

“AND BALAK THE SON OF TZIPOR SAW ALL THAT THE JEWS HAD DONE TO THE EMORITES.” (BAMIDBAR 22:2)

THIS WEEK'S PARASHA opens with Balak, king of Moav, seeing how the Jews had destroyed the powerful Emorites and their kings Sichon and Og. Balak, who had relied on these kings to protect him and his nation, was now terrified of the approaching *B'nei Yisrael*. Expounding on this theme of kings and their reliance upon their armies for protection, Rabbeinu Bechaye introduces this *parasha* with the following verse: “In the multitude of people is the king's glory...” (Mishlei 14:28). Rabbeinu Bechaye elaborates: A king is flesh and blood and places his reliance on his multitude of troops. The people he rules, in turn, place their reliance on him. Hashem never wanted *B'nei Yisrael* to have a king, Rabbeinu Bechaye tells us, because Hashem wanted *B'nei Yisrael* to place all their trust in Him alone. Hashem, nevertheless did create a *mitzvah* to appoint a king, knowing that *B'nei Yisrael* would eventually err and request such a ruler.

Why was it wrong for B'nei Yisrael to request a king?

Why was it wrong for *B'nei Yisrael* to request a king? We all know that at the same time we believe with complete faith in Hashem's control of our destiny, we are still expected to be *mishtadel* – to put in appropriate effort to reach our desired outcome. We go to work to earn a living, even though we know that Hashem is the actual Provider of our livelihood. There is nothing wrong with installing a lock on our door or hiring a manager for our business – as long as we understand that our security and the success of our business is, ultimately, in the hands of Hashem. We need to have soldiers and an army to defend our borders. Why, then, was it any worse for *B'nei Yisrael* to appoint – or anoint – a king as “defense manager” to be commander-in-chief and run the country?

This situation presents an especially challenging test

Apparently, there is indeed a difference. There is something in the human psyche that responds to military might in a manner unlike any other physical effort – medical, financial or otherwise. When we see a mighty leader with a huge armed force at his command, we are affected by this show of power. How can we not rely on such massive strength? This situation presents an especially challenging test for our *bitachon* – our trust and reliance on Hashem. This why Hashem did not want the Jewish people to request a king – because of the unique effect that huge armies, led by their commander-in-chief, can have on the belief system of a Jew. Somehow, on some level, the military force and weaponry can turn his head and pull his heartstrings ever so slightly to rely on flesh and blood mortals instead of the Almighty Hashem. When faced with such a demonstration of physical might, we must expend extra effort to focus on Hashem and His ultimate strength.

It is critical to remember Who is orchestrating and controlling all the armies

Let us reinforce our *bitachon* in Hashem as the only real power in the Universe that can help or harm us. Certainly in our times, when technology is constantly developing more powerful and lethal weapons, tanks and planes, missiles and bombs – it is critical that we see beyond the physical and remember Who is orchestrating and controlling all the armies and armaments. May we turn to Hashem for security, through increasing our prayer, Torah study and self-improvement, so that we merit heavenly protection from any human foe and the coming of the divinely-appointed king, descendant of King David, in the final redemption, soon in our days.