



#165 • BALAK • 14 TAMUZ, 5777 • 7/8/17

# DAF KESHER

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## DVAR TORAH FEAR – CONTROL – LOVE

Balak, the Torah records in our Parshah, offered forty-two sacrifices to G-d. He was rewarded, the Gemara says (Sotah 47b, quoting Rav's teaching, as transmitted by his disciple Rabbi Yehudah), by becoming the ancestor of Ruth, who herself was the ancestor of King Shlomoh, who offered thousands of sacrifices.

The same passage in the Gemara tells us that Ruth was descended from Balak through Eglon the king of Moav. Eglon, king of Moav, enslaved the Nation of Israel for eighteen years after defeating them in battle. Israel cried out to Hashem to save them. One of the judges, Ehud son of Gera, using subterfuge, then managed to free Israel from Moabite reign. Ehud told the king he had a secret message for him; the king requested that everyone leave the room; Ehud then told Eglon that he brings the word of G-d. While King Eglon was standing up from his throne Ehud killed him, and Israel was victorious over Moav.

Hashem said to Eglon, says the Midrash: "You honored me and got up from your throne – by your life, through you I will establish, via your daughter (Ruth), royalty, with a king that will sit upon My throne. That daughter is Ruth and the king was Shlomoh, who (I Divrei Hayamim 29:23), 'sat on the Divine throne as a king'" (Midrash Tanchuma Vayechi 14).

This is difficult: True, Balak offered sacrifices – but he offered them to help Bilam destroy G-d's beloved People, Israel. A good deed, even in the midst of evil, does not go unrewarded; but how did Balak merit becoming the ancestor of the righteous Ruth? The same is true for Eglon – why should that one time he stood up for the word of G-d merit him such greatness!?

Balak and Eglon both had a connection with G-d and His People Israel. Balak's connection with Israel was through fear. He feared for his life and his people. So he tried to use Divine power to destroy the object of his fear, Israel. He offered up sacrifices to G-d with that end in mind.

Eglon also had a connection with Israel; but his was through domination and control. He enslaved Israel for eighteen years. His lording over Israel brought about his own death, when Ehud son of Gera saved the Jewish People from Moabite control by bringing down Eglon, the enemy king. Despite his warped connection to Israel, by standing up from his own throne he showed honor to the G-d of Israel. He said, in effect, "There is a throne above my own."

Ruth's connection to Israel not one of fear like her ancestor Balak, nor was it one of control, like her ancestor Eglon; hers was a connection of love. She wanted to join the righteous Naomi's People and serve their G-d. To connect with Israel Ruth, the princess of Moav, sacrificed her status and became a poor girl collecting grain in an Israelite field. Hashem was patient with Moav; He waited generations until their connection with Israel transformed from fear to control to love. And then King Balak's and King Eglon's connection with G-d transformed into King Shlomoh's true royalty – crowning Hashem as King over Israel and the entire world.

## SOURCE GUIDE: SEEING ALL OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Balak prefaced his second attempt to get Bilam to curse the Jewish People by telling him to “only see some of them but not all of them.” What was Balak’s strategy? What does it teach us about the Jewish People? This source guide is built on a talk given on a Shabbat evening by Harav Yisrael Alter, the Gerer Rebbe, זצ”ל (1895-1977, known by the title of his sefer as the **בית ישראל**) recorded in Kol Mevaser, who offers an explanation.

### A. Only See Some of Them

Balak’s first attempt to get Bilam to curse the Jewish People was unsuccessful. He tried something different the second time:

<p><b>1. Bamidbar 23:11-14</b>                  (11) Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them!”                  (12) He answered, saying, “What Hashem puts into my mouth is what I must make sure to say.”                  (13) Balak said to him, “Come with me to another place from where you will see them; however, you will see only a part of them, not all of them - and curse them me from there.                  (14) He took him to Sdeh Tzofim, to the peak of the mountain, and he built seven altars and offered up a bull and a ram on [each] altar.</p>	<p><b>במדבר כג:יא-יד</b>                  (יא) וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלָק אֶל בִּלְעָם מַה עָשִׂיתָ לִּי לְקַבֵּ אֲנִי לְקַחְתִּיךָ וְהִנֵּה בְרִכְתָּ בְרַךְ.                  (יב) וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשִּׁים יְדֹדְךָ בְּפִי אֶתוֹ אֲשַׁמֵּר לְדַבֵּר.                  (יג) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּלָק לָךְ נָא אֲתִי אֶל מְקוֹם אַחֵר אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶנּוּ מִשָּׁם אֶפְסֵם קְצָהוּ תִרְאֶה וְכֹלֹ לֹא תִרְאֶה וְקִבְּנוּ לִי מִשָּׁם.                  (יד) וַיִּקְחֵהוּ שָׂדֵה צִפִּים אֶל רֹאשׁ הַפְּסֻגָה וַיִּבֶן שִׁבְעָה מִזְבְּחֹת וַיַּעֲלֶה פָר וְאֵיל בְּמִזְבֵּחַ.</p>
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Why did Balak only want Bilam to see part of the Jewish People and not all of them?

