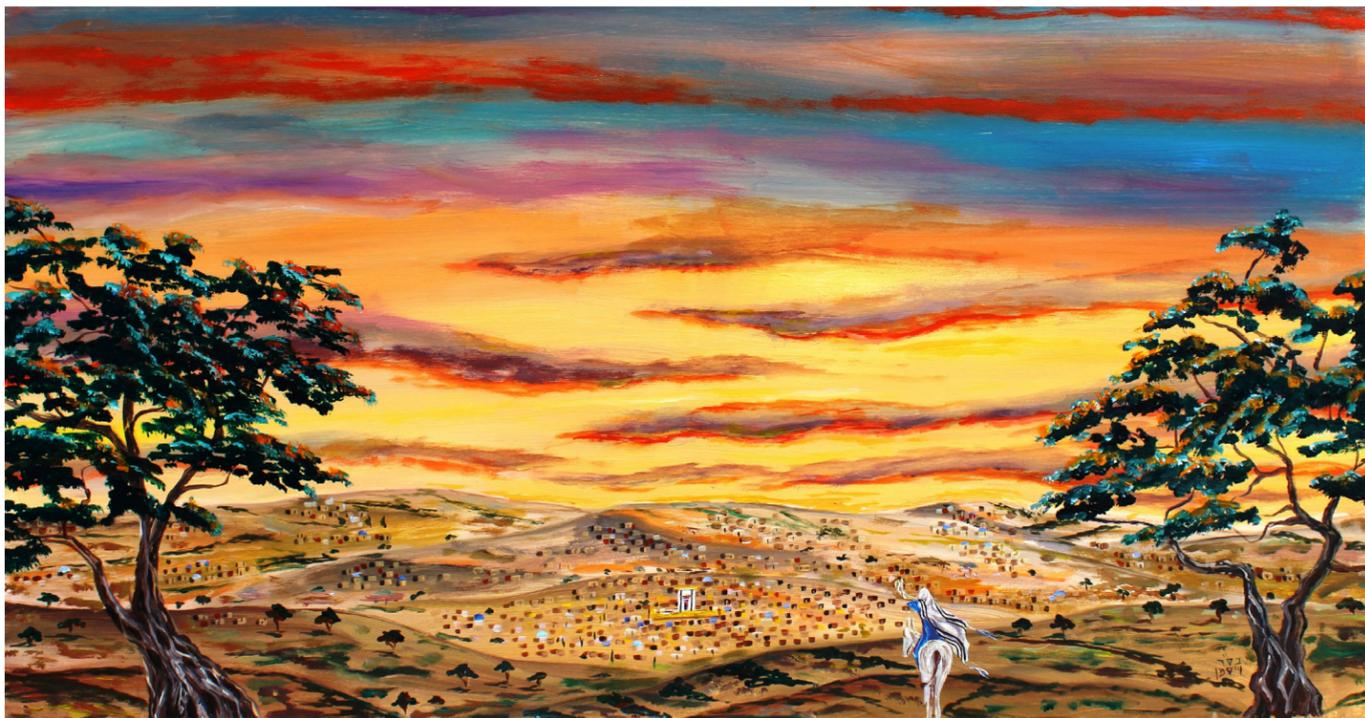


Shearith Israel  
SPANISH &  
PORTUGUESE  
Synagogue of Montreal  
Est. 1768

# SHABBAT BULLETIN

July 16, 2022 | 17 Tammuz, 5782



## Dvar Torah

DECISIVELY INDECISIVE: THOUGHTS FOR  
PARASHAT BALAK  
BY: RABBI MARC D. ANGEL

This week's Torah portion begins (Bemidbar 22:2): "And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Ammorites." Interestingly, the Torah doesn't tell us at this point who Balak is!

The passage then continues with two verses describing how the Moabites feared the advent of the large contingent of Israelites. Only at the end of verse 4 are we informed that "Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time." Wouldn't it have been more logical to tell us from the outset that Balak was king of Moab?

Apparently, the Torah is alluding to aspects of Balak's personality and leadership style. When Balak first surveyed the problem, he did not know what to do. He did not act in a kingly manner. He vacillated, choosing not to make an independent decision. But then he heard the murmurings of his people. They were afraid. They wanted action against a perceived threat. Only after hearing their complaints did Balak realize he had to make a decision: he was, after all, the king of Moab.

