

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Balak:*** Numbers 22:39 – 25:9
 Haftarah: Micah 6:1-8
 B'rit Chadasha: I Corinthians 1:28-31

He has blessed, and nothing I say can reverse it.

[Numbers 23:20]

Today's *Balak* Meditation is Proverbs 16:6-8;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 12, *Sh'ma Koleinu* [Hear our Cry!]

Vayelech Bila'am im-Balak – And Bila'am went out with Balak . . . Numbers 22:39a.

It is the *Season of The Great Return* – and we are glad! As the Psalmist wrote: *When the Holy One brought back the captivity of Tziyon, we were like those who dream. Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. And they said among the nations, "The Holy One. has done great things for them."* Psalm 126:1-2. But alas, while the nations, the humanist elites, the cross-cultural institutions upon which the economies and political systems of the nation and world depend, the heads of the hypocritical 'social justice' movements of the day, the street gangs, the international cartels, and the angry anarchist revolutionaries, and the fake-news and fake-science agitators/alarmists all have no choice but to acknowledge the shocking event that is occurring right before their eyes, none of those groups are the least bit happy about it. All the *powers that be* in the world are outraged. All the wanna-be world leaders are racing to 'get out in front' of this. All the institutions have activated their propaganda machines to divert attention by spinning deceptively false narratives. Hate-mongers, fear-mongers, race-baiters, virtue-signallers, conspiracy-theorists, and other bondservants of the occult are having a feeding frenzy. The nations are raging. The peoples are indulging vain imaginations. The earth's warlords and kings are taking counsel with one another daily as to how to stop the inevitable reunion of Yisrael's progeny with the Land. They have been brainwashed by generations of toxic serpent-speak. They have been poisoned by the tainted fruit of the tree of the knowledge of 'good' and 'evil'. They have been duped by their governments' propaganda machines. They have been infected with the vile of anti-Semitic hate. When they look at B'nei Yisrael, therefore, they don't see ambassadors from the Courts of Heaven with good news from on High; they see 'apes' and 'dogs' and 'dirty Jews'. They hate them with a burning passion. Indeed, they hate Israel – and, of course, its God – far, far more

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than they love their own nation, their own race, their own children, or even their own lives. They all imagine themselves being the one(s) to devise the ‘final solution’ that takes care of the ‘chosen-people problem’ forever.

And so, Balak, the ambitious warlord/king of Moav, has jumped on the ‘hate Israel’ bandwagon. He has entered into an unholy alliance with one of his people’s ancient nemeses, *B’nei Midyan*. Together, Balak and the elders of Midyan have come up with a plan. They have agreed to pool their vast amounts of silver and use them to hire Bila’am, a sorcerer from Petor by the River, to come to the plain of Moav, overlooking the Jordan River, and ‘curse’ B’nei Yisrael. They made quite a pitch to Bila’am: ***“Come now, curse them for me; perhaps I will be able to overpower them and drive them out! Let nothing hinder you from coming to me now, for I will certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me.*** Numbers 22:11, 16-17. It was, alas, an offer that Bila’am found impossible to refuse.

***I Will Bless Those Who Bless You,
And I Will Curse Him Who Curses You***

In the preceding aliyah of parsha Balak, however, Bila’am discovered that ‘*cursing B’nei Yisrael*’ is not exactly as easy as it sounds. The road from Petor by the River to the plain of Moav became a crucible for him. The Holy One has appeared to Bila’am and forbidden him to pronounce any curse against B’nei Yisrael. Bila’am has been told in no uncertain terms: ***Lo ta'or et ha-am ki varuch hu*** – i.e. *Do not curse this people, because it is blessed*. As we enter today’s aliyah, therefore, Bila’am is aware that the Holy One has him on a short leash. He now knows that an Angel of the Holy One accompanies him with sword drawn and ready to strike him through if he speaks anything other than what the Holy One gives him to say. It is with this understanding that, in today’s aliyah, Bila’am will pronounce his oracles.

Lights! Camera! Action!

The aliyah on which we focus today begins by telling us that *Bila’am went out with Balak*. Numbers 22:39[a]. Can two walk together unless they are agreed? We will soon find out! Bila’am and Balak are about to launch off on a precarious journey to *the Dark Side* of human experience. They are about to step off into a realm where *dark energy pulses*, where *dark sayings predominate*, and where even the *brightest lamps of Divine Light start to flicker vulnerably* in the face of stormy gales of fear, hate, outrage, and disgust. Bila’am and Balak are going to enter this dark realm through the *standard occult portal* – a carnival-like midway that I call the ‘*boulevard of a thousand dreams and illusions*’. This midway features many enticing booths. At the beginning of the midway there is the booth of *self-indulgence*. Next is the booth of *sensory stimulation*. Then comes the booth of

subliminally-suggested sentimentality. Somewhere along the way is the booth of *superstition*. Always in the vicinity of the booth of superstition is the ‘new age’ booth of *artificial light and false hope*. Not too far away one always finds the booths of *political, ideological, and/or philosophical spin* and of *cynical, sarcastic, accusatory rhetoric*. Close by are usually booths of *religious images and labels, and of ceremonies laced with music, chanting, smoke, mirrors, and hype*. Further down the midway are more elaborate booths of *intellectual disorientation and misdirection; of cleverly induced illusion and delusion; of twisted logic; of half-truth; of misrepresentation; of bait-and-switch; and of outright lie*. Each booth along this midway has its hawkers. And each game of chance along the way comes at a cost, has an addictive hook, and is designed in such a way that the ‘house’ always wins. The secret to all of the booths on the dark side midway is *emotional manipulation*. Its hawkers use what I call the *demagogues tool chest*. That tool chest consists of:

1. *fear of missing out on something;*
2. *offense;*
3. *outrage;*
4. *jealousy of the favor/blessing the Holy One has bestowed upon others;*
5. *class envy;*
6. *racial/national/cultural pride - and its inseparable flip-side, namely dehumanizing attitudes of race/nation/culture-based bias;*
7. *hate;*
8. *disgust;*
9. *guilt/shame;*
10. *sentimentality;*
11. *pity; and*
12. *sensuality.*

These tools of demagoguery open the *Pandora’s Box* of the human heart, loosing the dark energy pulses – i.e. pulses of *narcissism and its alter egos of self-expression, self-actualization, self-justification, and self-improvement; of sexual lust; of intellectual curiosity; of voyeurism; of passion for romance; of craving to be in control of and/or manipulate to one’s own advantage all situations and relationships; of wanderlust and thrill-seeking, of greed and acquisitiveness, of gluttony, of rage, and of the pursuit of what fallen men think of as ‘happiness’ instead of that which the Creator designed for joy*. Once this Pandora’s Box is open, and the atmosphere is pulsing with these forms of dark energy, perversions quickly become normalized, that which is healthy and good is re-imagined as evil and that which is evil is re-imagined as good, conversation degenerates into complaining, accusing, blaming, ranting, and pontificating, and people become polarized around ideas, ideals, ideologies, abstract concepts, false narratives, vain

imaginings, and incendiary slogans.

Welcome to the New World Order

What has happened with Bila'am, Moav, and Midyan – and what the Holy One wants us to know will happen again in the 'latter days' – is that a one-world-order league has been formed. A plot to rebel against the Holy One and to destroy the descendants of His chosen Model Nation has been hatched. The prototypical *Dream Team of the Dark Side* has come together. Welcome to the killing fields of humanism and pseudo-intellectualism! Welcome to the garden of greed! Welcome to the porch of paranoia! Welcome to the lair of lust! Welcome to the parlor of pride and prejudice! Welcome to the house that hate built!

