

# Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from  
the famed Maggid of Dubno  
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

## The Blessings of a Blind Prophet

### Balak

Why did Bilaam boast of being blind -  
"This is the word of Beor's son Bilaam,  
the word of the man with the blinded  
eye" (Bamidbar 24:3)?

### The Parable of Two Merchants

Two merchants sold their wares at the  
same market. The first merchant sold  
the finest quality linen. He was always  
happy when his customers were  
knowledgeable, for such clients could  
appreciate the value of his merchandise  
and would not argue about the price.

The second merchant sold a cheaper,  
lower quality cloth. He was unhappy  
when discerning customers arrived, for  
they would quickly notice the defects  
and shoddy workmanship in his  
merchandise. His preferred ignorant  
clients who didn't know better. Or even  
better - customers with poor eyesight,  
or those arriving at dusk, when the  
defects in his cloths would be difficult to  
discern.

### Balaam's Special Blessings

The Midrash teaches that "Everything

that Israel enjoys in this world - is from  
the blessings of that evil man [Bilaam]."  
But in the future, we will benefit from  
the blessings of the Avot - Avraham,  
Yitzchak and Yaakov. The Midrash  
supports this idea that the blessings of  
the Avot are reserved for the future  
from the verse, "The Eternal your God  
will guard for you the covenant and the  
kindness that He promised to your  
fathers" (D'varim 7:12). God will save the  
kindness He promised to the Avot for  
the future.

Why are the blessings of the Avot only  
for future times? The Maggid explained  
this Midrash as follows:

The Avot were like the astute customers  
in the parable. They were great and holy  
men, and they could appreciate a  
generation of spiritual greatness and  
holiness. With a full heart, they blessed  
generations of future times, generations  
that will be filled with knowledge of God.

But who would bestow a generous  
blessing for mediocre generations, for  
the Jewish people during times of exile  
and strife and spiritual shallowness? To  
bless these generations, God chose a  
prophet who was nearly blind, one who  
would fail to notice their failings and  
foibles.

For this reason, Bilaam stated that he  
was blind. Bilaam needed to explain: Why  
was he blessing Israel? Why did God  
need or even want his blessings? But  
Bilaam's blindness was his strength. He

**only saw what God wanted him to see.**

**Thus the Jewish people, even in their current imperfect state, benefit from Bilaam's blessings.**

**Adapted from Mishlei Yaakov, pp. 360-361**