We’ll follow the answer based on the talk given by the Gerer Rebbe on the second night of Rosh Hashanah in 5731 (October 2, 1970).

### B. All Seen as One

Even though each one of Israel is judged (like sheep going one by one), Hashem sees them all at once:

<p><b>2. Rosh Hashanah 18a</b>                  Said Rabbah son of the son of Chanah, quoting Rabbi Yochanan: And all of them are looked over in one glance.</p>	<p><b>ראש השנה יח.</b>                  אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן וכולן נסקרין בסקירה אחת.</p>
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Why does Hashem look at all of Israel in one sweep? The author of the **בית ישראל** quotes his father, the author of the **אמרי אמת** (Harav Avraham Mordechai Alter, זצ”ל, 1866-1948):

<p><b>3. Kol Mevaser Part 1, Parshat Balak</b>                  For when you look in particular at each and every one – you see more and more his sins and shortcomings. But this is not the case if you look in a general way at all of Israel – then you see only good.</p>	<p><b>קול מבשר חלק א' פרשת בלק</b>                  כשמסתכלין בפרטות על כל אחד ואחד - רואים יותר את העבירות והחסרונות. מה שאין כן, אם מסתכלין בכללות על כל ישראל - רואים רק טוב.</p>
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Three verses illustrate this. The first:

<p><b>4. Bereishit Rabbah 8:5</b>                  He redeemed my soul in peace from those who were at war against me, for the many were with me.</p>	<p><b>תהילים נה:יט</b>                  פָּדָה בְּשָׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי מִקְרָב לִי כִּי בְרַבִּים הָיוּ עִמָּדִי.</p>
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David Hamelech says that Hashem saved him during war for many were with him. Commentators differ about who these many were: angels (Ibn Ezra) or the masses of Israel and Yehudah who loved him and prayed for him (Rashi). The verse takes on new meaning in the context of the Gerer Rebbe’s drashah: I was peacefully redeemed in judgement – even though the accusers in the Heavenly Court would be inclined to point out my guilt – because I was united with the many. I was seen along with all of Israel and judged as good, redeemed.

The following verse also reflects this idea. It goes further than saying that Hashem created all people and

understands all of their actions:

<b>5. Tehillim 33:15</b> He Who forms their hearts together, Who understands all their deeds.	<b>תהילים לג:טו</b> הַיְצַר יַחַד לְבָם הַמְבִינֵן אֶל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם.
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It says that Hashem, who created all of them as one unit, puts all of their actions in context when taken together – and therefore judges all favorably.

Balak understood this secret:

<b>6. Bamidbar 23:13</b> Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place from where you will see them; however, you will see only a part of them, not all of them - and curse them for me from there.	<b>במדבר כג:יג</b> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּלָק לֵךְ נָא אִתִּי אֶל מְקוֹם אַחֵר אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶנּוּ מִשָּׁם אֶפְסֵם קַצְהוּ תִרְאֶה וְכִלּוֹ לֹא תִרְאֶה וְקַבְּנוּ לִי מִשָּׁם.
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He realized (here the Gerrer Rebbe builds on the teachings of the Rebbe of Peshis'cha, Harav Simcha Bunim, זצ"ל, 1765-1827) that if all of Israel is looked at together, they will definitely be perceived in a positive light. Balak therefore prevented Bilam from gazing at all of Israel at once.

### C. Mutual Responsibility

That same unity comes with a responsibility to be concerned about others' sins and shortcomings:

<b>7. Shavuot 39a</b> "One man will stumble on his brother" (Vayikra 26:37) – a man [will stumble] on the sin of his brother. This teaches us that all of Israel are responsible for one another.	<b>שבועות לט.</b> ... "וכשלו איש באחיו" (ויקרא כו:לז) – איש בעון אחיו. מלמד שכל ישראל ערבים זה בזה.
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In the words of the author of the **בית ישראל**:

