

Balak / בַּלַּק

Enough With The Donkey Hairs!

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

Rav Volender, the rov of the Jerusalem Prison, locked his office door and prepared to head home for the evening.

"No, I don't belong here!" came a desperate voice from down the hall. "Just ask Rav Volender - he will tell you that I'm really a big Tzadik! You can't put me in jail!"

Rav Volender looked up to see Tzadok "Hatzadik" being led towards the cell blocks, where the prisoners were held.

"Good evening, Tzadok," said Rav Volender as the guards dragged Tzadok past him.

"Please, that's my rebbe - please let me speak with him!" Tzadok pleaded.

The guards looked at Rav Volender, who nodded his approval.

"What brings you here tonight?" Rav Volender asked pleasantly.

"I didn't do anything wrong, rebbe!" Tzadok said tearfully.

"He was caught digging a hole under the train station," one of the guards said.

"I see," said Rav Volender, stroking his beard. "And why, Tzadok, are you missing half of your beard again?"

"Rebbe, I can explain," Tzadok said.

"I'm sure you can. But I have to run to Maariv. We'll talk in the morning. Good night, Tzadok."

The next morning after Shacharis, Rav Volender approached Tzadok.

"Let's go to my office," Rav Volender said. "We can talk there."



Tzadok followed Rav Volender to his office.

"It's like this, rebbe," Tzadok said, sitting down across from Rav Volender. "I found a map which leads to the cave where the hairs from Bilaam's donkey are. It's right under the train station. I just had to dig it up and find it!"

"The hairs from Bilaam's donkey - again?" Rav Volender sighed. "Haven't we discussed this enough?"

"I know, I know, rebbe. You told me that I should forget about it and spend my time learning Torah and serving Hashem. But I tried and I tried and it doesn't work. Bilaam's donkey came to me in a dream and told me that there is a map in a garbage dumpster. And in the morning, when I took out the trash, there was a map in the dumpster! So I took it out and there was a coffee stain right where the train station was! This was a siman min Hashomayim! And then when I got to the train station, I saw a shovel lying right there - obviously Hashem was telling me to dig!"

"Let me guess," Rav Volender said. "You accidentally cut off half of your beard with the shovel?"

"Oh no, rebbe - I'm too careful to let something like that happen. When I got arrested I leaned towards the door of the police car to explain to the officer about the hairs of Bilaam's donkey and he slammed the door on my beard.

"But anyway, what I'm trying to say is that I'm not like you, rebbe. Hashem helped you become a Talmid Chochom - he gave you opportunities to learn a lot of Torah and become a big rov. But Hashem keeps showing me how to get the hairs of Bilaam's donkey. Don't you see?"

"Tzadok, do you remember the first conversation we had?"

"Oy rebbe, we've had so many conversations."

"Indeed we have. Do you know who Bilaam was, other than the fact that he had a donkey?"

"A talking donkey," Tzadok said.

"Yes, yes. But Bilaam wanted to go to curse Klal Yisroel. And Hashem didn't want him to, but after Bilaam kept asking, Hashem said okay, fine - go. And that is because if a person really, really wants to do something, then Hashem will help him do it.

"I really, really want to be a Talmid Chochom. I learn as much as I can, and as a result Hashem helps me find plenty of time to learn so I can continue to grow in Torah. But you - you keep obsessing about these donkey hairs. Tzadok, there is **no** kedusha to the hairs of Bilaam's donkey - and I'm pretty sure they aren't around anymore. This is a silly *mishegas* of yours. But because you insist on wanting to find them instead of doing what you are supposed to do, Hashem allows you to continue wasting your time."

Tzadok swallowed hard at this uncomfortable truth.

"Okay, but how do I change what I want?" he asked.

"Ah, Tzadok!" Rav Volender said, reaching for his Mesillas Yesharim. "You need to learn Mussar. Let's learn Mesillas Yesharim together every morning after Shacharis. I promise you this will help you want the right thing, and then Hashem will help you get it."

Rav Volender paused. "And one more thing," he said. "You keep losing half your beard in your quest for these silly donkey hairs. A Yid's beard is much holier than the hair of a donkey."

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

let's review:

- Why did Hashem allow Bilaam to go with Balak to try to curse Klal Yisroel?
- How did Hashem help Tzadok in his quest for donkey hairs?



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