

Parshat Balak (5781): Self-Hatred **Rabbi Chananya Berzon**

The Jew that hates his Judaism contributes to universal anti-semitism; it is as a quote I once was introduced to explains, "It's ok if you hate me, I hate me too." The Jew that has a feeling of inadequacy and low self-esteem amongst the nations of the world creates anti-semitism. Throughout the time of the Jewish People in Egypt, and continuing through the times of the *chamishei chumshei Torah*, the Jews perpetually complained, disapproved, and criticized the leadership, the Torah, G-d, the People. Take note of how there is a build-up, ending in an ultimate crescendo with Korach and Bilam. We learn about Korach, who himself symbolizes the self-hating Jew! Korach hated Moshe, Aharon, and all of Shevet Levi -- albeit stemming from his personal miopic view; Korach was willing to destroy his entire People and following that it seems that the nations of the world became obsessed with the destruction of Am Yisroel.

Towards the end of Parshat Chukat, our Parsha this week, the *Amoraim* have a simple question: why instigate going to war against the Jewish nation? Couldn't rejecting the request of the Jewish people to pass through your land suffice? The answer is that hatred is blinding! Hatred is abhorrent, senseless, and irrational. When Bilam was willing to go curse the Jewish People, the posuk says *וַיָּקָם בַּלְעָם בְּבֹקֶר וַיַּחְבֵּשׁ אֶת-אֲתוֹנוֹ* "Bilam got up in the morning to put the saddle on his donkey." It is here that Rashi points out *שְׂנֵאֵל הַשׂוֹנֵא אֶת הַשׂוֹנֵא* "Hatred causes you to see subjectively, and causes you to act irrationally." This event with Balak and Bilam became a prototype for the other nations of the world, and such hatred became a universal statement.

We find this universal statement to still hold true in our modern-day world! We can see that Jewish self-hatred extends to the world-wide community, across the spectrum; true until our very day. The self-hating Jew who does not take pride in Jewish values - such as helping the needy - or who does not take pride in Jewish Noble Prize winners, the accomplishments of his People, in the Jewish nation, or in Israel legitimizes overt and covert hatred from our enemies. The plague of antisemitism emerged from within our own camp and spread throughout the entire world! It makes no sense that a Jew should hate himself, but ergo if they are on-board with it, the entire world goes on-board with it.

Let us be unabashedly proud of who we are! We are the diamond amongst humanity, with all its shining facets. *Halevei* the Jewish People, the Jewish nation in Israel, the Jewish politicians throughout the world should be proud of our heritage and its impact upon the *mamlechet kohanim goi kadosh*. And that should bring us peace, serenity, and the *geula sheleima bimheira bikarov*. Amen!