

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ויקם בלעם בבקר ויחבש את אתנו וילך עם שרי מואב וגו' (כב-כא)

We find a seemingly similar occurrence with Avraham Avinu and with Bilaam the wicked prophet. The *Torah* reports that each of them, “*arose early in the morning and saddled his donkey*.” In Hebrew, the word “יחבש” (saddled) is closely related to the word “כבוש” (to conquer). Likewise, the word “חומר” (donkey) resembles the word “חומר” which implies “physicality.” Thus, when Avraham “*saddled his donkey*,” and prepared to perform the commandment to bind and sacrifice his son Yitzchok (עקידת יצחק), he conquered his physical drives in service of *Hashem*, and as a result, when he went up to receive the prophecy on *Har HaMoriah*, he left his donkey behind, as if to say “I am free from the ‘חומר’ - the grip of desire.” Contrast this with Bilaam, who arose early in order to scheme the downfall of others in his pursuit of wealth and glory. In Bilaam’s case, it is the donkey itself who gets the prophecy - proving itself to be on a higher level than Bilaam himself! It was all about how they prepared themselves and what was their ultimate goal. For this reason, *Hashem* predicts Bilaam’s demise with the words: “Their forefather Avraham has already preceded you.” (סנהדרין קב)

A renowned personage of the old Jewish settlement in Jerusalem during the First World War, was the holy **R’ Dovid Zvi Shlomo Biederman ZT”L**, the **Lelover Rebbe**. He was known as a *tzaddik* among *tzaddikim* and the unquestionable leader of Jerusalem’s Chassidic community. He was the official head of Kollel Warsaw, and in 5643 (1883) succeeded his father as Lelover Rebbe. His only concern in life was whether or not he was living up to the expectations of his Creator.

On occasion, R’ Dovid would travel to the graves of the *Avos*, both in *Chevron* and *Beis Lechem* (Bethlehem), to pray and pour out his heart on behalf of his people. His intense *tefillos* were unparalleled and many people would give him their petitions so that he may pray for them as well. On one of his trips, he undertook the arduous, almost day-long trek by donkey to the gravesite of the Matriarch Rochel, just outside of Jerusalem in *Beis Lechem*.

R’ Dovid gathered his things and set out early in the morning - just as *Avraham Avinu* did - right after the conclusion of the sunrise minyan (*netz*). The entire way he contemplated and organized the prayers he would say there. He wanted to be sure not to forget anything, since it was only infrequently that he had the opportunity to make the journey.

When he finally arrived at *Kever Rochel*, he saw that he was not alone. A woman with a number of small children had arrived previously and was making herself at home in the monument’s domed chamber. She had already spread out a blanket and laid the youngest of her children down to sleep, and was busy preparing the evening meal.

The *Rebbe* was incredulous. Did she have no regard for the sanctity of the site? Did this woman not realize where she was? Why was she not immersing herself in prayer? How could she busy herself with such mundane matters in such a holy place? He approached the woman and in a less-than-friendly tone demanded an explanation.

The weary woman looked up at him from her seat on the floor and replied softly, “*Rebbe*, I would think that our *Mama Rochel* would be pleased that we are eating and resting here.”

The Lelover felt suddenly faint and uneasy. He realized that he had been making the journey to *Kever Rochel* for decades and had not even begun to understand what it represented. Here was a simple unlearned woman, yet she possessed a profound grasp of the true holiness of the Matriarch Rochel, and her Tomb. What had been he doing here all those years?

He now understood that Rochel was the mother who wept and prayed for her children. Her desire is only that we should have some relief, some comfort in life, some peace of mind in order to better serve the Holy One. And when people would travel to her grave, the purpose of the trip was so much more than just standing and crying out in prayer!

From that day on, whenever R’ Dovid traveled to *Kever Rochel*, he would make extra preparations, including bringing with him a meal which he would share with all the others who came to entreat the *Mama Rochel* to intercede for them and bring their prayers on high.

משל למח הדבר דומה

מי מנה עפר יעקב ומספר את רבע ישראל תמת נפשי מות ישרים ותהי אחרייתי כמחור וגו' (כג-י)

משל: In a certain city there was a rabbi who appeared to be a pious and well-versed Jew, but who in truth entertained all sorts of modern reformist ideas and beliefs. His corrupt outlook influenced his students negatively, and many of them abandoned the path of *Torah*. Unwilling to tolerate such a scourge, the city’s Orthodox community conducted a harsh campaign against the so-called *rav*.

“Why do you hound me so?” the *rav* once complained to a group of *chassidim* who had campaigned against him. “We are no different from one another. I wear a long coat

just like you, I learn *Torah*, I daven the same *nusach* as you, and I conduct myself the same way you do!”

One of the *chassidim* answered: “It is written in *Pirkei Avos* (ה-כב), ‘*What is the difference between the students of Avraham Avinu and the students of the wicked Bilam?*’ Now why does the question refer to the differences between the students, rather than the differences between the teachers? The answer is that sometimes there is no apparent difference between one *rav* and another - but the difference is obvious when you look at their respective students.”

