



SOUTH HEAD YOUTH PARASHA SHEET

PARASHAT BALAK



There was a wicked king named Balak. King Balak ruled over the Moabites. King Balak was no friend of the Jewish people. When he heard that the Jewish people were traveling in the desert to Israel he decided to wage war against them. He knew that the Jewish people were protected by Hashem and he knew that Hashem answered all of Moshe's prayers. King Balak did not want to simply attack the Jewish people in a war. He wanted to find the source of the Jewish people's strength and attack this strength. King Balak consulted his ministers who told him



that the source of the Jewish people's strength is in Moshe's mouth. Moshe prays to Hashem and uses Hashem's name to strike enemies down in battle. King Balak realises that he needs to find a person with equally supernatural powers who can use Hashem's name against the Jewish people. King Balak finds out that there is a man named Bilam. Bilam was a non Jew. He was also a false prophet and a magician. He had the ability to speak to Hashem, but only at night time. Bilam was very happy to receive a request to destroy the Jewish people. However he was afraid that he would be unable to do so without Hashem's permission. So Bilam told Balak's messengers to stay over at his house for the night. During the night Hashem came to Bilam and asked, 'who are these people that are staying in your house?' Bilam responded, 'these people are messengers from King Balak. They have come to me with a request to curse the Jewish people. I

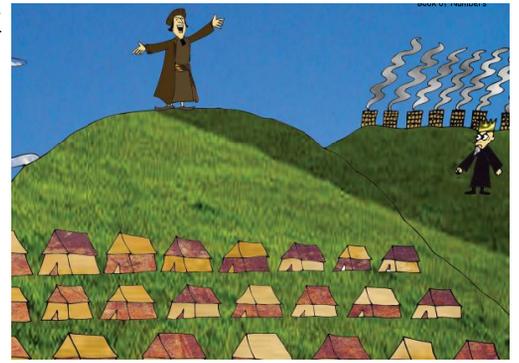
know Hashem that I may not seem important in Your eyes Hashem. But look, I am very important in the eyes of King Balak'. Hashem was very angry with Bilam and told him, 'do not go with the messengers tomorrow'. Bilam was a very sly man. He replied to Hashem, 'ok I won't go with the messengers. Instead I will curse the Jewish people from here'. To which Hashem responded, 'No, you will not curse My holy nation'. Bilam did not give up. He said to Hashem, 'fine I won't curse Your people. I will bless them instead'. To which Hashem replied, 'My people do not need your blessings. They are blessed by Me. You shall not curse them or bless them'.

When morning arrived, Bilam was too embarrassed to tell King Balak's messengers that Hashem did not permit him to curse the Jewish people. So he told them, 'I'm very sorry but I cannot go with you. You are not important enough and so Hashem does not let me go with you'. The messengers were very offended. They returned to King Balak and told him, 'Bilam will only come if important messengers escort him to you'. King Balak has no problem with this and immediately sends a group of important messengers. When the messengers arrived at Bilam's home they told him, 'King Balak has sent lots of money for you. However, you will only receive the money if you curse the Jewish people for him'. This time, Bilam had no choice but to tell the messengers the truth. He was a really greedy man and he really wanted all that gold that King Balak has sent him. 'My dear friends, I would really love to curse the Jewish people. However, Hashem has not given me permission to do so and I cannot do anything without the permission of Hashem. Perhaps you should stay here the night. Hashem may change His mind and allow me to go with you'. That night Hashem appeared to Bilam and told him, 'if you want to go, go. However, you may only do what I tell you to do'. Bilam was ecstatic! Perhaps he thought, Hashem will become angry with the Jewish people and I can then use this as an opportunity to curse them!

Bilam was so excited to curse the Jewish people that as soon as dawn arrived he jumped out of bed and prepared his donkey for his travels. Usually he would ask his servant to prepare his donkey for him. However, he was so excited he wanted to prepare his donkey on his own. While he was traveling to curse the Jewish people, an angel appeared and blocked the way of Bilam's donkey. The angel stood in front of the donkey holding a sword. When the donkey saw the angel he was immediately frightened and jumped to the side of the road and stood there frozen. The donkey refused to budge even one step further. Bilam had not seen the angel and became angry at the donkey's actions. He hit the donkey hoping that this would make the donkey continue walking. The donkey did continue walking however, it wasn't much further before the angel reappeared. This time there were fences on either side of the road and so the donkey had nowhere to jump. The donkey was very scared of the angel and so he went as close to the fence as possible and continued traveling. In doing so, he dragged Bilam's leg against the fence. Bilam was not happy with this at all. He shouted in pain as his leg dragged along the fence. As a punishment for traveling too close to the fence, he hit his donkey very hard. The donkey had no choice but to continue traveling. Then, once again, the angel appeared before the donkey. This time the donkey was traveling on a very narrow path. There was only room for one person to travel in each direction. The donkey had no choice but to stop out of fear that if he walked any further he would walk right into the angel and his

