

Balak Summons Balaam: Rosie's Davar Torah

My parasha Balak, tells a story of a king called Balak that is scared of the Jewish people and everything he does to keep them away. This parasha happens 20 years into the Israelites trip in the desert. The Israelites fled Egypt to journey into the desert for 40 years because Pharaoh made them slaves. Even though the Israelites could have stayed slaves they stayed strong and left, choosing the more difficult and daring path that would lead to freedom. Though a direct trip to Israel from Egypt nowadays could take a week, God chose to make the trip to Israel long and full of obstacles to see if they were worthy of entering this land.

The Israelites are on there way to travel to the Moab (A part of the desert).

²Balak, the king of Moab, saw that the Israelites were coming his way and after what the Israelites had done to the Amorite tribe, Balak was terrified that his land was going to end up like theirs.

So king Balak sent messengers to summon Balaam, a magician, who was in his native land.

Balak said to Ballam:

“People have come out of Egypt and have settled next to me. ⁶Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed.”

I don't think it's right to put a curse on people. But I do agree that whoever you bless, is blessed. But not necessarily whoever you cursed is cursed. By just cursing the people of Israel, you're just making an assumption that they're going to steal the land or kill its people. They might just be passing through the land.

So God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed.”

Balak turned to Balaam and said: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me.”

To me, this seems like a sort of Bribing: The officials are trying to bribe Balaam into coming.

The way I see it, there is a form of positive bribing and a form of negative bribing. For instance, an example of a positive bribe would be if someone said if you do your homework and chores every day for a week, at the end of the week you can get a chocolate. A negative bribe would be if you said I will give you a huge reward if you go up to your brothers Lego and smash all of it.

So Balaam answered them, “Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of God.

It's interesting to note that Balaam isn't even Jewish but he still considers God to be the one commanding him.

The point of Balaam not being Jewish but still asking the Jewish god for permission is to say that even though this is not his god he will still ask this god, this shows that this god, aka the Jewish God, OUR god, must be very important.

So Balaam goes with Balak's idea, so that Balak doesn't kill Balaam, but he knows he's going to do only what God tells the him.

Balaam's Donkey

Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the officials. When the donkey saw the angel of the God standing in the road with a sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat his donkey to get it back on the road.

²⁴Then the angel of God stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides. ²⁵When the donkey saw the angel of God, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat the donkey again.

²⁶Then the angel of God moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. ²⁷When the donkey saw the angel of God, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff.

If I was the donkey, I'd be a little bit upset that I have had what I think is a brilliant idea, to not go near the angel, but you are not listening or respecting the idea because in your mind your ideas are always better.

Actually the donkey is a metaphor for something. Maybe the donkey is a metaphor for what a part of Balaam's body is thinking but he is ignoring that part.

I'd like to call it intuition. The donkey is really the part of Balaam's soul that works on intuition. He basically feels that something is wrong, and that is the part that is pulling him off the the main road to protect himself from getting in trouble because of not following God's orders.

Then God opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of God standing in the road with his sword drawn. Ballam bowed low and fell facedown.

The angel of God asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. What God is saying to Ballam, is that Ballam was saved by the donkey. Or, the way we see it, by his intuition.

Balaam said to the angel of God, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back."

The angel of God said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you."

When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the edge of his territory. And said "Balaak, I have called you multiple times, why didn't you come?" "Well, I have come to you now," Balaam replied. "But I can't say whatever I please. I must speak only what God puts in my mouth."

Then Balaam said to Balak " I shall go and have a talk with god to see the best way to proceed"

⁶So he went back to Balak and found him, Then Balaam spoke his message:

"How beautiful are your tents, Jacob,
your dwelling places, Israel!

⁶"Like valleys they spread out,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes planted by God,
like cedars beside the waters.

⁷Water will flow from their buckets;
their seed will have abundant water."

Then Balaam said: May the Israelites pass safely through your land and cause no trouble to you and your people. "

I (Rosie) believe in free will. I believe that anything that you do has to be thoughtful and to the best of your ability. It may not follow all the requirements of god but as long as you are being thoughtful, kind and trying your best, that is what matters most.

Some of the Mitzvot are almost impossible to do today. The world has changed so much. For example, in the past men were told to follow all the mitzvot, while women only had to follow 3 mitzvot. Lighting candles before shabbat, tending to the house and going to the mikvah to dip. These rules are sexist and are not showing the potential of women. If the

Torah was egalitarian or respectful towards women, then the world would be a very different place today. For example, women in the past were also not asked to do good deeds like give to the poor or help the needy. So if men donate money to a charity it is seen as a much bigger and better thing than if women donate anything.

Back to Ballam, something I noticed whilst reading my parsha was that **B**alak wanted to curse the Israelites for potentially stepping onto his land. This is wrong as the Israelites have done nothing to hurt Balak and his people. The Israelites were blessed, they shouldn't be cursed. Another thing I noticed was that Ballam felt like he was always right and knew the best for everyone. I saw this when Ballam was walking to Moab as the donkey wanted to go off the path and Ballam didn't like this. So Ballam decided to beat the donkey. In this situation the donkey knew better. The donkey knew that wandering off the path was the right thing to do. The donkey served as Ballam's intuition even when the intuition was not yet clear to Ballam himself. Intuition can help everybody in life.

To conclude, I believe that this parasha can teach us that sometimes it may take you time to figure out your true beliefs, maybe at first if you are influenced by the wrong people you may find yourself going the wrong way, really all you need to do is listen to your intuition. This parasha can also teach us to not judge people based on their past actions, for example when the Israelites were passing through the Amorite territory they destroyed everything. Balak judged the Israelites on their past actions as he wanted to curse the Israelites for coming into his land when really they would do nothing to him. I do believe that people deserve a second chance unless they have caused harm to people that can not be undone like killing.

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