

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ויאמר בלעם לאתן כי התעללת בי לו יש חרב בידו כי עתה הרגתיך ... (כב-טז)

Bilaam seems to express no surprise over his donkey's sudden capacity to speak. He responds matter-of-factly, as if he were talking to any other person. Bilaam's lack of a reaction reflected the type of person that he was. Bilaam was a person of contradictions. The Sages attest that he was arrogant and wicked through and through, yet he received prophecy from Hashem. He did not nearly have the spiritual strength to achieve prophecy in his own merit, and he could not possibly incorporate such intense spiritual highs into his essence. He thus lived in a contradictory world, in which direct communion with Hashem did not sanctify him at all. He did not live a "normal" life. He had no sense of decency or fair play. He did not appreciate what the Creator of the World gave him; he took it all in stride. He inhabited an evil world, in which prophetic powers were used to curse rather than to instruct and inspire. And so, nothing fazed him; there was no such thing as abnormal. Miracles which would have awed any regular person made not the slightest impression on him.

The **Chovos Halevovos** (Duties Of the Heart) explains how all of *Avodas Hashem* is dependent on the trait of showing appreciation. Unfortunately, our *Yetzer Hara* works very hard to persuade us to lack appreciation, to live a life of contradictions. The term for this is "*kofiy tov*" - an ingrate. Literally, it means bending the goodness.

This "contradiction" may be explained with the following stories. The great *Mashgiach* of *Yeshivas Mir* in Poland, **R' Yerucham Levovitz zt"l**, was once asked to visit a Jewish soldier on an army base. The soldier, with wounds all over his body, was brought into the room. A doctor was summoned and he ordered the attendants to bring enough dressing to roll and cover all of his wounds. R' Yerucham expected to see a huge load of bandages brought in. To his surprise, the doctor used a relatively small roll, small enough to fit into his pocket. The doctor unwound it till it covered the soldier's entire body.

R' Yerucham's lesson was that it is possible to take something that is very small and fold it over and over, until it appears very big. And vice-versa. This is what "bending" a goodness, means. One can take a goodness that another does for him and be ungrateful about it thereby "bending" it and minimizing its size. This is how one displays the trait of a "*kofiy tov*".

On the other hand, the *Mashgiach* recalled another story which stresses the exact opposite approach: taking an apparent small or minor *tova* (goodness) and magnifying it exponentially, showing that there is more to it than meets the eye.

There were two young men in the *Mir Yeshiva* of marriageable age. One of them was set to go out on a *shidduch* date with a prospect of matrimony. It was a freezing cold winter's day in Mir and the young man had no gloves. The winter there was much colder than what we experience, and gloves are an extreme necessity. Without them, a person's hands could easily freeze up. This young man borrowed a pair of warm gloves from his friend and happily went on his date.

The next day, he returned the gloves and told his friend, "Thank you for the gloves." His friend responded, "You're welcome."

The first fellow continued, "No, you don't know what I mean. I don't just mean that your gloves kept my hands warm. Do you realize that without your gloves my hands would have frozen and I'd become an invalid? Thank you." "You're welcome."

"Wait, you still don't get what I mean. If I wouldn't have your gloves and would have become an invalid, what kind of *shidduch* would I have gotten? Your gloves will enable me to get a good *shidduch*. Thank you." "You're welcome."

"Wait, you still don't grasp the full meaning. Without your gloves, I would have gotten a cripple as a wife. What kind of children would we have? Your gloves will help me have good children. Thank you." "You're welcome."

"Wait, there's still more to your gloves. Without them, my children wouldn't be good so what kind of *shidduchim* would they get, and what kind of children would they have? So with all sincerity - thank you very much!" "You're welcome."

The *Rebbe* concluded, this is called being *makir tov* - showing appreciation. Taking a goodness which seems apparently small and unimportant and unraveling the *chessed* bit by bit, thus showing how magnanimous the *tova* really was!

כמל מאת ה' כרכיבים עלי עשב אשר לא יקוה לאיש ... (מיכה ה-ו)

תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

While *Micha HaNavi* reminds *Klal Yisroel* of the open miracles Hashem performed for them, he also talks about the unseen miracles - including the dew that falls from the heavens every morning. The *Navi* says: "*Like dew from Hashem, like droplets on grass, which do not look to anybody nor place their hope in mortals.*" Chazal explain that unlike rain that could be sent in the merit of humans, dew only falls by the will of the Almighty.

The **Medrash Aggadah** (**Nevi'im Perek 8**) makes an interesting point. When *Moshe Rabbeinu* questioned Hashem about why all the other nations of the world had protective angels while *Klal Yisroel* had none, Hashem responded that if He gave *Klal Yisroel* an angel, they would

be subject to the same rules as the other nations of the world - for the protecting angel of a nation determines when the nation's protection ends. Hashem's response underscores the Almighty's profound and deep-seated love for *Klal Yisroel* in that He did not want anyone other than Himself making crucial decisions for the fate of the Jewish nation.

Therefore, the *Medrash* says that even when Hashem is angry at the Jewish people, "*His [Hashem's] will is like dew upon the grass*" (*Mishlei 19:12*) - for just as dew covers the world every single day, in a protective layer while rejuvenating the vegetation below it, so too does Hashem "drape Himself" daily over *Klal Yisroel* protectively, infusing His children with holiness.

ויאמר בלק אל בלעם לקב איבי קראתיך והנה ברכת ברך זה שלש פעמים ... (בר-ו)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPMAN ZT"l

מחשבת הלב

Bilaam intended to curse *Bnei Yisroel* by saying one word at the precise moment Hashem gets angry each day. That word was "כלם", destroy them. Instead, the *halak* scrambled the letters to read "מלך", as it says "ותרעת מלך בו". (*Tosfos Avoda Zara 4b*).

