

HAVE FAITH!

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Balak, the son of Tzipor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. Moav was very afraid; there were many of them, and Moav became very uneasy about the Children of Israel. (Bamidbar 25:2-3)

There are basically two principles that emerge from this week's parshah: anti-Semitism for anti-Semitism's sake, and the antidote, hidden Divine protection. A couple of years ago, such a discussion may have been more academic than anything else. Today, unfortunately, it is quite practical.

Based upon the above verses, it appears as if Balak was only acting in self-defense. He had seen what the approaching Jewish nation had done to others in their way, and worried that his nation would suffer a similar fate. That can hardly be called anti-Semitism. It was simply self-preservation.

Except for one thing: the Jewish people had explicit instructions not to go to war against the people of Moav. In this case, self-preservation was keeping quiet and stepping aside. The only question is, did Moav know this and disregard it, or did Moav simply make a mistaken, yet understandable assumption, one that any enemy nation would have made in a similar position?

Well, to begin with, Moav was not one of the seven Canaanite nations, which should have indicated from the beginning a need to make certain of the plans of the Jewish people before acting in any kind of defense. Secondly, Balak and Bilaam were sorcerers-the real thing-and Bilaam claimed to even know Da'as Elyon-knowledge of the Upper One, which meant, more than likely, that they had been in tune to the attack plans of the Jewish people. No mistaken assumptions here.

The Shem M'Shmuel on this week's parshah corroborates this idea by explaining that Moav and Midian, enemies until now, collaborated against the approaching Jewish nation out of fear of spiritual displacement, not physical displacement. Apparently they knew that if the entire Jewish nation settled the land on their first approach, the Messianic Era would have begun, and the era of evil would have ended forever. Being evil to the core, they found that to be unacceptable.

But they weren't stupid either, well, at least not completely. They were certainly smart enough to know that any attack on the Jewish people would be perceived as an attack on God Himself, and therefore, doomed to fail from the start. Therefore, they knew, they needed a pretext to attack the Jewish people approaching them, one that could transform an offensive attack into a defensive one, at least as far as Heaven was concerned.

Sounds silly, right? As if God doesn't know what is really going on in the hearts of men! Every Yom Kippur we remind ourselves of just the opposite, so that, in the upcoming year, we won't make the mistake AGAIN of fooling ourselves into believing that we are more innocent than we really are. "Oh, I didn't know that was a sin . or at least that bad a sin ." Right.

Indeed, it is quite amazing how far we are willing to go to delude ourselves, just to justify behavior that is, in essence and in practice, completely wrong. And, the scariest thing about being human is how wrong thinking over time can replace correct thinking, until it becomes the person's permanent perspective on life. It becomes his or her own personal truth, even though life contradicts it, and everyone else sees this.

And, once that happens, the person begins to constantly interpret reality incorrectly. For example, when God asked Bilaam who the messengers were who came to get him, Bilaam assumed that God does not know everything, which encouraged him to hold back truth from God. It gave him a false sense of potential success, because he was so desperate to curse the Jewish people, that he was prepared to try, instead of taking into account the great odds against him.

Balak too. He also knew that they were playing with fire, Divine fire, but went ahead with his plan anyhow. Amazing. But is it anymore amazing than the way the world is ganging upon Israel today, demonizing them and their actions, because of the way they are forced to defend themselves against sworn enemies and known murderers? Not at all.

Modern Israeli society is far from perfect. But it is also far from being anti-humanitarian, or anything else that the UN resolutions claim it is. We certainly do not follow the known Palestinian practice of teaching children to hate their enemy, and to sing songs of hatred, as a Syrian official claimed recently.

And yet, no nation stood up and claimed the opposite. Everyone who listened to the blood libel simply took it in stride, feeling no need to vehemently rebut it. Apathy when it comes to the world's hatred of the Jewish people is also a form of anti-Semitism, because it shows a lack of concern for a people for no other reason except for the fact that they are Jewish. The Nazis may have started the Holocaust, but apathy made it possible to occur, and that is precisely what Hitler, y"s, relied upon to carry it out.

That is really the point. Anyone who is not anti-Semitic is standing back and nervously scratching his head saying, "What exactly did the Jews do wrong to justify that kind of response? Why is the world siding with a terrorist state over the Jewish one? At what point did Israel go from being an ally to an enemy, and why?"

But, anyone who is anti-Semitic doesn't even ponder such questions. Their latent anti-Semitism was waiting for a pretext to come out, and will justify just about anything to justify itself. They will turn the world and history upside down to appear correct in their own eyes, just to hate and get at the Jews. It is amazing how similar this week's parshah and this week's world look alike.

