

Parasha Meditation Balak

Bamidbar 22:1-25:9

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Transforming Curses into Blessings

Introduction

Unified Vision – The Source of our Blessing

We arrive at *Parashat Balak* during the zenith of the summer month Tamuz – the season of the eyes, and rectification of vision.¹ It is the time to guard our eyes and see only the good in the world and in other people. The ability to guard and focus one’s eyesight correctly is the rectified “sense” of sight.²

The *gematria* (numerical value) of the Hebrew word for eye עַיִן/*Ayin* is 130, its small *gematria* being 13. Thirteen is a very interesting number; it bonds multiplicity into oneness. This is why both the Hebrew word אהבה/*ahava* – love and אחד/*echad* – one share the numerical value of thirteen. When we unite in love, the multiplicity of our individualities merges to become one. Our twelve tribes are connected through their one father Ya’acov/Yisrael. While Jews look to make many into one, non-Jews look to make the one (G-d) into many, (trinity). Therefore, they cannot relate to the holiness of number thirteen, which is considered an “unlucky number,” in non-Jewish circles.

In this week’s *parasha* there is a contrast between the gentile and Jewish relationship with our eyes. Bilam “lifted his eyes and saw Israel dwelling according to their tribes”³ Rashi explains that he wished to cast an evil eye upon them.⁴ Casting an evil eye on people is essentially cutting off their spiritual channel to the oneness of G-d – the source of their blessings. It is interesting to notice that the root word עַיִן/eye which is the focal point of the *parasha* occurs exactly thirteen times in *Parashat Balak*. The attempt to apply witchcraft and curse on the Jewish people by separating their individual diversity from Hashem’s oneness backfired and turned into the thirteen attributes of mercy unifying Hashem – the source of our blessing.

Cursing is Separating from the Source of Blessing

There are several words for curse in Hebrew, the most common is *klalah* from the root קלל/*kalal* which is etymologically related to the word קל meaning light – taking someone lightly and disrespecting him. The word for curse used in *Parashat Balak* is ארה/*ara*. I’m trying to figure out why that word means curse. It has the same letters as the Hebrew word for light אור/*ohr*, except it is missing the *vav*. This letter also means “and” and has the ability to connect. Truth is connecting

¹ *Sefer Yetzira*, Chapter 5:4.

² Rav Ginsburgh, *Gal Einai*, <<http://www.inner.org/times/tamuz/tamuz.htm>>.

³ *Bamidbar* 24:2.

⁴ Rashi, *Ibid*.



all the strings and seeing the whole picture. This is why the *vav* is called the letter of truth in Kabbalah.⁵ The word for light in Hebrew is always written with the *vav*, even though *vav*'s are often missing in the Hebrew language when the *vav* is used as an "oh" sound. Perhaps the deeper meaning of the kind of curse Bilam was trying to cast on Israel – the ארה/ara without the *vav* – was to disconnect them from each other and Hashem – the source of their blessing. I found substantiation for this concept in the *Netivat Shalom* who writes that Bilam's purpose was to separate Israel from cleaving to Hashem in order that the curses would have power over them. Therefore, he tempted them with the daughters of Moav and with the idol-worship of Ba'al Peor. The source of the *devekut* (cleaving) of a Jew to Hashem is in the mind and in the heart. Bilam therefore, attempted to separate Israel from Hashem through the mind by means of tempting them to idol-worship, and through the heart by means of the temptation of the women.

Torah and Tefilah – Israel's Eternal Protection from Negative Energy

Torah and Tefilah (prayer) protect us from contaminating our minds and heart. Through Torah learning our minds, opinions and beliefs become purified, and by pouring our hearts out in *tefilah* before Hashem we purify our hearts. The houses of prayer and Torah study purify the hearts and minds of a Jew and enable him to cleave to Hashem. Therefore, in order to contaminate our hearts and minds Bilam desired that we would have neither synagogues nor Torah study halls.⁶ Yet Hashem reversed his curse to blessing: "How goodly are your tents..."⁷ – these are your prayer houses "...your dwelling places Israel"⁸ – these are your study halls. Through Bilam's reversed curse Israel became blessed that we will always have the ability to cleave to Hashem through our perpetual houses of prayer and Torah study. Through the power of Israel's eternal Torah and *tefilah* we cleave to Hashem and thereby receive everlasting protection from negative energy and the evil eye.

The Eye as the Source of Curse or Blessing

According to the western scientific view, the eye is merely a passive sensor of light. However, in Chassidut, the eye has power to influence and change reality.⁹ It has the ability to affect the world for good or evil. Recently quantum physics have proven this concept by demonstrating that an object being observed acts differently than when it hasn't been viewed. The eye has the power to change reality for good or bad. The evil eye is the source of all curses and can cause people to lose money, get sick, or become depressed etc. Rav once went down to the graveyard, he did what he did and he said, "Ninety nine died as a result of *Ayin Hara*, and one died through natural causes."¹⁰

However, the power of the positive is always greater. Looking at someone with love and care has tremendous healing powers, and brings about happiness, prosperity and blessing. You can get a feel for how people's eyes send out messages, by gazing at the eyes of a few different friends and opponents! You can also work on maximizing your own power of blessing through practicing looking with eyes of love.

⁵ *Zohar*, part 2, 169a.

⁶ *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 105b.

⁷ First part of Bilam's curse turned into blessing *Bamidbar* 24:5.

⁸ Second part of Bilam's curse turned into blessing (bid.)

⁹ See for example *Kedushat HaLevi, Parashat Balak*.

¹⁰ *Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia* 107b.



Meditation:

This meditation is designed to strengthen your power of blessing by guiding you to practice giving out “*ayin tova*” – the good eye which bestows healing goodness and blessings towards others and yourself. The first four steps are practice steps to help strengthen the power of your eyes. The two first steps can be practiced separately at any given time and place, not necessarily at the same time as step 3 and 4.

1. Practice focusing your gaze on one point, and see how long you can hold the gaze. (You could practice this whenever you are waiting for something).
2. Shift your gaze from the one point to the whole of which the point is part, then back to the one point. Repeat several times
3. Draw a blue *Magen David* on a white surface, and look at it for at least two minutes.
4. Close your eyes and visualize the *Magen David*, try to hold the vision for as long as possible.
5. Look at a person in your life that you love very much. It could be a spouse or child, sibling, parent or close friend. Tune into the person’s face and look for the glow of Hashem’s light in that face. Imagine expanding this glow of light.
6. If you can’t find the person’s glow or he or she is not well, practice sending rays of light to that person through your eyes. Look for where the person is in need of light and focus your light to that particular place.
7. When meditating alone visualize people in your life that you love and imagine expanding their glow of light or sending them light to the places they need. Visualize how the person you love is gradually becoming more filled with light, life, health and happiness! Repeat this exercise as much as possible, until it becomes natural for you to send light whenever you are communicating with others.

Notes:

Taking the Leap of Choice from Curse to Blessing

Curses whether in the form of berating oneself or hoping that something bad happens to someone we do not like, are ultimately destructive, and limit our spiritual and emotional development. However, blessings allow for mindfulness, gentle self-evaluation, forgiveness, and moving on. How would our moment-to-moment life experience change if curses were not an option and if God only allowed us to bless ourselves and bless others, to offer ourselves and other people mindful hope for mindful change?

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual

empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact info@berotbatayin.org or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at director@berotbatayin.org

or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

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