

# IN ORDER FOR NOTHING TO HAPPEN

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

The expression "No news is good news" takes on greater proportions of meaning as we study the events described in this week's portion. The Omniscient Observer and Narrator of the Torah, unusually so, moves to a side show beyond the immediate focus of the Jewish People for the first time since Abraham enters the spotlight as the individual whose family would be the protagonist of human history. What for?

We are gifted with a box seat to observe in a comedy of errors how the malevolent machinations of Bilaam and Balak are continually frustrated with only impasses on their way to attempt the impossible. We can enjoy from a close distance the volley of folly between two enemies forced into cooperation. We eventually witness their plans unravel and backfire as the intended curses are converted to blessings.

All this transpires as the Jewish People sit securely in their "goodly tents" enjoying the genuine bliss of a G-d centered individual and communal life together. While from hilltops nearby missiles are ready to reign down holy terror and the strange bedfellows of politics born nurse their ugly dreams the innocence of happy Jewish living persists.

Without this perspective we might be lulled into a false sense of security or be unduly induced into a panic mode. It seems there are more secret wars than we can ever count that remain forever the stuff of dreams deferred and damned. We may be more vulnerable than we think and more secure than we presume. We can never know how many times and to what extent we are being spared.

Rabbi Yakov Emden writes in the late 18th century: "Many have tried to injure us, but they were unable to wipe us out. While all the great civilizations have disappeared or been forgotten, the Nation of Israel that clings to G-d is alive today! What will the wise historian answer when he examines this phenomenon without prejudice? Was this all purely by chance? When I contemplated these great wonders they took on greater significance than all the miracles and wonders that G-d performed for our ancestors in Egypt, in the desert, and when they entered Israel. The longer this exile extends, the miracle of Jewish existence becomes more obvious to make known G-d's mastery over nature and history."

Cecil Roth concludes in "History of the Jews": "The preservation of the Jew was not casual. He has endured through the power of a certain ideal based upon the recognition of a higher power in human affairs. Time after time in his history, moreover, he has been saved from disaster in a manner

which cannot be described except as "providential". The author has deliberately attempted to write this work in a secular spirit; he does not think that his reader can fail to see in it, on every page, a higher imminence."

In the world that we live in, with overt threats abounding, perhaps the best news we can hope to hear and that which calls for daily recognition is- no news. Paradoxically, plenty has to happen in order for nothing to happen.

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