אם יתן לי בללך מלא ביתו כסף וזהב לא אוכל לעבר את פי ה' אלקי לעשות קטנה או גדולה וגו' (כב-ח)

“*Those who have an evil eye, an arrogant spirit, and a greedy soul are among the disciples of the wicked Bilaam*.” - נפש רחבה (אבות ה-כב) In explaining Bilaam’s trait of *greedy soul*, Rashi (in his commentary to *Avos*) cites the wicked prophet Bilaam’s words to Balak’s original emissaries, who requested that he come with them in order to curse *Klal Yisroel*: “*Even if Balak will give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the word of Hashem*.” The fact of the matter is, Bilaam could have said, “If Balak will give me all the money in the world,” as we find a similar language in the words of *Chazal*: “אם אתה” נתן לי כל כסף וזהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות שבעולם איני דר אלא - “*If you will give me all the silver, gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, I would not dwell only in a place of Torah*.” (אבות ו-ט)

However, denotes the **Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, R’ Yehudah Zev Segal ZT”L**, Bilaam’s choice of words indicates that his desire for enormous sums of money was not rooted purely in a craving for wealth. Bilaam’s arrogance caused him to lust after the wealth of others, in this case Balak - “*his house full*” - so that his rise in stature would be coupled with Balak’s fall. Bilaam’s greed epitomized his selfishness as well as his lack of regard for his fellow man.

Its not just enough to stay away from money and possessions in order to remove the “mindset” of Bilaam from our consciousness. We must also remove the greed, jealousy, arrogance and “evil eye” that is represented by Bilaam. The righteous road to becoming a disciple of *Avraham Avinu* requires reflection and a willingness to see the good in others, unlike the way of Bilaam who gave no thought to satisfying the Divine will but rather wished to flaunt it. Through proper reflection, one learns a way of life that gains him the status of a disciple of *Avraham Avinu*. May we all merit to achieve that lofty status.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

שנאת חנם

Rashi describes a fascinating and enlightening conversation that *Hashem* has with Bilaam. *Hashem* tells Bilaam that he has no power to curse the Jewish people because they are blessed. Bilaam then offers to bless them, but *Hashem* says, “No thanks!” Rashi explains with a *marshal*: Like we say to the bee, “Keep your honey and keep your sting!” (“לא מדובשך ולא מעוקצך”)

There are, and have always been, two ways that the *goyim* try to destroy us. It is either by humiliating and oppressing the Jews, or by befriending us thereby leading to our assimilation ר”ל. The **Divrei Shaarei Chaim** writes that we must be wary of both methods, “the honey and the sting” for they are equally dangerous. We must not allow ourselves to believe that their honey - friendship - is healthy and delicious. It is only to trap us into a “sticky situations” that eventually leads to the worst sins.

Aside from the danger of becoming like the *goyim*, there is an even worse threat that can affect our relationships with our fellow Jews. We know that there is a known fact (הלכה בידע) that Esav (Gentile) hates Yaakov (Jews). But why do so many Jews hate each other? Why is there so much *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred) in our camp, that we cannot manage to bring the final redemption? The answer is that it is not the Jew that hates the other Jew but rather the “goy” inside the Jew that hates the other Jew! Jews by nature love one another, but when we allow the influences and mentalities of the secular world to enter our own, we begin to act like them causing hatred and strife to our beloved brothers. We must always be wary of what the *goyim* can do to us. But even more so, we must be extremely careful of what the *goyim* cause us to do to ourselves!

התייצב על עליתך ואמלכה אולי יקרה ה' לקראתי ודבר מה יראני והגדתי לך וילך שפי וגו' (כג-ג)

Bilaam’s inability to curse the Jewish people resulted in a series of prophecies like no other. He pronounces them a holy nation with no iniquity; compares them to an “awesome lion”; recognizes their purity and modesty; and tells of their ultimate and eventual redemption. What is truly amazing is that it took a wicked non-Jew like Bilaam to state the obvious before even *Bnei Yisroel* were willing to accept this as fact.

R’ Chaim Gutnick ZT”L explained by way of a parable about a couple who came to him for marriage counseling due to a host of issues. After listening to their problems, R’ Chaim suggested, among other things, that they commit to some specific Jewish practices, for example *Shabbos* meals, where they can sit and enjoy each other’s presence without outside interference. Frustrated by his reactionary, old-fashioned viewpoint, they dumped him and sought professional help.

A few weeks later he was at home, when the bell rang. R’ Chaim answered the door to the same couple, this time carrying a bottle of wine and a bouquet of flowers as a peace offering. Their explanation for their change in attitude? Their highly paid, thoroughly “modern” therapist had recommended that they bring some caring back into the marriage. Once a week, turn off the TV, disconnect the phone and make a commitment to sit down to a quiet, candle-lit dinner.

Hearing this identical advice from a “professional,” they reconsidered their previous attitude and were willing to accept that there may well be some value in Judaism after all.

Unfortunately, for many Jews to accept a moral standard and belief in *Hashem* and His *Torah*, they need the world’s approval. If a rabbi talks about the negative effect of TV and the Internet, people say he is outdated, but were a lecturer on values to say the same, then people take it more seriously. If even the Bilaams can be persuaded that this world is due for a change; that life has greater possibilities than what society at large has to offer, isn’t it time that we too changed ourselves?

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

ויאמר אלקים אל בלעם לא תלך עמדם לא תאר את העם כי ברוך הוא (כב-י)

On behalf of thousands of Shomer Shabbos Jews - www.chickensforshabbos.com - The charity that simply feeds & clothes Shomer Shabbos Jews in Eretz Yisroel with zero overhead