

Parsha QA



Parshas Balak

For the week ending 12 Tammuz 5759

25 & 26 June, 1999

Outside Israel Parshas Chukat is read
together with Parshas Balak

Parsha Questions

1. Why did Moav consult specifically with Midian regarding their strategy against the Jews?
2. What was Balak's status before becoming Moav's king?
3. What happens to a field where oxen graze?
4. Why did Hashem grant prophecy to the evil Bilaam?
5. Why did Balak think Bilaam's curse would work?
6. When did Bilaam receive his prophecies?
7. Hashem asked Bilaam, "Who are these men with you?" What did Bilaam deduce from this question?
8. How do we know Bilaam hated the Jews more than Balak did?
9. What is evidence of Bilaam's arrogance?
10. In what way was the *malach* that opposed Bilaam an angel of mercy?

11. Why did the *malach* kill Bilaam's donkey?
12. Bilaam compared his meeting with an angel to someone else's meeting with an angel. Who was the other person and what was the comparison?
13. Why did Bilaam tell Balak to build seven altars?
14. Who in Jewish history seemed fit for a curse, but got a blessing instead?
15. What tragedy befell the Jews at Rosh Hapisgah?
16. Why are the Jewish People compared to lions?
17. On Bilaam's third attempt to curse the Jews, he changed his strategy. What did he do differently?
18. What were Bilaam's three main characteristics?
19. What did Bilaam see that made him decide not to curse the Jews?
20. Bilaam told Balak that the Jews' G-d hates what?

Bonus



How would YOU answer this question?

The Torah says: "G-d was angry that Bilaam went" to curse the Jews. Why was G-d angry? G-d had given Bilaam permission to go? I know what Rashi says: That Bilaam knew G-d didn't want him to go, yet he went anyway with great desire, but the text doesn't seem to say anything about Bilaam going with great desire. How does Rashi see this?

I Did Not Know That!

Bilaam and Balak were ingrates! They would not have been born if not for Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov: Bilaam's ancestor Betuel was born in the merit of Avraham binding Yitzchak on the altar, and Bilaam's ancestor Lavan had children in Yaakov's merit. Balak's Moabite ancestors descended from Lot after Avraham saved Lot's life.

• *Ba'al Haturim*

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

- 22:5 Balak's Rise to Power
- 22:20 Bilaam's Mission
- 22:23 The Donkey
- 23:16 Bilaam's Prophecy
- 24:20 Amalek

Sforno

- 22:2 What Balak Saw
- 22:6 Bilaam's Power
- 23:22 Jewish Conquest

Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 22:4 - Since Moshe grew up in Midian, the Moabites thought the Midianites might know wherein lay Moshe's power.
2. 22:4 - He was a prince of Midian.
3. 22:4 - It shows no sign of blessing.
4. 22:5 - So the other nations couldn't say, "If we had had prophets, we also would have become righteous."
5. 22:6 - Because Bilaam's curse had helped Sichon defeat Moav.
6. 22:8 - Only at night.
7. 22:9 - He mistakenly reasoned that Hashem isn't all-knowing.
8. 22:11 - Balak wanted only to drive the Jews from the land. Bilaam sought to exterminate them completely.
9. 22:13 - He implied that Hashem wouldn't let him go with the Moabite princes due to their lesser dignity.
10. 22:22 - It was mercifully trying to stop Bilaam from sinning and being destroyed.
11. 22:33 - So that people shouldn't see it and say, "Here's the donkey that silenced Bilaam." Hashem is concerned with human dignity.
12. 22:34 - Avraham. Bilaam said, "Hashem told me to go but later sent an angel to stop me. The same thing happened to Avraham: Hashem told Avraham to sacrifice Yitzchak, but later canceled the command through an angel."
13. 23:4 - Corresponding to the seven altars built by the Avot. Bilaam said to Hashem, "The Jewish People's ancestors built seven altars, but I alone have built altars equal to all of them."
14. 23:8 - Yaakov, when Yitzchak blessed him.
15. 23:14 - Moshe died there.
16. 23:24 - They rise each morning and "strengthen" themselves to do *mitzvot*.
17. 24:1 - He began mentioning the Jewish People's sins, hoping thus to be able to curse them.
18. 24:2 - An evil eye, pride, and greed.
19. 24:2 - He saw each Tribe dwelling without intermingling. He saw the tents arranged so no one could see into his neighbor's tent.
20. 24:14 - Promiscuity.

Bonus



It doesn't say G-d was angry at Bilaam "because he went" but rather "because he was a *goer*." (Not "*ki halach*" but rather "*ki holeich*".) The difference is subtle but significant: For Bilaam, going to curse the Jews wasn't a mere action he tried to do; rather, it was an action that defined his essence. At that moment, Bilaam was a "Goer," a "Jew-curser." When a person expresses his essence, he acts with desire.

• Based on Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch