

#40 Balak Numbers 22:2-25:9

By Moshe Schwab

While praying:

- * Be firmly attached to God. Seek His approval and change what needs to change so you can be clean spiritually.
- * Enjoy following God, fellowship with Him. Get past the things that keep you from that.
- * Be resilient; stay connected to God; develop a life story for each stage of life that gives you strength.
- * Inspect your life and be thoughtful. Take time to think how your life is going and make your life purpose filled.

Balak means, “devastator,” “empty,” or “wasting” (ref. Wiki). Moav and Midyan were afraid of Israel so Balak, the king of Moav hired Bilam (Balaam) to curse Israel. Bilam (Balaam) first refuses, but inquires again and God says he can go, but he is to do only what God tells him to do. God was angry at Bilam and made an angel to stand in his way and had Bilam's donkey speak to him. The angel tells Bilam that he is to only speak what he tells him.

When it is time to curse Israel he ends up blessing Israel. King Balak takes Bilam to another place and he ends up blessing Israel again. The false prophet Bilam is taken to another place by Balak and Bilam realizes that he cannot use his incantations and allows God to speak blessings again for Israel. He says in Numbers 24:9, "Blessed be all who bless you! Cursed be all who curse you." Balak is very angry with Bilam, but Bilam says there was nothing he could do about it. Further Bilam prophecies that a king will come from Israel and destroy all their enemies some day.

Next, some in Israel met prostitutes who enticed them to commit sexual sin and they also made sacrifices to the pagan god Ba'al Pe'or. When we sin, we can cause a curse to fall on us. Because of Israel's in, God allows a plague to fall on Israel. Moshe had the men hung that engaged with the prostitutes. A man brought one of these women near the Tent of Meeting and Pinchas went after him and speared him and the woman. As a result of the idolatry and sexual sin, 24,000 died from a plague, but the plague stopped because of Pinchas.

Ironically, the blessings that God made Balaam pronounce over Israel became part of the modern Jewish service and is called the Ma Tovv. Another irony in the Torah portion is that the donkey saw the angel and Balaam didn't see it; Balaam should have been able to see, but continued on with his folly. God made the donkey to talk to Balaam and Balaam talked to the donkey; it is a humorous point – perhaps we could say that God made Balaam to look like his donkey. It seemed that Balaam repents, but like other wicked people, his repentance is only temporary. He opposes the purposes of God and Israel entering their land, but he is unsuccessful; instead, God made Balaam to bless Israel; Balaam's motives were wrong and we should remember to be careful that our motives line up with the scriptures and not try to wrongly justify our behavior.

Also, according to Revelation 2:14 it was Balaam who laid the stumbling block in front of Israel with the worship of Ba'al Pe'or. In Jewish thought, it is wrong to do anything that can cause a person to fail or sin. He couldn't curse Israel, so he brought a curse on them in another way. He ends up dying shortly after for his sin.

What can we learn from Balaam's behavior?

We should not just listen to what God says, but do what He says.

We need to have deep values.

We should never consider witchcraft or the occult. The Torah says not even learn to do what the pagans do.

Watch out that we don't let power get to our head as Balaam did.

Protect your mind from wrong thinking.

Do not acquire money through evil gain.

Do not cause others to sin.

Be patient with one another and be encouraging. Say encouraging things to each other. We need each other to stay strong.

Another thing this portion teaches us is that God is over all. Rabbi Shaul said that Yeshua is over all in Ephesians 1:19-23 NKJV:

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

It says there is great power to those who believe. If you lived in an ancient society, you probably wondered why things happened sometimes. Shaul says that Yeshua the Messiah is over all and that includes all the pagan gods and so called people who said they operated some kind of power (from devil spirits like Balaam). The Messiah is over all and none of these powers can touch us. What God blesses can't be cursed if we stand on God's word in faith. Also, it says that Yeshua is the head over the believers. The head of your denomination is not the head over the believers.

