

KOL MEVASSER

Macro, Micro, & Balanced Perspectives

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel

Standing on a mountain and gazing down at the Israelite camp from a distance, Bil'am offers magnificent words of blessing and praise. "None has beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has one seen perverseness in Israel; the Lord his God is with Him... (Bemidbar 23:21) How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel (24:5)." Bil'am had come to curse the Israelites, but ended up blessing them for their virtues.

After informing us of Bil'am's lofty praises of Israel, the Torah provides a close up view of the Israelite camp: "...and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bow down to their gods...and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel (25:1-3)."

Will the real Israel please stand up? Is this a virtuous, righteous nation as described by Bil'am? Or is this a nation engaged in harlotry and idolatry as described in the later passages of this Parasha? The answer: both are true...but only partially true.

Bil'am offered a macro-perspective. A macro-perspective sees the big picture, but does not focus on specific details. From this grand perspective, the Israelites were a blessed nation, beloved by God, characterized by orderliness and righteousness.

The Torah then provided a micro-perspective. A micro-perspective focuses on specific details, but omits the larger picture. It sees every blemish close up.

If one looks at an oil painting masterpiece from a proper distance, one experiences its beauty and majesty—but one will not see individual brush strokes. If one looks at the same painting while standing one inch away from it, one will see dabs of paint and some blurred colors, but will not see the picture in its fullness. It is the same painting, but our perspective dramatically affects our reaction to it.

Perhaps the Torah juxtaposes the macro and micro perspectives in order to underscore an important point: life is complex. Each individual, community and nation has its overarching character—which hopefully is marked by idealism and piety; but also has its blemishes and weaknesses. A wise observer must seek to maintain a balanced perspective by keeping both the macro and micro aspects in mind.

(Continued on page 3)

KJ Schedule Parashat Balak

Erev Shabbat Balak / Friday, July 4th

Shaharit/Morning Prayer	7:30 am
Shir Hashirim.....	6:45 pm
Minhah/Arbith	7:00 pm
Shabbat Candlelighting	7:51 pm

Shabbat Balak / Saturday, July 5th

Shaharit/Morning Prayer	8:30 am
Minha, Seudah Shlisheet, Arvit.....	7:00 pm
Motzei Shabbat / Havdallah	8:58 pm

Weekdays Sunday, July 6th

Shaharit.....	7:30 am
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Monday to Friday, July 7th to 11th

Shaharit.....	6:30 am
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Erev Shabbat Pinhas / Friday, July 11th

Shaharit/Morning Prayer	7:30 am
Shir Hashirim.....	6:45 pm
Minhah/Arbith	7:00 pm
Shabbat Candlelighting	7:49 pm



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Famous Sephardic Poets

Yehuda Halevi, 1075-1141 CE

Yehuda Halevi, one of the greatest Hebrew poets of all time, was born in Toledo and studied with the famous rabbinic scholar, Isaac Alfasi. In addition to mastering biblical Hebrew, Arabic and the intricacies of the Talmud, Judah explored the physical sciences, philosophy and metaphysics. He was especially proficient at writing poetry, and soon attracted the attention of the great poet Moses Ibn Ezra. It wasn't long before his fame spread throughout the Jewish communities of Spain. Because Cordoba was the cultural capital, Halevi migrated there and found his voice as Israel's sweetest singer. He left behind an abundance of prose, liturgy and poetry. In his most famous work, The Kuzari, Halevi defends Judaism against the assaults of the first crusade and discusses the connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel.

My Heart is in the East

My heart is in the east, and I in the
uttermost west—
How can I find savor in food? How shall
it be sweet to me?
How shall I render my vows and my
bonds, while yet
Zion lies beneath the fetter of Edom,
and I in Arab chains?
A light thing would it seem to me to leave
all the good things of Spain—
Seeing how precious in my eyes to behold
the dust of the desolate Sanctuary.

Translated by Nina Salaman from Heinrich Brody, ed. Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi (Philadelphia: JPS, 1924, 1952).

Shabbat Kiddush

is sponsored in memory of
her brother

Manachy Nissim, z"l

by
Emma Shapiro & Family

Condolences

to the family and friends of
Manachy Nissim, z"l

who passed away in Israel
He is the brother of our dear member,
Mrs. Emma Shapiro. May Hashem
console her and her family together
with all the mourners of Tzion.

Condolences

to the family and friends of
Djoe Mussry, z"l

who passed away in Jakarta, Indonesia
She is the mother of our dear member,
Letizia Einy and siblings Loecky, Jack
and Irwan; mother-in-law of Ronald
Einy, grandmother of five including
Charles and Miranda Einy. May Hashem
console them together with all the
mourners of Tzion.

In Memoriam

We remember these yahrzeit anniversaries for
July 5 to 12, 2014. It is customary to light a me-
morial candle, donate tzedaka, & attend services
the preceding Shabbat.

