

RABBI AHARON ZIEGLER — BALAK 2019/5779

“MOSHE CRIES”

(25:6) Nowhere else in the Torah do we find Moshe Rabbeinu crying. What is the significance of crying? Is it a symptom of sadness?, or of happiness? Or is it a sign of helplessness.?

In a shocking act of brazenness, a man brought a Midianite woman in front of Moshe and the elders and sinned with her in public view. Not knowing how to handle the situation they were totally perplexed and reduced to helpless crying. At that moment they forgot the law regarding one who publicly violates the Torah prohibition against cohabiting with a gentile woman, that the law is, “*Kano'im Po'ge'im Bo*” {*a zealous one may kill him*}. The Midrash comments (Midrash Rabba 20:24) that as a result of Moshe's inaction, because of forgetfulness, he was punished in that “no one knows the place of his burial” Devarim 34:6).

How can we justify this rather strict judgement against Moshe? Rav Aharon Lichtenstein offered the following explanation. Moshe was high and above any other mortal human being; he was close to being like an angel. As such, he was held to a higher standard of practice, [Bava Kamma 50a] so that when he failed to take the initiative action and rise to the occasion as he had done in the past, this was considered a grave sin.

Usually we define wrongdoing as someone who commits an illicit act. When one steals, he's committed a sin. However, we generally do not accuse a person of sinning if failed to do something right. It may be a missed opportunity, an act of omission, but certainly not deserving any punishment. And here, Moshe did pay a price for not acting.

I would have thought that by not taking advantage of a religious opportunity one only failed in the realm of “[*Sur Meira*]-*Va'asei Tov*” [Tehillim 34:15] of “Do Good”, that although one has not acted properly by not Doing Good, he has still not done anything wrong. We see from here that such an approach is also a deficiency- and that one who fails to act, is, in fact considered to have acted wrongly.

The Gemara teaches (Berachot 12b), that one who could pray on behalf of another person, but fails to do so, is considered a sinner! It does not say he merely forfeited an opportunity to a Mitzvah; rather, he is called a sinner!

When a person fails to maximize his potential and does nothing, he is held accountable. We may not be able to save the world, but in our own circle of family and friends, there are surely many such moments. Moments when a small chesed on our part, an unexpected act of kindness, an unsolicited helping hand, could result in an opportunity for making all the difference in the world to someone, and to ourselves.

But, we must also recognize that failing to do so is a shortcoming in our Avodat HaShem, our service to Gd. That which is possible for us to fulfill in binding upon us. *IT IS SO MUCH EASIER NOT TO ACT WHEN WE CAN. IT IS SO MUCH GREATER WHEN WE DO. So lets not cry over it- let's do it!!*

Questions On Parashat Balak:

1-In beginning of Parasha, 22:2, Balak is introduced as “Balak son of Tzippor”. But in 22:4 he is given the title of “King of Mo’av”. What do we learn from this?

2-From what incident did Bil’am learn that even a normal function of speech, or ability to speak is under control of GD?

3- What kind of death did Bil’am wish upon himself? –

4-How do we know that Bil’am was blind in one eye?

5-Not one Jew died from the intended curses of Bil’am, but his advice was potent. How many Jews died as a result of his advice? -

6-What merit did king of Mo’av have that from him Rut and David HaMelech originated?

KOL HAKAVOD TO THOSE WHO ANSWERED LAST WEEK

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