

# שיחות רב עוזר פרשת בלק תשס"ז

שליט"א Rav Ozer Glickman Insights into Torah and Halacha from

ר"מ בישיבת רבנו יצחק אלחנן

**A**mong the praises that בלעם extends to עם ישראל is a description of the people's fortitude and ferocity:

הן עם כלביא יקום וכארי יתנשא לא ישכב עד יאכל טרף ודם חללים ישתה

Behold a people that arises like a lioness and raises itself like a lion; not lying down until it eats its prey and drinks the blood of the slain.

This intense people will not rest until they have devoured their enemies. Appropriate praise from a pagan visionary perhaps, especially one commissioned by a brutal king fearful of an enemy's military power. Seeing their prowess in the war against the אמורי is what drove the Moabite king to seek a curse against this people in the first place. Perhaps בלעם is only projecting his patron's worst fears.

These words, however, are placed in the mouth of בלעם by הקב"ה:

ויקר ה' אל בלעם וישם דבר בפיו ויאמר שוב אל בלק וכה תדבר

And ha-Shem met up with Bilaam and put words into his mouth and said to him: Return to Balak and so speak.

בלעם's vision may have been flawed and less than genuine prophecy (ויקר) but it still derived from the Source of all Truth. Curious praise indeed from the One Whose very Name is Peace.

The מפרשים see in these words of praise a prophetic warning regarding the war against מדין. The ארי in the verse is משה רבנו who will not lie down, i.e., go to his final rest, until he exacts vengeance from Israel's enemies. בלעם: חללים. The even supplies the victim whose blood will be spilled among the חללים. The fulfillment of the prophecy is recorded then in ספר יהושע:

ואת בלעם בן בעור הקוסם הרגו בני ישראל בחרב אל חלליהם (ג': כ"ב)

We are not, however, a militaristic people. רש"י above cites חז"ל's midrashic take on בלעם's praise:

כשהן עומדין משנתם שחרית הן מתגברין כלביא וכארי לחטף את המצוות ללבש ציצית לקרא את שמע ולהניח תפלין...

When they get up from their sleep in the morning, they are valiant like the lioness, and like a lion they seize the precepts, wearing fringes, reciting Shema, and donning phylacteries.

naturally elicit in חז"ל's minds as they should in ours thoughts of the acts of מצוה that frame our day: שמע and its attendant מצוות, ציצית and תפלין. In the hypertextual world of a תורה, this pair of words cannot appear together without evoking "בשכבך ובקומך". We read בלעם's words attuned to their broader connotation within the Torah that is never random. Torah context is neither discreet nor historical. We must learn to read texts as חז"ל did, free of the modernist habit of seeking historical context over truth.

There is, though, more to this reading by חז"ל than a creative word association. The notion that performance of מצוות can be fortitudinous is essential to the Torah's worldview. The first words of the בלעם here: recall אורח חיים in מחבר

יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבקר לעבודת בוראו שיהא הוא מעורר השחר

One should be valiant as the lion when standing in the morning for worship of the Creator, by being awake before daybreak.

רבותי, we must recapture the experience of valor in המצוות. קיום. We must dedicate ourselves to Torah commitments with a sense of the heroic. Spirituality must be earned gallantly. Anyone with a credit card can purchase a white shirt and black pants but only one prepared to struggle valorously can be a true בן תורה.

בן תורה doesn't seek an escape from the challenges of life in the quietude of the המדרש. Rather he strives valiantly to acquire Torah while meeting his responsibilities to his family, to his community, and to his people. In this there is heroism and gallantry. Torah is not an escape from life but an elevation of life, an infusion of wisdom into the often turbulent never completely secure maelstrom of human existence. השם, realize the vision that הקב"ה placed in the mouth of בלעם. Rise up like lions in the service of

שבת שלום ומבורך