The Haftarah is Mikhah (Micah) 5:6-6:8 Micah talks about the future Israel, and says they are like the dew and rain from the Lord; like a lion. They will defeat their enemies and God will remove idol worship and cause havoc on those who would not listen to God. Micah says God brought them out of slavery and Bilam blessed them. So in the present, God demands in Micah 6:8 CJB, "To act justly, love grace and walk in purity with your God." Someday, God will perform what He said He will perform. Notice it says grace; God's commandments were a gift of God's grace for mankind.

Be firmly attached to God. Seek His approval and change what needs to change so you can be clean spiritually. Ya'akov said in James 4:8-9 NKJV, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep!" Perhaps mourning over our past sinful behaviors is foreign to most people. Better to mourn now than when we stand before Yeshua (2 Corinthians 5:10) and are judged. We need to be close to God and change. Taking seriously our sin helps us to stay away from sin. "He who conceals his sins will not succeed; he who confesses and abandons them will gain mercy;" Proverbs 28:13 CJB.

Not only are we to be honest with God, but we should enjoy following God and fellowship with Him. Get past the things that keep you from that. Honor and respect God, but also have a relationship with Him. Talk to Him and be willing to listen for His direction. He is not going to tell us to do something that is wrong; that would be from the devil. James 4:7 NKJV says, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." When God gives a thought to do good, do it. God will also lead you in your important decisions as well.

Life isn't always clear and what we go through can be difficult at times, but be resilient; stay connected to God; develop a life story for each stage of life that gives you strength. Being resilient means, you are able to recover from difficulties with ease. Have a mindset that you are going to be okay. I'm **not** saying that we shouldn't be reasonable. Take the action you need to take and be sensible.

Almost every day I give something that's bothering me to God in prayer. "Don't worry about anything; on the contrary, make your requests known to God by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving. Then God's shalom, passing all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with the Messiah Yeshua;" Philippians 4:7-8 CJB. It says we are to give our requests with thanksgiving; we are to have some sort of expectancy. Then give it to God and don't let it keep coming back and take away your peace.

Perhaps your recent life story can be one where you have been able to succeed or conquer and move on. In my own personal life, I continue to press on even though I have some physical difficulties. Believe that God has plans for you and keep following what He wants you to do.

Hebrews 10:22-25 NKJV

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

Shaul was determined to move forward with his life, "I know what it is to be in want, and I know what it is to have more than enough - in everything and in every way I have learned the secret of being full and being hungry, of having abundance and being in need. I can do all things through him who gives me power.;" Philippians 4 12-13 NKJV. Shaul gives a little snippet of his life story there.

Inspect your life and be thoughtful. Take time to think how your life is going and make your life purpose filled. "I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, and my spirit makes diligent search;" Psalm 77:6 NKJV. David has some serious things going on in his life. None of us are immune to striving to do what is right, trying to please God, and to be a blessing to others. It takes some thought and commitment. I am committed to do what is right and be a blessing to everyone I know and meet; how about you?

Think about how you can be a better person. Don't be like Balaam and make goals that lead you away from a good relationship with God. Be focused and think about how you are going to

please God. Watch out for feelings that keep you from being a blessing to others. Don't let the devil distract you. You are going to stand before God, so take responsibility for yourself.

Recognize when you are tired and recharge. Workplaces give people breaks; it gives them the opportunity to recharge and perform better. I do fun things to recharge; nature, music, fun, humor, and sleep are great ways to recharge. I recharge several times a day. Be faithful and think about how you can accomplish your spiritual goals. One of the most successful businesses ask the question, "What if." What if I prayed a little more; what if I found something to do that could bring blessings to others in some way? My wife served inner city children for 4 years and did that in spite of the terrible traffic she had to go through.

When we do what is wrong, we bring evil and bad into the world. Don't be a Balaam who only thought of himself. Be close to God, be near and dear to God, and do right. Fellowship with God and enjoy your relationship with God. Don't let things get you down and give things that bother you to God. Understand where you are headed in life. Are you working at being faithful; are you determined to move forward. Think about how you will accomplish life the way God wants you to. Make sure you are sensible with your goals; don't try to overdo it. You don't have to do everything. There is no compromise though in doing what is right. Stick with it; you can do it.