

# This Land is My Land

## A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

### Essay #5—Parshat Balak 5761

Sorry to have missed last week's essay (Parshat Balak), but I was away from the Land and found it hard to write about it, not being there. Still we can review the parshah with its contemporary ideas of Balak and Bilaam and their united efforts to keep the Jews away from the Holy Land.

The Jews were commanded to avoid Moab and to not wage war with them. And so they did, bypassing the entire land of Moab on their way to the Holy Land. Only when they encountered Sichon and Og, who were to the north of Moab, were the Jews forced to wage a war against them, for they refused the Jews passage to the Holy Land. But nonetheless Moab was not to be touched. Then what caused Balak to become frightened and to call Bilaam to his aid? Of what was he afraid? And what caused Bilaam to act the way he did, to try so hard to curse the Jews after being given an emphatic “**NO!**” by God?

Balak and Bilaam represent those with an evil eye towards anything good. This translates in our every day life as those who seek the destruction of others, despite the benefit one may receive from the other. Despite the Jews being commanded to stay away from Moab, leaving them to progress and prosper on their own, they could not bear the fact that the Jews were walking away from them alive and well. They had that urge to destroy them altogether and what better way than with the power of Bilaam, who, for a dollar or a million, would badmouth anyone and destroy them with his words?!

History proves that most Palestinians arrived in the Holy Land in the late 19th century, when Baron de Hirsh and Baron Rothschild were funding the return to Israel and rebuilding the Land. The Palestinians benefited greatly from the return of the Jews to the Holy Land. Yet, they could not bear to see anything good in them nor were they able to bear any progress and prosperity amongst the Jews. And so followed pogrom after pogrom, and war after war. And, when they could not succeed -- for God said we are a blessed nation despite their attempts to prove otherwise -- they turn to Bilaam, the media, to champion their cause.

We can thus translate the Biblical account of Balak and Bilaam in contemporary terms. We find that when the Jews conquered the lands of Sichon and Og, when they reached the Jordan River and were on the verge of entering and taking control of the Holy Land, just then arises a non-entity, a Balak (see Rashi, *Numbers* 22:4) who becomes a leader of a people (much as takes place in the Middle East today). Fearing the Jews, for no reason at all (on the contrary, the Jews provided them with the means for livelihood and education, even when the other Arab nations failed the Palestinians in every sense, as well as in other areas), they send for Bilaam, the badmouthing media, to wage their battle, for, as our Sages teach, the pen can be mightier than the sword (*cf.* Rashi, *ibid.*, and *Erkhein* 15b). And, as we have often seen, a war waged in the media is often more successful than one waged on the battlefield. So Bilaam enters the scene and, for honor and wealth, sells his soul to the Moabites, in order to condemn the Jews.

But our Sages also teach that it was Moshe's might that caused Moab to wonder about the Jews. They could not understand how the Jews constantly remained, despite all the efforts to destroy them. And they

discovered that Moshe's power was "his mouth" (Rashi, *loc. cit.*), i.e., his power of prayer. Thus, in order to counter Moshe's prayer, they brought in Bilaam, whose power also was "the mouth."

Herein lies the key to defeating Bilaam and ultimately entering and conquering the Land. By using the power of Moshe, the power of prayer. As stated in the previous essay, the Holy Land and prayer are synonymous. When we pray, we invoke the sanctity of the Land. Our prayer becomes our weapon to conquer and defeat all our enemies. It also allows us to enter into and conquer the Holy Land. We need not succumb to the Balaks, the non-entity "leaders," nor to the Bilaam's and their "talking donkeys," with whom they maintain "marital relations" (*Sanhedrin* 105b) and immoral connections, a lifestyle maintained by many contemporary "leading" heads of state. We need not be vanquished by the forces who wish to impose their immoral lifestyles upon us. All we need to counter them is prayer: more prayers, additional prayers, relentless prayers. Then the sanctity of the Land will be revealed, then the power of the mouth will proclaim the truth, that the Land belongs to the Jews, as so decided by God (see [Essay #1](#)).

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