

# Who's on First (2024)

(Balak)

I remember a Twilight Zone episode years ago where aliens made an experiment by giving the simple minded Mr. Dinkle superhuman strength. They observe as he makes a fool of himself and instead of using his new found strength for the benefit of mankind he engages in all types of egotistical behavior until the aliens take away his powers and note the failed experiment. Something similar happens with Bilaam.

The Zohar discusses the interchangeability between the letters of Bilaam, Balak and Amalek. They essentially are all related to each other. We see this being played out in the news today. Hamas are the bloodthirsty savages that rape and torture while the ICC adorned with the robes of jurisprudence are their champions of justice. They defend the blood lust of their spiritual cousins while prosecuting the Israeli avengers as criminals.

Underneath their veils of legitimacy are the same vile characters. Even Bilaams donkey was more spiritual than the supposed prophet who rages at his donkey oblivious to the angel that stands in the way.

Balaam said to the she-donkey, "For you have humiliated me; if I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now." (Bamidbar 22:29)

Rashi brings down

If I had a sword in my hand: This matter made him greatly contemptible in the eyes of the dignitaries. This man was going to kill an entire nation with his mouth, yet for this she-donkey he needed weapons!- [Mid. Tanchuma Balak 9, Num. Rabbah 20:14]

Rav Binyamin Kahane explains that the talking donkey teaches us an important lesson. In the same way Hashem can make a wicked man like Bilaam a prophet, He can also make a donkey talk. There is essentially no difference. The wicked man with his new found power of speech reverts back to his base self. The prophecy that was borrowed he sells to the highest bidder and then like a donkey Hashem pulls him by the bit against his will to bless Israel instead of curse. The ICC judges with their borrowed robes similarly are like rapists thugs masquerading as judges. They too will eventually revert to their savage nature like Billam with his sword.

Those who pollute the word 'Justice' in their high offices in the ICC or Washington with their 'sanctions', ultimately bless with each curse they send. One might ask why is there so much pressure against Israel after the horrible massacre of Oct 7? One would think there would be a great deal of sympathy like there was after the Shoa. Instead of supporting the victims and the IDF who are battling these savage criminals in order to rescue their hostages, Israel is labeled the criminal. In order to understand this let me suggest some hints found in our Parsha.

**Va'era**

There are four interesting times the word 'Va'era' is used. The first time is in Parsha Vaera after Avraham is recovering from the brit milah. This is the commandment that sets the Jew aside from all other peoples as a 'chosen' and holy Nation. While some were drawn to this holy family others had animosity towards it and rejected Hashem who chose Israel.

In Parsha 'Vayera' Moshe is told that what Avraham was promised he would see realized in his time. The small tribe of Hebrews was now born as a Nation and their fame spread throughout the world. Along with the Torah on Mount Sinai came a great Sina (hatred) from the nations. Amalek, Bilaams spiritual cousin, attacked soon after to try and diminish the birth of this new spiritual reality of Am Israel. The 'Va'era' of Avraham became a political reality in the time of Moshe.

Our Parsha begins with another Va'era; 'Va'era Balak.' Balak saw that his days were numbered. Israel had vanquished Chesbon and the prophecy of Hashem building His Kingdom here on earth was becoming a serious reality. The hatred for Israel was not motivated by territory but a hatred for the 'choseness' of Israel. As the tribes of Israel grew unified as a Nation so too did the animosity of other nations towards it. Why would Hashem choose Israel and exclude others? 'What is the privilege that they have that we don't have,' they complained? Are we all not God's children? The jealousy of Israel united Balak and Bilaam who were formally enemies.

This unites the world today as well. Especially when Israel avenges their wrongs and threatens to manifest the biblical prophecies they so detest. There is a type of Balak and Bilaam within Israel as well that undermines its own mission. For example Korach who was jealous of Moshe and the conflicts of the Erev Rav and the Meraglim. It's not by coincidence that those in Israel protesting Bibi and justice reform are connected to the Jew haters outside of Israel. If Bibi negotiates a hostage release he is condemned by them, and if he continues the war he is also condemned. He can't win. Of course the settlement movement leaders who force Bibi to stay strong are hated even more and the sanctions and judgements from outside are a consequence.

One might say that in addition to jealousy Korach was spiritually misled by a vision he sensed of his future descendants. Maybe Balak also sensed that Moshiach would come from his family. That future potential was there however nevertheless one is punished for the sins they do today.

