



Balak / בַּלַּק

Praising His Beloved People



By: Aharon Spetner

Illustrations by: M. Weinreb

Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

"Come boys," Totty said. "We're going to be late for Mincha."

As the Friedmans hurried down the street, they heard the sound of loud music.

"What's that?" asked Dovid.

"Look!" said Moishy, as they turned the corner. "That looks like Mayor McGillicuddy!"

Ahead, the entire street appeared blocked off. Hundreds of mostly empty seats had been set up, and on the stage stood none-other than the recently reelected mayor of University City, PJ McGillicuddy.

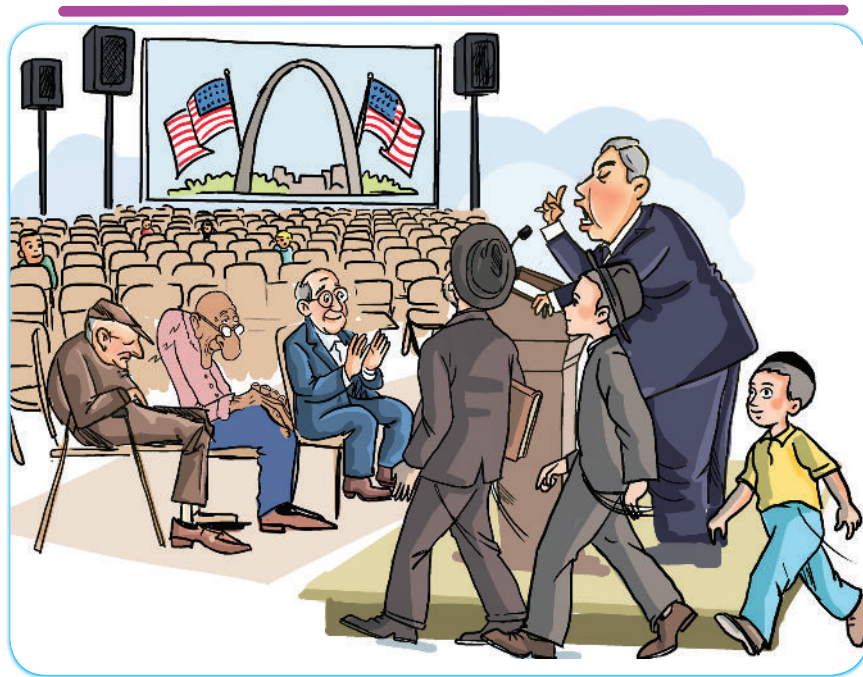
"My fellow Americans," the mayor boomed, his voice echoing through the loudspeakers. "It is my pleasure to once again be elected to be the best mayor you have ever had."

McGillicuddy paused as Cameron, the mayor's aide, applauded vigorously.

"Over the years, I have led the city of University City to prosperity. Why even I myself have become incredibly wealthy during my time in office. I founded the University City Zoo, and animal attacks on visitors have dropped almost five percent in the past six months. I oversaw the recapture of some of the violent prisoners who escaped after the prison guard I hired accidentally let them loose. And I am steadfastly committed to my promise to create the University City space program and to send local astronauts to Jupiter by the end of the year!"

Cameron clapped again, as several of the attendees seemed to be drifting off to sleep.

"Now, there are some people I need to thank for my immense success. First of all, there is one person without whom none of this would be possible. Someone who is more devoted to this city than anyone I know.



And that person is me. Without me, I could never have done all that I have for our community.”

“He’s *meshuga in kupp!*” laughed Dovid, as the Friedmans walked past the loudspeakers.

“But almost as important, I also would like to mention the Jewish community of University City. The Jews of our town have shown tremendous loyalty to me and my campaign. Whenever I demand to speak in their synagogue, their rabbi, Rabbi Greenblatt, always allows me to do so. And they are such special people! Their children have such respect for their parents, they are law-abiding citizens, and they even pray for my dog, Cuddles, whenever he gets sick.”

The mayor’s voice grew fainter as the Friedmans headed away from the ceremony and approached the shul.

“Boys,” Totty said. “I think we can learn something from what we heard of Mayor McGillicuddy’s speech just now.”

“What?” asked Moishy. “That it’s okay if wild zoo animals attack people?”

“Or that we should daven for sick dogs?” offered Dovid.

“No, no,” Totty laughed. “That’s not what I meant. I meant the nice things that he said about Yidden.”

“But we already know those things,” Moishy said.

“Yes, of course we do,” said Totty. “But I meant the very fact that he said nice things about Yidden. We should learn from that.”

“We should praise ourselves?” asked Dovid.

“Think about this week’s Parsha. Look at all of the wonderful things that Bilaam said about Klal Yisroel.”

“But Bilaam was a goy, just like the mayor,” Dovid said.

“Okay, but did you know that the Gemara tells us that they originally wanted to include Parshas Balak in Krias Shema?”

“Wow, davening would be so long if they did that,” said Moishy.

“And that’s exactly why the Gemara says they didn’t do it. But why would we want to include this Parsha in Shema? And the reason is because it says such wonderful things about Klal Yisroel. And it is important for Jews to say good things about Klal Yisroel.

“Look at all of the people, just like us, running into *shul* to daven. That’s amazing! And over there is Rabbi Elefant - he and his wife run a bakery out of their house for all of the Yidden in our town who want to buy Pas Yisroel baked goods. Everywhere we look we can see how amazing Hashem’s people are!”

“So we are supposed to say things that we already know?” asked Moishy, still not getting it.

“Yes!” Totty said, as they walked into the shul. “It makes Hashem so happy to hear wonderful things being said about His people. And it’s one thing if a goy says it. But Hashem cares so much more about the words of Yidden. So it’s way more valuable to Hashem when we, His children, say wonderful things about Klal Yisroel!”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

let’s review:

- What would be the reason to include Parshas Balak in Krias Shema?
- How many ways can you think of to praise Klal Yisroel?



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