Balak the king still did not know

what to do—only that he had to do something to calm his fears and the fears of his people.

A strong and confident king might have presented the people with a clear strategy, such as: 1) we will send emissaries to the Israelites to see what their intentions are; perhaps we can reach a peaceful understanding with them; 2) we will muster our troops and be ready for battle, if necessary; 3) we will reach out to our neighboring allies to see if they will stand with us in our confrontation with the Israelites.

But Balak does not do these things. Rather, he sends emissaries to hire a soothsayer, Bil'am, to curse the Israelites! Balak decides to rely on magic rather than on practical diplomatic and military tactics. He puts his hopes in the skills of a noted orator whose words supposedly had supernatural powers.

But the Torah goes on to make a mockery of this orator soothsayer. Bil'am is outwitted by his own donkey! The donkey sees reality more clearly than he does. And then when Bil'am is supposed to use his great oratorical powers on behalf of Moab, he is unable to utter his intended words. Rather, the Almighty puts words into his mouth that give blessings, rather than curses, to the Israelites.

A weak and frightened king Balak

chooses a highly praised—but obviously imperfect--magician: and the problem facing the Moabites is not abated at all.

The story of Balak and Bil'am highlights wrong ways to make decisions. Balak is indecisive and feels he must act only when he senses pressure from the public. When he does make a decision, it is not based on tested diplomatic and military knowledge, but on wishful thinking, relying on a notorious wonder-worker. Balak and his advisors had an illusion of validity, thinking that their course of action was correct, even though it meant dismissing sound practical tactics in favor of following a smooth-talking soothsayer.

And, of course, Balak and Bil'am failed to achieve their goals.

When making important decisions, one must make pragmatic judgments based on as much fact as possible.

To base decisions on wishful thinking and the aid of glib soothsayers is to follow the leadership style of Balak. Failure is an inevitable result.

Shabbat shalom.  
REVEREND HAZAN DANIEL BENLOLO

## SHABBAT SHALOM

Start/Debut 8:21 p.m. End/Fin 9:35 p.m.

**PARASHAT BALAK:**  
HERTZ PAGE 669  
**HAFTARAH MICAH:**  
HERTZ PAGE 682

### OUR SHABBAT TORAH CLASSES AND SOCIALS HAVE RESUMED!

Torah class will be given every Shabbat after Kiddush by Andy Rotchel, in Aintabi Hall. Coffee & refreshments will be served. Come join, discuss, exchange and socialize in a delightful Shabbat afternoon social environment.

**TSOM 17 TAMMUZ**  
Sunday/Dimanche July 17 Juillet  
Begins/Commence 3:40 a.m.  
Ends/termine 8:55 p.m.

### WEEKLY SERVICES SCHEDULE

**Shabbat**  
Shahrit: 8:30 a.m. Minha: 8:15 p.m.  
**Sunday**  
Shahrit: 8:00 a.m. Minha: 7:45 p.m.  
**MONDAY - FRIDAY**  
Shahrit: 7:30 a.m.  
Minha: 6:00 p.m.

### CHEVRA SHAAS Service Schedule

**SHABBOS, July 16<sup>th</sup>**  
Schachris 9:30 a.m.  
**SUNDAY, July 17<sup>th</sup>**  
Schachris 8:00 a.m.

To contact Reverend Hazan  
Daniel Benlolo:  
cantorbenlolo@thespanish.org  
(514) 892-2859



Refuah  
Shelemah  
To:

Rabbi  
Menahem  
White



## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

People who wonder if the glass is half full or half empty are missing the point. The glass is refillable.

Simon Sinek | Aish HaTorah

## OPINION

### Chevra Shaas Words From Rabbi Menahem White BALAQ 5782

I have said over this personal story several times in Chevra Shaas, but to the best of my recollection, I have never written it down. And I do believe that it deserves to be printed.

You see, many years ago, Balaq was my Bar Mitzvah parasha. We belonged to a large synagogue in Boston. Bar mitzvah boys were not allowed to read the Torah, as that was the exclusive job of the official Torah reader. However, I did, of course, read the haftarah, which was taught by one of the assistant Rabbis. Our Hebrew school was also part of the synagogue, and was housed in the synagogue building.