The Dark Side/New World Order Movement is fueled by some very dark energy, but that energy is very good at re-imagining itself as light. Its adherents make sure to couch every dark manipulation in the language of 'enlightenment'. They excel at proposing pseudo-intellectual theories and calling them high-sounding names like 'science', 'social justice', 'superior knowledge', and 'truth'. They love to shame anyone they consider a threat or obstacle with dehumanizing labels. They love to slime those they hate with outrageous accusations and false comparisons. They relish offense. They promote outrage. They manipulate people through virtue-signalling, through fear, through jealousy, through envy, through lust, through shame, through guilt, and through greed. They revel in sexuality, excuse rioting, looting, violence, and murder – claiming those are natural outgrowths of moral outrage. These things infected the materialistic, territorial, and argumentative Edomi, the sneaky, deceptive Aradians, the in-your-face, armed-to-the-teeth attack dogs of the Emori – and now they have infected the paranoid, propaganda-spouting Moavi and the opportunistic, manipulative, and devoid of conscience human traffickers of Midyan.

Walking On The Dark Side of Human Experience – Where Dark Energy Pulses and Dark Sayings Predominate

As we begin our studies we find that the prototypical *Mashiach Tachat* character² and his prototypical false prophet have found each other. They are on the scene, on the job, on the clock, and ready to make their move. Here is how the occult adventure begins: ***Balak took Bila'am and brought him up to the high places of Ba'al . . . Numbers 22:41a.***

Balak hoped that in the dark side spiritual environment of the high places of Ba'al, Bila'am would see some weakness or defect in Israel that he could judge and curse.

² *Mashiach Tachat* is the Hebrew phrase that has been converted into English by adherents of Christianity as 'Anti-Christ'. *Mashiach Tachat* is humanity's sinister substitute for the Messiah – a man who exhibits somewhat comparative power as, but all the polar opposite ways and characteristics, of the real Messiah.

Balak spared no expense to bolster the ‘dark energy’ atmosphere. Torah tells us:

*Balak offered oxen and sheep, and he sent some to Bila’am
and to the princes who were with him.*

*Then Bila’am said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here,
and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams.*

Note that this pattern mimics – but at its essence is the *anti-thesis*, of – the *Mish’kan* model designed by Creator for His People. First, Balak selected a place to serve as the ‘*anti-mish’kan*’. Then he dedicated this *anti-mish’kan* site to:

- [1] false gods/occult spirits – i.e. ‘*anti-Holy One*’ influences;
- [2] over-stimulation of the flesh – i.e. the ‘*anti-Ruach*’ – through:
 - [a] stimulating the physical senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch with hype– i.e. ‘*anti-worship*’, and
 - [b] stimulating the ‘fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge’-fed pseudo-intellect of those gathered with seemingly important and high-sounding information they falsely label as ‘knowledge’ – i.e. ‘*anti-truth*’;
- [3] one or more powerful visual occult symbols – i.e. ‘*anti-Serafim*’,
- [4] a manipulative agenda – i.e. ‘*anti-self-denial*’,
- [5] an elite, robed priest/prophet cult – their ‘*anti-Mashiach unit*’;
- [6] an elevated platform and/or altar – their ‘*anti-mizbeach*’; and
- [7] an ‘order of service’ that includes:
 - [a] emotionally-charged chanting/singing– i.e. ‘*anti-psalmistry*’;
 - [b] sacrament – i.e. ‘*anti-teshuvah*’
 - [c] animal sacrifice – i.e. an ‘*anti-korbanot humility approach*’;
 - [d] ritual – i.e. an act of ‘*anti-love/service of fellow man*’; and
 - [e] manipulative demagoguery – i.e. ‘*anti-Torah*’ speech.

Understand this dark-side pattern. Encountering it is a telltale sign that you have crossed a *tamei/chol* boundary and stepped off into an occult abyss.

Meanwhile, back in the ‘Bila’am narrative’ of Torah, we are told:

*Balak did just as Bila’am had told him to, and Balak and Bila’am
offered a bull and a ram on each altar.*

*Then Bila’am said to Balak, “Stand by your burnt offering, I will go;
and perhaps the Holy One will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you.”*

[Numbers 22:41 – 23:3]

A lot of blood is going to be shed in the hill country of Moav today. A *paranoid pagan with a messiah complex* and a *charismatic prima donna prophet with serious addictions to attention and currency* – have come looking for trouble. And they are about to find it.

Wait . . .What Is Really Going On Here?

There is only one way this can turn out, right? Clueless, unsuspecting Israel is about to be driven into the sea, right? The fire in the eyes of the sons and daughters of Avraham is about to be put out forever by the harbingers of the New World Order right? No! The nations of the world always leave one important factor out of their calculations: the ***AVRAHAMIC COVENANT FACTOR***. The peoples of the earth do not understand, and therefore overlook, this over-arching, scheme-trumping reality.

Do you understand the ***AVRAHAMIC COVENANT FACTOR***? Does the knowledge, appreciation, and experience of it enter into your decision-making? Does the majesty and wonder of it influence your worldview, inspire your approach to people and situations, and empower your responses to all life's challenges? There is, you see, always much, much more going on in the world around us than self-obsessed human eyes can perceive. We are discovering through these studies just how marvelous – and assured - the Holy One's unseen activities on our behalf are. Just outside our line of vision – and totally unknown to either our leadership or our citizens - momentous events affecting the future of Israel and the nations are always rapidly unfolding. The *goyim* (gentile nations) are always imagining a vain thing. They are always in a rage. If we knew what they were saying behind closed doors, and in their counsel rooms, we would always be up in arms. But not to worry - the Holy One is always fully aware of it all. He just laughs at them. And then He steps in quietly and faithfully to perform 'hidden miracles' on behalf of His Beloved. We can thank Him later. And believe me, *we will*.

Goin' Up to the High Places

Before this little prophetic episode is over, Balak is going to take Bila'am to three separate "high places" in Moav from which he can spy upon *and* pronounce the Word of the Holy One concerning the Redeemed Community. The first high-place/overlook to which Bila'am traveled was *Kiryat Hutzot* - an open-air center of pagan worship. The elevation of this place provided an excellent view of *B'nei Yisrael's* camp. In my mind's eye I can see Balak and Bila'am climbing the wall of the fortress for the big event. I can see the citizenry of the town and all Balak's princes and courtiers - and of course the priests of Ba'al, Molech, Asherah, and the other gods of Moav - waiting below in the street with baited breath, anxious to hear what the famous prophet of the new world order had to say concerning the hordes below. I can see Bila'am looking around behind him and gulping, as he – and only he – sees the Angel of the Holy One with his sword drawn and pointed right at the back of his neck, reminding him he is not to depart in even the slightest particular from the Word given Him by the Holy One. Trembling, Bila'am went to the pulpit prepared for him, and for his first oracle uttered words that no one – except one

smiling, sword-wielding Angel of the Holy One – expected to hear:

Mah ekov lo kaboh El

How shall I curse whom God [El] has not cursed?

umah ez'om lo za'am Adonai

How shall I defy whom the Holy One has not defied?

Ki-merosh tzurim er'einu umigeiva'ot ashureinu

From the hills I see him: for from the top of the rocks I see him,

Hen am levadad yish'kon uvagoyim lo yitchashav

Behold - a people that will dwell apart and not be reckoned among the nations.

Mi manah afar Ya'akov umispar et-rova Yisra'el

Who can count the dust of Ya'akov, or number the fourth part of Yisra'el?

tamot nafshi mot yesharim

Let me die the death of the righteous,

utehi achariti kamohu

And let my last end be like his!

[Numbers 23:8-10]

Let's look closely at this first oracle. Obviously, Bila'am has not done what Balak hired him to do; he has not *curse*d B'nei Yisrael. He has instead declared to Balak and every other person present that cursing the Covenant Nation of the Creator of the Universe is ***impossible***. He has, instead, blessed B'nei Yisrael. After publicly announcing that cursing the Holy One's model nation is impossible, Bila'am declared over them: "***Behold - a people that will dwell apart and will not be reckoned among the nations.***"

Bila'am *saw something*. He saw the grace/favor of the Creator of the Universe on the people encamped below. As Bila'am looked upon the encampment of Israel he was allowed to behold not a disorganized multitude of roving bands of refugees, as everyone else saw them, but *a perfectly arranged camp bearing the marks of purity, unity, discipline and order*. Even beyond this however he saw something about *the distinctive calling of Israel and its uniqueness among all the nations of the earth*. He saw prophetically that the people down on the plain - and their descendants forever - would [a] '***dwell apart***' and would [b] '***not be reckoned among the nations***'. Listen up - these are YOUR important 'identity' declarations!

