



## **Sicha Summary**

Chelek 18 | Balak | Sichah 4

### **The Context:**

The content of the Haftorah is meant to reflect and correspond to the theme of the *parshah* it follows. More specifically, the theme of the end of the *parshah* should be continued in the beginning of the Haftorah.

*Parshas Balak* concludes with the story of the Jewish people's idolatrous worship of *Ba'al Peor*, the subsequent plague, and Pinchas' zealous punishment of Zimri which abruptly ended the plague.

The Haftorah opens with this verse from the prophet Michah: "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew sent by G-d, like torrents of rain upon vegetation that does not hope for any man and does not wait for the sons of men." (*Michah* 5:6)

What is the thematic connection between the worship of *Ba'al Peor* and Michah's prophecy that the Jewish people will "not hope for any man and... not wait for the sons of men"?

### **The Preface to the Explanation:**

Micah's prophecy describes the time leading up to the redemption, but it concludes before the redemption is completed. There is still evil to contend with, but G-d is in the process of eradicating that evil, "The remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest..." (*Ibid*, 5:7)

*Parshas Balak* finds the Jews in a similar state — positioned on the Jordan river, across from the Land of Israel, preparing for the completion of their redemption.

In the Haftorah, Michah teaches the Jewish people what kind of faith they must cultivate to usher in the final redemption. “And the remnant of Jacob shall be... like dew sent by G-d... that does not hope for any man and does not wait for the sons of men.” On the cusp of redemption, Michah does not need to warn the people about a forbidden form of reliance on human beings; instead, he refers to a permissible form of “hope in man” that the Jewish people must abandon.

The Torah itself validates the importance of the natural realm; it demands that we work within nature in order to receive G-d’s blessings. At the same time, we do not attribute our success to our natural efforts; they are a vessel that can contain G-d’s blessing. Yet, even while not granting nature autonomy, there are still two ways to perceive nature as an intermediary: 1) Because G-d commanded us to work within nature, we view the natural realm as having real significance. 2) We see nature as G-d’s chosen tool to deliver our sustenance; it has no significance on its own, and our interaction with nature is solely to fulfill G-d’s commands.

According to the first way of perceiving nature, conflicts of priorities can arise: If spending extra time in prayer or study eats into a person’s profits, and they view their natural efforts as important and significant, they will constantly be drawn away from their spiritual pursuits, or they will make due with the bare minimum. If, however, a person sees nature as nothing but G-d’s tool, then he will never abandon prayer or study for possible profits because his worldly efforts do not contradict his Divine service; he sees them as one and the same.

It is this level of faith that Michah refers to when he says “the remnant of Jacob shall be... like dew sent by G-d... that does not hope for any man.” Just like the dew falls without being brought about by man, so, too, the Jew

will perceive that his blessings come from G-d alone, and his natural efforts are nothing other than G-d's tool.

**The Explanation:**

This exhortation to view nature as just another expression of G-d is the antidote to the worship of *Ba'al Peor*. A person worshiped the idol of *Peor* by exposing himself and defecating before it. Chassidus explains this grotesque display as an expression of an overindulgence in excess materialism, in "waste," as opposed to searching for meaningful spiritual pleasure. A person arrives at this indulgence by way of misconstruing the role of nature itself. It begins with attributing significance and power to natural processes, and ends with drawing in materialistic pursuit.

Repudiating the mistake of *Peor* worship was crucial in leading up to the Jewish people's entry into the Land of Israel: In the desert, the people had all of their material needs miraculously provided by G-d, without any need for human effort working through natural means. In entering the Land of Israel, the Jewish people would be entering the world of physical labor and commerce. The danger of succumbing to an overemphasis of the role of nature was then heightened. Thus, the Jewish people had to relearn the need for absolute faith and reliance on G-d.

In our era, as we experience the last moments of exile, we, too, must prepare for the ultimate redemption by changing our perspective on human effort achieved through natural means, and recognizing it for it truly is — a tool in the hand of G-d to deliver blessing and sustenance.