It makes one wonder if the recent oil spill, in the Gulf of Mexico, is somehow tied to American support of the Arab world, just as Hurricane KATrina was often connected to the destruction of Gush KATif. It's almost as if Heaven is saying, "You love the Arabs so much? So why not be dependent upon their oil even more? You want to endanger the environment of My people? How about I endanger YOUR environment? You want to ridicule My people at sea? I will ridicule YOU at sea!"

Not that Obama, an anti-Semite according to Kyle-Anne Shiver in an excellent article written for the American Thinker on June 8, will take note or make the connection. To him and his (even Jewish) counterparts and allies, it is just a very unusual and unfortunately catastrophic environmental event at the hands of, British Petroleum, which began as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company since it first found oil in, of all places, Persia. No, they will simply forge ahead and work on dismantling the Jewish state as if God is on their side.

Then, what is the point of such Hashgochah Pratis, if no one is going to pay attention to it anyhow? Well, what is the point of telling us the story of what happens behind our backs if we aren't aware that it is happening? This time the Torah tells about what could have gone wrong and didn't, but countless times since the close of Torah there has been no one to reveal to us many of the miracles that have occurred to save our Jewish necks.

There doesn't have to be. It's enough that the Torah tells us once that God is always looking out for us, and that even during times when we might not merit His protection, or at least His full protection, He sticks up for us anyhow, by at least not letting those who would do us evil walk away with impunity.

It's like a father, who, upon getting angry at his son, berates him and sends him home early from a simchah. As the son leaves, sad and with his head down, another boy comes over and pushes him as if to add insult to injury. Does the father laugh at such a thing? Of course not. Rather, he immediately runs over and defends his son, even though it doesn't change the punishment itself.

Obviously, we can't say for sure. However, it is ironic that one of the worst hurricanes in history totaled Louisiana just after the Arabs totaled Gush Katif, especially since an entire presentation had been made the year before warning of the dangers of a Hurricane Level 5, which everyone ignored, except the presenters. They later cried as they told of how the death and damage could have been avoided had they been taken seriously the year before.

This is from God, that which is wondrous in our eyes. (Tehillim 118:23)

And, this oil spill is quite similar, inasmuch as it was unexpected, and unstoppable, and as a result, it is doing massive long-term damage. Furthermore, as one Torah code floating around today seems to indicate, it might even have been predicted by the Talmud, which talks about water congealing with oil and making it impossible for fish to swim, right before Moshiach comes.

Who knows? Maybe yes, and maybe no. But one thing is for sure about this parshah, and that is that God is always looking out for his people, even when they deserve what may be coming to them. Jewish history is miraculous, and that is only talking about the miracles that we know about. There are so many others that we won't find out about until after history concludes.

It reminds me of the story of Lot and his guests. Once the people of Sdom realized that Lot had strangers in his house, an angry and ruthless mob gathered by his front door, demanding that Lot turn the guests over. Heroically, Lot stood up to them, but crazily, he offered his own daughters instead, which the mob rejected.

When the scene began to turn ugly, one of the guests opened the door, reached out for Lot, and pulled him to safety. And being angels, they were able to blind the entire mob outside, rendering them scared and helpless, allowing Lot to flee destruction while the rest of Sdom groped in physical darkness, after groping in spiritual darkness for so many years.

That is how it will probably play out at the End-of-Days. Right now, a mob is beginning to gather around Eretz Yisroel, making unreasonable demands. The scene is getting uglier by the week, and the people defending us from the outside are losing ground. It won't be long before they make up their minds to break in and take over in one way or another.

However, at the last minute, Eretz Yisroel will pull to safety those who merit to be saved, and then shut the door, as miracle after miracle happens to neutralize the massive danger that lurks just outside, just as God did to Sancheriv and his united nations army of that time. He did it once before and He'll do it again, right before the eyes of the very world.

You don't believe me?

I have a hard time believing me as well. But not because what I am saying is not possible or even likely. But, because I lack vision, imagination, and faith. The problem is mine, not God's, Torah's, or history's. I just hope that by the time all of this becomes actual reality, I am a full believer. Otherwise, I'll probably wear my eyes out from rubbing them so much, just trying to absorb the reality of the Final Redemption. May it happen soon, and may it happen mercifully.

Text

Copyright © by [Rabbi Pinchas Winston](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Rabbi Winston has authored many books on Jewish philosophy (Hashkofa). If you enjoy Rabbi Winston's Perceptions on the Parsha, you may enjoy his books. Visit Rabbi Winston's [online book store](#) for more details! www.thirtysix.org