One day, in Hebrew school class, some time before the bar mitzvah, there was a knock on the classroom door. I remember it vividly: "Rabbi Pole [the Bar Mitzvah teacher] has to speak to Menahem." As I walked across the room, and was about to leave, my teacher, an extremely learned and nice man, and a fine pedagogue, Mr. Louis Harris, asked me "what's your parasha?" I answered "Balaq." Without missing a beat, he quoted the first verse [from the prophet Micah chapter 5] *ve-haya she'eirit ya`aqov be-qerev `ammim rabbim ke-tal me'et HaShem* "the remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many nations like dew from HaShem."

And Mr. Harris explained: the time will come when the remnant of the Jewish people [having been decimated in the holocaust, which was still in everyone's consciousness] will be accepted among many nations like dew from

HaShem. The Hebrew word for "like dew" is *ke-tal*. And the gematria [the numerical value of the letters in that word] is 59. And Israel was the 59<sup>th</sup> nation admitted into the United Nations!!

Now, I am not a "gematrist," not a numerologist. But that brief comment by Mr. Harris made a great and lasting impression on me. For it impressed upon me the great miracle of the establishment of the State of Israel.

Of course, the UN has, for the most part, abandoned Israel. Yet, as my great teacher from later years, Rav Joseph Soloveitchik, said in his famous speech entitled *Qol Dodi Dofeq*, perhaps it was by Divine guidance that the UN was established for that **one purpose**: to recognize the State of Israel, and to include it in the family of nations.

Shabbat shalom; we pray for peace in Israel and in the whole world.



S&P Shabbat Kiddush/Seudah is Co-Sponsored by:

Jacqueline Anson, in memory of her brother, Albert Bitton z'l.
Racheline & Charles Abadi, in memory of her father, Nessim Boucai z'l.
Molly McHugh, in memory of her aunt, Rachele Dadoun z'l.



Mazal Tov To

Racheline & Charles Abadi, in honour of the birth of their first great grandson, son of Rebecca Etingin & Paul Sugarman.

Our Condolences To



Mireille Fattal & Family, on the loss of her husband, Wilson Fattal z'l.
Nanci & Joseph Fattal, on the loss of his father, Wilson Fattal z'l.
Maurice Fattal, on the loss of his brother, Wilson Fattal z'l.
Valentine Balass, on the loss of her brother, Wilson Fattal z'l.
Sam & Linda Fattal, on the loss of his brother, Wilson Fattal z'l.
Emile & Rita Fattal, on the loss of his brother, Wilson Fattal z'l.

COMMUNITY

Got a Question for Reverend/Hazan Daniel Benlolo?

Dear reader,
I want to share with you an email I received this past week.

From the: Office of the Chief Rabbi of Israel

Who has the most important role in our synagogue services?

The Torah gives us details of 'maaser' - the tithe that was given to the Leviim, the Levites. The Torah informs us that the tithe was not to be considered holy.

"Ki sachar hu lachem chelef avodatchem b'ohel mo'ed." - "because it was to be a wage to the Levites in exchange for all that they did in the tent of meeting." (Bamidbar 18:31)

One of the key roles that the Leviim had was to sing for the nation and lead them in prayer, and it is on this basis that many of our poskim, our decisors,

tell us that a Cantor, a Chazzan, should receive a salary for what he's doing - because he takes on the role of the Levi in our synagogue services.

The Rashba goes one step further. Accepting that the Chazzan is like the Levi, the Rashba adds that on Yom Kippur the Chazzan in our synagogues is our Kohen Gadol - he is our modern-day equivalent of the High Priest as he leads the nation in asking Hashem to atone for our sins.

It is here that we recognize how our tradition respects and treasures the importance of singing.

You know, if you want to find out how important something is, the best way is to do without it for some time and then you'll really appreciate it. We know, for example, how the absence of greeting on Tisha B'Av enables us to appreciate it all the more. Isn't this exactly what we discovered in the long periods during Covid when in Britain

and elsewhere it was forbidden to sing in public? Then we recognized how central and critically important Shira, singing, is to us as we strive to come closer to the Almighty and raise our levels of spirituality.

Now that, Baruch Hashem, we are once again able to hold synagogue services as usual, let us never forget how critically important Shira, singing, is for us, and how it is primarily through Ruach, spirituality, that a synagogue service can transform our lives.

I therefore believe that the most important role that anybody can have in the synagogue service is to lead that service - to be the Chazzan - and thanks to our Chazzanim, all of us within the community are inspired to join in the service, to have incredible Ruach, and thereby to be better people and to come closer to the Almighty.

