

**Balak (22:2)** – The commentaries are bothered as to why a Parsha in the Torah is named for a Rasha like Balak. **The Birkas Avraham** explains that since he offered 42 Korbanos to Hashem and fathered Rus so he merited the Parsha's name. Others explain that it seems odd that the Avos do not get the name for their Parshiyos so why should Balak? Moreover, why shouldn't the Parsha be called "Bilaam" if, after all, he is the main character? **Rav Dr. Benny Lau Shlita** explains that as far as Balak and Bilaam are concerned, only one is successful. Only Balak achieves his mission in the Parsha. Bilaam winds up failing and instead of serving as a leader to the nations, he becomes a mere vessel to be used (and abused) by them.

**And Hashem opened the mouth of the Donkey (22:28)**- What was the point of the opening of the donkey's mouth? What effect did it have? **Rav Yaakov Abuchatzera ztl.** suggested that Bilaam's sorcery power came from the donkey but he thought that the power of Kedusha of Moshe also came from a foreign source. Here is where the donkey corrected him – you used ulterior means to achieve your sorcery, she told him. Moshe did not. Bilaam cannot get the message and sees it as a taunt and accuses the donkey of making a joke out of him.

**They are a nation that lives alone (23:9)** – **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often remind us that Bilaam realized that we live and die differently and are buried differently. He would often explain that it is not a curse to be different but rather an opportunity. It is forbidden for us to bury our dead with the dead of the non-Jews. Nechemiah identifies himself to the king as the place of Kivrei Avosai. People naturally are attached to the place where their forefathers are buried.

**They are a nation that rises like a lion (23:24)** – **Rashi** explains that this refers to the fact that the nations rises quickly in order to grab the Mitzvos of Tallis, reciting Shema and wearing Tefillin. The **Maharal** explains that the uniqueness of these Mitzvos is their frequency. Despite their commonplace, the person rises like a lion in order to grab the chance to perform them and does not become complacent in the ability to achieve. **Rav Yerucham Levovitz ztl.** looked at it differently: Despite the fact that these Mitzvos are passed down generation to generation with regularity, a newcomer observing the observance like Bilaam was taken by the fierce desire of the first generation and blessed the future ones with that same tenacity and excitement in their observance of the same Mitzva.

**How good are your tents Yaakov (24:5)** – **Rashi** (citing Bava Basra 60a) explains that he saw that the Jewish tents were not facing one another. Yet in Sanhedrin (102b) the Gemara notes that Bilaam intended to curse the people not to have Shuls and Battei Medrash. How can we explain the apparent contradiction? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** suggested that by praising the Jewish home, he thought he would get the people to remain there and not establish Battei Medrash and Shuls. This would ultimately prove to be a curse in that a nation cannot survive without Battei Medrash and Shuls influencing the masses to study and live Torah life.

**The nation set out to be Mizaneh with the daughters of Moab (25:1)** – **Rav Gifter ztl.** explained that the people left the protection of the Ananei HaKavod. When they confronted their desire which they had not been tempted with before – in the Midbar – they failed. In life, the protection of the Ananei HaKavod provides helps us handle the tough environment that we find ourselves in, beyond the protective walls.

**They were crying in front of the Ohel Moed (25:6) – Targum Yonasan** adds that they were also saying Kriyas Shema. The **Baal Shem Tov** (Vayikra 20:17) explained that when something – even something forbidden – that is rooted in a good intent, the good intent cannot be ignored (e.g. Marrying one’s sister is a Chessed )so what is to be understood about the experience here? **Rav Yisrael of Tchartikov ztl.** explained that when the people cried in front of Ohel Moed it was the cries of Teshuva – which is why Pinchas was inspired to take a Romach – a reference to the 248 letters of Kriyas Shema which inspired his actions. This is why Hashem noted “Heisiv Es Chamasee” as opposed to “Heisir” because he returned the people to their Teshuva roots and engage in Ahavas Hashem.

**Haftorah: And walk with Tzniyus (Micha 6:8)- Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** noted that Tzniyus is often misunderstood as a discussion about sleeve lengths. However, he explained that anything that is Kadosh needs to be covered – as it adds a layer of distance and glamour to it. This is not only true for the soul of a person but for the body that contains it as well. He added that a Jew is a walking Sefer Torah and just as the Sefer Torah and the things in the Aron were not revealed, the human “Aron Kodesh” is the body and should be corrected as well.