



11 Tammuz 5781
Monday, Parshat Balak

21 June 2021

The Chosen Nation

When Bilam opened his mouth to bless Am Yisrael in place of cursing them, the first thing he praised them for was their seclusion from the rest of the nations, *"For from its origins, I see it rock-like, and from hills do I see it. Behold! It is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations."* The Hebrew word *levadad* – solitude has a numerical value of forty, which alludes to the Holy Torah given to Moshe Rabbeinu on Har Sinai in forty days. The gentiles too recognize the fact that in the merit of the Torah we received, we became the Chosen Nation.

The owner of an enormous manufacturing and marketing company for air-conditioners is a great believer in the power of tzaddikim, although he is a non-Jew. Every year, during the days of the *hilula* for the tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"a, in Morocco, we hire his services. One year, R' Daniel Afriat, responsible for the air-conditioning at the *hilula* ceremony, wished to pay a deposit. But the owner refused to accept it, stating he has total confidence that the Jews will pay up completely. After the *hilula*, when R' Afriat wished to sort out the payment, he took advantage of the opportunity and asked the man how he had acquired such a strong sense of trust in the Jewish nation.

"I was once stuck in the small town of Ouezanne, in Morocco," he began. "This is the resting place of the tzaddik, Rabbi Amram ben Diwan, a great miracle-worker. When my friends heard I was there for some time, they recommended I visit his grave, even though I am a gentile. I did as they advised, since I suffered from financial as well as personal problems at the time. I kissed the grave, with perfect faith that the soul of the tzaddik could affect wonderful things on my behalf.

"The caretaker offered me a candle and instructed me to light it in a designated place near the grave of the tzaddik. Additionally, he poured some oil onto my hands from the lit wicks and told me to rub it into the nape of my neck. I did as I was told and, with a feeling of elevation, left the gravesite.

"Some time later I was in Belgium, speeding along in my car together with some friends, when an oncoming vehicle crashed into our car. All passengers were rushed immediately to the nearest hospital, our situation appeared to be very critical!

"When the doctors began working on me, they were afraid I had suffered a fatal blow to the back of my neck. But in a miraculous fashion, all the x-rays indicated I had emerged unscathed. This was the exact spot where I had previously rubbed the oil at the tzaddik's grave. The doctors could not understand how I was saved from such a severe accident, but I knew the reason..."

The man concluded, "From when I merited experiencing the intensity of the holiness and greatness of the Jewish sages, I love the Jewish people and trust them fully."

David Chananya Pinto