

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Balak:** Numbers 22:39 – 23:30
 Haftarah: Micah 6:1-3
 B'rit Chadasha: I Corinthians 1:28-29

Balak took Bila'am and brought him up to the high places of Ba'al ...
[Numbers 22:41a]

Today's 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.

Bila'am's high-profile celebrity donkey-ride from his home near the Euphrates to the plains overlooking the Jordan Rift Valley proved to be an experience in comedic misadventure. First, the prophet-of-the-nations kept getting into and losing arguments with his beast of burden. Then he got found himself on the wrong side of an angel of fierce countenance menacingly waving a sharp sword. The point of it all was this: Bila'am was at a critical crossroads. He had to decide who he was, whom he served, and how he wanted to be remembered in history. The prophet is going to have no excuses if he messes this up. He is going to be held accountable for every word he utters. If he does not heed the angel's admonishments he will become a laughingstock, and his name a byword, to all generations. His legacy is in his own hands. He has a window of opportunity to write his own ticket. But that window will slam shut the moment anything but blessing exits his mouth relative to Israel. And so it is for all of us. As Yeshua will later put it: ***A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. For every idle*** [Grk. *argos* – useless, unprofitable, careless] ***word men may speak they will give account for it on the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified; and by your words you will be condemned.*** Matthew 12:35-37. Think long and hard before you speak, Bila'am. But right now, just hush, because the next scene in the great drama is about to begin!

Lights! Camera! Action!

The stage has been prepared. Put on your prophet suit and hat, Bila'am - the podium is yours ... and it's *show time*.

Our aliyah begins by telling us *Bila'am went out with Balak*. Numbers 22:39[a]. Bila'am and Balak are about to take a walk – a precarious journey to *the Dark Side*

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of human experience. They are stepping 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 will enter this dark realm through the *standard occult pathway* – 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. 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 barkers 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 others*;
5. *class envy*;
6. *racial/national/cultural pride*;
7. *hate*;
8. *disgust*;
9. *guilt*;
10. *shame*,
11. *pity*; and
12. *sensual seduction*.

These tools of demagoguery open the *Pandora's Box* of the human heart, loosing the dark energy pulses *run rampant* – *i.e.* dark energy 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 of course, and the atmosphere is pulsing with these forms of dark energy, perversions quickly become normalized, that which is healthy and good is relabeled as evil and that which is evil is relabeled as good, conversation degenerates into complaining, accusing, blaming, ranting, and pontificating, and people become polarized around ideas, concepts, and imaginary movements.

Welcome to the League of Nations – And 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 league of nations has been formed. The nations have raged. Rulers have taken counsel together. A plot to rebel against the Holy One's Kingship and to destroy the descendants of his servant Ya'akov has been hatched. The prototypical *Dream Team of the Dark Side* has come together. Welcome to the Dark Side of humanity, *Bila'am, son of Be'or!* Welcome to the stronghold of globalism. Welcome to the throne room of new-world order elitism. 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. Welcome to the house that hate built. Welcome to the era of nations that rage. Hear the high-sounding rhetoric of demagogues. Watch the propaganda machines of media whip the peoples of many lands into a frenzy of fear and hate until they are quick to imagine a vain thing. Mayhem cannot be far behind. The Dark Side is fueled by dark energy, but disguises itself as light. It makes sure to couch every dark manipulation in the language of 'enlightenment'. It loves to propose pseudo-scientific theories and call them truth. It loves to promote ideological agendas and call them 'social justice'. It loves to shame political opponents with derogatory labels. It loves to slime those it hates with false comparisons. It relishes offense. It loves fear. It thrives on jealousy. It finds a way to revel in sexual perversion, murder, and moral outrage at the same time. It delights in covetousness, bias, prejudice, fear, perversion, and hate. Alas, it is very effective. It has infected many, many people – people of every nation, of every culture, and of every land. It has infected the materialistic, territorial, and argumentative Edomi. It has infected the sneaky, deceptive Aradians. It has infected the in-your-face, armed-to-the-teeth attack dogs of the Emori. It has infected the paranoid, propaganda spouting Moavi. It has infected the opportunistic, manipulative, and devoid of conscience Midyani human traffickers. It has made the focus of all of these people the dream of WIPING THE DESCENDANTS OF YA'AKOV/YISRAEL OFF THE FACE OF THE PLANET. They all agree that *we* – *i.e.* the Covenant People of the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov – *absolutely must be destroyed*. And as we begin

today's aliyah, we find that the prototypical *Mashiach Tachat* character² and his prototypical false prophet have found each other. They are on the scene – and they are on the job. They are finally ready to make their move.