Identity Factor #1: We Are A People Who 'Dwells Apart'

What does Bila'am's prophetic declaration that '*It* [i.e. the nation descended from Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov] ***is a people that will dwell apart*** mean? What does the prophetic declaration that Israel will "***not be reckoned among the nations***"³

³ Keep in mind that the Holy One has prophetically announced over Israel: "***You are to be holy, for I am holy -- I have separated you from the nations of the world to be mine.***" Leviticus 20:26. Upon redeeming

entail? At the very least these declarations mean that the people of Israel have been ‘*carved out*’ of the race of man for a special purpose. When the Holy One called Avram, later known as Avraham, out of his father’s household, the race of people he founded was a *totally new and different people*. Of course Israel and the other nations of earth *share a common ancestry* [Adam through Noah]. But ever since Avram left the house of his father Terach in response to the call of the Divine Bridegroom, the separation level has been expanding. And it will continue to do so. Avraham’s progeny has been set apart to the Holy One; forever commissioned and empowered to be, and live their lives, unlike, and separate and distinct from, all other nations and cultures. A major part of the plan of the Holy One for the redemption of mankind, bloodline by bloodline, is making sure His Covenant nation does not think, look, act, eat, marry, make war, raise children, run a nation, live, or die like the people of any other culture on earth. The people of the Covenant are to be as *oil* and the nations of the earth are to be as water. The two are not to – will never effectively - mix⁴. Even though in many generations Israel has dwelt outside the territorial boundaries of the Divinely ordained homeland to which the Holy One called Avram, Israel is not supposed to, has never, and is never going to be able to, totally assimilate. If segregation is not their choice it will sooner or later become the choice of the people with whom they seek to live. Wherever men and women of Israel live, whatever languages they may speak to transact the daily business of life, they will, whether they like it or not, remain

Israel out of Egypt He declared to Israel, "***Do not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you are not walk in their customs.***" **Leviticus 18:3**. The Holy One also said to Israel: "***You are not to worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds.***" **Exodus 23:24**. Shortly before Israel took possession of the land of promise the Holy One again warned against getting too involved with Gentile nations, saying: "***You are to make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. Furthermore, you are not to intermarry with them; you not to give your daughters to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Holy One will be kindled against you, and He will quickly destroy you For you are a holy people to the Holy One your God; the Holy One your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.***" **Deuteronomy 7:2-4, 6**.

⁴ In 1899 in an essay entitled "*Concerning the Jews*", Samuel Clemens, a/k/a Mark Twain wrote: “. . . Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. . . . Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it. The Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains.”

strangers, foreigners – a displaced people awaiting the call to *go home*.

Balak must have been mortified! For him this poses a serious dilemma. If he disavows Bila'am just because the message is not what he "paid for", he will be exposed as the charlatan he is and will lose all credibility. *This is just a preliminary*, he reasons. All Bila'am has seen so far is the fortified outskirts of B'nei Yisrael's camp, where it is strongest. We will go *higher in the hills of Moav*, where he can get a better perspective. From there he will surely be able to spot Israel's weak and vulnerable areas. So, off the odd couple goes to the next high place/vantage point.

Bila'am's 2nd Oracle – at Tzofim, the 'Field of Dreams'

The second place chosen by Balak as a potential vantage point from which Bila'am could curse Israel was the field of ***Tzofim***, at the top of Mount Pisgah. From this scenic overlook⁵, Balak reasoned, surely Bila'am would see it "the right way".

The second kind of 'dark energy/occult' place to which human beings always drawn is a place of stark, eye-catching, even hypnotizing 'nature'. What is this thing the world calls 'nature'? It is the pagan world's *anti-Creation* false narrative. Those who call Creation's beauty 'nature' imply that *everything in the kosmos developed/evolved 'naturally'*! Calling the Created order by the occult label 'nature' is their way of attributing the source of its beauty and magnificence at best to *chance* and at worst to the work of *some false goddess*. Such a false goddess is often today identified as '*Mother Nature*'. They want you to believe you can get insight, inner peace, illumination, and power from 'nature'. But that is the ultimate insult to the Holy One – choosing to ignore Him, and attribute His Gift of Creation to someone or something else. 'Nature' is nothing more than a profane muse – a capricious nymph that can, at a superficial level, activate a phase of human creativity that will always lead to self-expression, self-promotion, and flesh-adulation. *Creation*, on the other hand, is a work of Divine Artistry that inspires awe toward, and motivates people to humbly serve, its Creator. How can you tell if 'nature' is being used as a god – by yourself or by someone else? If, when a person encounters beauty and majesty in Creation, they are in awe of, and revere, and sing the praises of, *the place or the experience*, what is happening is idolatry. If, on the other hand, the person who encounters the same beauty and majesty falls deeply into awe of, and reveres, and sings the praises of, the CREATOR, it is not 'nature' – it is holy.

Back to 'nature', however, go Balak, Bila'am and the enthusiastic occult caravan

⁵ ***Tzofim*** means "watchmen" or "watchers". ***Pisgah*** is from a root word meaning "to consider", or "to contemplate". In modern English, we might call this spot "*Lookout Point*".

of Moavi and Midyani activists. As the excitement builds among the crowd and the time for Bila'am to "do his thing" approaches, however, Bila'am again feels *the pressure of supernatural steel* against the back of his neck. And he again senses the watchful eyes of the Angel of the Holy One on his every move. Since he fears this Angel - and the Holy One - much more than he wants to please Balak, when it is time for him to speak at Tzofim he blurts out:

Vayisa meshalo vayomar kum Balak ushama

Rise up, Balak, and hear;

Ha-azinah aday beno Tzipor

Listen to me, you son of Tzippor:

Lo ish el vichazev uven-adam veyitneicham hahu

[God is] not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent:

amar v'lo ya'aseh v'diber v'lo yekimenah

Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not make it good?

Hineh varech lakachti uverech v'lo ashivenah

Behold, it is my part to bless: He has blessed, and I can't reverse it.

Bila'am goes on to tell Balak – and the world – exactly how the Holy One sees and what glorious destiny He has ordained for the Covenant people He redeemed from Egypt:

Lo-hibit aven b'Ya'akov

He has seen in Ya'akov;

v'lo-ra'ah amal b'Yisra'el

Neither has he seen perverseness in Yisra'el.

Adonai Elohav imo utru'at melech bo

The Holy One his God is with him; the shout of a king is among them.

El motzi'am miMitzrayim

God brings them forth out of Mitzrayim;

keto'afot re'em lo

He has as it were the strength of the wild-ox.

Ki lo-nachash b'Ya'akov

Surely there is no enchantment with Ya'akov;

v'lo kesem b'Yisra'el

Neither is there any divination with Yisra'el:

ka'et ye'amer l'Ya'akov ul'Yisra'el

Now shall it be said of Ya'akov and of Yisra'el,

mah-pa'al el Hen-am kelavi yakum

What has God done! Behold, a people rises up as a lioness,

v'cha'ari yitnasa lo yishkav ad-yochal teref

As a lion does he lift himself up: He will not lie down until he eats of the prey,

v'dam-chalalim yishteh

And drink the blood of the slain.

