

## **Inspirations from the Haphtarah by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh**

### **Balak**

#### **Tznius for ourselves, Our fellow Man, and for Hashem**

The Haphtarah for Balak is taken from Micha 5:6-6:8. The primary connection to the Parsha is verse 6:5 which states, 'My nation, remember what Balak, the king of Moav, plotted and what Bilaam, the son of Beor, answered him from Shittim. Yet, I brought you to Gilgal that you may know the righteous acts of Hashem.' Balak wanted to do great harm to Am Yisroel. He hired Bilaam to curse them, but it did not work. Chazal understand the word Shittim as a reference to the fact that Bilaam advised Balak that the only way to do immeasurable harm to Am Yisroel would be to cause them to do acts of immorality and consequentially worship idols. The Torah tells us that this occurred when Bnai Yisroel were living in Shittim. Balak took the advice and got Am Yisroel to behave immorally with the daughters of Moav and as a result Am Yisroel started to worship Baal Peor which was worshipped in the most disgusting ways. Sadly, Balak and Bilaam succeeded in causing 24,000 people to be killed in a plague.

The Haphtarah concludes with the verse, 'What does Hashem ask you? Only to do just, love kindness, and *Hatznea Leches* with your G-d. The Term *Hatznea leches*, go humbly, requires explanation. After all, much about how we conduct ourselves as the children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov is predicated on this verse. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch brings this verse when he introduces the laws of how we are to dress ourselves. He states that we understand from here that we are to dress modestly and not in a manner that brings attention to ourselves. While our religious community tends to emphasize the technicalities of how much one should cover oneself, tznius is really much greater than the covering alone. Tznius indicates our sense of knowing that there is a higher authority. We have to be aware of Hashem's presence at all times. Simultaneously, we must be aware that there are others besides us and we are not to be selfish. So we have to dress ourselves in a manner that is fitting for the tzelem Elokim in ourselves and in the other human beings we are with. In

fact, it is the very fact that the other person is as human as we are that we cover ourselves appropriately for, as my Rosh Yeshiva Rav Dovid Feinstein, Shlit"a, stated on a number of occasions. All of these ideas are the exact opposite of a debased, immoral individual. Such an individual is only living for oneself and for his own pleasures, totally incognizant of both G-d or anyone else's needs. This was Bilaam's advice to Balak; He told Balak to get Bnai Yisroel to live a selfish, godless life incognizant of anyone or anything else. Bilaam's whole credo was the direct opposite of ours.

The Ksav Sofer brings the Gemara's explanation of the term *Hatznea Leches* homiletically. It means the mitzvah of helping a bride go to the chupa and accompanying the dead to burial. While helping a bride go to the chupah may be a bigger mitzvah on a certain level, nevertheless, dealing with the deceased is more 'with your G-d'. This is because in the case of doing Mitzvos for the deceased, the only rewards are from Hashem and no longer from that person. The Ksav Sofer explains that doing both Mitzvos equally show the act of going humbly with Hashem. After all, *Hatznea Leches* is a way of life and behavior directed to avodas Hashem.