

Balak **Destroyer** **If You Can't Beat Them, Corrupt Them**

Torah: Numbers 22:2-25:9

(1) 22:18 ***Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak: when Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, great or small against the order of the L-RD my G-d.*** The prophet knew that he could not change G-d's mind and that Balak was trying to do something which could not be done. G-d's Word remains unchangeable.

(2) 22:35 ***The angel of the L-rd said to Balaam: go with these men; but you will only repeat the words which I shall say to you. And Balaam went with the chiefs of Balak.*** However, the L-RD is warning Balaam not to give the enemies of Israel any ammunition, but only to repeat what G-d says. Balaam was allowed to go in order that Moab would understand the power of the blessing of G-d and not so that Moab would understand how to undermine the source of the blessing.

(3) 23:23 ***Enchantment can do nothing against Israel; nor divination against Israel; in the appointed time it shall be said to Jacob and to Israel what the work of G-d is.*** Israel was embarked upon a generational journey to bring the Messiah in order that He might be a blessing to all nations, through the great nation. Generations of the nation may be lost, but nothing can overthrow either the blessing (faith) or the source of that blessing (obedience). All the attempts to use magic (sacrificial ceremonies) to destroy Israel backfired. There had to be another way to defeat the people.

(4) 25:1 ***Israel dwelt at Shittim and the people began to give themselves up to debauchery with the daughters of Moab.*** We are told later that Balaam disobeyed G-d and told Balak how to destroy the people – by getting them to practice criminal idolatry and fornication. We cannot be defeated when we walk with the King – the enemy is still in the business of trying to get us to abandon our victory and practice spiritual suicide, which is what backsliding is.

Haftarah: Micah 5:6-6:8 (5:7-6:8)

(5) 5:6 (7) ***The remnant of Jacob shall be amidst numerous peoples as a dew which comes from the L-RD, as drops of water upon the grass and which does not depend upon people or upon the children of men.*** In this passage we see the generational impact for blessing which Israel has always had. Later in the passage the sevenfold punishment of Israel is referred to – but the punishment is only there to remove the source of punishment and to return the people to the place where they can be blessed and be a blessing. G-d will target and remove all and any habits or attitudes we harbour which will stop the blessing and bring the punishment.

(6) 6:3. ***My people what have I done to you and in what have I tired you out. Answer Me.*** The spiritual requirements of G-d are reasonable and wholesome. He never wearies us, our spiritual fatigue comes from the modern day Balak's and Balaam's who infiltrate our hearts and lives and infect and corrupt our spirituality.

Brit Chadashah: Rom. 11:25-32

(7) 11:29 ***For the gifts and the calling of G-d are irrevocable.*** G-d's love for the Jewish people has never wavered, nor have His righteous requirements (faith and obedience). His call will be repeated in every generation and in every synagogue of the Jewish people until they return to the Word and accept the Messiah of promise, despite all the opposition and oppression which is levelled at this unique group of people. He cannot defeat us. He cannot defeat you – do not let the corruption of the world (whatever modern version of the daughters of Moab which is prowling around your life) move you away from His blessing – but if it does, know that His correction will be focused at your return and not at your destruction.

(Sharon, pp. 100, 101) **Ps. 79** Jewish Hero: Phineas

“It is not just with you who stand here with us today before the L-RD our G-d that I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath,, but also with those who are not here with us today.” (Deut. 29:14, 15) ***For I, the L-RD your G-d, I am a jealous G-d, who punishes the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate me and who shows mercy unto a thousand generations of those who love me and who keep My commandments.*** (Exod. 20: 5, 6)

Even though our walk with the L-rd is a personal walk where we have to come to faith personally, there is a generational aspect to faith which we cannot ignore. One aspect will always be the living generations of our families, which usually are three or four generations (grandparents, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren) and the negative effect of the sinful choices of one generation (usually the oldest) only has an impact upon the living generations and not upon those who will subsequently come onto the scene.