[Numbers 23:18-24]

Bila'am's second oracle thus turned out to be even more favorable toward the Covenant People than his first. But Balak, like Pharaoh, has hardened his heart. He would not relent. The Holy One therefore has yet one more embarrassment in store for him. Balak falls right into the Holy One's plans when he says to Bila'am, ***“Come, I pray you; I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there.”***

Bila'ams 3rd Oracle - at Pe'or, the Gateway to Ruin

After the oracle/prophecy at Zofim, Balak took Bila'am to a third vantage point - the high place called *Pe'or*. Numbers 23:27-28. *Pe'or* means a *cleft*, or *wide opening*. Think of Peor, therefore, as a *mountain pass*. The only thing Torah tells us about this particular mountain pass, at this time at least, is that it *'looks out toward Yeshimon'*. Numbers 23:28. *Yeshimon* is a Hebrew word meaning *'wasteland'* or *'desert'* or *'place of ruins'*. Bila'am lifted his eyes, and Torah tells us: ***Vatehi alav ruach Elohim*** – *i.e And the spirit of Elohim [God] was upon him.* Numbers 24:2. And Bila'am declared:

Mah-tovu ohaleicha Ya'akov⁶

How lovely are your tents, O Ya'akov,

mishkenoteicha Yisra'el

Your dwelling places, Yisra'el!

V'yarom me'agag malko vetinase malchuto

His king shall be higher than Agag, His kingdom shall be exalted.

El motzi'o miMitzrayim

God [El] brings him forth out of Mitzrayim;

keto'afot re'em lo

He has as it were the strength of the wild-ox:

yochal goyim tzarav

He shall eat up the nations his adversaries,

v'atzmoteyhem yegarem

and shall break their bones in pieces,

⁶ This commendation of the tents of Ya'akov has been interpreted by Rashi to mean that Bila'am saw the tents of Israel's camp arranged in such a way that none of the openings faced each other, for the sake of *tznuut* (modesty).

vechitzav yimchatz.

And shall smite [them] through with his arrows.

Kara shachav ka'ari uchlavi mi yekimeinu

He couched, he lay down as a lion, As a lioness; who shall rouse him up?

mevaracheycha varuch v'orareycha arur.

Blessed be everyone who blesses you, and cursed be everyone who curses you.

[Numbers 24:5-9]

As Bila'am says these things, keep in mind that he is looking at the very same people Moshe recently screamed at, and called "**you rebels**". I guess it's all in one's perspective.

Mah Tov [How Lovely . . .]

Bila'am's oracle at Pe'or is stunning in its poetic beauty. The opening lines '***mah tovu***' [How lovely . . .] have become so beloved that the phrase is actually used to open every synagogue prayer service. What, however, did Bila'am find so *to*v [beautiful, productive, pleasing, fruitful] about the '*tents of Ya'akov*'? What is so praiseworthy about *an arrangement of tents*? It was not goatskins strung over support staves and staked to the desert floor; what caught Bila'am's eye was something much deeper – and far more *to*v – than that. Bila'am saw the Holy One's redeemed community *as it was meant to be* and *as it is destined to become*. He saw the Holy One's community thriving not in places of corporate worship, but in individual but closely-associated homes. He saw each family living the lifestyle of Avraham, about whom the Holy One said: "***I have chosen him, so that he will teach his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Holy One by doing what is right and just . . .***" Genesis 18:19-20. He saw fathers and mothers doing in their tents/dwellings exactly what Moshe would direct in Deuteronomy 6:7-9: "***Teach*** [the *mitzvot* of Torah] ***faithfully to your children. Speak of them as you sit in your homes and as you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up Inscribe them on the doorposts of your houses, and on your gates.***"

From tent to tent to tent, and from dwelling to dwelling to dwelling, the same beautiful prophetic image arose in Bila'am's eyes. This was not a people dependent upon shrines and altars and religious services for their holiness; it was a collection of holy, inspired *families/households*.

As A Bridegroom Looks Upon His Bride

Because the *Ruach* was upon him, Bila'am saw Israel *as she looks to the Holy One*. The Holy One has betrothed Israel to Himself as a bridegroom betrothes himself to a bride. To Him, she is/we are *altogether lovely*. She has/we have captured His heart with one glance of her/our eyes. Forever she is/we are deemed beautiful. Never will there be in His heart any shadow of turning.

In the natural, what Bila'am should have seen from this vantagepoint was a *wasteland* – miles and miles of *desert sands*, *dry bones*, and *barren ruins*. But the presence of Israel's 'beautiful tents' totally transformed the environment. Because the Spirit of *Elohim* was upon Bila'am, he prophetically saw Israel turning wastelands, desert sands, and places of ruin [i.e. *Yeshimon*], into *valleys spread forth . . . with gardens by the river-side . . . full of aloes which the Holy One has planted and shaded by cedar trees beside the waters*.

Picture a desert – hot, dusty, desolate, barren. Then picture the same desert suddenly bursting into bloom, turning into a lush, well-watered, tropical paradise – all at the arrival of a group of people blessed by the Holy One. That mural is exactly what Bila'am saw at Pe'or to inspire his third oracle. Have *you* seen it, Beloved? Have *you* seen the desert sands burst into bloom at the presence of the families of the Holy One's people? Look around you right now, in whatever city or region or country in which you live. The world around you is your desert, your wasteland. I have a question for you. In the midst of that wasteland, that land of ruins, *how lovely are your tents* in the Holy One's eyes? Do you understand now what '*all creation waits, and groans, in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed*'⁷ means? Let the Holy One's creative, prophetic power work in you – in your home – in your family life and business life and recreational life.

The Last Word

At this point, Balak has "had it" with Bila'am. He orders Bila'am out of his kingdom. But Bila'am does not "go quietly into that good night". Bila'am turns to Balak and says in his own defence:

*"Didn't I also tell your messengers who you sent to me, saying,
If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold,
I can't go beyond the word of the Holy One, to do either good or bad
of my own mind; what the Holy One speaks, that will I speak?"*

*Now, behold, I go to my people: come,
[and] I will advise you what this people shall do to your people in the latter days.*

Bila'am then delivered a fourth oracle/prophecy – whether Balak . . . or the rest of the world . . . wants to hear it or not.

Bila'am's 4th Oracle – His Vision for Israel in the 'Latter Days'

As he promised, Bila'am's fourth oracle does indeed deal with 'the latter days'. Here is how Torah records this particular seer's latter-day vision for us:

*Er'einu v'lo atah ashureinu v'o karov
'I see him, but not now; I see him, but not near:*

⁷ See Romans 8:19-23.

darach kochav miYa'akov

There shall come forth a star out of Ya`akov,

vekam shevet miYisra'el

A scepter shall rise out of Yisra'el,

Umachatz pa'ateiMoav v'arkar kol-b'ei Shet

Shall strike through the corners of Mo'av, Break down all the sons of tumult.

V'hayah Edom yereshah

Edom shall be a possession,

V'hayah yereshah Se'ir oyevav

Se`ir also shall be a possession, [who were] his enemies;

v'isra'el oseh chayil

While Yisra'el does valiantly.

Veyer'd miYa'akov

Out of Ya`akov shall one have dominion,

V'he'evid sarid me'ir

And shall destroy the remnant from the city.

Psst. *Messiah is coming, Beloved.* Even Bila'am knows it. Do not let talk of a new world order, a "Palestinian State", an "Israeli Occupation", or 'the Return of the Mahdi' - or any fake 'social justice' movement's incendiary rhetoric - take away either your peace or your focus.

Bila'am Prophecies Regarding Israel's Enemies

Bila'am then turns his attention to the eternal enemies of the Holy One's people – those who will make war on Israel from without. He will also prophesy what will happen to those who seek to destroy Israel from within. Some of the dire things Bila'am has to say about those who oppose Israel may disturb you. On one hand, I actually hope it *does*. We very much need to know that *we have enemies*. We very much need to know *who they are*. And we very much need to know *what is going to happen to them 'in the end'*. On the other hand, overemphasis on 'enemies' can distract one from the purpose and destiny for which we were created and redeemed by the Holy One. Vigilant preparation for battle, watching out for signs of imminent attack, and arming for and waging all-out war constitute a part, but only a very small part, of our purpose and our destiny. We must be alert. But we must never allow vigilance against enemies to distract or deter us from *doing what we were created to do* or from *being who we were created to be*.

