַיָּגֵר מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי הָעָם מְאֹד כִּי רַב-הוּא וַיִּקְרָץ מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי  
 ד בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ד וַיֹּאמֶר מוֹאָב אֶל-זִקְנֵי מְדִינַת עַתָּה יִלְחָכוּ  
 ה הַקְּהָל אֶת-כָּל-סְבִיבֵתֵינוּ כְּלַחֵד הַשּׁוֹר אֶת יָרֵק הַשָּׂדֶה וּבָלָק  
 ו בְּנֵי-צִפּוֹר מָלְדוּ לְמוֹאָב בְּעֵת הַהוּא: ה וַיִּשְׁלַח מִלְאָכִים  
 ו אֶל-בְּלָעָם בְּנֵי-בְעוֹר פְּתוּרָה אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַנֶּהָר אֲרָץ בְּנֵי-עַמּוֹ  
 ז לְקַרְאֵ-לוֹ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה עִם יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם הִנֵּה כֹסֶה אֶת-עֵין  
 ח הָאָרֶץ וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב מִמְּלִי: ו וְעַתָּה לְכֶ-נָּא אֲרַה-לִּי אֶת-  
 ט הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי-עֲצוּם הוּא מִמֶּנִּי אוֹלֵי אוֹכַל נֶפֶשׁ-בוֹ וַאֲגַרְשׁוּנוּ

מן-הָאָרֶץ כִּי יִדְעֹתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר-תִּבְרָךְ מִבְּרַךְ וְאֲשֶׁר תֵּאָר  
יֹאָר: ז וַיֵּלְכוּ זַקְנֵי מֹאָב וְזַקְנֵי מִדְיָן וְקַסְמִים בְּיָדָם וַיָּבֹאוּ  
אֶל-בְּלָעַם וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵלָיו דְּבָרֵי בָלָק: ח וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם  
לִינּוּ פֹה הַלְיָלָה וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם דְּבַר כְּאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר יְהוָה  
אֵלַי וַיִּשְׁבוּ שָׂרֵי-מֹאָב עִם-בְּלָעַם: ט וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים אֶל-  
בְּלָעַם וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה עִמָּךְ: י וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלָעַם  
אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים בָּלָק בֶּן-צֶפֶר מֶלֶךְ מֹאָב שְׁלַח אֵלַי: יא הִנֵּה  
הָעַם הֵיכָא מִמְצָרִים וַיִּכַּס אֶת-עֵינֵי הָאָרֶץ עַתָּה לָכֵה קְבֹה-לִי  
אֲתוּ אוֹלֵי אוֹכַל לְהִלָּחֵם בּוֹ וַגִּרְשִׁיתִיו: יב וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים  
אֶל-בְּלָעַם לֹא תִלָּךְ עִמָּהֶם לֹא תֵאָר אֶת-הָעַם כִּי בְרוּךְ הוּא:  
[שְׁנִי] [חֲמִישִׁי כִשְׁהוּן מַחֻבְרִין] יג וַיָּקָם בְּלָעַם בַּבֶּקֶר  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-שָׂרֵי בָלָק לְכוּ אֶל-אַרְצְכֶם כִּי מֵאֵן יְהוָה לַתִּתִּי  
לְהִלָּךְ עִמָּכֶם: יד וַיִּקְוּמוּ שָׂרֵי מֹאָב וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-בָּלָק וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
רוּ מֵאֵן בְּלָעַם הִלָּךְ עִמָּנּוּ: טו וַיִּסָּף עוֹד בָּלָק שְׁלַח שָׂרִים  
רַבִּים וְנִכְבְּדִים מֵאֵלֶּה: טז וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-בְּלָעַם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ פֹה  
אָמַר בָּלָק בֶּן-צֶפֶר אֶל-נָא תִמְנַע מִהִלָּךְ אֵלַי: יז כִּי-כַבֵּד  
אֶכְבְּדֶךָ מֵאֵד וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאמַר אֵלַי אֲעֲשֶׂה וּלְכֵה-נָא קְבֹה  
לִי אֵת הָעַם הַזֶּה: יח וַיַּעַן בְּלָעַם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-עַבְדֵי בָלָק  
אִם-יִתֶּן-לִי בָלָק מְלֵא בֵיתוֹ כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב לֹא אוֹכַל לַעֲבֹר אֶת-  
פִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי לַעֲשׂוֹת קִטְנָה אוֹ גְדוֹלָה: יט וַעֲתָה שָׁבוּ  
נָא כְּזֶה גַם-אַתֶּם הַלְיָלָה וְאֲדַעַה מֵה-יִסָּף יְהוָה דְּבַר עִמִּי:  
כ וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים | אֶל-בְּלָעַם לִילָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם-לִקְרָא  
לְךָ בָּאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים קוּם לְךָ אֶתֶם וְאֶת-הַדְּבַר אֲשֶׁר-אָדַבְר  
אֵלֶיךָ אֲתוּ תַעֲשֶׂה: [שְׁלִישִׁי] כא וַיָּקָם בְּלָעַם בַּבֶּקֶר וַיִּחַר  
בְּשׂ אֶת-אֲתָנּוֹ וַיִּלָּךְ עִם-שָׂרֵי מֹאָב: כב וַיִּחַר-אַף אֱלֹהִים  
כִּי-הוֹלֵךְ הוּא וַיִּתְנַצֵּב מִלֵּאף יְהוָה בְּדַרְךְ לְשַׁטֵּן לוֹ וְהוּא  
רָכַב עַל-אֲתָנּוֹ וַשְׁנֵי נְעָרָיו עִמּוֹ:

