



# GROWTH

## At The SHABBAT TABLE

### PARSHAT BALAK

#### A Tale of Two Gentiles

A careful analysis of a subtle but major contrast sheds light upon a very interesting anomaly. This week's Parsha discusses a gentile named Balak, who "saw all that Israel did to the Emorites," and decided to employ Bilaam to cast a negative energy onto the Jews. However, we also know that another gentile by the name of Yitro also noticed the awesome might of the Jewish nation in their battle against Amalek. Yet, his reaction was essentially the exact opposite from that of Balak's, as he seized inspiration and even converted to become a member of Am Yisrael.

Why did Balak choose to respond with an insecure lust of jealousy and hatred, whereas Yitro embraced motivation and ended up joining the club? Where and why did their paths diverge?

R' Eliezer Zeytouneh shared a profound insight. The answer can be readily discerned in the Torah's description for each character. "Balak Ben Tzipor saw all that Israel did to the Emorites," the Torah testifies. Notice that all he saw was a victorious nation; he lacked the depth to see further. He failed to notice the Divine Hand of Hashem that orchestrated it all. Yitro, however, was a different story. "Yitro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moshe, heard all that G-d had done for Moshe and for Israel, His people, that Hashem had taken Israel out of Egypt." Yitro was genuine enough to see G-d and attribute the events that transpired to Him. Thus, after leveling up from having just an awareness of a Divine force to actually seeing the Creator work His wonders, what else would he have done other than want to draw near? Balak, however, didn't view things in that light; all he saw was a people that disgusted him reveling in extraordinary successes, which practically drove him to the brink of an insatiable fury.

*It doesn't take much to see G-d or appreciate his personal providence in current events, our nation's survival throughout history, or one's personal life. Someone who knows what to look for sees G-d in even the smallest of things, like a cell of an organism which was masterfully designed in intricate complexities that far outweigh the genius of any man-made innovation. He sees that the same G-d who created the universe and runs the entire show single-handedly is also very much present in his personal life, and every moment becomes a meaningful opportunity to connect with the Divine origin. Someone who doesn't know what to look for, though, is merely sad and pitiful, prone to falling prey to the toxicity and negativity that surrounds him. May we be fortunate to soon live in the era of Mashiach, when the whole world will discover Hashem and never want to look back...*

*"Struggle is real.  
But so is Hashem."  
(Meaningful Minute)*

**Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:**

Rahamim Ben Shifra Yitzchak Ben Naama Chana Bat Malka  
Miriam Bat Bakol Heleni Orna Bat Chen Chana Frida Bat Yaffa  
Ariel Ben Frida Shmuel Ben Chaya Miriam Ahuva Bat Esther

#### Willpower and Word-Power

R' Yehoshua Zitron recounted a powerful story.

*Shlomo was a boy who was unfortunately diagnosed with cancer at the age of 8 years old. Sadly, it didn't look too well for him, but with a lot of resilience and determination, he survived. At the age of 30, he was told that he had been totally healed of the illness. Finally, after 22 years, the doctors had told him that every last trace of the cancer in his body was gone. He ended up getting married and establishing a family, but he had decided that when he would be completely healed, he would make a meal of gratitude to thank G-d for his complete refuah. One of the people he invited was his pediatric oncologist, in show of appreciation for everything he has done to help him.*

*At the meal, Shlomo arose to speak and pointed to the pediatric oncologist, "This doctor played a major role in my recovery." He went on to explain, "Back when I was ill, my health was deteriorating. I wasn't doing well. But I happened to overhear the doctor – this doctor – tell the nurse: 'You see that boy? That young boy is a strong one. He's going to live. Even though he's going through so much, I know he has it in him to survive.'" People starting tearing up, but Shlomo continued: "You know, when things would get really difficult and the pain was overbearing, I remembered those words from this doctor. Those doctor's words willed myself to survive. And for that, I want to express my utmost gratitude..."*

*Everyone applauded, and Shlomo took his seat. The doctor then stood up and shocked the entire crowd: "I have to be honest, so I feel compelled to share the following with you... The story isn't exactly as Shlomo had just related." The oncologist took a breath and explained, "When young Shlomo was in the ward, going through treatment, I had honestly thought that he wouldn't have survived the cancer. His prognosis did not look good. But when Shlomo was leaving the office, there was another boy with a similar illness that was just entering. I then looked at the nurse and pointed at the other boy, commenting that he was a strong boy and predicting that he would survive. To be completely honest, I wasn't even talking about Shlomo..."*

But in Shlomo's mind, he heard the doctor telling him that he will survive and that he is strong, which indeed gave him the willpower to make it through the darkest times.

It is crucial for parents to believe in their kids and tell them: "You're brilliant; you're incredible. You can be whatever you want and accomplish great things..." If a child hears that he/she can do anything, then in their own mind, they build the confidence to believe that they have the ability for anything. Don't ever be stingy with positive reinforcement, because that encouragement actually goes a very long way.