1. The Oracle Concerning Amalek

The first nation other than Israel over which Bila'am prophesies is Israel's archetypical enemy Amalek. Amalek is a nation of nomads – spread throughout the world - of which Torah has previously told us: "***The Holy One will be at war***

against the Amalaki [Amalekites] *from generation to generation.*” Exodus 17:15. As you will recall, Amalek was the first people group to attack the Redeemed Community after the Exodus. Even before the Redeemed Community reached Sinai, Amalek had engaged in terrorist attacks against it. Hence, Torah tells us that the Holy One actually instructed Moshe: *Write this for a remembrance in a book, and repeat it in Y’hoshua's ears, that I will surely wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens.* Exodus 17:14-16.

Amalek is nothing short of the ultimate ‘anti-Israel’. Hence, in *Sefer D’varim* [the Book of Deuteronomy], Moshe will write that it is the duty of every member of the Community of the Holy One to remain constantly aware of the enmity of, and to consider oneself to be in a constant state of war with, Amalek⁸ forever:

*Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you came out of Egypt;
how he came upon you on the way and attacked your rear,
all that were following feebly behind you, when you were weary and faint...”
"You are to wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens; do not forget."
[Deuteronomy 25:17-19]*

It was King Shaul’s [Saul’s] failure to utterly destroy Amalek and everything and everyone associated with Amalek that led to the Holy One stripping away the kingdom from him and giving it to David. See **I Sh’muel** [Samuel] **15**. Haman, the murderous villain from the Esther story, was – you guessed it - an *Amaleki*. So let us consider just what the gifted seer Bila’am has to say considering this prototypical adversary – a people group so utterly consumed with hatred of Israel and the God of Israel that the Holy One decreed the only solution was its total annihilation. Torah tells us:

reshit goyim Amalek
'Chief among nations is Amalek,

v'acharito adei oved
but in the end he will be destroyed forever.'

Thank you, Bila’am, for reminding us of Amalek. Thank you for reminding us to inspect closely the nature and mindset of the ‘chief among the nations’ in every time period in which we live. That said, I have a few questions for you. Do you know who your mortal enemy is? Do you keep the remembrance of Amalek’s hatred toward you and treachery against you in the back of your mind at all times? Will you know how to recognize Amalek when he comes up on your radar screen? Do you understand and recognize his tactics and his strategies? Will you know how to deal with him when he attacks? You should know these things, Beloved.

⁸ This should be considered against the backdrop of Deuteronomy 20:10, which requires, before waging war on any nation outside the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael, offering to the people of that nation the option of peaceful surrender.

Indeed, you *must*. Because *Amalek is real*. He is alive and well, and he is still consumed with evil. He still hates you – and your God – with a hatred that will not let him rest until he attacks you and ‘drives you into the sea’.

Study the tactics of Amalek as Exodus 17 reveals them. He will, in times of his own weakness, *wage guerrilla warfare* - attacking your stragglers, your weak ones, your elderly, your women, your children, and your adventuresome ‘strays’ who wander out of the fold. If these attacks are not dealt with swiftly and with great force and determination, he will be emboldened, will draw strength from the innocent blood he has shed, and will attack you head on. Against such an attack, you will always need a Y’hoshua to lead your defense.

But back to Bila’am, Bila’am prophesied that ‘in the end’ Amalek would be *destroyed forever*. This prophecy was inspired by the Holy One, and is 100% true. In the meantime, however, please understand that you are *at war* with Amalek – and act accordingly.

2. *Bila’am’s Prophecy Over the Keyni*

The second people group over whom Bila’am prophesied is a group called ‘*ha-Keyni*’. Our English Bibles call this people group ‘Kenites’. But that translation obscures their true identity. *Ha-Keyni*, you see, are descendants of *Kayin* [Cain]. You remember, the one who slew his brother *Hevel* [Abel].

Ha-Keyni are mentioned several times in the TaNaKh. The father-in-law of Moshe, Yitro, though himself a *Midyani* (Midianite) was from the area occupied by *Ha-Keyni*. The well mentioned in Exodus 2:17 – at which Moshe met Tzipporah was a well of *ha-Keyni*, who were trying to drive off Tzipporah and her 6 sisters when Moshe intervened. In the period of the judges - i.e. the 12th-11th century BCE - it was a woman of *ha-Keyni*, Ya’el, who killed Sisera through treachery (*ha-Keyni* were allies of the Kena’ani, and Sisera had fled to her tent to hide from the pursuing Israeli forces. She invited him in, offered him protection, and then drove a spike through his head as he slept). **Judges 4:17-22**.

Settling among the B’nei Yisrael, *ha-Keyni* eventually became absorbed into the tribe of Y’hudah. See **I Chronicles 2:55**. Whole clans of them became ‘scribes’ – people who taught Israel to view the Torah *as a legal code*, instead as a living, breathing *K’tuvah* [marriage covenant]. Like their ancestor *Kayin* [Cain], they follow *a form of religion that brings neither satisfaction to them nor pleasure to the Holy One*. *Ha-Keyni* thus became ‘*the enemy within*’. Just as Amalek seeks to destroy Israel from *without*, *ha-Keyni*, like *Kayin* their ancestor, seek to destroy their brothers from the position of trust they hold *within*. Of these, Bila’am prophesied:

Eytan moshaveicha v'sim basila kineicha
'You live in a fortress, and have placed your nest in a cliff.

Ki im-yihyeh leva'er Kayin
But when the time comes to destroy ha-Kenyi,
ad-mah ashur tishbeika
how long will Assyria hold back from you?'

Oy mi yichyeh misumo El
'Alas! Who can survive God's devastation?

v'tzim miyad Kitim
Warships shall come from the ports of the Kittim,
ve'inu ashur ve'inu-ever
and they will lay waste Assyria and Eber.

V'gam-hu adei oved
But in the end they too shall be destroyed forever.'

Meanwhile, Back in the Camp of the Redeemed

All the time Bila'am was speaking the Camp of the Redeemed was at total, blissful peace. Not a single serpent or scorpion was able to bruise a Hebrew heel. Not one spirit of *tumah* [uncleanness] was able to find a place to attach itself in any Hebrew heart. No arrogance or self-righteous attitude took root in a single Hebrew mind. No folly or vanity brought depression or disgrace to a single Hebrew soul. No complaint was spoken. No jealous rage erupted. No rebellious attitude manifested. Not so much as a hint of greed or gluttony or lust arose to pervert a single Hebrew's appetite. No sickness fell. No plague broke out. Nothing whatever disturbed the *shalom* of the Camp of the Redeemed. It was like when He declared '**Light, BE!**' and light simply WAS. Through Bila'am's oracles the same voice thrice declared **YOU ARE BLESSED** over us, and BLESSING simply was. That is the effect of the Covenant Blessing of the Most High – at least when men accept it, are thankful for it, and release it as freely as they receive it. Our Divine Bridegroom has spoken eternal blessing over us⁹ you see - and *no adversary in Heaven on or earth can undo that which He has spoken.*

But One Thing We Have Yet to Learn – What is an Appropriate Level of Interaction With Non-Torah Observant People and Cultures?

What level of relationship with the nations, peoples, and cultures that cohabit the earth with us is appropriate and necessary to our great mission of redemption and restoration - and what level and degree of interaction with such nations, peoples, and cultures is dangerous and counterproductive? Where are the lines? What are

⁹ See Genesis 12:2-3, 22:17, & 26:3, 24; Exodus 20:24; Numbers 6:27; and Deuteronomy 15:6.

the boundaries? Where are the ‘safe harbors’ – and the ‘no fly zones’? How do we keep from absorbing other peoples’ and cultures’ negativity? How do we keep our light shining in the darkness – yet not being doused out by it? How do we keep our Kingdom salt from losing its savor? How do we keep from becoming just another stinking *cesspool of toxic waste* instead of the *fragrant fountain of blessing* we were called to be and *immersion in Torah, by inclusion in Messiah*, and by *infilling with the Ruach Ha-Qodesh* has empowered us to be?

