

Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick

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פרקי אבות פרק 1

פרשת בלק תשע"ח

The power of Achdus

וַיֵּרָא בָּלָק בְּן־צֹפּוֹר אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶמְרֵי: (כ"ב ב)

"And Balak saw everything that the Yidden did to Emori" The question is: the word יִשְׂרָאֵל / Yidden is Plural, then it should have said עָשׂוּ and not עָשָׂה Singular? The answer can be that Balak was smart and understood that the success of the Yidden winning wars, was that Klal Yisrael are "one" with אחדות, therefore he decided to nullify their closeness and be victorious over them. (ספר מאור ושמש)

Hashem cannot hear negative comments on his children

לֹא תִלְךְ עִמָּוֶהָם לֹא תֵאָר אֶת־הָעָם כִּי בְרוּךְ הוּא: (כ"ב י"ב)

Hashem said to Bilaam: "You shall not go with them! You shall not curse the people because they are blessed" (22:12). Many commentators ask the following question: Why did Hashem have to warn Bilaam not to curse the Yidden. Hashem could have simply reversed the curse to a blessing just as we find Hashem reversed the curse into a blessing: Devarim 23:6 וְלֹא אָבָה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לִשְׁמַע אֶל בִּלְעָם וַיִּהְיֶה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְךָ בְּרָכָה. But Hashem, did not want to listen to Bilaam. So He, transformed the curse into a blessing for you, because Hashem, loves you? The answer can be: That at the conclusion of the parsha, we find that Balak and Bilaam found a way to have the Yidden sin and many died in a plague. Now if Hashem would have allowed Bilaam to curse the Yidden, the Goyim would have said that the Yidden died as a result of the curse from Bilaam and not because of their sins. Therefore "because Hashem, loves you" Hashem objected to the curse of Bilaam. Hashem wouldn't allow something negative said on his loving children. (ספר ילקוט דוד)

Hashem loves his creatures and has patience

וַיִּפְתָּח ה' אֶת־פִּי הָאֲתוֹן וַתֹּאמֶר לִבִּי לָעָם מִדֶּ־עֲשִׂיתִי לָךְ כִּי הִבִּיתִנִּי זֶה שֶׁלֹּשׁ רָגְלִים:

Hashem opened the mouth of the she-donkey, and she said to Bilaam, "What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?" (22:28) Shlome Hamelech says in (Koheles 1:8) וְאֵין כָּל חֲדָשׁ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ: and there is nothing new under the sun. There are no new creations, Therefore the Mishna states (Avos 5:6): "Ten things were created on the eve of Sabbath during the twilight period, and they are: the mouth of the ground, the mouth of the well, פִּי הָאֲתוֹן the mouth of the donkey (who spoke to Bilaam) etc.

The Chassid Ya'avetz explains that these were all items that had to be created, for their existence would prove vital for the maintenance of the world and Yisrael. The "mouth of the donkey." refers, of course, to the miraculous event of the communication that took place between Bilaam and the donkey. Bilaam undertook the journey to view the camp of

Yisrael and place curses upon the nation. On the way, his donkey kept stopping, for it viewed what Bilaam did not: the presence of a threatening angel sent by Hashem. It was when Bilaam succumbed to his fury for a third time and inflicted violence upon his donkey that the miraculous occurred: "And Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey, At that point the angel revealed himself to Bilaam as well, and he came to realize how, in fact, the donkey had spared him from the angel's sword. The question arises: Why indeed was this miracle necessary? Well the Mishnah describes the origination of the "פִּי הָאֲתוֹן" to the Six Days of Creation. R' Yaakov Emden (*Lechem Shamayim*), comments that Bilaam's donkey itself was created at the beginning of the world. That means that it existed for thousands of years, having been created and then lasting for so long just to be able to speak to Bilaam. And, as we have seen, nothing particularly productive seems to have come from this entire effort. Why, indeed, is this item included in the list of things deemed so important to the world that they were already fashioned during the week of Creation?

R' Chaim Shmuelewitz (in his sefer *Sichos Mussar*) derives from here a most potent lesson. We learn from this episode just how dear every single *nefesh* (soul) is to Hashem, and how greatly He desires that even a complete villain such as Bilaam should return to Him. It is true that ultimately the miracle of the donkey's speech did little to advance the salvation of Yisrael. Rather, it was intended for Bilaam himself, in an attempt to get him to finally see reason and overcome his wickedness. Alas, Bilaam still had free choice, which he obviously exercised poorly. But what we do see from here is the extent to which Hashem will go to try to bring back even those who have strayed far from Him. After all, He created a special entity from the Six Days of Creation for this sole purpose – to attempt to bring closer to Him a single individual – and, for that matter, an individual who was a complete *rasha*. The following sentiment is expressed at various junctures in the works of Chazal (cf., e.g., *Makkos 24b*): "– וְכַף לְעוֹבְרֵי רְצוֹנוֹ בְּדָ, לְעוֹשֵׂי רְצוֹנוֹ עַל אַחַת בְּכֹה וְכֹה: "If such (beneficence is extended) to those who violate His will, how much the more so (is it applicable) to those who fulfill His will!" Certainly Hashem's care and concern extends in abundant measure to those who are truly earnest in their quest to serve Him in accordance with His will.

This lesson is hidden in the words of Dovid Hamelech (Tehilim 145:8) Hashem is הַנֶּחֱמָ וְרַחוּם ה' אֶרְךָ אַפִּים וְגָדֹל־הַסֵּד: *Hashem is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and of great kindness.* The seforim explain the idea "of great kindness" as above. Hashem waits and has patience until one does the right things, even Bilaam! (Yehuda Z. Klitnick based on seforim)

STORY OF THE WEEK (By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

**** In zchus of chesed, all the wedding presents were delivered, thanks to Rav Elimelech from Lizensk ****

Near the city of Lizensk lived a Yid named R' Yechiel. He was a very successful innkeeper. He had a loyal worker named Bentzi who was not married. Once R' Yechiel sent Bentzi to Lizensk on business. When Bentzi finished his business, he went to see the Rebbe R' Elimelech for a bracha. Rav Elimelech already knew Bentzi and they talked about jobs. Rav Elimelech told Bentzi that a young orphaned girl named Bluma was temporarily staying at his house and needed work, "Perhaps you can arrange for this girl to work with you at R. Yechiel's inn." Bentzi replied, "I know the owner just happens to be looking for a maid now. I will be happy to take her along with me." The Rebbe called Bluma into the room and adjured both of them to be *ehrllich* during the journey and to follow the dictates of the Torah. They understood exactly what the Rebbe implied and promised to follow the Torah.

Bentzi and Bluma returned to the inn and R' Yechiel took Bluma on as a worker. Bentzi looked after Bluma as a big brother would. When Bluma asked Bentzi about their pay, he answered, "It comes at the end of the year, but I leave my money to accumulate and grow with R' Yechiel. When I need the money to get married, I'll take it back. He is an honest man and I would advise you to do the same." She agreed.

Hashem had His mysterious ways and R' Yechiel's parnossa went down and down, until he became a pauper ר"ל and was forced to sell his inn.. He had no choice but to discharge his workers, and they went their separate ways. As experienced inn workers, Bentzi and Bluma landed jobs at another inn for 50 Guilden a year. A year went by and they each earned their pay. The once-prosperous R' Yechiel was reduced to being a wandering beggar. One day, he came into the inn. Bentzi noticed his old boss, now with torn clothing and a pale face. The reunion was very touching. R' Yechiel told Bentzi that he had an opportunity to rent an inn from a Poritz, but was lacking 100 Guilden. Bentzi, having a compassionate neshama, offered to help R' Yechiel in return for the many kindnesses he had enjoyed in the past. Bentzi approached Bluma and told her about R' Yechiel's plight. He suggested that they pool their 50 Guilden nesteggs and give the 100 to R' Yechiel and thereby earn a great mitzvah. Bluma answered, very much to Bentzi's surprise and delight, "Look. I'm as happy as the next person to do a chesed. But I have no one to marry me off, and without that money, my own plight is hopeless. However, if you agree to marry me as I am, with no dowry, I will advance the money to R' Yechiel." An offer like that doesn't present itself every day, so Bentzi agreed to marry Bluma. Bentzi loaned the 100 Guilden to R' Yechiel, who was elated, and promised to repay them with Hashem's help.

Bentzi and Bluma decided they needed a better parnossa, so they went into the wood transport business, using a rented

wagon. It was hard work but they earned good money. Meanwhile their great act of chesed with *Mesiras Nefesh* caused a tremendous commotion in Heaven. Rav Elimelech saw with Ruach Hakodesh what had occurred. He understood that the time for Bentzi and Bluma to marry had come. He summoned Bentzi and advised him to go forward with the shidduch, although it didn't take much convincing. Bentzi was happy that the Rebbe approved of the shidduch, but he said that there was not enough money to make a wedding. The Rebbe told him he would arrange everything and promised that the couple would be very successful.

Rav Elimelech gathered 10 of his greatest students and they traveled to the wedding of Bentzi and Bluma. Rav Elimelech stayed at the inn where Bentzi had worked and told the innkeeper to prepare a wedding meal. Rav Elimelech was *Mesader Kiddushin* at Bentzi and Bluma's chasuna. Before the *bentching*, Rav Naftali from Ropshitz called out, "It's time to bestow the wedding presents. I give this entire village as a present." Another prominent talmid said, "I give the water mill from the next town." Yet another student said, "I'll give them 1000 gold Reinish."

Meanwhile the innkeeper and his workers started making fun of the "rabbis." Rav Naftali turned to the innkeeper and asked him, "What are *you* giving the new couple?" The innkeeper continued with his sarcastic remarks. Rav Naftali then announced, "Our innkeeper is giving his inn as a present. Wonderful!"

The wedding concluded and the crowd dispersed. A few nights later, Bentzi was shlepping wood and heard screams for help from afar. Without hesitating, Bentzi ran towards the call and saw a young goy drowning in a pool of muddy water. He threw down a rope and dragged the goy out of the water. The soaking, but rescued young man said, "You saved my life. I am the son of the Poritz, and I am getting married literally tomorrow night. My father will reward you greatly for this."

Bentzi attended the wedding and was received every possible honor at the assembly. The Poritz took the floor, called for quiet, and announced, "I want to reward dear Bentzi for saving my son's life. The inn where you once worked now belongs to you. What's more, I am presenting you as a gift the entire village where you live." Not to be left out, the father of the bride announced, "And I am giving you the water mill from my village." Then the mother of the bride took out 1000 gold Reinish and gave it to Bentzi. Bentzi had no words to express his gratitude for the marvelous reception and gifts. Hashem arranged for Bentzi to receive all the presents that the Rebbes promised him at his own wedding – including his workplace of past years. In the *zchus* of their *Mesiras Nefesh* to do a chesed, they were rewarded greatly. The couple were *zoche* to build a family full of Torah and chesed זי"ע.

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