

Behold a nation left Egypt, and behold they are covering the earth's eye. (22:5)

Earth's eye? Simply, this refers to the surface of the earth. Rashi explains that Balak was referring to Klal Yisrael's decimation of the two powerful kings –Sichon and Og, who were considered the shomrim ha'aretz, guardians of the land. If the two giants who protected the land were quickly dispatched by the Jews, what should Balak say? He realized that he had no chance against the Jewish army.

Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita, the Lelover Rebbe, defines earth's eye as the way people view matters that occur. They look at it through the earth's eye, as being teva, natural. Regardless of the occurrence, to them, "things happen"; it is a part of the natural order of life. It could be a major earth-shattering catastrophe, a cataclysmic occurrence like no other; nonetheless, it is always considered to be caused by the forces of nature. Heaven never plays a role in their perspective/outlook. It is always earth; they gaze through the eyes of earthiness/nature.

Balak saw that the Jewish People were different. They were a nation who "covered the earth's eyes." They did not share the world view; they viewed things from a different perspective. They saw everything as being bashert, pre-ordained, by design, as part of a Divine plan.

Balak saw, but his vision did not penetrate beyond the superficial. He declared, Hinei am yatza mi'Mitzrayim, "Behold a nation left Egypt." Hearing this, Bilaam subtly corrected him, saying, Keil motziam mi'Mitzrayim, "(It was) G-d (Who) took them out of Egypt." Rashi makes the observation, "You, Balak, said, 'Behold a nation left Egypt (on their own)'. It is not true! They did not leave on their own. It was G-d Who took them out!"

Are we prepared to accept this verity? Theoretically, yes, but in real, everyday life – it is a big maybe. As the Lelover points out: How do we react when something goes wrong, especially when we are running

late for an appointment? What do we do when we have a flat tire, a stalled car? Does anger immediately set in, or do we say, "Well, Hashem decreed this, so I might as well accept it"? Are we then prepared to ask, "Why did this happen? What message is being conveyed to me"? If we look through the ein ha'aretz, earthly/physical point of view, it was happenstance. If we follow in the path of what Judaism teaches, we cover the ein ha'aretz, and accept that it was destined.

The Rebbe relates the incident of a group of people who arrived one minute too late to catch their train. They watched in dismay as the train pulled out of the station. One member of the group said, "We came a minute too late." Another fellow (astutely) said, "We did not come late."

"How can you say that?" the first one asked.

"Well, since we did not make it in time for this train," the second one began, "it is obvious that it

was

destined for us to travel on the next train, which leaves in two hours. We did not come late – we simply came two hours early – for the next train.”

Obviously, when we arrive late, just in time to see our flight leaving the gate, our immediate reaction is not, “Well, at least we are two hours early for the next flight.” Nonetheless, if we live our lives (as we should) with the belief that everything that takes place is for a purpose, nothing just happens, it is preordained by Heavenly decree, our first reaction will be acceptance, followed by introspection to discern what Hashem is telling us.

I was reminded of this reality by none other than a seventy-eight year old Jew, incarcerated for the last 24 years for various crimes. I have known him for six years, during which time he has put on Tefillin daily (without davening, just Shema Yisrael) and attended a weekly Torah class and Shabbos morning service. Prior to that, he remembers attending a synagogue with his bubby, as a six-year-old –seventy-two years ago! Out of the blue, he remarked today, “You know, Rabbi, had I not gotten in trouble, I would have lived and died as a goy. Now, I will at least die as a Jew and be buried in a Jewish cemetery. Hashem has His plan. I guess I was a ‘hard case’, and I had to go to prison in order to come face to face with my Jewish identity.”

Hashem has a plan. We are fortunate to be observant and cognizant from our earliest years that life has

purpose, and that we experience no coincidences. Everything is by design. We are members of the nation that “covers the ein ha’aretz.” Even such contemptable pagans, such as Balak and Bilaam, acknowledged this.