ו וַעֲתָה לָכֵה-נָא אָרְה-לִי אֶת-הָעַם, In Bamidbar / Numbers we read, הַזֶּה כִּי-עֲצוּם הוּא מִמְּנֵי אוֹלֵי אוֹכַל נִפְה-בוֹ וְאֲגַרְשֵׁנוּ מִן-הָאָרֶץ כִּי יִדְעֹתִי אֵת  
*22:6 Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to*

*defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed. (ESV)* There is a moral / ethical message in Balak's words. When he said, אָרָה-לִי "curse for me" this returned and became "curse me." This became the personification of *Tehillim / Psalms 37:15 But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken. (NIV)* The interpretations contained within this phrase וְעַתָּה לְכֹה-נָא אָרָה-לִי אֶת-הָעַם הַזֶּה "Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me" from *Bamidbar / Numbers 22:6* as pertaining to diminishing a little bit (נִכְה) and cursing, this diminishing a little is what happens when we sin. In the Hebrew language there are three words that refer to sin. The word sin in our English bibles is the word chataah (חַטָּאָה), which means literally "to miss the mark," as in one shooting an arrow to a target and missing. The חַטָּאָה type of sin is one of being in error, making a mistake, and not quite being able to hit the target in relation to God's commandments. The second word is the word pesha (פְּשָׁע). This word means a willful transgression done to spite God. This suggests a type of defiance, rebellion, and the casting off of the authority of God's Word over our lives. In the English translations, this word is most often translated as "transgression" meaning, going beyond the limits of God's Torah. The third word is avon (עֲוֹן), which carries with it the concept of "iniquity" in the Scriptures. Avon is connected to the idea of perversion, or a willful twisting and distorting of the will of God towards a selfish end. Note how these are the things that Bilam was doing, and there is a great danger for each one of us to do the same. King David said the following according to *Tehillim / Psalms 32:1*.

***Tehillim / Psalms 32:1***

*32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered. (NASB, א לְדוֹד מִשְׁכִּיל אֲשֶׁר י  
(נְשׂוּי-פֶשַׁע כִּסּוּי חַטָּאָה)*

In *Tehillim / Psalms 32:1*, King David describes the happiness of the one whose pesha (פְּשָׁע) is "forgiven." This is the forgiveness of willful transgression (sin). Note how all sin is willful. The word trans-

lated “*forgiven*” (נָשׁוּי) comes from the root word (nasa) which means “*to bear, to carry; to deliver (a speech, address, prayer); to suffer, to tolerate.*” In other words, happy is the one whose rebellion against the Lord has been “*carried away*” and whose chataah (חַטָּאָה) has been covered. David continues saying, “*How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!*” (Tehillim / Psalm 32:2, ב אֲשֶׁרֵי אָדָם לֹא יִחַשֵׁב יְהוָה לּוֹ עֲוֹן, וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ רְמִיָּה:).

