

## Maya's Davar Torah: Parashat Balak

My Torah portion is Balak. It takes place in the desert, during the time of the 40 year journey to the promised land.

The Israelites left Egypt because they were slaves, and they wanted their freedom so they started to go on a journey to get to a land where they can be free. I believe it is always better to live freely, than in slavery, even if it means to danger yourself by walking in the hot desert for 40 years. Even if living in slavery feels safer, if you don't get fed, and don't have a minimum amount of food and water, and can barely survive, then I think that it would be worth the risk.

This parsha shows us how when something bad was going to happen to the Israelites, the opposite happened. They were supposed to get cursed, but they ended up getting a blessing. I can relate to this in a few ways.

When the war started on October 7th in Israel, I thought that would mean that I would be less close to Israel, and my identity as an Israeli-American, because I wouldn't be able to go to Israel as much, and there was all this hate towards it. When the war with Iran broke, I thought that I wasn't going to be able to come to Israel and have my Bat Mitzvah, but the opposite happened, just like the parsha, and now I get to be here today and have my bat mitzvah.

I thought that when the war broke out, it would mean that I would be farther apart from my Israeli identity, but just like in the parsha, the opposite happened. I became closer than I ever was. I did this by wearing a necklace for the hostages to school, speaking Hebrew to the one other Israeli girl in school, and continuing to attend the annual Israel parade every year, being more proud, and played it to the kids in my class despite when they would say stuff like "free palestine", to me or to other kids in my class "Israel is bad they kill innocent kids".

I think that this parsha is all about karma, and how you should treat others how you would like to be treated. Israel has done so many great things in the world, specifically water purification, and the iron dome, which has saved countless lives from missiles. I believe

that despite this challenging time with all the war and hate that is being received, Israel will get the good karma just like in the parsha.

I would like to thank my family for bringing me here, and making this special day happen. Thank you Ima for being my biggest supporter, and loving me so much, and abba for always being up for an adventure with me and making me feel safe, and noa for being my partner in crime, and always having my back no matter what. Aside from my immediate family, I would like to thank Savta for always wanting to be with me and being so close to us, and Noni for being so patient when we give you british makeup or crazy hairstyles and putting up with our pranks.

Thank you all for coming, and I hope everyone has a great time.