

four thousand Jews. No wonder Jews throughout the ages have characterized Bilaam as "Bilaam harasha," Bilaam, the evil one. He has no reason or justification for his malevolence and enmity.

It is just there, like much of the anti-Semitism that infects a great deal of the supposedly civilized intellectual world today. It is difficult to deal with such baseless yet intense hatred and venom. I think it obvious that G-d intervenes to spare us from many of the actions of our enemies and friends. Thus the story of Balak and Bilaam remains relevant and current as the topics and events in our world today. Balak and Bilaam are able to exact a price from us in lives, fortune and social standing. But now, as then, they are unable to defeat us. *Rabbi Berel Wein and torah.org.*

Haftarah Summary Rabbi Aron Tendler

This week's Haftarah is from Micha. Micha prophesized around the year 3200 during the reigns of Achaz and Chikiah. The prophecy in this selection relates to the period prior to the war of Gog and Magog and the coming of Mashiach. The nations of the world will have assembled against Israel, and the Jews will know that their salvation can only come from G-d. G-d's power will be revealed to everyone and a time of peace and tranquility will envelop humanity. Armies and defenses will no longer be necessary to protect the Jews and the nation's war machinery will be disassembled. Micha was then commanded to chastise his generation for violating G-d's will, despite all the goodness He had bestowed upon them.

In the final verses of the Haftarah, the prophet tells the nation that true atonement can only be attained through change and action. The ceremonious aspects of devotion, such as sacrifice and prayer, will not accomplish forgiveness. Justice, loving kindness, modesty, humility, and

Minyan Schedule

Erev Shabbat Parashat Balak	
Candle lighting 22/07/16	4.50 pm
Mincha (Mizrachi)	5.00 pm
Shabbat Parashat Balak	
Shacharit 23/07/16	9.15 am
Children's Service	10.00 am
Mincha (Mizrachi)	4.40 pm
Shabbat ends	5.49 pm
Fast of Tammuz 24/07/16	
Fast starts	5.35 am
Fast ends	5.36 pm
Erev Shabbat Parashat Pinchas	
Candle lighting 29/07/16	4.55 pm
Mincha (Mizrachi)	4.55 pm

Announcements

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active change are the services that G-d desires.

The connection to our Parsha is the mention of Balak and Billam as examples of G-d's caring and protection for the Jewish people. The story of Parshas Balak involved G-d protecting us from our enemies even when we were totally unaware of their insidious conspiracies and intentions. Prior to the coming of Mashiach, the Jews will realize that their safety is dependent upon G-d and G-d alone, just as the Jews in the desert were totally dependent upon G-d's continuous protection and intervention. *Rabbi Aron Tendler and torah.org.*

Or Chadash

קהילת אור חדש

WEEKLY BULLETIN

Shabbat Parashat Balak

17 Tammuz 5776; 23 July, 2016

Shabbat Torah reading: Stone Chumash
page 856, Haftarah page 1189.

President Jonathan Erlich

Rabbi-in-residence

D'var Torah Rabbi Franklin

A Spirituality Crisis Rabbi Marc D. Angel

There is a feeling among many Jews, including many Orthodox Jews, that worship in the synagogue lacks adequate inspiration and spirituality. Among the complaints: the synagogue ritual is chanted by rote; the prayers are recited too quickly; the prayers are recited too slowly; the service is not understood by congregants; people talk too much in synagogue; the services do not involve everyone in a meaningful way. Here are some of the "solutions" that have been suggested over the years, along with why they have not achieved full success:

Introduce Hassidic/Carlebach melodies, these may be more lively and inspirational than the usual synagogue music. Yes, for some people, singing such melodies is emotionally satisfying. But for many others, such music seems more like a hootenanny than a

vehicle for addressing G-d.

Make the services more egalitarian. Yes, for some people this seems like a way of getting men and women more involved. Yet, the Reform and Conservative movements have been fully egalitarian for many years, without any perceptible improvement in the overall spiritual life of their communities. Indeed, these movements have been suffering from serious loss of membership, and from generally poor attendance at services. While newly established "partnership" services are popping up in the Orthodox world, it remains to be seen whether this represents a passing fad, or if these types of services will fall into the same patterns that have taken hold in the non-Orthodox egalitarian services.

Make services shorter; include more readings in the vernacular. Yes, for some people this makes the synagogue experience more palatable. But it is doubtful whether it brings people to a greater feeling of the presence of G-d, or whether it will inspire



more people to actually attend services.

Introduce meditation practices. Yes, some people may find this helpful to their spiritual experience. But many others may find these practices an outside imposition on Jewish worship and may be repelled by this mode of spirituality.

