

STORM ON THE HORIZON

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

And he sent messengers to Bilaam son of Beor ... (Bamidbar 22:5)

In the world of weather, they call it the 'Perfect Storm.' It is when weather conditions that normally do not co-occur do co-occur, resulting in dramatically destructive storms. According to meteorologists, such 'perfect storms' occur only once in one hundred years, though, three have actually occurred in the last sixteen years already.

In this week's parshah, a perfect storm of a different nature is also brewing. At the start of the parshah, we don't learn of any inherent relationship between Balak and Bilaam, other than the fact that Balak is a king with a problem and Bilaam is the man with his solution.

In fact, as Rashi points out, Moav over whom Balak was king and Midian, the nation of Bilaam, previously had fought like cats and dogs. It was only their common hatred of the Jewish people that allowed them to suppress their hatred for each other and instead focus that hatred on their common enemy. As the song goes, "This one hates that one, and that one hates this one, but, everyone hates the Jews!"

However, the Holy Zohar, which looks at reality on a far more esoteric level, on this week's parshah points out a connection between Balak and Bilaam of which even they may not have been aware. A connection that may have been left only theoretical had the Jewish people not approached the border of Canaan at just that precise moment in history, while Balak was king and Bilaam was still alive.

And, according to the Zohar, it is a connection so fundamental that it is even revealed through their names, which are spelled: bais-lamed-kuf (Balak), and, bais-lamed-ayin-mem (Bilaam). Combined, they can spell two words, which should be instantly recognizable by every Jew, and send chills up and down our collective spine: 'Bavel' and 'Amalek.'

Bavel, of course, is Babylonia, the place to which the Jewish people were first exiled after the

terrible destruction of the Jewish people and the First Temple. Amalek is THE people that stand at the extreme other end of the spiritual spectrum from the Jewish people, first mentioned in the Torah at the end of Parashas Beshallach, and, against whom G-d is forever at war until the end of history.

What the Zohar Hakadosh is indicating is that both Balak and Bilaam contribute something that, when brought together, result in the type of evil associated with Bavel, and, even worse, Amalek. And, if they happen to be traits that can exist even outside of Balak and Bilaam themselves, then, it is 'storm' that can occur and keep occurring even after Balak and Bilaam themselves are long gone.

Again, the clue to understanding the answer is in the names, and, in the Zohar. The Zohar begins by asking: Why is the name of Balak's father mentioned, when usually, with respect to the rest of the kings around him, it does not mention their father's name? The Zohar answers: To inform us that, even though Balak had descended from the family of Yisro, he was the only one NOT to convert after Yisro returned to Midian, and, as a result, was appointed king by Moav and Midian even though his own father, 'Tzippor,' had not been a king.

Thus, Balak's main trait was to be able to look truth in the face and deny it without any sense of remorse or fear of doing so. Just the opposite! He was emboldened by his own obstinacy, and prepared to act viciously against what he perceived to be his OWN enemy.

It is a phenomenally wicked trait, as we can well understand, and as we have seen on many occasions. However, its effect may still be limited and its damage might still be containable without a second trait to project that evil onto the world and greatly magnify its intensity. That is where 'storm condition' #2 comes in, and did ...

Shabbos Day:

... For I know that all whom you bless are blessed, and those whom you curse are cursed. (Bamidbar 22:6)

This was Balak's message to Bilaam, whom he was trying to hire as a contract-curser. However, as the Arizal explains, Balak was offering more than just an evil compliment to allure him into joining forces with him against the fast-approaching Jewish nation. He was indicating to Bilaam that the true power of his ability could finally be realized if he did indeed form a partnership between his trait and Balak's:

Regarding one who reincarnates into something inanimate, we find with respect to Naval HaCarmelli, of whom it says, "His heart died within him, and he was like a rock" (I Shmuel 25:37). The sod of this is understood from knowing that Lavan reincarnated into Bilaam, and later, into Naval HaCarmelli. Bilaam, who was a snake-charmer, had power only in his mouth to curse people, and

when Bilaam was killed, it was with a single rock -- something domem (silent) -- to atone for the charming he did with his mouth. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, p. 62)

The demagogue. A person who is tries to stir up the people by appeals to the emotion, prejudice, etc., in order to win them over quickly and so gain power (Webster's New World Dictionary). Today, one envisions those highly-emotional electrifying speeches made my none other than one Adolph Hitler, may his memory be erased, to millions of Germans as he tried to transform them into Nazis.

And, to the wonder of historians to this very day, he had been highly successful. Just his mouth alone and what came out of it, either directly or through his propaganda machine, had the unfortold power to transform him and his band of occult-practicing (among other immoral activities they indulged in; Bilaam had also been intimate with his donkey) thugs into the leading parliamentary power of post World War I Germany within five short years.

He had been the ultimate 'snake' charmer. (Arafat isn't so bad himself, it seems.)

Part of the wonderment of Hitler's rise to and (fall from) power was how many conditions had to pre-exist to make it happen. First of all, Germany had to have been broken from inflation after their humiliating defeat in World War I, and Hitler had to live through and experience that humiliation. The Allies, new to the situation, had to make a mistake (easily seen in hindsight) about how to treat post World War Germany, to aggravate the situation.

Then, Hitler had to surround himself with the 'right' evil people, who were also talented, people like Julius Streicher, and Heinrich Himmler and crew (yemach shemum), who could transform his message into one the masses could slowly accept, and, as necessary, create enough intimidation to crush the opposition.

Then, of course, the Allies had to be intimidated enough and war-wary to be willing to the look the other way (specifically British Prime Minister Chamberlain in 1938), while Hitler took control of Germany first, and then Europe. And, had the technology not been available at precisely that time, the Nazi party would have fallen far short of their objectives from the outset.

There were many more such 'weather' conditions that had to co-occur, and, though the Western world bet against it, in the end, they DID occur, and the 'perfect storm' called the 'Holocaust and World War II happened in the worst way. History provided the 'weather conditions,' and Germany provided the Balaks and Bilaams.

It was no different with respect to World War I, and, it will be no different with respect World War III - the FINAL war of Gog and Magog -- if, G-d forbid, the world bets against it again and ignores the warning signs brewing on the spiritual and political horizon.

Make no mistake about it. As you read this d'var Torah now, there are Balaks and Bilaams floating around all over the place, like scraps of paper caught up in the path of winds, each one having their own limited effect in their own limited sphere of influence --

The Egyptian Government Paper Al-Akhbar Once Again Defends Hitler

Following criticism of President Husni Mubarak during his visit to the US in early April 2001, the Egyptian government daily Al-Akhbar temporarily ceased publishing articles defending Hitler. Recently however, the paper again published an article by Mahmoud Muhammad Khadhr, a cleric from Al-Azhar University, entitled In Defense of Hitler. Following are experts of the article:

... But all of Hitlers crimes and infractions were forgotten by the world, except for one crime that was exaggerated and blown completely out of proportion, thanks to the insistence of world Zionism to continue to stoke the fire. The reason for this was the emotional need of the Sons of Jacob to extort Germany and to eat away at its resources. It is hard to believe that the Europeans and Americans, who are entitled to thinking, confirming or denying anything -- including the [existence of] the prophets and God himself -- cannot address the Jewish Question, or more precisely, the false Holocaust, whose numbers and scope they have exaggerated until it has reached the level of the merciless destruction of six million Jews, only because Hitler saw them as an inferior race unworthy of living next to the Germanic race, which must rule the world.

Anyone who knocks on this door encounters the most horrible accusations and is tried in all of the European countries and in the US for anti-Semitism, for two reasons:

The first is Zionisms control over thinking in the West. This control testifies to the degree of oppression of thought by the Zionist propagandist apparatus in those nations. No one can oppose this oppression, for fear of being tried and sent to prison, or having his livelihood and his reputation threatened...

The second reason is, without a doubt, the great fear that the lies of Zionism will be exposed if the subject [of the Holocaust] is investigated by facts and if logical conclusions are made.

