

Parshas Balak

This week's Parsha is Balak, the fascinating story of King Balak, who hired Balaam to curse the Jews. In the beginning of the Parsha, Rashi asks, who hated the Jews more, Balaam or Balak. Rashi concludes that Balaam hated the Jews more. The reason is that Balaam could have told Balak there would be no need to curse the Jews, as there was no permission from Hashem to go to war with Moav, and therefore, there was nothing for Balak to worry about.

Balak was worried and contrived a conspiracy theory (that is very similar to Pharoah's conspiracy theory in Parshas Shemos) that there was a nation, the Jews, travelling near his kingdom, and to protect himself and his country, he must curse them. Balak's position in wanting to defend his nation was understandable, even his method of hiring a spiritual antagonist to try and curse the Jews because part of Balak's fear was the invincibility of the Jews by having Hashem on their side.

Since Balaam would have presumably known that Moav was not to be conquered or fought with, Balak could have been spared the cost, but since Balaam went through with it, it shows his hate for the Jews.

Torah is so relevant to our times. The posuk, in highlighting Balak's fear, doesn't mention the word Jews, just the conspiracy theory that the Jews may fight him. Wouldn't it stand to reason to consult or send a delegation to ensure that his investment was sound or that he was, in fact, at risk?

We see a similar mode of antisemitism in our world today. Many conspiracy theorists and antisemites are devising all sorts of theories about Jews; how real are any of them? Like Balak, not very. Furthermore, those who want to cause us harm, like Balaam, wish to do so and especially will fight us at the opportunity on a spiritual level. The story of Balaam follows very well from the previous few Parsheos, which tell us Jewish weakness, the Meraglim, Korach, and the waters of argument that lost Moshe his ability to enter the land.

Our enemies prey on our weakness and pounce when they are able. What was Balaam's destiny and Balak's ultimate success? They cast doubt and caused the Jews to sin lewdly. This weakness is born from hate within and not living with the Torah. Ultimately, Balaam prophesied about the end of days, Mashiach's time, our time, where we are told through Torah we can bring Mashiach. Through learning and living with the Torah, the star will burst forth from Yakov, and we will usher in the Era of Mashiach, as prophesied even by our enemies.

Our enemies inadvertently prophesy and shed light on the truth of the Jews by trying to "curse" us spiritually; like Balaam, they show the truth about how enviable we are and how good our nation is, Mah Tov Ohalecha Yaakov and Mi Kamcha Yisroel. We are unlike any others; let us know and feel it, and live Torah-filled lives so we love our neighbours, and then ultimately, we can receive Mashaich, as promised.

Good Shabbos