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## SHABBAT BALAK

*Parashat Balak* takes its title from Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab. Afraid that the Israelites will attack his nation, Balak sends messengers to invite Bala'am ben Beor, a well-known pagan prophet, to come and curse the people of Israel. At first, God forbids Bala'am to grant Balak's request. Then the seer is sent but told that he must say only what God commands. On the way, Bala'am's donkey sees an angel standing before her and refuses to go forward. Bala'am beats her. After the donkey protests that she is being mistreated, Bala'am himself sees the angel. Fearful, he asks if he should return home, but the angel tells him to continue, warning once again that he is to say only what God commands. On three occasions King Balak asks Bala'am to curse the Israelites, but each time the seer blesses them. Furious, Balak tells Bala'am to return home. In parting, the seer predicts that Israel will soon "smash the brow of Moab." Later, when the Israelites camp in Shittim, they have sexual relations with Moabite women and offer sacrifices to the Moabites'god. As a result they are punished with a plague. When Pinchas, son of Eleazar the priest, witnesses an Israelite entering a tent with a Moabite woman, he takes a spear and kills both of them. His action ends the plague after 24,000 Israelites have died.

א וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְעָם אֶל־בָּלַק בְּנֵה־לִי בָזָה שְׂבַעַת מִזְבְּחֹת וְהִכּוּ לִי בָזָה שְׂבַעַת פָּרִים וְשְׂבַעַת אֵילִים: ב וַיַּעַשׂ בָּלַק כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בִּלְעָם וַיַּעַל בָּלַק וּבִלְעָם פָּר וָאֵיל בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ: ג וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְעָם לְבָלַק הַתִּינִיב עַל־עֲלֹתֶיךָ וְאֵלֶכָה אוֹלֵי יַקְרָה יְהוֹה לַקְרָאתִי וְדַבֵּר מִה־יִרְאֵנִי וְהִגַּדְתִּי לְךָ וַיִּלְךְ שָׁפִי: ד וַיִּקְרַ אֱלֹהִים אֶל־בִּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֶת־שְׂבַעַת הַמִּזְבְּחֹת עֲרֹכְתִי וְאֶעַל פָּר וָאֵיל בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ: ה וַיִּשָּׂם יְהוֹה דְּבַר בְּפִי בִלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוּב אֶל־בָּלַק וְכַה תְּדַבֵּר: ו וַיָּשָׁב אֵלָיו וְהִנֵּה נָצַב עַל־עֲלֹתוֹ הוּא וְכָל־שָׂרֵי מוֹאָב: ז וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר מִן־אֲרָם יִנְחֵנִי בָלַק מִלְּךְ־מוֹאָב מִהַרְרֵי־קָדְס לְכֵה אָרְה־לִּי יַעֲקֹב וּלְכֵה זַעֲמָה יִשְׂרָאֵל: ח מָה אֶקְוֶה לֹא קִבְּהָ אֵל וּמָה אֲזַעֵם לֹא זַעַם יְהוֹה: ט כִּי־מֵרֹאשׁ צָרִים אֲרָאֵנוּ וּמִגִּבְעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֵנוּ הוֹרְעִם לְבַדָּד יִשְׁכֹּן וּבַגּוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשֵּׁב: י מִי מָנָה עֲפָר יַעֲקֹב וּמִסַּפֵּר אֶת־רִבְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּמָּת נַפְשֵׁי מוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְתַהִי אַחֲרֵיתִי כְּמָהוּ: יא וַיֹּאמֶר בָּלַק אֶל־בִּלְעָם מָה עֲשִׂיתָ לִּי לְקֹב אֵיבִי לְקַחְתִּיךָ וְהִנֵּה בִּרְכָתְךָ: יב וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂם יְהוֹה בְּפִי אֶתּוֹ אֲשַׁמֵּר לְדַבֵּר: יג וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בָּלַק לֹךְ־נָא אִתִּי אֶל־מְקוֹם אַחֵר אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶנּוּ מִשָּׁם אֶפְסִי קִצְהוּ תִרְאֶה וְכֹלּוֹ לֹא תִרְאֶה וְקִבְּנוּ־לִי מִשָּׁם: יד וַיִּקְחָהוּ שָׂדֵה צִפִּים אֶל־רֹאשׁ הַפִּסְגָּה וַיִּבְנוּ שְׂבַעַת מִזְבְּחֹת וַיַּעַל פָּר וָאֵיל בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ: טו וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בָּלַק הַתִּינִיב כֵּה עַל־עֲלֹתֶיךָ וְאַנְכִי אֶקְרָה כֵּה: טז וַיִּקְרַ יְהוֹה אֶל־בִּלְעָם וַיִּשָּׂם דְּבַר בְּפִיו וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוּב אֶל־בָּלַק וְכַה תְּדַבֵּר: יז וַיָּבֵא אֵלָיו וְהִנּוּ נָצַב עַל־עֲלֹתוֹ וְשָׂרֵי מוֹאָב אִתּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בָּלַק מִה־דַּבֵּר יְהוֹה: יח וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר קוּם בָּלַק וּשְׁמָע הַאֲזִינָה עַדִּי בְּנוֹ צֶפֶר: יט לֹא אֵישׁ אֵל וַיִּכְזֹּב וּבֶן־אָדָם וַיִּתְנַחֵם הֵהוּא אָמַר וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה וְדַבֵּר וְלֹא יִקְיַמְנָה: כ הִנֵּה בְרַךְ לְקַחְתִּי וּבְרַךְ וְלֹא אֲשִׁיבְנָה: כא לֹא־הִבִּיט אָוֹן בְּיַעֲקֹב וְלֹא־רָאָה עֵמֶל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוֹה אֱלֹהֵיו עֲמֹו וּתְרוּעַת מִלְּךָ בּוֹ: כב אֵל מוֹצִיאֵם מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּתוֹעַפֹת רָאִם לוֹ: כג כִּי לֹא־נִחַשׁ בְּיַעֲקֹב וְלֹא־קָסַם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כִּעַת נֹאמֶר לְיַעֲקֹב וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִה־פַּעַל אֵל