### **Who's on First?**

There is a famous comedy sketch by Abbott and Costello called 'who's on first', where the language gets mixed up trying to decipher who is on first base in a particular ball game. There is a lot of confusion today as well regarding 'who is on first.' The resentment of the chosen people by others who may have been first before them is a resentment that accelerates towards the times of Moshiach.

There is a time limit when Hashem has promised us Moshiach will arrive. When the required amount of souls of Israel have entered the world, the required amount of merit used up by those who have battled Israel and the required amount of conquest, growth and repentance of the holy Nation, this time will arrive.

Hashem in His infinite wisdom designed a world in which in many cases the first growth is a type of shell that is ultimately discarded for the fruit that it protected. There is a similar idea in the first growth of the foreskin discarded at the brit milah. As the birth pangs of Moshiach grow there are those last sparks that will attach themselves to Israel and those who violently oppose it, like the foreskin, sensing their end is about to come.

Binyamin Kahane explained that the war of the Arabs has nothing to do with the misconception of territory. It is a holy war and the children of Amalek will gladly blow up their own children if it stops the redemption from happening and causes more Jews to die. All the haters who hate each other are united in their hatred of Israel. All who think they are first will kill each other as they conspire to destroy Israel. Those who are part of this foreskin from Bilaam to Balak to Amalek will unite in order to be snipped off once and for all. Whether they wear robes of respected judges or whether they tear their robes off when their stolen craft is exposed and their savagery can no longer be concealed, in the end the deceivers will revert to their true nature.

The fourth Vayera is 'Va'era Pinchas.' (Bamidbar 25:7) As the curses of Bilaam increase with severity they transform into blessings and accelerate the redemption. Bilaam's forces in Washington that curse Israel with sanctions have resulted in opening the heart of Israel and consequently endearing our Father above. The tzedakah people are now giving in their time, self sacrifice and money is unprecedented. Despite the sanctions we continue to avenge.

Benzi Gopstein, who has been sanctioned for being a tzadik, led a protest this week for all the other tzadikim who have been sanctioned. This new challenge has only increased his efforts and has generated a new flame of resistance against compliance to foreign pressures. I went there to put some cash in his pockets and he told me that many people are coming out and doing the same. These sanctions have a reverse effect and are actually accelerating the demise of Bilaam Balak and Amalek.

### **The Padlock**

A good metaphor that explains the who's on first concept, the first foreskin growth destined to be discarded and the various seeds of moshiach that are also hidden within and needed for the final redemption is a padlock. I remember the old locks that you would turn once to the right, then once to the left, and then once more to the right and open. Now if you turned once to the left, you are definitely closer to redemption however nothing looks any different and you are still imprisoned. If you turn once more to the left you are extremely close to redemption but still all is dark. That last turn brings redemption but could not have happened without what went before to prepare this.

All of the stages of history are leading up to a divine revelation that each stage is preparing, from those sifted out and those sifted in. There are some things completely discarded and then other things that are refined.

During the Corona epidemic there were some who did not question authority and obeyed like sheep while others protested and were vilified and persecuted. Many of the same vilified

protesters after Oct 7, who apparently had been more enlightened, suddenly became closed like a padlock against Israel, while others who previously had been blind, suddenly saw the light when it came to their support of Israel. The complex preparation and sifting process of the Jewish people and mankind, is only understood by Hashem. Here is another padlock metaphor.

A Christian tried to convert me once and I told him that we actually believe the same thing, the only difference is mathematics. 'What do you mean?', he said. I said to him to correct me if I am wrong, but don't the Christians believe in the following three principles? Number one, they believe that Hashem had a son. He was Jewish. He looked like everyone else but there was something intrinsically different. He was Hashem's son. Number two, they believe that he suffers for the sins of the world and through his suffering the world is being rectified. And number three, they believe that if you want to know the Father, you need to know the son. Is that correct? Absolutely he said, but what do you mean the difference is mathematics? I told him that we also believe that Hashem had a son who was Jewish, but it was not just one son. 'All' of the Jewish people are Hashem's children. They may look like everyone else but there is something intrinsically different about them. It's not just one Jew who suffers, but 'the Jewish people' suffer for the sins of the world and through our persecution the moral compass of the world is evolving. And finally, if you really want to understand Hashem, you really need to sit with an observant Jewish man with a long beard and he will explain things to you. Like the padlock metaphor, the template has been created. All that is needed is one small shift and there will be a great correction.

