

BILAAM WAS A 'SPIRITUAL' MAN

by Rabbi Label Lam

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1. BILAAM GOT UP IN THE MORNING, SADDLED HIS DONKEY, AND WENT WITH THE OFFICERS OF MOAB. (22:21)

BACKGROUND:

It was almost forty years since the Exodus.

And Balak, the king of the nation of Moab, is frightened by the growth of the Jewish nation.

So he asks a non-Jewish prophet, Balaam, to curse the Jews.

It's interesting how Jewish tradition picks up on a seemingly minor detail in this story.

Bilaam has many servants.

Yet the Torah tells us that he saddles his mule by himself.

Why? Because he's excited to start out on his evil mission.

There's another time the Torah makes this point.

It's about our forefather Abraham.

When he was going to fulfill G-d's commandment.

And there too it tells us that Abraham got up in the morning.

And saddled his donkey by himself.

...It's an important lesson.

Think about some of the things that are part of our lives.

Maybe it's the charitable causes we believe in.

Or our children's Jewish education.

And our commitment to Israel. And so on.

... If we are excited about something we get personally involved.

Because it's really important to us.

And we want to make sure it gets done.

Instead of leaving it to others to do.

And just assuming that it will get done.

2. "LET ME DIE AS A RIGHTEOUS PERSON" (23:10)

Bilaam was a 'spiritual' man.

He knew that a human being has a soul. And that the soul is eternal.

And his deepest wish is that he should have eternal life.

That when he dies, he goes to the World of the Righteous.

... But he forgot one thing.

That eternity doesn't 'happen'.

... We create it.

How? By living an ethical life. A moral life.

By living up to our responsibilities to our fellow man.

And our responsibilities to G-d.

The Torah's bottom line: If you want to die as a great person ... live like one.

3. RABBI SHLOMO ZALMAN AUERBACH.

He was recognized as one of the greatest Torah scholars of our generation. And especially for his amazing commitment to helping others.

His funeral in Jerusalem a number of years ago, was attended by over three hundred thousand people.

... It was during the procession in downtown Jerusalem. A policeman was desperately trying to redirect traffic.

At one point, he asked someone: "Who in the world was this man?"

Boy! If I knew my funeral would be like this I'd drop dead right now!"

... But we know it doesn't work like that!

He died a certain way.

Because he lived a certain way.

4. A DAY FOR JERUSALEM

This Sunday is a fast day 'the 17th of Tammuz'.

It commemorates the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem, by the Roman legions in the year 70 CE.

... It's something we should always remember:

Of all those laying claim to Jerusalem, there is only one nation, that has mourned and fasted over its destruction.

For almost two thousand years.

Good Shabbos.

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