There are two primary approaches to the non-Torah observant world that will guarantee a destructive/toxic level of interaction with the nations and peoples of the world.

1. the Pathway of Isolationism

The first unbiblical way of approaching intersections with the realm of non-Torah observant peoples and cultures is the path of *isolationism*. If we follow this path we go into *reaction mode*. We *react* to the presence of those who are not like us - and who are not blessed with our precious gift of revelation of and relationship with the Holy One - on a knee-jerk basis. That means we *turn up our noses, harden our hearts, and do everything we can to keep other nations and peoples as far away from us as possible*. That means we keep *building higher and higher walls and barriers – physically and emotionally – to keep others out*. That means we keep *creating new and more difficult obstacle courses to prevent intrusion in our lives by ‘uncircumcised Philistines’*. That means *we only have conversations and interactions with those who look like us, think like us, talk like us, dress like us, eat like us, spend money and leisure time like us, and worship like us*. Whether out of *fear* or out of *arrogance*, those who follow this path quickly become proud, hard, judgmental, easily offended, and cruel. They start to consider every thing and every person they characterize as ‘goy’ or ‘trefe’ to become an *intolerable abomination* in our eyes. Heaven help us. We were created for better than this. We are the light of the world; a city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **Matthew 5:14**. If we separate completely from the world, how will the Divine Light in us be seen? And if it is not seen – well, *what good is it?*

2. The Pathway of Assimilation

The second unbiblical and dangerous way to have a destructive level of interaction with the nations and peoples of the world is to choose the opposite extreme - the way of *assimilation*. If we take this path we allow ourselves to be seduced by the sensual enticements and socially acceptable perversions indulged in by other cultures. We yield ourselves to manipulation by the same *tamei* [unclean] spirits, to being deceived by the same dead-end philosophies, to participating in the same socio-political *gotcha games*, and to allowing ourselves to get caught up in exactly the same deadly *sensuality-run-amok* patterns of thought, speech, and action from

which we have been placed on earth at such a time as this to set people free.

Those who follow the path of assimilation so crave being liked and accepted by the peoples around them that they start to – indeed *aspire to* - look like them, think like them, talk like them, dress like them, eat like them, spend money and leisure time like them, and worship like them. Oh Beloved – we are the salt of the earth; we are not supposed to look like everyone else. If salt loses its unique, Divinely designed flavor, it is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. **Matthew 5:13.**

The Way of Assimilation Gets Acted Out Before Our Eyes

The last part of today's aliyah gives us a stunning object lesson in the dangers, sorrows, and shame of the pathway of assimilation. As we conclude *Balak* we find the nation that the Holy One would not allow Bila'am to find fault in or curse behaving like anything but the Betrothed Bride-to-be of the ever covenant-faithful God of Creation. Acting according to the counsel of Bila'am - who had knowledge of exactly what areas of our lives were untested and open to attack when we were 'just sitting' - the young women of Midyan and Moav *put on a show that turned the heads and stirred the prurient interests* of the young Israeli warriors. So enthralled were the young men that they were willing to abandon their covenant with the Holy One like a worn-out shoe (which, of course, none of these had ever seen, because of the Holy One's supernatural provision) for a few moments of deviant pleasure with Gaga and Beyoncé *et al* - and of course *the demons they rode in on*.

What was so wrong with a little 'testing the waters' of the culture around us? The Talmud describes the 'worship' of *Baal Peor*. Tractate *Avodah Zerah 3* states that the area in front of the idol was used as a latrine and that the worship of the idol consisted of defecating before it. In his comments Rashi says that *Pe'or* [meaning 'opening', sometimes used to refer to a person's lower digestive system] was so called "*because they would uncover before it* [i.e. in front of the idol *Baal Peor*] *the end of the rectum and bring forth excrement; this is its worship.*" What on earth did the Moavi – much less the blessed sons of Israel – find appealing about this, you ask? Perhaps what so captivated Moav – and the sons of Israel – was the *moral relativism* of it all. Defecating on ground that which is supposedly 'holy' is an act that makes a bold statement – a declaration that absolutely nothing - not even something considered to be a 'god' - is deserving of honor. After all, a man who will defecate on his god's 'turf' does so for one reason, and one reason alone – to prove to himself and the world that *he lives by 'no rules'*, and that *he will do whatever he pleases no matter who objects*.

The 'worship' of *Baal Pe'or* was in reality not worship of a god – even a false god

– at all; it was *the exact opposite of worship*. It was the adoption of irreverence – the *fear of no god*, and *the acceptance of no bounds on personal behavior* – as one’s way of life. This licentious philosophy is very easy to embrace. Such a philosophy calls every perversion normal, and labels every restriction premised upon either morality or common decency ‘prudish’ and ‘unenlightened’. After all, if nothing is sacred, nothing is vile. Oh Israel. *What on earth are you doing?* This ‘nothing is sacred, nothing is vile’ philosophy is the exact opposite of the Holy One’s plan for you. The Holy One has set you as a shining kingdom of priests, to shed the Holy One’s moral and spiritual light abroad in the world, and to *‘make distinction between the holy and the profane, and between that which is t’hor and that which is tamei*. Your uniqueness is your shield and your purity is your sword, Beloved. Please, please, ***do not lay down you sword and shield*** anywhere but in the Courts of the Bridegroom King!

What Then is the Right Way to Interact With Other Cultures?

So we now understand that both the pathway of isolation and the pathway of assimilation are lethal mission-killers. So how ARE we supposed to behave in relation to our neighbors? What IS a safe and appropriate level of interaction with the non-Torah observant peoples and cultures we see every day? This is where the Torah comes in. If we do not know and walk in the Torah, we are sitting ducks. If we just know and walk in the letter of the Torah, and do not know and walk intimately with the Author of the Torah as our Bridegroom-King, we are doomed to compromise and failure. But with the unbreakable Commandments of God and the Testimony of Yeshua there is indeed a way to not be overcome by evil, but even yet to overcome evil with good. It is the more excellent way.

What is the more excellent way? It is simply to do what the Torah says. It is to approach every person culture in the world in a state of *wise as serpents while simultaneously being harmless as doves*. It is to constantly maintain a commitment to *love the Holy One our God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strength, live by the sh’ma-principle of intimate relationship instead of by belief-systems, doctrines and theologies and creeds, stay on His Calendar instead of adjusting to the calendars of the secular and pagan sources, and surrender our time and energy and passion in the great adventure of knowing and being known by the Holy One, teaching His Ways to our children and households, that we and they may keep the way of the Holy One, to do righteousness and justice*.

That means that at the very least we will not make ourselves *tamei* for the sake of ‘table fellowship’, nor profane the Shabbat or Mo’edim of our Divine Bridegroom in order to make a little extra money or fit in with the calendar and priorities everyone else around us follows. It means we will not fear what the people around us fear, hate what they hate, love what they love, or celebrate when they choose to

celebrate. It means we will not dress or eat, or entertain ourselves or our children, or choose a friend or a mate, or educate a child, the way they do, much less build our relationship with our God around a series of regular ‘meetings/services’, sacraments, and ritual’ the way those around us who engage in religion do. It means, quite frankly, that we will *love the people around us, and serve them, and carry on business with them, and treat them with honor and respect* – but we will never join them in their disobedience to Torah. We will never try to become like them. We will never dress, or adorn ourselves, or talk, or eat, or drink, or look at the material world, or indulge our flesh, the way they do. If you want a little more guidance in this regard, please read and meditate on Proverbs 16:17- 32.

