



## *Parshas Balak 2022, intention matters*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Leah Mintche Bas Gittel and Shaul Ben Berta.*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in the merit of the holy Ohr Hachaim, Rav Chaim Ibn Attar, one of the commentaries I use frequently. Because his Yahrzeit is on the 15th of Tammuz, the release date of this episode.*

*He was an immense Kabbalist and a giant Torah scholar. These unique attributes are reflected in his commentary, the Ohr Hachaim. He is one of the few people with "Hakadosh-the holy" at the end of his name. He passed away in Yerushalayim during Shabbos in 1743, less than a year after arriving in Israel.*

*The story is told that on the same date, the Baal Shem Tov (the founder of the Chassidic movement) was sitting with his students at the last meal of Shabbos. When he suddenly exclaimed, "the light from the west has been extinguished!" The holy Reb Pinchas of Koretz said, "the Sefer Ohr Hachaim protects the home, and learning it has the same effect on the soul as learning the Zohar." In his honor, may we merit the coming of Moshiach and the ultimate redemption.*

Our Parsha tells us the story of Balak and Balaam. Balak, the king of Moav, worried about his upcoming battle with the Jewish people. Moshe and the Jewish nation had just won their wars with the powerful countries of Emor and Bashon.

So Balak recruited Balaam, the famous non-Jewish prophet, to curse the Jewish people and hopefully defeat the Jewish nation in battle.

When Balaam was told of Balak's request, G-d appeared to him and said that he is not allowed to curse the Jewish people, for they are blessed. Balaam sent word back to Balak that G-d does not let him curse the Jewish people.

Balak sent prestigious messengers back to Balaam, promising him great riches in return for his services. Once again, G-d appears to Balaam, but he allows him to go, provided that Balaam only says the words that G-d tells him to.

At the beginning of Balaam's trip, G-d placed an angel with a giant sword in his path. The donkey saw the angel and did not want to move; however, Balaam, oblivious to the angel, started hitting his donkey. The Pasuk tells us (22:28) that the donkey turned to Balaam and said to him, "*what have I done to you that you hit three times?*"

At that point, G-d revealed the angel to Balaam, who bowed before the angel asking for forgiveness. The angel told him to continue his journey but reminded him that he must only say what G-d tells him.

However, a question comes to mind: When G-d finally revealed the angel to Balaam, he panicked. He quickly got off the donkey and begged for forgiveness. (22:34) "*I have sinned because I did not see you standing in my way.*" But if Balaam did not see the angel, then what was his sin? Why was he asking for mercy for a sin he did not know he had committed?

In honor of the Ohr Hachaim's Yahrzeit, we will delve straight into his deep and profound explanation. He writes that the sin Balaam is referring to is that he went with Balak's messengers. Although he told the messengers that he could only say what G-d told him, his intent was to curse the Jewish nation.

Balaam was not reading between the lines when G-d clearly said he could NOT curse the Jewish people. Balaam wanted to outsmart G-d by reminding Him of the Jewish nation's sins to trigger His anger toward them. He hoped that he would be allowed to curse the Jewish people because of this anger.

The Ohr Hachaim explains that Balaam's true intention and desire was to harm the Jewish people. Hence, as soon as G-d allowed him to go, he was willing to travel even though he could not curse.

Consequently, when he eventually met the angel, he immediately began to plead for mercy. Because he realized that G-d knew his true intention and was about to punish him for it.

The Ohr Hachaim learns this because Balaam said to the angel (22:34) *"if you still disprove, I will turn back for me."* The words **"for me"** hint that Balaam thought he was about to be punished for his true intention. Therefore, he told the angel, **"I sinned and I am willing to go home so I don't get punished."**

The Shulchan Aruch writes that many mitzvahs require intention and focus to be fulfilled. For example, to fulfill the mitzvah of Shema, one must have minimum intent while reciting the first verse. Because the intention is the driving force behind the energy and spirit of our actions.

But due to G-d's immense love and compassion for the Jewish people, He counts our **GOOD** intentions as semi-completed actions. Meaning, that if one intended to go to shul but slept in, G-d counts it as if they went to shul. Because good intentions usually pave the path and lead us to find our soul's purpose.

In our daily life, it is essential to understand that the intention behind our actions matters almost the same amount as the act itself. Because intent is like a seed, a rotten seed will not usually sprout or grow into something bigger.

But a healthy seed can sprout and develop into a thriving organism that can sustain itself for generations. Similarly, our pure intentions can inspire people to grow and change the world for the better.

**"Be mindful of intention. Intention is the seed that creates our future."**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,  
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*