Shabbat Shalom.

PARNASS HAYOM BEIT HAMIDRASH HELWANI

SUNDAY/DIMANCHE 18 TAMMUZ - JULY 17
Vicky Moghrabi, à la mémoire de Rachel bat Mazal ז"ל.

Yaer Oliel, à la mémoire de son père, Mimoun Oliel ז"ל.

Famille Dadoun, à la mémoire de Rachele Dadoun ז"ל.

TUESDAY/MARDI 20 TAMMUZ - JULY 19
Leila Khamara, in memory of her mother, Noam Khamara ז"ל.

WEDNESDAY/MERcredi 21 TAMMUZ - JULY 20
Elie Chetrit, à la mémoire de sa mère, Esther Chetrit ז"ל.

FRIDAY/VENDREDI 23 TAMMUZ - JULY 22
Shoshana Suzanne Elkeslassy, en l'honneur de sa Famille.



Jewish Wisdom

Speaking During the Reading of the Torah Portion

Halacha Yomit

Question: While praying the synagogue on Shabbat morning, may I speak with my friend while the Torah is being read?

Answer: The Gemara (Sotah 39a) states: "Rabba bar Rav Huna said: As soon as the Sefer Torah is opened, one may not even speak words of Halacha, as the verse states, 'And when it was open, the entire nation stood,' and standing refers to being silent. Rabbi Zera said that Rav Chasda derived this law from the verse, 'And the ears of the nation were toward the Sefer Torah.'"

This means that as soon as Torah reading begins in the synagogue, one may not engage in even a Torah conversation and certainly not idle chatter. This Halacha is derived from the fact that Ezra the Scribe opened the Sefer Torah, and the entire nation was silent so they could concentrate on what was being read.

The Letter of the Law

The Rishonim speak about some different details regarding this law. Maran Ha'Shulchan Aruch (Chapter 146) rules:

"Once the reader begins reading the Torah portion, one may not speak even words of Torah, even in between the Aliyot."

Although there are different opinions regarding the studying Torah between the Aliyot and even while the Torah is being read, all opinions agree that random conversation between two people is strictly prohibited, both during the reading and between the Aliyot.

Speaking Between the Aliyot

The students of Rabbeinu Yonah explain that speaking between the Aliyot is likewise prohibited because the Sages were concerned that this might lead to speaking during the actual Torah reading as well. Nevertheless, briefly replying to a halachic question in between the Aliyot is permissible. (See Mishnah Berurah, Subsection 6)

The Ma'amar Mordechai writes that the prevalent custom is that when a groom or Bar Mitzvah boy is present in the synagogue that the congregation sings in their honor before they go up to read the Torah. This custom has a solid basis, for there is no concern that the congregation will continue singing even after the Torah begins to be read.

Shabbat shalom
Reverend Hazan Daniel Benlolo

Congregation Maghen Abraham

Thoughts: Mayer Sasson

PERASHA BALAK

"...G-d his G-d is with him and the homage to a king מלך is in him." (23, 21)

From a curse to a blessing

It says in Sefer Hagan that one makes a blessing he must say it aloud so that his friend will answer Amen. If he does so, even if G-d forbid a curse was decreed on him it will change from a curse into a blessing,

We can learn an allusion to this idea from this verse.

As we know, Bilam wanted to curse Israel in the daily fraction of time when G-d is

angry at Israel. Since one can only say one word at this time, Bilam wanted to say "בָּלַם" - Destroy them - but G-d changed it from "בָּלַם" to "מֶלֶךְ" - king- which has the same letters - as it says "וּתְרַעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ" - "the homage to a king is in him."

The words "בָּלַם" and "מֶלֶךְ" add up to the numerology of the word Amen (including a one for the word).

We see from here that answering Amen turns a curse into a blessing, as per the Sefer Hagan.

SHABBAT SHALOM!!



Upcoming Events



Thursday, July 21 | 3:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.
(in the garden in Hampstead) All are welcome!
Sisterhood Book Review: "From Mid East to Far East" by: Gabrielle Elia - Reviewer: Gabrielle Elia
RSVP: sisterhood2020@hotmail.com
Free for Sisterhood Members & \$5 for non-members.



SAVE THE DATE
Soccer Tournament & BBQ - to come in August