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

Torah describes Balak and Bila'am's little stroll around the 'dark side' in vivid detail. 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]

This is a *fool's errand* if there ever was one. Nothing good is ever going to happen at the *high places* of Ba'al – or at *any place* set apart for either [1] *the veneration of any false god*, or [2] *attempts at communication with an occult spirit*. True servants of the Most High cannot share space with certain things: among these are *vanity, idolatry, adulteration of the holy with the profane, uncleanness, fear mongering, malice, rage, accusation, gossip, gluttony, envy, complaint, and sloth*.

What is Balak thinking? Torah tells us that Balak hoped that, in the dark side spiritual environment of the high places of Ba'al, Bila'am would see some weakness or defect Israel he could curse, and that Moav and Midyan could exploit. And to bolster the 'dark energy' of the place, Balak spared no expense. Torah tells us:

***Then 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.***

There is a pattern that people who draw their inspiration from the darkness follow. This pattern mimics – but at its essence is the *anti-thesis*, of – the *Mish'kan* model designed by the Heavenly Throne of the Creator for His People. First, those who draw their inspiration from the dark side of human experience select a place to serve as their '*anti-mish'kan*'. They then dedicate this *anti-mish'kan site* to:

[1] one or more named false gods or occult spirits - which become their cultural, and ultimately personal, '*anti-Holy One*' influence[s];

[2] intense over-stimulation of human flesh – which is *their* '*anti-Ruach*'.

They over-stimulate their '*anti-Ruach*' through bombarding:

[a] their physical senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch with hype– *i.e.* '*anti-worship*', and

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.

- [b] the ‘fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge’-fed pseudointellect of man with seemingly important and high-sounding information they call ‘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, Beloved. Encountering it is a telltale sign that you have crossed a tamei/chol boundary, and stepped off into an occult abyss. Do not sell your soul – or sacrifice your children – to this seductive form of *tumah* (destabilizing & wellness-fragmenting ‘uncleanness’).

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,
and I will go; 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 ruler 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.

But ... 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, not so much! 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*, Dear Reader? 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

Balak is going to wind up taking 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 location to which Balak took Bila'am was *Kiryat-Hutzot*. This was apparently an open-air center of pagan worship on top of a high hill. The name of this particular 'high place, *Kiryat-Hutzot*, can mean "city of streets", or "city on the outskirts". Undoubtedly *Kiryat-Hutzot* was one of the fortified cities on the border of the territory Moav occupied, high up on a hill so as to provide both an excellent view of the surrounding area and a strategic military advantage over any attacking force. Remember, the Emori [Amorites] under Sichon and Og had constantly embattled the Moav'im, necessitating both a watchful eye and a defensible border.

In my mind's eye I can see Balak and Bila'am with much fanfare 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 bated breath, anxious to hear what Bila'am the renowned prophet had to say concerning the hordes encamped in the valley 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. "*This is not going to be pretty*", Bila'am must have thought!

Trembling, Bila'am went to the pulpit prepared for him and for his first oracle said something which no one – except one smiling, sword-wielding Angel of the Holy One, of course – could possibly have 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 umigeva'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 of Bila'am the prophet. Not only did it not contain anything that would get him smitten by the Angel of the Holy One, it was really pretty amazing. First of all, let us consider the obvious. Bila'am has not done what Balak hired him to do. He has not cursed Israel. He has instead declared to Balak and every other person present that cursing Israel is *impossible*. And after publicly announcing that cursing Israel is impossible, Bila'am said of the vast multitude of Hebrews encamped beneath him on the plain: ***Behold - a people that will dwell apart and will not be reckoned among the nations.***

Bila'am *saw something* that day. When he was not blinded by ambition, man pleasing, and self-interest, it turns out, he was indeed a *seer*. The Holy One blessed him with the supernatural ability to see something about the people whose camp spread out in the valley beneath him that far transcended anything they had even seen in themselves. 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*** prophetic declarations.

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 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 and his brother Nahor in Paddan-Aram in response to the call of the Divine Bridegroom, the separation level has been expanding. And it will continue to do so.