The story of Korach is reminiscent of Christianity with the claim we are all holy. The story of Balak is the first place in the Torah that writes about Moshiach. As I mentioned earlier maybe to some degree a vision of future purity that will come from this impurity confused them. The jealousy and hatred that motivates our enemies may have within them some small sparks, like Ruth, that are ultimately needed to perfect the holiness of Israel. The Zohar explains that Hashem had to manipulate the world in a way, in order to choose Israel and at the same time preserve Israel from the jealousy of its enemies.

He took a little bit of deadly poison spices and put it at the opening of that vessel [containing the Torah], then called his servants and said to them, You faithful of mine, would you like to have some of this potion? They said, Let's see what it consists of. They took a bit of it to taste and, even before that, when they only smelled it, they felt like they were going to die. They figured to themselves, If he gives that potion to his son, he would certainly die, and we will inherit our lord's goods. They said to him, Our lord, this potion is only proper and suitable for your son. Here are some of our wages. Give it as a bribe to your son so that he will accept this potion.

So too, the Holy One, blessed be He, is a wise healer and knew if He gave the Torah to Yisrael before He informed THE CHIEF MINISTERS, they would pursue Yisrael for her sake every day, and kill them. But instead, HE INVITED THEM AND THEY REFUSED and they gave Him offerings and gifts so that YISRAEL should accept her. Moses accepted all of them to give to Yisrael. This is what is written: "You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive: you have received gifts..." (Tehilim 68:19).

Therefore, Yisrael inherited the Torah without any disagreement and without any accusation at all. Praised is He and praised is His name forever and ever. (Parsha Balak 150)

The nations were hoping that the Torah and the choseness of Israel would cause them to be destroyed. When they suddenly realize that Israel is about to inherit the combined physical and spiritual world that they renounced for the animal and barbaric, suddenly the Gentile comes out of the Gentile and the Jew comes out of the Jew. Along with the multitudes of the Gentiles who protest there are the refined few to be extracted. Among the rebels of the Jews who tried to throw away their choseness, also there are many to be refined and returned to their source.

The irony is that the catalyst that spreads the fire of antisemitism is the very desire within Israel to be like the other nations and reject their choseness.

Come and see the offerings and gifts that Yisrael received from the CHIEFS OF THESE NATIONS, because of which neither death nor the Other Side could dominate them, and not only that, they received the Torah without any protest. They also received gifts and presents from all. When they sinned, it is written: "And the children of Yisrael stripped themselves of their ornaments" (Shemot 33:6), which are "gifts from men," WHICH THEY RECEIVED (Parsha Balak 151)

We are very close to the days of Moshiach. Some small sparks and grains will be sifted through while the arrogant firsters will be sliced off like the foreskin as they battle each other like dogs for the raw meat of Israel. In Egypt preceding the Exodus there was a war between the first born Egyptians that killed each other the night before Yetziat Mitzraim. We are very close to the end.

## **Conclusion**

I will end with a joke that expresses much of what we have discussed. There was an antisemite sitting in a restaurant and he looked hatefully at a Jew sitting at a table not far away. He proclaimed 'I am buying a drink for everyone here - except for that Jew.' The Jew smiled back. Infuriated, the Goy continued, 'I am buying an appetizer for everyone here - except for that Jew.' Everyone smiled and thanked the Gentile including the Jew. He became even more infuriated and bellowed, the dinner is on me for everyone here. Except for that Jew'. Again everyone thanked him very much, including the Jew. Furious the antisemite got up to leave. After paying his bill he asked the cashier, 'Why is that Jew smiling and thanking me every time I am publicly insulting him?' The cashier said, 'Oh, you mean Moshe sitting there? He is the owner.'

In conclusion, the protesting Jew that tries to undermine our cause in order for everyone to 'like us', creates the opposite effect. The Gentile sees weakness and comes to attack and butcher us. This causes a wave of reborn Jews to sacrifice and unite with their people against our enemies. Our running away causes us to return even against our will. It is a time that challenges some Gentiles to stand with Israel and others to give free expression to their repressed jealousy. It is a time where the brit milah is about to be performed not only on our external enemies but internally on the heart of the Jewish people. The animosity between those who do not accept Hashem's choice of Israel and His rejection of all of the false prophets and seers is being weighed on the scales of Israel's local struggles that have become international struggles. Rav

Kahane brings down many times that the Geula will come about only through faith. Whatever will transpire, will transpire. I am sitting front row center in the Land of Israel watching each curse turn into a blessing, strengthening the people of Pinchas and waiting to see - 'Who's on first'.

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