8 Tammuz / Sunday, July 6th

Isaac Shamsi *Itzhak ben Shemuel*

10 Tammuz / Tuesday, July 8th

Khanbaba Pouladian *Itzhak ben Avraham*
Isaac Shamash *Yitzhak Rahamim ben Avraham*
Hatoon bat Haviva

11 Tammuz / Wednesday, July 9th

Joseph Bensabat *Yosef ben Simy Moryousef*
Moshe Sassoon *Moshe ben Sasson*
Solomon Leo Sassoon *Shlomo ben Yamin*
Esther Levy Solomon *Esther bat Leah Matana*

12 Tammuz / Thursday, July 10th

Eshagh Sarraf *Eshagh ben Yehuda*

14 Tammuz / Shabbat, July 12th

Rachel Meyer Judah *Rahel bat Aziza*

Weekly Readings: Torah Portion Balak

Sefer Bamidbar / Book of Numbers 669-682
Neviim / Prophets Haftara Micah 682 to 685

Refuah Shlemah

Rahel bat Marcel

Mordechai Cohen / Mordecai ben Avraham
Moselle Amron/Mazal Tov bat Salha Matana
Tilda Levy / Tilda bat Miriam
Joseph Sharaf / Yossef ben Jamila
Maurice Ovadia / Moshe ben Noosha
Pnina Herzbrun / Pnina bat Esther
Michael Herzbrun / Michael Baruch ben Sarah

Shabbat Shalom U'Mevorah

Wishing You a Peaceful Shabbat

(Continued from page 1)

To see only the virtues and greatness of an individual, community or nation is misguided. To focus only on the sins and errors of an individual, community or nation is wicked.

We who love and respect the State of Israel and all that it means to the Jewish People, are often frustrated and angered by the unfair treatment Israel receives in the political sphere and in much of the media. Even when criticism of Israel may be legitimate, the overall tone of the criticism is not legitimate when the critics only take a micro perspective. They ignore the noble ideals upon which Israel is based; they do not focus on the incredible idealism, righteousness, and fairness that characterize the Israeli nation. They only seem to see flaws, and they magnify these flaws very far out of proportion.

Sometimes the micro-perspective stems from ignorance, and sometimes from outright malice. But without the macro perspective, the true nature of Israel is totally misunderstood and misrepresented.

On the other hand, it is also an error only to take a macro perspective where Israel is absolutely perfect, and to ignore real problems and shortcomings which exist. The test of any individual, community or nation is not to be perfect—since this is a human impossibility. The test is to strive for greatness and to confront problems honestly.

Some years ago, I participated on a panel that dealt with American civilization. One of the panelists spoke bitterly of American shortcomings. He only seemed to be able to see vulgarity, materialism, hedonism, racism, social anomie. Everything was wrong with America.

While not discounting the many failings of American society, I reminded this panelist and the audience that the United States is a tremendous experiment in democracy, a monumental advance in human civilization. America is indeed the greatest bastion of freedom, democracy and opportunity in the world. The Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776 changed the course of human history dramatically and very positively. Yes, of course, we must continue to address the flaws in American society, and the American people is blessed with many idealistic citizens who devote their lives to improving our society in every way.

To only see the virtues of individuals, communities or nations is to engage in unhealthy fantasy. To only focus on the flaws of individuals, communities or nations is to engage in destructive misrepresentation of truth.

This week's Torah portion provides a vivid reminder to maintain an all-encompassing macro and micro perspective. Our goal must be not to engage in propaganda, but in an honest and sincere search for truth.

Shabbat Shalom

Who will take the place of Eyal, Gilad & Naftali?

Below is an article written by a friend of mine who is a Scottish Catholic Journalist. I took this from his Facebook and couldn't of written it better. I ask my friends here in Dallas, are there three people who will go to Yeshiva and take the vacancy left by Eyal, Gilad and Naftali?

Zvi Drizinn

How should Israel respond to the brutal murder of three schoolboys?

A Facebook Note by Stephen Daisley

"Proportionately," The World says. "With restraint." As if it is the hallmark of a civilised society that it views coolly and dispassionately the slaughter of its young.

"They were illegal settlers," say the fellow-travellers with Palestinian rejectionism. "They shouldn't have been there in the first place." Jews are unlawful interlopers in Judea and Samaria, the cradle of Jewish history. The teenagers invited their savage demise by failing to acquiesce in the ethnic cleansing of the Jews from the heart of their homeland.

"Work with the Palestinian Authority to bring the killers to justice," says the Left. As if the PA really exists outside a smattering of heavily guarded buildings in Ramallah. Hamas may have done the bloody deed but let us not pretend that Hamas alone found joy in the destruction of Jewish lives.

(Continued on page 4)



A Day in the Park

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(Continued from page 3)

"Kill the killers," says the Right. "Or throw them in jail." As if jihadists are a finite resource in Palestinian society. As if they would not be replaced tomorrow by younger, fierier shahids. As if a few more Palestinian funerals will even the score, solve the problem. Throw them in jail? Of course. Now, guarantee me they won't be freed in the next round of terrorist releases.

I don't know how Israel should respond. All I know is this: My heart aches for those boys, for their parents and loved-ones, for every friend they have been snatched from. Ha'makom yenahem etkhem betokh she'ar avelei Tziyon vi'Yerushalayim.

My heart aches that Eyal Yifrach, Gilad Shaar, and Naftali Frenkel will never again join a minyan, never again strap on tefillin, never again listen to their fathers recite kiddush on Shabbat, never grow up to have children who will listen to them recite kiddush. Baruch dayan ha-emet.

Tonight I feel a burning, righteous rage. Raid. Bomb. Annex Judea and Samaria. Hashem yikom damam. Tomorrow I will be calmer and the next day calmer still. But is calmness a virtue? Should we not be angry? Maybe the Zahal is the only solution. Maybe the only way yeshiva students can walk safely in Alon Shvut, Kedumim, and Revava is if an Israeli flag flies over Nablus, Qalqilya, and Jenin.

I will leave these questions to the politicians for now. My own response? Revenge may be the prerogative of G-d but there is a justice that men can exact: To go living, building, praying, raising families, and sending boys to yeshiva. In short, be Jewish. Ela sheb'chol dor va-dor omdim aleinu lechaloteinu; v'ha-kadosh baruch hu matzilenu miyadam.

Remember, survive, flourish. Pray for Eyal, Gilad, and Naftali z"l and hold their families in your heart.

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