

Parashat Balak / פרשת בלק

Shabbat Tammuz 14, 5767, June 30, 2007
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This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Numbers 22:2-25:9

Haftarah: Micah 5:6-6:8

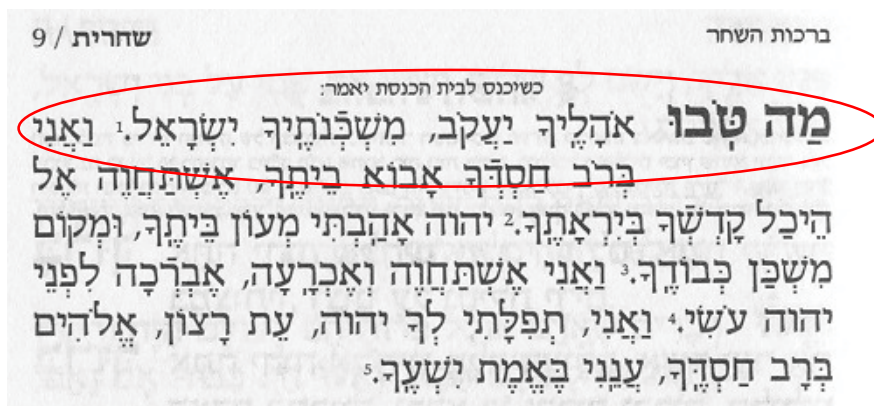
B'rit HaChadashah: 1 Corinthians 1:20-31

Numbers 22:17-22:35

22:17 I will reward you very well, and whatever you say to me I will do. So please come, and curse this people for me." 22:18 Bil'am answered the servants of Balak, "Even if Balak were to give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of ADONAI my God to do anything, great or small. 22:19 Now, please, you too, stay here tonight; so that I may find out what else ADONAI will say to me." 22:20 God came to Bil'am during the night and said to him, "If the men have come to summon you, get up and go with them; but do only what I tell you." 22:21 So Bil'am got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Mo'av. 22:22 But God's anger flared up because he went, and the angel of ADONAI stationed himself on the path to bar his way. He was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. 22:23 The donkey saw the angel of ADONAI standing on the road, drawn sword in hand; so the donkey turned off the road into the field; and Bil'am had to beat the donkey to get it back on the road. 22:24 Then the angel of ADONAI stood on the road where it became narrow as it passed among the vineyards and had stone walls on both sides. 22:25 The donkey saw the angel of ADONAI and pushed up against the wall, crushing Bil'am's foot against the wall. So he beat it again. 22:26 The angel of ADONAI moved ahead and stood in a place so tight that there was no room to turn either right or left. 22:27 Again the donkey saw the angel of ADONAI and lay down under Bil'am, which made him so angry that he hit the donkey with his stick. 22:28 But ADONAI enabled the donkey to speak, and it said to Bil'am, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" 22:29 Bil'am said to the donkey, "It's because you've been making a fool of me I wish I had a sword in my hand; I would kill you on the spot" 22:30 The donkey said to Bil'am, "I'm your donkey, right? You've ridden me all your life, right? Have I ever treated you like this before?" "No," he admitted. 22:31 Then ADONAI opened Bil'am's eyes, so that he could see the angel of ADONAI standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, and he bowed his head and fell on his face. 22:32 The angel of ADONAI said to him, "Why did you hit your donkey three times like that? I have come out here to bar your way, because you are rushing to oppose me. 22:33 The donkey saw me and turned aside these three times; and indeed, if she hadn't turned away from me, I would have killed you by now and saved it alive" 22:34 Bil'am said to the angel of ADONAI, "I have sinned. I didn't know that you were standing on the road to block me. Now, therefore, if what I am doing displeases you, I will go back." 22:35 But the angel of ADONAI said to Bil'am, "No, go on with the men;

but you are to say only what I tell you to say." So Bil'am went along with the princes of Balak.

While reading the scriptures, occasionally there are mysterious characters which we are told nothing about where suddenly they enter into the story line. Bil'am is obviously a powerful and spiritually endowed man as evidenced by king Balak sending his messengers to call him and have him curse Israel. We know nothing about Bil'am's training or background; the scriptures tell us only what we need to know. Though Bil'am had planned upon cursing Israel, he turned around and blessed Israel instead. The blessing of Israel was so rich in texture and meaning, so elevating and honoring we begin our daily T'fillot with a quote from his blessing called the "Mah Tovv." "Mah Tovv Ohalekha Ya'akov, Mish'k'notekha Yisrael," which means "How good are your tents, Ya'akov, your dwelling places, Israel."



In Parashat Balak we see how man's ways lead to death even those who are blessed spiritually and powerfully. God delivers those he loves from their sinful ways and this is demonstrated even in Bil'am's case. Bil'am committed a sin by getting up and going with the princes of Balak to curse Israel against God's command. Because of Bil'am's disobedience, God sent his angel to stand in the way of Bil'am so he would not go up to curse Israel. Three times Bil'am's donkey saved Bil'am's life and three times Bil'am attempted to continue forward in sin. Finally God opened Bil'am's eyes and he saw the error of his ways to follow after the sin of greed and arrogance. (I presume the motivating force behind Bil'am's going with the princes of Balak was because of greed.)

In this instance I believe Bil'am really thought he knew what he was doing. However, God worked to turn Bil'am from the blindness of sin. I also believe God works in our lives in the very same way. We know what we should do, we know what God's word tells us to do and yet there are times when we do not obey the word of the Lord.

Is there stubbornness in your life towards God's will?

Bil'am did not go with a humble heart, the first thing God did was humble him before he could use him to bless his people Israel. Bil'am had to come to the point of death, even to the point where an animal (ass/donkey) virtually shows him how disobedient he was being to the Lord's will. Again and again we see how God works in the lives of men

and women in scripture but only when each man or woman is willing to offer themselves to be used by the Lord first.

The one role of Torah is to point us to God's will for our lives, and direct us to the Messiah Yeshua. The Torah has various messianic prophetic images/pictures of what God has planned in the messiah. We can see the culmination of this image of humility of heart and spirit which God uses for his glory in the Messiah Yeshua. The testimony of the apostle Paul to the Philippians demonstrates this.

Philippians 2:7-9

2:7 On the contrary, he emptied himself, in that he took the form of a slave by becoming like human beings are. And when he appeared as a human being, 2:8 he humbled himself still more by becoming obedient even to death - death on a stake as a criminal! 2:9 Therefore God raised him to the highest place and gave him the name above every name; (CJB)

What lessons can we take from this Parashat?

1. Yeshua Hamoshiach established by example how we should live our lives with a humble heart and spirit.
2. If we do not humbling ourselves the Lord will humble us so that he can use us more efficiently.
3. If we are living a disobedient life, the Lord will bring us to a low point in our lives for the purpose of directing us in the way that we should go.

What brings the praying soul nearer to God is humility of heart. Our Lord Yeshua gave us a story of two men going up to pray. One utterly devoid of humility and the other utterly submerged in the spirit of self-depreciation and lowliness of mind. The one who went before the Lord in prayer with a humble heart was justified because he did not exalt himself. (***Luke 18:11-14***). The Lord puts a great price on a humble heart; therefore determine today to not be puffed-up with self-conceit. Rather seek the Lord and the virtues which are taught in his Son Yeshua Hamoshiach.

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah for ever and ever