The first dubious fact is the number of six million Jews who were burnt in the gas chambers. Did they have families, children, who demanded compensation, or did Zionism see itself as their only heir? If we assume that every person had an average of five family members, this would bring the number of Jews affected to thirty million. It is certain that many Jews escaped before the ship sunk, that many of them therefore, survived, despite the so-called extermination and burning [in the gas chambers]. This would mean that the number of Jews in Germany was sixty million, although the total number of Germans has never reached this number.

Even if we cross off one zero from the six million and are left with a tenth of this number, it would still seem exaggerated and would have to be investigated.

No one can ask why Hitler punished the Jews. The reason had nothing to do with that broken

record known as anti-Semitism. If Hitler was an anti-Semite, why was this anti-Semitism mentioned only after the World War was declared? Hitler could have expelled - in the period in which he built Germany up and prepared it for the War in order to recover what it lost in WWI - this undesirable [Jewish] race from Germany and planted it in South Africa or anywhere else in the world. Did Hitler attack the Jews or did their crime deserve even more?...

There is more to the article, but, I think the point is made. And, all of the Balaks and Bilaams are just waiting for the right political conditions to come around, to which they can attach themselves and through which they can become unified and amplify their evil intentions.

The only question is, what creates the proper and deadly 'weather patterns' to make nightmare reality?

SEUDAH SHLISHI:

When Bilaam saw that G-d was intent on blessing Israel, he did not go as at other times to perform enchantments ... (Bamidbar 24:1)

The Talmud teaches that, had G-d not interceded on behalf of the Jewish people against Balak's and Bilaam's efforts to destroy them, we wouldn't be here today to talk about it. For Bilaam, who was a reincarnation of Lavan, Ya'akov Avinu's father-in-law, it had been the second time. However, Chazal make it perfectly clear that, it was G-d who transformed Bilaam's curses into blessings, not Bilaam's own shortcomings.

In other words, 'Hashgochah Pratis' -- direct 'Divine Providence' makes the difference when it comes to the final condition, as the following (e-mail forwarded to me last week) may illustrate. I cannot verify all the details, but som I know are definitely true.

G-d's Perfect Storm Warning

By John McTernan, June 13, 2001

From June 8 to June 9, 2001, one of the greatest rainfalls in the history of the United States happened in eastern Texas. In a 24-hour period, over 28 inches of rain fell in the Houston area. In fact, between June 5 and 11, three feet of rain fell on the area.

The rain was the product of Tropical Storm Allison, whose brief history will go down in Weather Bureau records as "weird" -- to say the least. Allison formed within one day in the Gulf of Mexico, which is unusual. This storm then headed into Texas east of Houston and broke up as a storm system. The remnants drifted to the north of Houston and circled around

the city before sliding back south to the Gulf. The storm then re-formed into a tropical storm, which began to unleash incredible torrents of rain starting Friday evening and into Saturday.

The destruction in Houston was catastrophic. An estimated 20,000 homes and businesses were destroyed or damaged, along with possibly 50,000 automobiles and trucks. The city was closed for three days. Twenty-eight counties in Texas were declared a disaster area along with 14 parishes in Louisiana. The resulting damage will be close to \$2 billion. This was an incredible storm that did tremendous damage to southeast Texas.

[At that time,] President George W. Bush sent CIA director George Tenet to Israel to try and broker a cease-fire between the Israelis and the Palestinians and to implement the Mitchell Report. This was the Bush administration's first real involvement in the Middle East crisis. Tenet wanted Israel to stop building in the settlement areas.

Tenet arrived in the Middle East on Wednesday. On Friday, June 8, the Central Intelligence Agency director hosted talks between senior Israeli and Palestinian security officials in Ramallah, while Assistant Secretary of State William Burns met Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in the West Bank city. This was at the same time Allison re-formed as a tropical storm and began dumping this tremendous rain. The two events exactly coincided! On the nightly news, the flooding and the meetings in Israel were reported together!

Texas is President Bush's home state. He was at his ranch in Crawford, Texas at the time of the flooding. He declared the 28 counties in Texas a federal disaster area while he was in Texas.

This was the third time since the Madrid Peace Process began that a sitting president's state has been the location of a powerful and damaging storm, occurring at the exact time the president was involved with Israel and the covenant land.

