



THE SHALOM BAYIT JOURNAL



Parashat Chukat-Balak

The Enduring Commitment

Understanding the Torah and the Human Experience

Human beings naturally pay more attention to what is wrong than to what is right. We notice what is missing more quickly than what is already present. While this tendency is there to help us recognize danger and solve problems, it can also distort the way we see people and relationships.

As relationships become strained, people often begin interpreting even neutral or positive actions through a negative lens. Perspective shifts away from appreciation and toward frustration. As disappointments accumulate, our attention gradually narrows toward what is not working.

Over time, temporary frustrations take center stage. Perhaps Chukat and Balak invite us to consider this same tendency.

Boreh Olam's relationship with Bnei Yisrael is not presented as a perfect relationship. Throughout the journey in the desert, there are complaints, fear, and repeated struggles with trust. Again and again, Bnei Yisrael complains and focuses on what they don't have rather than what Hashem is giving them. Yet the relationship goes on.

Then we arrive at the story of Balak and Bilaam, and suddenly the perspective changes. Instead of looking at Bnei Yisrael through the lens of their complaints, we see them through Boreh Olam's eyes as He watches over His people, protects them, and refuses to allow Bilaam to curse them.

Many of the commentaries ask, "How could Bilaam speak so positively about Bnei Yisrael after their incessant complaining?"

The Or HaChaim explains that Bilaam was not merely prevented from cursing Bnei Yisrael. He was compelled to see them through Boreh Olam's perspective of His nation. Instead of viewing them through the eyes of an accuser, Bilaam was forced to see something good—the way Hashem sees the good in us.

Perhaps this offers an important lesson for our own relationships. Sometimes husbands and wives become so focused on frustrations that they stop seeing one another clearly.

Fear, hurt, exhaustion, and disappointment can make it difficult to see our spouse's intentions clearly.





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We begin interpreting actions through the lens of frustration rather than through the lens of trust. Lasting love often requires learning to see one another through a lens of compassion rather than accusation.

It means intentionally looking for the good that is already there, appreciating it, and even speaking it aloud to our partner. Couples will experience conflict. They will go through seasons of distance.

Lasting love often requires learning to see one another through a lens of compassion rather than accusation.

Yet when they begin noticing and appreciating the good they each bring to the relationship, the relationship itself often begins to feel different, even if the circumstances have not changed.

Whether we think of Boreh Olam's relationship with Bnei Yisrael as one of a parent and child or through the marital language used throughout Tanach, the relationship remains one of enduring love, commitment, appreciation, and acknowledgment.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges in any enduring relationship is learning to keep seeing one another through the lens of love, even when disappointment is present.

Can you think of a time when choosing to focus on the good in someone changed the way you saw them?



About The Shalom Bayit Journal

The Shalom Bayit Journal explores the intersection of Torah, psychology, relationships, and the human experience. Through thoughtful essays and practical reflection, the Journal seeks to make timeless wisdom meaningful and accessible for everyday life.