Restoring Uniqueness and Purity

Thank heaven that the Holy One loves His betrothed far too much to let her wallow in such filth and to sink so far below her calling. The Holy One steps out of the cloak of invisibility and incorporeality and tells Moshe what he needs to do to fix the mess that is unfolding. His instructions to Moshe are:

Kach et-kol-rashei ha-am

Take the princes of the people,

V'hoka otam l'Adonai neged ha-shamesh

and yaka – separate/dislocate – unto the Holy One, exposing them to the sun.

v'yashov charon af-Adonai miYisra'el

This will turn away the burning of the Holy One's af in relation to Israel.'

Some interpret this as an instruction to execute the princes – i.e. to hang or impale them. But that interpretation reveals the judgmentalism of the reader – not the heart of the Speaker. The actual decree of the Holy One is neither harsh nor brutal. It is merciful and wise. All the Holy One actually says is that *the leaders* of the tribes of Israel – i.e. those who have a watchman's responsibility, and have shirked it, such that those under their leadership have gone astray - are to be separated out and exposed to the sun. The people must see something stunning happening. Intermixing with *Baal Peor* has, you see, brought a cancer into the camp. It is of such a destructive nature that it cannot be cured. It must be *completely eradicated*. The Holy One, in His omniscience, knows exactly what it will take to get the sons and daughters of the Covenant to want to turn away in revulsion from this new addictive behavior. He knows that lectures – or lesser disciplines of any kind - will not work. He is not an immature child throwing a temper tantrum; He is a Great Physician prescribing a life-saving remedy.

Unfortunately the elders in the Camp of the Redeemed did not carry out the Holy One's purification instructions. The Great Physician's treatment regimen was not implemented. His Words fell on deaf spiritual ears. The judges did not *sh'ma*. Those among our number who led the people in the way of Bila'am did *not get*

separated out in an eye-catching way. They instead decided to continue with business as usual. The ineffective princes just kept doing the same thing, expecting a different result. They kept letting the men under their authority continue to pollute themselves and the ‘lovely tents’ of their families. They kept letting household after household slip into perversion - *on their watch!* They continued standing aghast while men under their command consorted with Midyani mistress after Midyani mistress. They continued committing acts of unthinkable debauchery in front of the idols of Moav. The failure of the elders of Israel to take the specific steps the Holy One had told them to take only emboldened those carried away in the ‘nothing is sacred, nothing is vile’ philosophy. And then, as often happens, someone finally pushed the envelope a little too far. One of the very princes that the Holy One had decreed was to be set apart/dislocated, but was not, was *Zimri*, from the tribe of Sh’mon. Emboldened by the failure of the elders to carry out the instructions of the Holy One, this man was brazen enough to bring a Midyani princess lover back to the camp with him. Not only that, he paraded her through the camp, right to the very door of the Tent of Meeting. And he actually began to cavort with the Midyani princess in the perverse manner of *Baal Pe’or* ***right in front of the Manifest Presence of the Holy One.*** Talk about daring God - or anyone else - to do anything about it!

Surely *Moshe* will call *Zimri* aside and counsel him. Surely *Kalev* and *Y’hoshua* will step forward and inspire *Zimri* to return to the ways of the Beautiful King. Surely *Elazar* the new high priest will escort *Zimri* peacefully from the sacred courts of the *Mish’kan*. But alas none of them do any such thing. All these *anointed men of authority* just ‘sat’. But hang on here – hasn’t Torah assigned someone the responsibility of dealing with intrusions of the profane and unclean into the most *tahor* and *kadosh* place on the earth? Isn’t that the Torah duty of . . . the sons of *Levi*? Is anyone in that tribe paying attention? Doesn’t anybody in that tribe remember what Torah says about maintaining the sanctity of the Tabernacle’s courts? The eyes of the Holy One go to and fro through the tents of the *Levi’im*, looking for someone who remembers His instructions,

***Behold, A Son of Levi Arises, Does His Duty,
and Takes Responsibility for Restoring the Holiness of the Mish’kan!***

Zimri and *Cozbi* cavorted on - *as the entire camp of the Redeemed gazed on in prurient curiosity and the nonchalant attitude of a lukewarm heart.* Perversion spewed forth in a place that was created to bear the sweet fragrance of blessing, life, health, joy, purity, and peace. Drawn to the bed of uncleanness *Zimri* and *Kozbi* were creating in the *Mish’kan*, the Death Angel descended upon the camp. A rapidly spreading plague quickly consumed 24,000 of the promising young men. But then something happened. Deep within the spirit of a young man named

Pinechas, son of Elazar – Aharon’s grandson, a holy passion awakened. Deep called unto deep, and all its waves and billows washed over the young priest-in-training. Perceiving that the source of the plague killing his companions was the perversion Zimri and Cozbi were releasing at the entrance to the *Mish’kan*, Pinechas rose up to defend the sanctity of the holy structure that had been placed in his tribe’s charge. Note, however, that Torah does not describe Pinechas as getting the least bit angry. Do you see him as angry as he takes up his spear, Beloved? Or do you see him weeping? How you see Pinchas in this instance – like how you see Yeshua as He arose to cleanse the Temple by driving out the moneychangers - says a whole lot more about you than it does about those Biblical actors. If you imagine Pinechas as acting out of outrage, then you probably also see Yeshua as acting out of wrath and anger when He drove the moneychangers out of the Temple¹⁰. But please consult Holy Writ. Nowhere in the Biblical account of either instance does it say that either Pinechas or Yeshua acted out of anger. Neither does Holy Writ Note describe either the Temple-cleansing actions of Pinechas or of the Master as affected by either outrage or revulsion. Holy Writ describes what seized both as something altogether different. Holy Writ describes what motivated them not as ‘anger’ – but as ‘zeal’. Mark the difference very, very well, Dear Ones!

Zeal and anger are worlds – indeed kingdoms - apart. The zeal that motivated Pinechas and Y’shua was not a human emotion – it was a divine passion. It was not energy from the dark side of human nature – it was LIGHT from the heart of the Creator of the Universe. Please note therefore that Pinechas did not rant, nor did he rave. He did not threaten. He did not go looking for trouble. Trouble had come to him, and had invaded threatened to take over the *Mish’kan*. And since the elders of Israel had proven they were not willing to follow the Holy One’s instructions as to how to deal with this rapidly spreading wildfire, he just got up and dealt with it. He took a spear in his hand, walked straight to the spot inside the sacred grounds of the *Mish’kan* where Zimri and Cozbi were publicly bumping and grinding in the sand and . . . and he impaled the prince of the tribe of Sh’mon and his Midyani consort with one swift, merciful blow. His actions were calm, considered, careful and precise. His strike was surgical.

In this particular instance Pinechas *alone got it 100% right*. But please take note of what Pinechas did *not* do. He did ‘get radicalized’. He did not join a movement. He did not succumb to offense or rage. He did *not* conspire against or lie in wait to kill anyone. He did *not* invade anyone’s home or other private chambers. He did *not* trespass on anyone’s property. He did *not* act out of a hypersensitive sense of morality, revulsion, shame, or self-righteousness. He did *not* inflict any collateral

¹⁰ See Matthew 21:12-14, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48, and John 2:12-17 for the descriptions of four different inspired writers concerning Y’shua’s cleansing of the Temple. In not a single instance is there any suggestion that Y’shua was angry or outraged. He was moved by another passion entirely – i.e. zeal.

damage. He did *not* spread gossip, accusation, or propaganda. He did *not* incite anyone else to violence. What *did* he do instead? He acted out of a Divinely enhanced understanding that in this particular circumstance, as the Holy One had said clearly to Moshe, this particular plague simply could not be stopped any other way. Not to inflict vengeance or punishment on anyone, but to preserve the holiness of the Mish'kan and the Camp, Pinechas took up his assigned position as a guardian of the Holy Sanctuary, took spear in hand, took aim, and let it fly.