One aspect of the wandering years we are studying in the Torah portion was that the discipline only applied to those who had refused to go into the land and not upon the younger generation who were yet too young to fight. The seniors among the people probably enjoyed themselves with forty years of “I told you so” as they played with their grandchildren and regaled them with stories of the captivity in Egypt, so that they would not be tempted to go back when it was their turn to enter.

The younger ones were not affected by the negative choice of their elders in part because the lost generation accepted their discipline and did not keep rising up against Moses – their acceptance of the wandering was a legacy of obedience which prevented the negative impact of their decision from being passed on to their children – because they did not remain part of those who hated the L-rd (and who perished), they became part of those who kept His commandments and who loved Him.

There is a modern myth which is used to try and break apart families and it is called the generation gap and part of this negative view of the generations is based in part upon our educational system, where kids of the same age are herded together away from their families and are exposed to influences and teachings which their families are not an active part of.

We are living in a society which tries to brew a war between the generations, so that the younger generation is always challenging what they receive from the older generation and are

taught to reject older ideas and accept new concepts and their main targets are faith and morality. Children are taught that they are learning new things and are being set free from the past because just like older technology, older ideas about the origin and purpose of the cosmos no longer apply and must be recycled as no longer relevant.

This attack is really an attempt to change our understanding of the nature of truth from that which is based on timeless principles to one that is based on the current opinions of each newer generation. These revolutionary ideas are always fluctuating under the barrage of supposedly newer discoveries and newer understandings which require that each newer generation abandon the older understandings of previous generations which they have both supposedly disproved and discarded as no longer true or applicable.

There is a timeless wisdom which each generation should pass on to the next generation and which is based on the eternal, changeless Word of G-d, especially in our fluctuating technologically volatile world. We need to avoid the trap of thinking that the truth will always be found in that which is new and recently discovered and that what we have received from the past is unreliable and outdated, because truly, there is nothing new under the sun, just recycled updates which claim to be bigger and better and faster, but which have three main objectives.

First, they want us to distrust the past and look at it as an enemy of progress, as if older people are really opposed to change and just want things to stay the way they were, which is simply not the case. How we apply the eternal truth of the Word may vary as we encounter new and different situations but the core beliefs and values of our faith are staples which cannot be replaced or superseded.

Next they want us to think that all that we believe, should be regularly recycled and altered, just like the technologies and fashions which actually thrive on change to stay in business. Instead of basing our lives on that which is changeless, we are supposed to be living with constant change and constantly receiving new ideas with which to replace ideas which have a short shelf life. We are being subtly brainwashed into thinking that there are no absolutes and we are also being trained to be suspicious of anything which claims to be an absolute.

It goes one step further as we are told that those who hold to absolutes, especially religious absolutes, are intellectually dishonest, backward thinking primitive people who need to both be pitied and also eventually liberated from their backward ideas that are holding them back from discovering higher and deeper truths.

Lastly, we are being brainwashed into thinking that as we age, we need to surrender our beliefs and our values and not force them on the younger generation, any more than we would try and force our outmoded technology and fashion upon the younger ones who will see marvels in a world we will never make it to. It is the expectation that we only have a limited day in the sun and that in order for our children and grandchildren to have their day in the sun, we have to not burden them with our outmoded beliefs and ideas about life.

Now we understand that technological progress has brought us considerable advantages, along with some of the negative side effects, pollution and environmental changes being the worst. But how do we answer this set of challenges so that we possess generational stability?

Let me suggest a few and let me begin with an explanation of the difference between an eternal truth and a situational application of the same. The Ten Commandments are eternal truths which need to be applied differently as our situations modify and we need to look at how the Word was applied by previous generations so that we can learn how to apply its unchanging truths in our changing situations.

We need to see that our applications of divine truth need to be constantly updated and reviewed and even challenged, but at the same time we need to make sure that our personal grasp of the eternal truths of G-d and His Word is never loosened or threatened.

We need to teach each new generation how to choose and how to apply the truth and how to distinguish between an application of divine truth and divine truth itself.

You see science and technology are constantly discovering new things about the universe, and how it works but the universe is not constantly changing, and continues to do its thing the way it has always done. There are changeless constants in our world because all we are doing is discovering how it works and not altering the way it works.