Avraham’s descendants through Yitzchak and Ya’akov have been uniquely set apart to the Holy One, commissioned and empowered to be – and live their lives - ‘unlike’ other peoples. Indeed, a major part of the plan of the Holy One for the redemption of mankind is that His chosen nation of Israel is destined to become - and remain always - a people that does not think, look, act, eat, marry, make war, raise children, run a nation, live or die like the people of other cultures. 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 – as our ancestors were doing when Bila’am spoke these words --

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 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 This brings to mind what Mark Twain wrote in 1899 in his essay "Concerning the Jews": “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.”

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

Bila'am saw Israel *through the Holy One's eyes* as few people in the history of the world have been able to do. And far from cursing her as Balak wanted, Bila'am has blessed her ... in spite of himself.

Saving Face

Picture Balak mortified! For him this poses a terrible dilemma. He cannot order Bila'am stricken down because he has promoted him to everyone as “the Seer who Knows All”. So if he now disavows him just because the message is not what he “paid for” he will be exposed as the charlatan he is and will lose all credibility. Balak has to salvage the rapidly eroding situation somehow, so he thinks fast. *This is just a preliminary*, he explains – all Bila'am has seen so far is the fortified outskirts of Israel's camp, where it is strongest. We will go *higher in the hills of Moav*, where he can get a look at more of the Israelite camp. From there he will be able to spot Israel's weak areas. And all the while I suspect that Balak is thinking to himself [Rabbi's son paraphrase], “I will let Mr. Bila'am the prophet have it big time when I get him to myself. Next time, he will say what I am paying him to say! He won't make a fool of Balak twice.”

Bila'am's Next Gig: Tzofim – Moav's 'Field of Dreams'

And so up the mountain to the next gig trek Balak, his princes, the priests of all the pagan pantheon of Moav, Bila'am, his donkey – and ... wait a minute ... is that the Angel of the Holy One? We will see, Beloved! The second place chosen by Balak for Bila'am as a potential vantage point from which to curse Israel is the field of ***Tzofim***, at the top of Mount Pisgah. From this scenic overlook⁵, Balak reasons, surely Bila'am will see it “the right way” and reinforce what Balak has been saying all along.

The second ‘dark energy/occult’ place human beings are always drawn is an eye-catching place in what deluded people like to call ‘nature’. What is this thing called ‘nature’? It is the pagan world's *anti-Creation*. To them, *everything in the kosmos just 'happened'* – i.e. developed/evolved ‘naturally’! Calling the Created order ‘nature’, as they do, is their way of attributing the source of its beauty and

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”.

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 a profane muse – a capricious nymph or sprite 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 of Moavi and Midyani. 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. And for the moment he fears this Angel - and the Holy One - much more than he wants to please Balak. So when it is time for him to speak at Tzofim what he blurts out is:

Vayisa meshalo vayomar kum Balak ushama

Rise up, Balak, and hear;

Ha-azinah aday beno Tzipor

Listen to me, you son of Tzipor:

Lo ish el vichazev

[God is] not a man, that he should lie,

uven-adam veyitneicham hahu

Neither the son of man, that he should repent:

amar v’lo ya’aseh

Has he said, and will he not do it?

V’diber v’lo yekimenah

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

Hineh varech lakachti

Behold, it is my part to bless:

uverech v’lo ashivenah

He has blessed, and I can't reverse it.

Bila'am does not stop there. He goes on to tell Balak – and the world in all its generations – in no uncertain terms 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 no iniquity 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]

Oh, my! Bila'am's second oracle has turned out to be even more favorable toward the Covenant People than his first. But Balak, like Pharaoh, has hardened his heart. He will not relent. The Holy One therefore has yet one more embarrassment in store for Moav's king. 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.”***

Balak hopes that the old adage is true: “the third time is the charm.” The Angel of the Holy One knows better, however. And when we read tomorrow's study, so will we.

Questions For Further 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 on top of Mount Pisgah at the field of Tzofim.

[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 was regathering us back to the land of 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 those among His own people who will protest and resist His call to leave the cities and countries of exile in which they dwell. Through the prophet the Holy One 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 v'im-Yisra'el yitvakach

For the Holy One has a controversy with his people 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 *Tzofim* (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 those words 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. Shaul tells us in no uncertain terms:

... God chose the lowly things of the world, and the things that are despised, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nothing the things that are: that no flesh should boast before God.

[1Corinthians 1:28-29]

[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 that 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'?

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.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Proverbs 16:6-8

***In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity;
And by the fear of the Holy 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.***