

How Lovely Are Thy Tents

Elohim is not a human who lies or a mortal who changes his mind. When he says something, he will do it; when he makes a promise, he will fulfill it. Look, I am ordered to bless; when he blesses, I can't reverse it... "How lovely are your tents, Ya'akov; your encampments, Isra'el! They spread out like valleys, like gardens by the river-side, like succulent aloes planted by יהוה, like cedar trees next to the water. Water will flow from their branches, their seed will have water aplenty. Their king will be higher than Agag and his kingdom lifted high. Elohim, who brought them out of Egypt, gives them the strength of a wild ox. They will devour the nations opposing them, break their bones, pierce them with their arrows. When they lie down they crouch like a lion, or like a lioness - who dares to rouse it? Blessed be all who bless you! Cursed be all who curse you!" (Nu. 23:19, 24:5-9)

Then יהוה your Elohim will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your children, so that you will love יהוה your Elohim with all your heart and all your being, and thus you will live... For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach. It isn't in the sky, so that you need to ask, 'Who will go up into the sky for us, bring it to us and make us hear it, so that we can obey it?' Likewise, it isn't beyond the sea, so that you need to ask, 'Who will cross the sea for us, bring it to us and make us hear it, so that we can obey it?' On the contrary, the word is very close to you - in your mouth, even in your heart; therefore, you can do it! "Look! I am presenting you today with, on the one hand, life and good; and on the other, death and evil -in that I am ordering you today to love יהוה your Elohim, to follow his ways, and to obey his mitzvot, regulations and rulings; for if you do, you will live and increase your numbers; and יהוה your Elohim will bless you in the land you are entering in order to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, if you refuse to listen, if you are drawn away to prostrate yourselves before other gods and serve them; I am announcing to you today that you will certainly perish; you will not live long in the land you are crossing the Yarden to enter and possess. "I call on heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have presented you with life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life, so that you will live, you and your descendants, loving יהוה your Elohim, paying attention to what he says and clinging to him - for that is the purpose of your life! On this depends the length of time you will live in the land יהוה swore he would give to your ancestors Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov." (Deut 30:6; 11-20)

During the times when we are "...troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." (2 Cor. 4:8-9), יהוה your Elohim is always near. He does not walk away from nor keeps Himself at a distance when tough times come. He cares for us lovingly and compassionately. This is part of what He meant when He said: "...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt. 28:20) Messiah is involved with us the here and now!

Life is often like the old TV show "Let's Make a Deal." Doors of opportunity present themselves to us and we must choose between them. In the show, The big deal involved three doors, famously known as "Door number 1", "Door number 2" and "Door number 3", each of which contained a prize or prize package. The top winner of the two was offered the first choice of a door, and the second contestant was then offered a choice of the two remaining doors. One door hid the day's Big Deal, which was usually more than the top prize offered to that point. It often included the day's most expensive prize (a luxury or sports car, a trip, furniture/appliances, a fur, cash or a combination of two or more of said items). The other two doors concealed prizes or prize packages of lesser value. However, in real life, once we make a choice, we are then presented with the consequences of those choices: either Life (the Blessing) or Death (the Curse). In the TV show, we anxiously waited to see the results—and there were always results. In this week's Torah Reading, *Parashah Balaak, Bil'am (Balaam)* also had to choose. Would he curse or bless *Yisrael*? How powerful would either the Blessing or the Curse be? Perhaps a better title for this episode could be "While *Yisrael* Played {not even aware of their surroundings, the evil ones planned their cursing...}" In *Bamidbar 25:1*, Scripture tells us that while *Yisrael* was at *Shittim*, they played the harlot with Moabite women and idols. As this was going on, Adonai is on the scene (even behind the scenes, if you please) battling the enemy to make it possible for *Yisrael* to inherit the "blessing" by stopping the

“curse.” In addition, there were human foes who also sought their demise. While *Yisrael* was busy partaking in the ways of the world, the L-rd was astounding the world with His supernatural power. You see, Adonai has the power to turn curses into blessings!

Points of Discussion:

- (1) Adonai only permits Balaam’s Blessing Upon our People: The *Ma Tov* prayer.
- (2) How Important is the blessing? {Ro. 12:14 “*Bless those who persecute you - bless them, don't curse them!*”}
- (3) Should both blessings and cursings proceed out of our mouth? {Jas 3:9-10: “*With it we bless ADONAI, the Father; and with it we curse people, who were made in the image of God. Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing! Brothers, it isn't right for things to be this way.*”}
- (4) Whom should we bless? {“*Finally, all of you, be one in mind and feeling; love as brothers; and be compassionate and humble-minded, not repaying evil with evil or insult with insult, but, on the contrary, with blessing. For it is to this that you have been called, so that you may receive a blessing.*”}