The **Chasam Sofer zt"l** explains *pshat* in the *posuk* in *Ki Seitzei* which states: "על דבר מואבי בקהל ה' על דבר אשר שר". עלק את בלעם". A convert from Ammon or Moav cannot enter our ranks because they hired Bilaam to curse us. Continues the *posuk*: "ויהפך ה' את הקללה לברכה". Why does the fact that Hashem flipped Bilaam's curse into a *bracha* belong here, where we are warned not to accept a convert from Ammon or Moav? It is from this *posuk* that Chazal extrapolate "עמומי ולא עמומית", only their menfolk are enjoined, but not the women. As we know, Dovid descended from Rus who was a Moavite. Therefore, since Bilaam said "מלך" instead of "כלם", and he was the "catalyst" to Dovid's reign, we allude to this by saying "מקללה ... ויהפך ה' את הקללה לברכה". It is only Hashem who can turn a "כלם" into a "מלך", *din* into *rachamim*. The "תרונית מלך ב" then refers to Him.

R' Akiva Eiger zt"l says a *vort* here which complements the above thought. After Bilaam blessed the *Yidden* instead of cursing them, Balak says the following: "קוב לקב ברכת ברך", on which the *Medrash* says "קוב לקב ברכת ברך". He explains that a typical lunar year has 354 days. 222 of those days we recite *tachanun* and 132 we don't, because they are *מי* instead of *ימי*. The numerical equivalent of "לקב" is 132, while "ברך" totals 222. Bilam wanted 132, to curse those 132 days, but instead bרכת, he blessed the 222 days of *din* turning them into days of mercy. Imagine! A whole entire year of *rachamim*! That is the love our מלך has for us! As the *posuk* in the *Haftorah* says, "למען דעת צדקות ה'". May it be Hashem's will that we again see the fruition of "ה' הפיר עצת נויים" and instead "עצת ה' היא תקום", with *yeshuos* for *Klal Yisroel* and an end to this long *golus*.

משל למה הדבר דומה מה טובו אהדך יקרב משכנתך ישראל ... (בר-ה)

משל: Mr. Brown struck it rich and decided to fulfill his lifelong dream: buying a multimillion-dollar Rolls-Royce.

One day, as he was driving his extravagant car, he heard something making noise. He got out and saw that his muffler was dragging along the road. Thinking this was normal, he went to the local shop but was told that they don't deal with such superior cars and he must call the company itself.

When the Rolls-Royce representative heard his problem, she immediately put a senior manager on the line who in turn, assured Mr. Brown that such a thing was impossible, but that the company would "look into it." Within one hour, a helicopter was hovering above Mr. Brown's mansion and a technician rappelled down, replaced the part and ascended back to the chopper in a matter of minutes. "Talk about

service!" exclaimed Mr. Brown, "but wait until I get the bill."

However, a bill never came. After a few weeks, Mr. Brown called the Rolls-Royce company and inquired about his bill. A senior manager got on the phone. "Mr. Brown," he cleared his throat loudly, "I can assure you that such a thing has never happened and there is no bill. MUFFLERS DO NOT FALL OFF OF ROLLS-ROYCE CARS." Click. Case closed!

משל: Bilaam took one look at the Jewish people and saw a nation spread out in an extraordinarily modest way; each tent facing away from the other's opening. Indeed, the Jewish people have high standards. From the food we eat to the things we say, from the people we touch to the things we look at, every aspect of life is preciously guarded. Hence, if one retains that status, he can rest assure that even if he falls to temptation, as far as "senior management" is concerned, he is a precious and holy Jew, as a Jew doesn't fall prey to sin!

ויאמר אלקים אל בלעם לא תלך עמם לא תאר את העם כי ברוך הוא ... (כב-ב)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

Parshas Balak is a very interesting *Parsha*. We see how Hashem tells Bilaam, "*Don't go with these men to curse the Jews*" but Bilaam doesn't listen. His heart is pulling him in the direction he wishes to go. Hashem finally tells him, "*Go with them.*" Why does Hashem seem to change His mind, *kavyachol*? Well, if you look carefully at the *posukim*, you will see that Hashem tells him, "Don't go IMAHEM - with them." In other words, don't go with the same intention as them. When Hashem says, "*Go with them,*" the *posuk* says "*Lech ITAM,*" just go with them in a physical sense, but do not really be together with them in mind and spirit. Later on, the *Malach* says to Bilaam, "*Lech IM Ha'anashim*" - Go together with the men, in body and in mind because this is what you really want to do and the way a person wants to go, Hashem will lead him!

What a tremendous message for us! It is truly the *kavana* of a person that counts, and even though sometimes you may find yourself in a situation or with people, who are different from you and have different ideas and *hashkafos* about life, you are where your mind is. Although you might have to physically be in a certain place, you do not have to truly be "WITH" those people if you set your mind on doing what is right. The way to become one in marriage is "*Mesameach Chosson IM Hakallah*" to understand your spouse. You do not have to be the same, but you do have to listen and respect the other's opinion.

We place a barricade between us and people that we love and should try to come close to. This is what Hashem was telling Bilaam to do with people who were evil and wished to curse *am Yisroel*. "*Lech ITAM.*" You can go with them but don't really be with them in mind and spirit. This is what we must do with certain people so that we are not influenced by their negative intentions. But an even stronger message might be to break down those walls, remove the thing that might be blocking us from having a real, close and beautiful relationship with the people in our lives with whom we are truly meant to be together.