

# A CANDIDATE FOR BLESSINGS

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

*How goodly are your tents Yaakov, your dwelling places Israel... (Bamidbar 24:5)*

So flattering are the words of Bilaam that if not for their lengthiness our sages would have included them in our daily recital of the Shema. In the end Bilaam pronounced a great blessing about the Jewish People. My question is: Where is his blessing? It was told to Avraham by HASHEM that "I will bless those that bless you and those who curse you I will curse." (Breishis 12:3) If Bilaam effectively blessed the Jewish Nation so generously then we should see some manifestation of his blessing in return. There seems to be none. Why not?

In a futuristic story the Talmud (Avoda Zara 2A-B) tells us of conversation between The Almighty and the nations of the world when the Epoch of the Moshiach will have already dawned. Here it is in an abbreviated form: Rabbi Chanina Bar Papa -some say Rabbi Simai- expounded so: In the times to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will take a scroll of the Torah in His embrace and proclaim: "Let him who has occupied himself with this come and take his reward!"

There upon the Kingdom of Edom (Rome) will enter first before Him... The Holy One blessed be He will say to them: "With what have you occupied yourselves?" They will reply: "O' Lord of the Universe, we have established many market-places, we have erected many baths, we have accumulated much gold and silver, and all this we did only for the sake of Israel that they might have the leisure to occupy themselves with the study of Torah." The Holy One blessed be He will say in reply: "Fools of the world, all that you have done, you have only done to satisfy your own desires. You have established marketplaces for the purpose of prostitution, baths to indulge yourselves, and as for the silver

and gold they are mine...Are there any amongst you those who have studied Torah?" They will go out with crushed spirits!

After Rome has departed Persia enters...And to the question of the Holy One Blessed be He, "What was your occupation?" They will answer, "We have constructed many bridges, conquered many great cities, we were engaged in many great wars, all for the sake of Israel to enable them to study Torah." The reply to which will be, "All that was done by you was done for your own sake! Fools of the world, bridges you made for the collection of taxes, cities you conquered to impose labor and as to waging war, I am the Lord of battles...Are there any amongst you who have studied Torah?" They too will leave with crushed spirits!

The Brisker Rav ztl. asked an important question about the truthfulness of this dialogue. These nations are making up a last minute story just to ride on the coattails of the Jewish Nation that did devote itself to Torah study. They're telling lies and making excuses about why they did what they did. Why then does The Almighty only refer to them as "fools of the world"? They should rather be called what they really are-"liars".

In the grand scheme of things they are really telling the truth. They made bridges and banks that benefited the Jewish People and actually enabled them to study Torah. The reason they are more fittingly titled "fools" is because they only failed to have that benefit in mind.

Bilaam too could say no different than what G-d had scripted him to proclaim. Sure, he blessed the Jewish Nation with his mouth, and what he said was true but his heart betrayed a contrary agenda. Therefore he foolishly fails to qualify as a candidate for blessings. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).