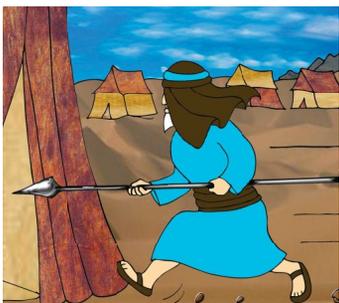


sword. When the donkey stopped traveling, Bilam became infuriated. He took his stick and hit his donkey as hard as he could. Suddenly, a miracle occurred. The donkey turned its head to face Bilam and said, 'why have you hit me three times? Have I ever behaved like this before?' As Bilam responded, 'no' he suddenly saw the angel standing in front of the donkey. The angel rebuked him and said, 'why did you hit the donkey? He did nothing wrong. I was the one blocking his way'. Bilam responded, 'I did not see you standing there. Why has Hashem sent you? He gave me permission to go with King Balak's messengers'. The angel replied, 'if you wish, you may go with the messengers. But remember, you may only do what Hashem tells you to do. Under no circumstances may you curse the Jewish people'. As he finished talking, the angel disappeared. Balak did not heed the words of the angel. He was still very hopeful that Hashem would become angry with the Jewish people and this would be his chance to curse them.



When Bilam arrived at the gates of Moab, King Balak immediately came to greet him. He took him to a view which enabled him to see the entire Jewish nation as they camped in the desert. Bilam told Balak, 'build for me seven Mizbachot (altars). I wish to offer sacrifices to Hashem before I curse the Jewish people'. Bilam was sure that Hashem would be happy with him for offering the Karbanot. However he was wrong! As soon as he finished offering the sacrifices to Hashem he opened his mouth to curse the Jewish people. However, instead of curses, beautiful blessings came out of his mouth. Bilam praised the Jewish people for listening to Hashem and for following His Mitzvot. King Balak was annoyed with Bilam for blessing the Jewish people. He took Bilam to a different view of the Jewish people hoping that he would be able to curse the Jewish people from the new location. But once again, the same thing happened. Bilam offered seven Karbanot to Hashem and when he opened his mouth to curse the Jews, beautiful blessings came out of his mouth instead. Now Balak was very angry. But he was not ready to give up. He knew that Bilam was his only chance of cursing the Jewish people. So he took Bilam to a third location. From this new location, Bilam and King Balak were able to see the Jewish people resting in their tents. It was a beautiful site. The tents were arranged in a manner that no two entrances faced each other. This meant that no one was able to peek into his neighbour's tent. In this location, Bilam once again brought up seven Karbanot. Once again when he opened his mouth to curse the Jewish people, beautiful blessings came out. He praised the Jews, 'How good are the tents of Yakov. I am sure that the Jewish people will conquer the land of Israel by defeating the other nations. The kingdom of the Jews will grow and grow.'. This infuriated King Balak. 'I told you to curse the Jewish people and instead you bless them. Leave me at once!' Bilam was very embarrassed. He said to King Balak, 'I cannot curse the Jewish people if Hashem does not allow me to. The only advice I can give you is: If you cause the Jewish people to become friendly with your nation and you make the Jewish people sin, Hashem will become angry with the Jewish people. This is what will allow you to conquer the Jewish people'. King Balak was very happy with this response and he immediately set to work.

King Balak knows that Hashem forbids Jewish people to intermarry with other nations. So the nations of Moab and Midiyan join forces and sent their pretty women into the Jewish camp. The women are ready to party. They bring wine, bread and idols together with them. The Moabite and Midiyanite women influence the Jewish men to bow down to their idols. This makes Hashem very angry. He tells Moshe that anyone who bowed down to the idols must be put to death. Moshe and the judges find out that many men from the tribe of Simeon have bowed down to idols. As they punish them, Zimri, the leader of the tribe of Simeon decides to challenge Moshe. He takes Kozbi, the daughter of Balak to Moshe and tells Moshe that he intends on marrying her. Of course Moshe tells Zimri that he may not do this. Zimri challenges Moshe and tells him that Moshe's wife Tziporah is not Jewish. However Moshe proves him wrong by telling him that he married Tziporah before the Torah was given. Additionally, Tziporah converted to Judaism. Zimri dismisses Moshe's words and takes Kozbi together with him into his tent. While Moshe and the judges contemplate what to do with Zimri, a man named Pinchas (who happened to be the grandson of Aharon) reminds Moshe that Zimri deserves the death punishment for his actions. Pinchas then takes a spear and pierces both Zimri and Kozbi. When the tribe of Simeon finds out what Pinchas has done to the leader of their tribe, they want to hurt him. However, they are stopped by an angel who tells them that Pinchas is a great hero as he took action to defend Hashem's honour.



Just like Hashem transformed Bilam's curses into blessings. We too should not hope for the destruction of our enemies, but their transformation into friends.

**It was great seeing you in Shule!
We hope you enjoy reading this Parasha Sheet and quizzing your family! -
Shabbat Shalom from Brookie and the South Head Youth Crew**