<b>8. Kol Mevasser Part 1, Parshat Balak</b> This is also the matter of "areivut" – mutual responsibility – that Moshe worked so hard on creating before his death, uniting all of Israel. All of Israel are responsible for each other means that when they are all together one sees only good in them. The matter of mutual responsibility is not only that everyone is liable for the sins of the other, but that they are united. This causes them not to sin in the first place!	<b>קול מבשר חלק א' פרשת בלק</b> וזה גם ענין הערבות שמשרע"ה עבד על זה כל כך לפני מותו, לאחד את בני ישראל. כל ישראל ערבין זה לזה, היינו, שכולם יחד רואים רק טוב. וענין הערבות, לא רק שכל אחד חייב בעבירות של השני, אלא אם הם מאוחדים - זה גורם שלכתחילה אינם חוטאים.
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The principle that "All of Israel are responsible for one another" does not only add guilt for others' sins and give responsibility to intervene to stop another from sinning. It is also a positive force. The unity that is the basis of this principle creates a connection that strengthens all and prevents them from sinning.

Why is Israel seen in a positive light if they are all viewed as one?

Here are two suggestions: 1. When Israel actualizes their unity they affirm that they are connected at the core – to the righteous Avot, especially Yaakov Avinu who is the father of all of Israel. 2. When Israel is united, not only are their sins shared, but their mitzvot. Each Jew shares every other Jew's mitzvot.

## THE POWER OF UNITY BY RABBI GIDON SHOSHAN

The Torah in Parshas Ki Savo (Devarim 26:18-19) describes a unique facet of both G-d and Yisrael. The Torah says that G-d distinguished us as his nation and we, as it were, distinguished him as our G-d. In explaining the uncommon verb for distinguished – האמיר – the Talmud records that we distinguish G-d as one when we declare twice daily "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד." G-d, on the other hand, distinguishes us by declaring "מי כעמך – ישראל גוי אחד בארץ – Who is like your nation Israel, one nation in the land?" The word האמיר is a verb that

represents One G-d and one unified nation.

The author of the Sefer Maor V'shemesh (Harav Kolonymos Kalman Halevi Epstein, זצ"ל, 1751-1823), utilizes this idea to explain a basic theme of this week's parshah, Parshas Balak. The Torah opens this parshah by saying "Balak ben Tzippor saw all that Yisrael had done to the Emori" (Bamidbar 22:4). The Torah continues to record the fear that Moav shared with its neighbor Midian, "עתה ילחכו הקהל" – Now the congregation will lick up its entire surroundings like an ox" (Bamidbar 22:3). Rashi explains that both Moav and Midian feared for their lives after witnessing Yisrael's domination of Og and Sichon, the two kings whom Moshe heroically defeated in last week's parshah. Though Moav and Midian were historical enemies, they sought to combine forces against the formidable foe, Yisrael.

Two questions present themselves: Why was Moav's trepidation based on the way in which Yisrael dominated Emori? Emori, the kingdom of Sichon was a weaker military force than Og. In addition, why did Moav refer to Yisrael by the term הקהל – the congregation – and not by its name?

The Meor V'Shemesh explains that what Midian feared was the power that Yisrael has when it is entirely united. At that stage in history, the rabble-rousers and all those who were involved in the sin of the spies had already died, and Klal Yisrael was left with a pure population, entirely united behind the leadership of Moshe. Yisrael, in this state of total unity, is an undefeatable force. Moav realized that it was this great unity which gave Yisrael the ability to defeat Og and Sichon.

Since it was unity that provided the power the Torah describes it in the context of אמורי, a word meant to allude to the verb האמיר – the word that best expresses Jewish Unity – מי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ. It was this idea that was expressed again by Balak when he referred to Yisrael not by its name, but by its descriptive moniker, הקהל – the united congregation.

Seeing that only unity and peace might have the power to defeat Yisrael, Moav sought an historic allegiance with Midian in order to defend itself. But, Baruch Hashem, the power of a united Yisrael remains ever stronger than a united group of other nations.

Truthfully, in unity is found all power. Only a unified home has the stable power to be productive in so many areas. Only the unified nation has the power to rise above its enemies. Only unity can rebuild the Beis Hamidash.

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שבת שלום ומבורך

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The Daf Keshet, a project of Shapell's Darche Noam, is prepared by Rabbi Eliezer Kwass, edited by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon, and distributed by Emuna Diamond. To join the Shapell's Daf Keshet mailing list contact us at [dafkeshet@darchenoam.org](mailto:dafkeshet@darchenoam.org).



The following digital Torah resources have been extremely helpful in researching and preparing the Shapell's Daf Keshet:  
DBS – Hataklitor Hatorani, Otzar Hachochmah, the Bar Ilan Responsa Project, and Hebrewbooks.org.

**We pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.**