Looking at Parashat Balak from a different aspect, we read in *Bereshit / Genesis 6:5* *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* (NASB, ה וַיִּרְא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם, הַבְּאָרֶץ וְכָל-יֵצֶר מִחְשַׁבַת לְבוֹ רַק רַע כָּל-הַיּוֹם: The word Yetzer (יֵצֶר) is mentioned first here in the Scriptures and represents the inner impulse or tendency within the human heart to lean towards selfish gratification. This is known as the Yetzer hara, the evil inclination. The Tetzer hatov “*the good inclination*” represents the inner impulse to do good. Bialm was looking to selfish gratification, he wanted the money of Balak. In *Bereshit / Genesis 2:7* we are told that God formed (Yetzer) man and so Yetzer also refers to something formed or shaped. The potter purposes an ultimate use for what he is making, and so too we are formed and shaped and ultimately the Lord desires for each one of us to be used for a particular purpose, to bring glory to His name and to love others. The word Yetzer provides a picture of shaping or forming our character and disposition in regard to our relationship with God. This is where Bilam went wrong in his relationship with God. Balak in his hatred was actively seeking contention and strife with Israel. The Hebrew word medanim (מְדַנִּים) is derived from the root din (דן), meaning to judge, as in a court of law. Hatred looks and judges on the grounds of judgment for conviction and so judging others becomes an accusation executing judgement upon another. Love on the other hand covers a transgression and the ultimate covering of love comes from the Lord God Almighty himself who gave his son so that our transgressions and sins would not be charged against us. (*Romans 4:7-8*). This is something Balak did not understand, and He sought to curse Israel, but the Lord God turned that curse into a bless-



ing.

According to the rabbinic literature in the *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 106a*, the rabbis state when Bilam saw that he could not prevail against Israel by his words, he devised a different strategy to defeat them. We are told that he advised Balak to build tents near the Israelite camp and to seat old women in their doorways to sell linen garments to the Israelites. The old women lured the men inside the tents, where the young women of Moab awaited them, adorned and perfumed. The women of Moab then proceeded to tempt the men of Israel to join in the sexual worship of “*Baal Peor*” to participate in both idolatry and immorality. (Note, there is a reason both idolatry and immorality are coupled together in the Scriptures. Those who are sinning in immorality have made this sin an idol in their lives going back again and again bowing down to its control over their lives.) By this Bilam succeeded in cursing Israel because of her sins. Bilam had figured out a way to get his reward from Balak. Bilam advised the Moabites on how to entice the people of Israel with prostitutes and idolatry. We see in this week’s Torah portion how Bilam was not able to curse Israel directly, so he came up with a plan for Israel to bring a curse upon themselves due to their sins. Balak followed Bilam’s advice, and Israel fell into sin, worshipping Baal of Peor and committing fornication with the Midianite women. As a result, the Lord God Almighty sent a plague among them, and 24,000 men died (*Bamidbar / Numbers 25:1-9, Devarim / Deuteronomy 23:3-6*). Because of what we read in the Torah of Bilam, Balak, and Israel, the story became infamous, and he is referred to several times in the Apostolic Writings. The Apostle Peter compares false teachers to Bilam saying Bilam is the one “*who loved the wages of wickedness.*” (*2 Peter 2:15*) Jude agrees with this interpretation and associates Bilam with the selling of one’s soul for financial gain (*Jude 1:11*). Yeshua also spoke of Bilam warning the people of God in Pergamum of their sin saying “*There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality.*” (*Revelation 2:14*) The Evil One’s tactics haven’t changed much with the passage of time. What Bilam and Balak demonstrates for us in the Torah portion is this back-door approach that is rooted in deception in idolatry and sexual im-

morality so the people of God would sin and fall under the punishment of God. Notice how Israel's first encounter with Baal (Baal of Peor) how disastrous this was and 24,000 men died out of the community. Today we find similar dangers, with men who appear to be of God, but are false prophets like Bilam one of whom both the Scriptures and Jewish tradition are emphatic that he was an adversary of the Lord, and enemy of the children of God. This is why it is so important for us to study God's Word such that we are not deceived. The way of Bilam is unrighteousness, and as the children of God we are called to righteousness, to live according to the way of God detailed in His Torah and taught by His Messiah Yeshua. Bilam did not love others, he did not pray for those who he did not know, he sought God to curse those whom he knew nothing about. To be able to truly love others, those whom we DO know, those whom we DO NOT know, and even our enemies requires a miracle on the order of splitting the sea or raising the dead. The Lord God of Israel promised to put a new heart (לֵב חָדָשׁ) and a new spirit (רוּחַ חָדָשׁ) within us according to [Ezekiel 36:26](#). He did this by giving us His Spirit to dwell in our midst having faith in His Messiah Yeshua. The world however seeks to enslave and paralyze God's people through fear and sin. By the power of God's indwelling Spirit, He empowers us to overcome sin, the world, and deception by demonstrating love and good will toward others. We too are held to this calling as the people of God. The story of Bilam reminds us to be aware of the dangers of this world, and to seek the Lord God of Israel consistently each day by faith in the name of Yeshua the Messiah!