The Holy One guided Pinechas' spear to its target. The trajectory of that spear was therefore every bit as sure as the trajectory of David's smooth stone. In a split second, with one swift blow, all the bumping, the grinding, the blasphemy, and the perversion that the 'Way of Bila'am' brought into a camp of people who had resorted to 'just sitting' came to an abrupt halt. Just like that, the dark spell of the siren song being simulcast by *b'not Moavi* and *b'not Midyani* was broken. Just like that, the blinders of assimilation-syndrome fell off the eyes of the men of B'nei Yisrael. Instantly the plague lifted. In the twinkling of an eye an entire generation that had become hopelessly lost was gloriously found, and an entire people who had become pitifully blind could once again perfectly see.

We will speak much more of Pinechas next week. He has a whole parsha of Torah named after him. In the meantime, I will say with regard to his conduct what I said earlier in the week with regard to the activities of Balak and Bila'am – please *don't try this at home*. Blessed is he who is not offended.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Prior to speaking the prophetic words the Holy One directed Bila'am to speak, Bila'am tells Balak to set up 7 altars, and to sacrifice animals on each.

[A] Why do you think Bila'am told Balak to do this?

[B] Summarize the first "oracle" or "prophecy" of Bila'am – the one at Kiryat-Hutzot.

[C] What do you think it means for the Holy One's people to be "*a people who live apart, and do not consider themselves one of the nations*"?

[D] What is it about the "*death of the righteous*" that is, according to Bila'am's first prophecy, to be envied and sought after?

[E] Summarize the second "oracle" or "prophecy" of Bila'am – the one at the field of Zophim, on top of Mount Pisgah.

[F] What do you think it means that "*God is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent.*"

[G] We know that the Redeemed Community was in no way without sin. The past few chapters of the Book of Numbers have made it clear that sin abounded in the camp. Why do you think Bila'am says that the Holy One "*has not*

seen iniquity in Ya`akov; neither has he seen perverseness in Yisra'el"?

[H] What “prey” do you think Bila’am is seeing, whose blood Israel will “drink” [metaphorically speaking, since consumption of blood is a specific violation of Torah] before “lying down”?

2. Today’s haftarah reading is from chapter 6 of the book of the prophet **Micah** [Hebrew *mem, yod, kaf, hey*, pronounced *mee-kaw'*, meaning "who is like God"]. As chapter 5 concluded yesterday, the Holy One was announcing that in the end days, as He called us back to Israel, He would destroy the cities of our exile, judging the nations who refused to listen to the Torah we taught and lived in their presence. In today’s aliyah, the Holy One turns his attention to us, His own people, who protest and resist His call to leave the cities (and countries) of exile in which we dwell, and He says:

Kum riv et-heharim

"Arise, plead your case before the mountains,

v'tishmanah ha-geva'ot koleicha.

And let the hills hear what you have to say.

Shim'u harim et-riv Adonai

Hear, you mountains, the Holy One's controversy,

v'ha-etanim mosdei aretz

And you enduring foundations of the eretz;

ki riv l'Adonai im-amo

For the Holy One has a controversy with his people,

v'im-Yisra'el yitvakach.

And he will contend with Yisra'el.

Ami meh-asiti lecha umah hel-eticha aneh bi.

My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me!

[Micah 6:1-3]

[A] Why do you think a person the Holy One has redeemed would resist leaving a city or country to which he/she was exiled?

[B] What does the Holy One direct those who are unhappy about the prospect of leaving the cities and countries in which they live and returning to *Eretz Yisrael*, the land promised to Avraham, Yitschak, and Ya'akov's descendants as an inheritance, to do to put their complaint in perspective? How do you think this would help?

[C] Do you feel it would be a “burden” or imposition if the Holy One instructed you, tomorrow, to leave your city and country, and go to live in *Eretz Yisrael*? If so, how would it be a burden? How would it be an imposition?

[D] You will note that the Word of the Holy One to Micah in verse 3 includes a reference to, if not a quotation from, today’s aliyah of Torah. As

Bila'am was concluding his second prophecy, from the field of *Zophim* (watchmen, watchers), on Mount Pisgah, he said: "It shall be said of Ya'akov and of Yisra'el, *'What has God done!'* What do you think is the connection between this prophecy of Bila'am and the question the Holy One asks in Micah 6:3?

3. In today's reading from the B'rit Chadasha, Shaul of Tarsus continues to discuss the difference between living by the Voice of the Holy One [*sh'ma*-ing His Words, and living them out as the weaker, responding partner in a covenant relationship] and living by other means – *such as* one's own (or one's society's) strength, wisdom, or customs.

[A] What "lowly things" of the world did the Holy One choose?

[B] What things that the world "despises" has the Holy One chosen?

[C] What is Shaul referring to as "the things that are"?

[D] What things that "are not" does the Holy One use to bring to nothing "the things that are"? [Hint: Before answering, you should read Hosea 2:23 and I Peter 2:9-10, Romans 9:25 and 10:19].

[E] In Strong's, look up the Greek verb which our English Bibles translate as "boast" in verse 3. Write the Greek word and its definition.

[F] What Hebrew verb would correspond to the Greek word you just looked up and defined? Write that Hebrew verb in Hebrew letters, with vowel points, and search out its meaning in Gesenius' notes. Then describe the Hebraic word picture you see coming into focus as you meditate on this Hebrew verb.

[G] Can you see a connection between Shaul's statement in today's B'rit Chadasha reading and today's meditation? Explain.

[H] Can you see a connection between Shaul's statement in today's B'rit Chadasha reading and today's Torah aliyah? Explain.

[I] Can you see a connection between Shaul's statement in today's B'rit Chadasha reading and today's haftarah reading? Explain.

[J] What does it mean to be 'in' Messiah Yeshua?

[K] In what way did Messiah become for us 'wisdom from the Holy One'?

[L] Define the terms 'righteousness', 'sanctification', and 'redemption'.

[M] In what way did Messiah become for us 'righteousness'?

[N] In what way did Messiah become for us 'sanctification'?

[O] In what way did Messiah become for us 'redemption'?

4. Shaul then continues his discussion concerning the difference between those who live by the Voice and those who live by other means -- *such as* one's own (or one's society's) strength, wisdom, or customs, closing out the thought with a quote from the prophet Yirmayahu [Jeremiah], saying: *as it is written, "He who*

*glories/boasts*¹¹, *let him glory/boast in the Holy One.*" 1Corinthians 1:28-29.

[A] Go back to the verse in Jeremiah which Shaul quotes [Jeremiah 9:24]. Read that verse in its context, namely Jeremiah 9:1-25. Then summarize what you think are the main points Yirmayahu [Jeremiah] is trying to make in that chapter.

[B] What is the Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'glory' or 'boast' in Jeremiah 9:24? Look up that verb in Strong's and Gesenius. Write it in English and with Hebrew letters and vowel markings. Meditate on it. Then Describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing as you meditate on that word.

[C] What do you think it means to 'glory/boast' in the Holy One?

[D] What other things besides the Holy One does Yirmayahu say people are improperly glorying/boasting in?

May you speak only what you hear from the Holy One, even when people expect you to say something different. And may you do only what you see your Father doing, even if others judge you a rebel and a renegade. May your flesh boast only in the Holy One.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Shiur

Proverbs 16:6-8

In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity;

And by the fear of the Holy One one departs from evil.

When a man's ways please the Holy One,

He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Better is a little with righteousness than vast revenues without justice.

¹¹ The Greek verb used is *kauchaomai*, pronounced kow-*khah*'-om-ahee, Strong's Hebrew word #2744, meaning to boast in something or rejoice concerning something. For other uses of this verb, see Romans 2:17, 2:23, 5:2, 5:3, 5:11, as well as I Corinthians 1:29 and 3:21, 4:7, and 5:12, and perhaps its most famous use, in Ephesians 2:9.