## NUMBERS 23:1-23

**1** Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here and have seven bulls and seven rams ready here for me." **2** Balak did as Balaam directed; and Balak and Balaam offered up a bull and a ram on each altar. **3** Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your offerings while I am gone. Perhaps Adonai will grant me a manifestation, and whatever is revealed to me I will tell you." And he went off alone. **4** God became manifest to Balaam, who stated, "I have set up the seven altars and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar." **5** And Adonai put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak and speak thus." **6** So he returned to him and found him standing beside his offerings, and all the Moabite dignitaries with him. **7** He took up his theme, and said: From Aram has Balak brought me, Moab's king from the hills of the East: Come, curse me Jacob, Come, tell Israel's doom! **8** How can I damn whom God has not damned, How doom when Adonai has not doomed? **9** As I see them from the mountain tops, Gaze on them from the heights, There is a people that dwells apart, Not reckoned among the nations, **10** Who can count the dust of Jacob, Number the dust-cloud of Israel? May I die the death of the upright, May my fate be like theirs! **11** Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? Here I brought you to damn my enemies, and instead you have blessed them!" **12** He replied, "I can only repeat faithfully what Adonai puts in my mouth." **13** Then Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place from which you can see them—you will see only a portion of them; you will not see all of them—and damn them for me from there." **14** With that, he took him to Sedehzophim, on the summit of Pisgah. He built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. **15** And [Balaam] said to Balak, "Stay here beside your offerings, while I seek a manifestation yonder." **16** Adonai became manifest to Balaam and put a word in his mouth, saying, "Return to Balak and speak thus." **17** He went to him and found him standing beside his offerings, and the Moabite dignitaries with him. Balak asked him, "What did Adonai say?" **18** And he took up his theme, and said: Up, Balak, attend, Give ear unto me, son of Zippor! **19** God is not a person to be capricious, Or mortal to have change of heart. Would God speak and not act, Promise and not fulfill? **20** My message was to bless: When [God] blesses, I cannot reverse it. **21** No harm is in sight for Jacob, No woe in view for Israel. Adonai their God is with them, And their King's acclaim in their midst. **22** God who freed them from Egypt Is for them like the horns of the wild ox. **23** Lo, there is no augury in Jacob, No divining in Israel: Jacob is told at once, Yea Israel, what God has planned.

## MICAH 6:1-8

**1.** Hear now what the Eternal One says; Rise; contend with the mountains, and may the hills hear My voice. **2.** Hear ye, O mountains, the controversy of the Eternal One; and you mighty ones, the foundations of the earth; for God has a controversy with His people, and with Israel He shall contend. **3.** O My people, what have I done, and how have I wearied you? Testify against Me **4.** For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.**5.** My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab planned, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him. From Shittim to Gilgal, may you recognize the righteous deeds of the Eternal One **6.** With what shall I come before the Eternal One, bow before the Most High God? Shall I come before God with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? **7.** Will the Eternal One be pleased with thousands of rams, with myriad streams of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?**8.** He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Eternal One demands of you; but to do justice, to love loving-kindness, and to walk discreetly with your God.