Whatever suggestions are offered, one can come up with counter-arguments. Each individual and each community has different needs and expectations. The “crisis of the synagogue” needs to be viewed, I suggest, in a much broader context. The synagogue is only one factor, and not the major factor, in the real problem we are facing. The real problem is: moderns are losing, or have already lost, their sense of intimacy with G-d. G-d is simply not a real presence in many of our lives. Even if we observe the commandments, study Torah and say our prayers, we may still not feel the awesome, overwhelming experience of living in the light of the Eternal.

If we are losing, or have already lost, a sense of intimacy with G-d, making changes in the synagogue service will not restore that intimacy. Whatever gimmicks we introduce, while possibly helpful to some, will ultimately fail, because they are focusing on symptoms rather than on the malady itself.

To a religious Jew who feels G-d's presence in daily life, the synagogue service poses little or no problem. The synagogue is just one of many contexts in which one experiences the Divine. It is not the center of religious life, and certainly not the only place to feel G-d's presence. One follows the synagogue ritual out of loyalty to tradition, out of solidarity with

generations of Jews who have prayed in this manner, out of a spiritual quest to be part of the community's prayers to the Almighty. But one also says private prayers any time of the day, in almost any place. If we have personal spirituality, we can bring this into our public spirituality. If we can maintain, or regain, a living relationship with G-d in our daily lives, then our synagogue experience becomes much higher and much deeper.

Surely, a synagogue needs to do its best to help congregants re-establish intimacy with G-d; and it needs to conduct its prayer services in a manner that is conducive to spiritual experience and development. But it also needs to realize that it is an enabler of spirituality, not a substitute for spirituality. G-d doesn't dwell only, or even primarily, in the synagogue. G-d dwells everywhere. Most of our lives are not spent in the synagogue, and most of our lives are deeply in need of relationship with the Almighty. If we can develop a full spiritual personality, we will find the synagogue experience to be a meaningful and vital aspect of our lives. We need to be working on how to become more sensitive to our souls, to our personal relationships with G-d. We need to imbue our daily lives with Torah and mitzvot in such a way that these activities resonate within us, and raise our spirits.

When Bil'am blessed the people of Israel, he said: “How goodly are your tents, O Jacob; your dwellings O Israel.” The “tents” refer to our homes, the centers of our every-day lives; the “dwellings” refer to our synagogues and study halls. When we first have our

“tents” in order, it is a natural extension to have our “dwellings” in order.

It is far from a simple matter for moderns to maintain, or regain, a sense of intimacy with G-d. Much of the time-spirit militates against genuine religious experience. Religion is not an easy way to G-d, and is not a short cut to spirituality. Treating symptoms without going to the root of our problem only makes the problem worse.

If we want our synagogues to be more spiritual, we have to be more spiritual ourselves. If we want our “dwellings” to be spiritually alive, then we first have to be sure that our “tents” are spiritually alive. *Rabbi Marc. D. Angel and the Institute of Jewish Ideas and Ideals.*

If Balak and Bilam Were Here Today Rabbi Berel Wein

Poor Balak and Bilaam. If they would have lived in our generation they would have undoubtedly received great and favorable media coverage, interviews on CNN and invitations to speak at the Hebrew University to tell their side of the story. The part about the speaking donkey would certainly have made for great feature articles where it would be pointed out that Bilaam is not to be blamed for beating his animal, rather it is all the fault of that conquering, occupying, bullying angel that inserted himself into the picture.

Yet, no matter what the revisionist historians will say, Balak and Bilaam remain the guilty villains in Jewish tradition and minds. There was no justification to demonize and curse an entire people who intended to do you no harm. Bilaam is a non-governmental, allegedly not-for-profit, one man organization, proclaiming great ideals while at the same time condoning enslavement and murder of thousands. And, in spite of his protestations of idealism and even-

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We have operated since 1995. During the year we arrange special activities including: learning, shiur/lecture series and social events.

handedness, he is for hire. He is the original spin artist, the public relations genius, the amoral unprincipled guru looking always for new clients. He is so good and effective at his task that apparently only the Lord Himself is able to rein him in and make him speak truths and blessings when that was not his original intent.

Bilaam is toppled from his self-importance by the G-d that he claims to represent and have contact with. His ultimate punishment is not so much his death at the hands of the Jews but it is the humiliating experience of being forced to bless when he intended and promised his employer to curse. Poor Bilaam, he should have waited a few millennia to ply his trade.

The Talmud teaches us that Bilaam's antipathy to the Jewish people was already apparent at the beginning of the Jewish sojourn in Egypt. He was the advisor to the Pharaoh who recommended that Pharaoh enslave the Jewish people and kill all of their male children. When G-d, through Moshe, thwarted that evil design and Israel emerged triumphant from Egypt in great numbers Bilaam tried a different tack using Balak in his effort to destroy the Jewish people. And finally when this scheme is stopped by Divine intervention, he advises the use of lust and sinfulness to destroy Israel. His advice costs the lives of twenty-

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