The first disaster literally destroyed President George H. Bush's home in Maine. This storm, which came to be known as "The Perfect Storm," happened while President Bush was initiating the Madrid Peace process on October 31, 1991.

According to meteorologists, a "perfect storm" occurs once every 100 years. This storm formed in the North Atlantic and headed west for 1000 miles. The normal weather patterns in the United States are west to east, not east to west.

This was one of the most powerful storms ever. It generated waves over 100 feet high, the highest waves ever reported in the North Atlantic Ocean. As the storm moved west, it sent 30-foot waves smashing at President Bush's home in Maine. This storm actually struck while the President was opening the Madrid Peace Process. When the President returned home, he had to go to Maine to oversee the repair of his home.

(My own note: Not only this, but, one year in advance of the next U.S. Presidential Election in

1992, during which George Bush Sr. would try to win a second term, he had an 80% popularity rating, the highest ever for a post-war U.S. president. He had been riding on the crest of the successful Persian Gulf War, and that kind of popularity so close to an election always guarantees a win for the incumbent president.

However, at the same time, Bush was trying to force Shamir to cease building settlements in the Yehudah and Shomron areas, and, even threatened to block a proposed 10 billion dollar loan guarantee to Israel. And thus, and in spite of all the controversy surrounding 'Slippery' Bill Clinton, one of the largest voter turn-outs ever in American history occurred -- just to oust Bush and install Bill Clinton in his place!)

In March of 1997, President Clinton invited Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to the White House to discuss his "problems" with Jerusalem. While Arafat was en route, a powerful tornado storm ripped through seven states, with the worst damage in Arkansas, Kentucky and Ohio.

Clinton's home state of Arkansas bore the brunt of the storm with 13 counties declared a disaster area. This storm brought record flooding to the Ohio River. Clinton met with Arafat, and the headline of a New York Times front-page article on March 4, 1997, read, "President Clinton Rebukes Israel." The headline of the adjacent article read, "In Storms' Wake: Grief And Shock." The report of Clinton's home state being devastated by tornadoes was on the front page of the N.Y. Times right next to the one of Clinton verbally attacking Israel.

The home states of all three of these presidents were affected by severe weather patterns simultaneously to their diplomatic dealings, which were putting pressure on the covenant land agreements for the nation of Israel.

The enormous damage to President Bush's home in Maine by "The Perfect Storm" was eerie, coming just as he was directly responsible for initiating the Madrid Peace Process, which affected Israel's land.

All three of these storms were ferocious and record breaking. Both George W. Bush and Clinton had to declare disaster areas in their own states at the very time they were dealing with land giveaway in Israel.

A clear pattern has developed here. Are these presidents being warned by G-d not to interfere with the covenant land of Israel? Can all of this just be a coincidence? Or is the hand of G-d signaling a perfect storm warning?

End of e-mailed letter. Perhaps his conclusion is partly right, for, we must ask the question: for whom is the storm? That will depend upon Divine Providence, and, Divine Providence depends upon the Jewish people. If we have sufficient merit, then, the Balaks and Bilaams of history are kept at bay,

and maybe even suffer their own storms. However, should we lack sufficient merit ...

MELAVE MALKAH:

Part Five: Aftermath & Yemos HaMoshiach

It is not over until it is over. In other words, until the actual war of Gog and Magog begins and occurs, it is possible to avoid it, which is one of the main reasons for writing this series of articles, and others like it. We need to enter the Messianic era, whenever we do, as peacefully as possible. And, though many commentators and later day rabbis have been somewhat pessimistic about the chances of national teshuvah taking place in time, it is not impossible.

For, history is never straightforward, and certainly Divine Providence is not. It is exceedingly difficult to know what G-d has in mind for any particular period of history, and certainly for the 'grand finale' of history as we have been used to it. Part of faith and trust in G-d is that He has far more mercy than we might be worthy of, and, out of love for our ancestors and their children -- us -- He might just show it at the very end.

However, according to those who predict the War of Gog and Magog to occur, many say it will not last very long, though, we may not know it at the time. This does not mean that there will not be deaths -- there have already been plenty. As we have said, it will be an awesome test of faith, to help decide who have been truly faithful to G-d and Torah, and were disloyal.

There will be great similarities between the redemption from Egypt and that of the final days leading into Moshiach's time (Sanhedrin 111a). In Egypt, at some point in time, events changed the way people thought. At some point, scoffers began to scoff less, and, even the all-powerful Egyptian magicians were forced to admit they had witnessed the 'finger' of G-d (Shemos 8:15). There simply comes a time when events become too coincidental, too obvious to deny that a Supernatural Being is responsible for them.

"... At the beginning Yemos HaMoshiach, there will be a combination of nature and miracle working at one time, as we saw at the time of the leaving of Egypt. Then, also, at the beginning of the redemption, there were great miracles, yet, the Jewish people still were quite physical and material; the zuhama was not removed from them until the giving of Torah. See the Zohar end the end of Parashas Yisro. So, even though G-d dealt with on the level of great miracles, still, their lives were completely governed by nature. It will be the same way in Yemos HaMoshiach, with the redemption being a function of both great miracles and nature; the entire world will remain quite physical, as well as the Jewish people. Any annulment of zuhama and refinement of physicality will only begin later, and it will progress slowly, for this is a major transition." (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 487)

It is not only man who changes, obviously, but the world in general. It is hard for our generation to imagine what creation looks like and feels like once G-d begins to remove the spiritual veils that

block our ability to feel His Presence. However, that is exactly what He will do, and, as a result, all of creation will be 'pulled out' from the world of spiritual impurity, and evil will fade away like a bad dream after waking up.

The focus of history from that point onward will be on preparing the bodies for eternal life in the World-to-Come, a multi-stepped process:

"... It is like a craftsman who extracts silver from its source in the ground; in the beginning he puts it into an oven until all the impurities of the ground are removed, and the silver remains. But not perfect silver, until he puts it into the oven again ... Likewise, The Holy One, Blessed is He, puts the body into the ground until it completely rots and all of the zuhama is removed, and only a small amount of decomposed matter remains. From this He re-builds the body, but not a perfect body ... What this means is that at the beginning, He will build the body from the small amount of decomposed matter, which will be clean and pure from zuhama. However, it will still be quite physical and not in its true perfected state ... After that Great Day, as it is written, "It will be a unique day; it will be known as G-d's, neither day nor night" (Zechariah 14:7) ... This is after the war of Gog and Magog, as it is written in 107b and many places ... All of them will hide in the ground like before from the fear and the power of The Holy One, Blessed is He, and this is what it is written, "... and (idolaters) will enter caves in the rocks and tunnels in the ground, because of the fear of G-d and from the glory of His greatness" (Yeshayahu 2:19) ... This will also be in Yemos HaMoshiach, as it says (Shemos 7b; Pinchas 243a) ... And their souls will leave them ... In other words, many will die from the great fear and awe alone! ... And, this small amount of decomposed matter will decompose even more ... In other words, during the time from when Moshiach comes until Techiyas HaMeisim physicality of the body will also decompose ... The body will remain there to be re-built, and its light will be like the light of the sun, like the light of Heaven. (Zohar, Vayaira 115b-116a)."

The Leshem continues:

"For, from the time that Moshiach comes, all bodies will be re-built pure and clean from any zuhama, but they will still be quite physical. After that, they will decompose more and then be re-built in Techiyas HaMeisim with splendor and they will give off light like the sun and the Heavenly emanations. All of this pertains to those who have already died as a result of the Angel of Death. However, death for the generation that merits to live into Yemos HaMoshiach will be from The Holy One, Blessed is He, directly, as it was for the Forefathers, Moshe, Aharon, Miriam. They will not all die at the same time, for, the world will not be destroyed in advance of Techiyas HaMeisim. Rather, some will die early, and some later, just as it is now. It will continue this way for a long time -- the entire forty-year period of Kibbutz Golios until the first resurrection, as well as the entire 210 years or 214 years after the first resurrection until the last resurrection, as we mentioned previously. Anyone who is not yet rectified by the time resurrection begins as is fitting for eternal life, will die at the end."

We will discuss these points in more details next week, b"H.

Have a great Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston
