



Chukat-Balak

The Jewish World Will Become Aligned

This coming Shabbat, the Jewish world will become aligned, because until now, we haven't been. Since Shavuot, the Torah reading in Israel has been different from that of the diaspora.

That's because this year in Israel, Shavuot was already over by Shabbat, and the next Torah portion was read - the portion of Naso.

In the diaspora, unlike in Israel, Shabbat was the second day of Shavuot. We had to wait for a week in order to read the portion of Naso. Therefore, the diaspora has been one week apart from Israel continuously since that point.

Last Shabbat in Israel, the portion of Chukat was read, and this coming Shabbat it will be Balak. And in the diaspora we have the double portion of Chukat-Balak. So from this Shabbat, the whole Jewish world will be united. I believe that sends out to us an exceptionally powerful message, because we're all together as a Jewish people.

In the Gemara Masechet Brachot, there's a fascinating teaching telling us that originally, the Shema was going to have four paragraphs, not just the three that we have today. The fourth paragraph was going to be the parsha of Balak. The only reason why that didn't happen was in order not to prolong the service unnecessarily, because

of what we call *tircha d'tzibbura* (An inconvenience to the congregation). This actually suggests that it is a perfect fit.

And why is it a perfect fit? Because the parsha of Balak tells us about "השגחה" how Hashem looks after our people.

Bilam, the heathen prophet, was on the top of the mountain, and he could see the entire people. He wanted to curse us all, to destroy the entire Jewish nation. We were oblivious to it. And so we thank Hashem, who always protects us, whether we're aware of it or not. But that image of Bilam seeing the whole people and seeking to destroy us, actually is a powerful one for us, because we were all together as one united nation, and that's how we are today.

What's happening in Israel is of concern to us throughout the Jewish world. And what's happening around the Jewish world is of concern to Jews in Israel. Therefore, during these challenging times, we're focusing on the unity of the Jewish people and how connected we all are to the State of Israel during these difficult times.

Every Shabbat at mincha time, we exclaim,

"ומי כְּעַמּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ"

The Jewish people is one single nation throughout the world.

Shabbat Shalom.