The generations teach us that we only have a limited amount of time and a limited impact on our world as we travel through it and we have to avoid thinking that our way of doing things is the only way to do things, but we should avoid change for the sake of change.

There is no such thing as a generation gap, because we were all young children and all of our young children shall become oldsters like us.

When I was teaching school I said that I once stood where they now stand and that one day they would stand where I stand because change is inevitable, but not all change is inevitable or desirable.

Just as there are timeless and changeless absolutes in the physical universe, there are also changeless and timeless absolutes when it comes to faith and morality.

However the answers which each generation comes up with to explain its role and to apply eternal truths to their situation has a limited shelf life and we need to be coming up with newer, renewed answers to the same set of questions people have been asking since the time of Adam and Eve. It is our answers and strategies which wear out and need to be updated, not the eternal truths they are based upon.

Just as a scientist loses his credibility when he or she ceases to deal with how the physical world works, we need to avoid losing touch with the eternal truths of G-d's Word as we make our way generationally through this life. Instead of constantly trying to re-invent the wheel, we need to admit that the wheels we have invented may have to be upgraded and replaced as they wear out and as we want to roll under modified conditions.

Older generations may struggle with newer technologies, but are not anti-change or hostile to new ideas because we do not live in a world which is constantly changing – we live in one where our ideas about the world are constantly changing.

A generational spirituality is not hostile to change and yet it is hostile to the false concept that

truth is constantly changing and that there are no spiritual absolutes. Modern technology has radically altered the way we live, and some of these alterations are negative and have damaged our planet in way which may not be easily fixed.

Each generation has to relate to the world where our circumstances are constantly changing, but where how the physical universe operates does not change and never will, world without end (until the world ends).

We will pass on both our achievements and our mistakes to succeeding generations and we want our children and grandchildren to come to grips with the same eternal truths we have embraced, even when how we related to our world has to change to fit new circumstances and to answer new challenges in a world where the pace of change is accelerating, but where there is truly nothing new under the sun, just newer versions of the same old same old.

Our societal fascination with everything new and our suspicion of everything old is probably the greatest challenge our new generations will have to contend with because neither the universe nor the way it operates is going to change.

It is in the realm of ideas and perception that our biggest battles will occur because there is a growing spiritual conspiracy which claims that there are no moral or spiritual absolutes and that all the absolutes of the past are outdated and need to be abandoned – which is simply not true.

Our passage in Deuteronomy said that the covenant made with the new generation was also made with all succeeding generations. This is because we live in a world where perceptions are always changing, but just as the physical universe remains unaffected by the perceptions people have of it, there are spiritual and moral absolutes which are also unaffected by the perceptions people have of them.

The blessing and the cursing of the Lord is based on how well each succeeding generation both holds to His absolutes and how effective they are in applying these changeless truths to the changing circumstances of their lives.

This understanding was first given to Israel, even though it was also taught to many previous generations before and after the flood. The degree to which this was ignored triggered both the flood and the scattering in the aftermath of Babel.

In your life and in our life are we doing a good job of continually applying the changeless truths of His Word to the constantly changing circumstances of our lives? Or are we abandoning them as supposedly outmoded ideas from previous generations which no longer apply to our modern situation?

May we never fall prey to the attack upon our generational spirituality because spiritual absolutes are just as non negotiable and changeless as the ones which govern how our physical universe functions.

Our modern world faces many challenges directly related to how we have abused our physical environment and we are starting to face as many which are directly related to how we continue to abuse our spiritual environment.

Thankfully generational folly has a limited shelf life, while the eternal truths of G-d's Word are changeless. Which one are you going to base your life on? Generational stability means that we adhere to the same eternal truths which were given to previous generations and that we avoid being subject to the same discipline which previous generations encountered as they let these truths slip.

We need to learn from their mistakes and design newer and creative ways of applying the changeless spiritual truths of G-d's Word to the constantly changing world in which we live.

Do you have generational stability in your life? Are you passing generational stability on to the next generation?

Do you know the difference between the changeless truths of the Word and the time geared applications of these changeless truths which we have to constantly upgrade and modified? What a good question for Yeshiva!

Let's pray.