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Daniella Wieder | Bogeret Dvar Torah

In Parshat Balak, there seems to be an interesting contradiction between what God answers Bilam the first and second time Balak sends him messengers. In Bamidbar 22:12, after the first messengers come, God says "לא תלך עִמָּהֶם לֹא תֵאָר אֶת הָעָם", God says "לא תלך עִמָּהֶם לֹא תֵאָר אֶת הָעָם, - You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people; for they are blessed." A few Psukim later, after the second, more important messengers come, God says "אִם לִקְרָא לְךָ בָּאוּ הַאֲנָשִׁים קוּם לָךְ אִתָּם וְאָר, אֶת הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר אֲדַבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ אַתָּה תַעֲשֶׂה - If the men came to call you, rise up and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you, that you shall do." It appears that God has changed his mind. How is this possible? Furthermore, two passukim later it says "וַיִּחַר אַף אֱלֹהִים, כִּי הוֹלֵךְ הוּא - And God became angry because he went" How does this make any sense when He told him to go?

Ramban comments that at first, God stopped Bilam from going to curse Bnei Yisrael because they were blessed. Why should he go with if he couldn't curse them? This is why he says "You shall not go with them". Of course Balak sent more messengers because he didn't believe what he was told. Bilam knew that more important messengers and an increased reward would not change God's mind because he knew Bnei Yisrael were blessed. This time God says "If the men came to call you", meaning "if they have come solely for the purpose of inviting you, and will be content if you accompany them on condition you do not curse the people, as I forewarned you", then "rise up and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you, that you shall do". It was therefore originally

God's desire for Bilam to accompany them, as long as he didn't curse Bnei Yisrael and followed His instructions.

Then why was God angry?

The problem was, Bilam didn't tell the messengers these conditions out of his eagerness to accompany them. He didn't say anything but "rose up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moabite" (22:21) as if he was willing to do what they wanted. This is therefore why God was angry with him. Had he told the whole truth, he would not have gone. Furthermore, as a prophet, God's name was attached to Bilam. His going might have been interpreted to mean that God had permitted him to curse the people, contradicting His original message. When he didn't curse them, people would assume that God changed His mind. This is far from the truth!

Even though Bilam was first told not to go, ultimately he got the approval he wanted. Rabbi Zelig Pliskin explains that from here, the Talmud derives the principle "in the way a man wishes to go, he is led." Nothing stands in the way of a strong will. When we strongly set our minds on a particular goal, we have the ability to meet that goal. When you are not strongly motivated to do something, you will procrastinate, and you may not do a very good job. Rabbi Avigdor Miller comments that God guides one who seeks wisdom according to the sincerity of the seeker. If we can develop a strong desire for the right things, we will be amazed at the positive changes and success we will experience.

The Talking Donkey



Rav Aharon Herskovitz | Rav Shaliach

During Bilaam's journey to Balak in this week's parsha, we are told of three separate instances in which Bilaam's donkey saw a sword-wielding angel and changed its walking pattern as a result. In the last of these three instances, we are told (Bamidbar 22:26-31):

Once more the angel of Hashem moved forward and stationed himself on a spot so narrow that there was no room to swerve right or left. When the donkey now saw the angel of Hashem, it lay down under Bilaam; and Bilaam was furious and beat the donkey with his stick. Then Hashem opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Bilaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?" Bilaam said to the donkey, "You have made a mockery of me! If I had a sword with me, I'd kill you." The donkey said to Bilaam, "Look, I am the donkey that you have been riding all along until this day! Have I been in the habit of doing thus to you?" And he answered, "No." Then Hashem uncovered Bilaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of Hashem standing in the way, his drawn sword in his hand; thereupon he bowed right down to the ground.

The Torah phrases the donkey's sudden ability to speak as a miracle, an unnatural occurrence. That is why we are told that "Hashem opened the donkey's mouth". Indeed, Chazal refer to the "donkey's mouth" as one of the ten objects created during twilight as the first Shabbat was beginning (Avot 5:6), emphasising both its miraculous nature as well as the Divine plan that prepared for this story thousands of years previous.

And yet, despite this outright miracle, Bilaam does not acknowledge this aspect of what's going on. Instead, he merely responds to the donkey's question of "Why are you doing this to me?" by explaining why in fact he is

hitting it. His response makes it seem like it's an everyday type of thing to engage in conversation with a donkey! Why?

I think that part of the message being stressed here is that Bilaam was totally focused on fulfilling his inner desire to go to Balak and curse Bnei Yisrael. Rashi mentions that his desire went so far as to even have him believe that he'd be able to succeed in convincing Hashem to curse Bnei Yisrael. He was so focused on his path that he did not see anything that would distract him, included the sword-wielding angel. His devotion to his cause blinded him to everything else. It also caused him to relate to a newly speaking donkey as just another thing bothering him from completing his mission: if he responds quickly enough to the donkey he'll be able to be on his way.

"Our devotion to our causes is often necessary and beneficial... But sometimes this devotion can blind us to what's going on around us."

Our devotion to our causes is often necessary and beneficial; if we are able to focus single-mindedly on them we can often accomplish much. But sometimes this devotion can blind us to what's going on around us, even to direct messages from Hashem. We must learn to balance our devotion with the necessary introspection and extrospection.



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תנועת בני עקיבא
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Dvar Halacha: Weekly Question

Have a question? Please email rav@bauk.org or call/message Rav Aharon at 07976642135.

QUESTION FROM KOBI: I heard the other day that if one does shacharit after sof zman tefilla one should not say brachot of the Shema. This isn't the practice I've seen in minyanim that daven late on shabbat mornings. Should I be saying the brachot before/after Kriat Shema when davening late, and if not, how does the seder tefilla work in practical terms?

ANSWER: The Gemara in Brachot (10b) states that one who reads Kriat Shema after its time (i.e. after three hours) has "not lost", and then explains that this means that they have not lost the opportunity to say the brachot. In other words, you can still make the brachot as usual, the two before and the one after.

Is there a time limit until when can you make the brachot? There is a three-way machloket amongst the rishonim and later poskim:

a) The Rosh, Tur and Shulchan Aruch write that one may say the brachot only until the end of the time of tefillah (i.e. four halachic hours into the day; one hour later than the time of kriyat shema).

b) The Maharil and Mishkenot Yaakov write that one can say the brachot until mid-day (which is the time of day until when you can say tefillah biveded).

c) The Rambam and Pri Chadash write that one may say the brachot all day long.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, in a regular case (such as waking up late) one should follow the psak of the Shulchan Aruch to say the brachot only until the end of the time of tefillah/four hours into the day, but in a case of ones, one can say the brachot until midday (when one could also say tefillah until in a case of ones). Even if you have passed the time of kriyat shema, the order of davening is the same as usual.

Roshim Thank You!



On behalf of the Mazkirut and the entire Tnua we want to thank our amazing Sviva Roshim for all of the hard work and effort they have put into their Svivot this past year. They, together with their entire Tzevet really have impacted Chanichim in their area. Sviva is the lifeblood of Bnei Akiva UK. Sviva provides such an important service to many communities in providing a Jewish framework for the children and future leaders of the community. It is our Roshim that put in all of the tireless work to make Sviva happen on a weekly basis. They showed extraordinary resilience and were able

to work through all of the tough challenges that there were faced with, providing a fun and educational environment for Chanichim. It is their leadership skills that make Sviva so successful year on year!

We wish them a lot of luck and success in their future endeavours and look forward to seeing them leading on future Bnei Akiva programs!

Aloh Na'aleh

Our 5777/78 - 2017/18 Roshim:

Zevi Lerer, Sam Rothstein, Natalie Maurer, Abi Laderman, Sam Jayes, Rabbi Goodwin, Elisheva Hersch, Motti Rotenberg, Avital Nevies, Leora Blitz, Shevi Goodman, Michal Kelly, Rebecca Woolich, Daniella Wieder, Kobi Weiner, Jason Lipowicz, Naomi Brookarsh, Joshua Benjamin, Louisa Stagni, Samuel Bray, Ronnie Passe, Jordan Passe, Joel Azulay, James Konn, Abi Elias, Jake Frieze, Elazar Atlas, Daniel Davis, Anoushka Goldman and Shira Collins

Community Updates



Mazal Tov to one of the Bogrot Chaburot in London who are finishing for the year. The Chabura, together with Rabbanit Shira, have been learning Masechet Taanit and we congratulate them on a year of dedicated Talmud Torah and wish them continued success next year!

If you are a boger or bogeret and would like to start a Chabura with the Rav or Rabbanit Shaliach in the new academic year please do get in touch at rav@bauk.org or rabbanit@bauk.org.

This past Monday we hosted Rabbi Michael Harris (Hampstead Synagogue) for a Leil Iyun shiur with Bogrim and Bogrot. Rabbi Harris gave us a fascinating sneak peak into some of the ideas discussed in his forthcoming book on Nietzsche and Rav J.B. Soloveitchik. Thank you very much to Rabbi Harris for a wonderful and engaging shiur.

This past week our Israel Machane madrichim and madrichot were in Israel with UJIA for a Israel Tour training seminar. The seminar offers a great opportunity to engage with young people and leaders from other movements and to meet and prepare with the Israeli madrichim who accompany each

of our Israel Machane groups. This year the Madrichim had a special opportunity to meet with Asher Callingold (Mazkir 5712-17) and Michael Rainsbury (Mazkir 5771) over Friday and Shabbat. One Madrich described this meeting as an amazing way to see the scope and impact that Bnei Akiva has had over the past 80 years on the UK and Israel. They said that this gave them a tremendous sense of responsibility in engaging their Chanichim in Bnei Akiva's history and heritage.

Pictured: Israel Machane Madrichot on the UJIA seminar.

