

מתיקות השבת

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HASHEM'S LOVE REVEALED THROUGH BILAM...

This week's *parsha* teaches us of Hashem's great love to us, and how He constantly performs concealed kindnesses for us, without us even knowing. To explain the sequence of events in this week's *parsha*, we will begin with the following *mashal*:

There was once a wise and very powerful king. The king had a son who was very beloved to him, and upon him he always showered kindnesses, so that he appreciate his kindness and great might and love him with all his heart.

One day the king thought to himself, how can I teach my son how much I truly care for him?

The king put together a plan, he called his servants to send them to his enemies' land, in order that they persuade the enemies to try and kidnap the prince.

The king even gave them equipment to take along for the enemies to use to dig a long tunnel that will reach the prince's room in the palace. The enemies accepted the idea happily and carried out the plan. Once the enemies were very close to reaching the prince's room, the king sent his soldiers in middle of the night into the tunnel, where they caught the enemies and tied them up, keeping them in their spot.

The King's Love Revealed In Darkness...

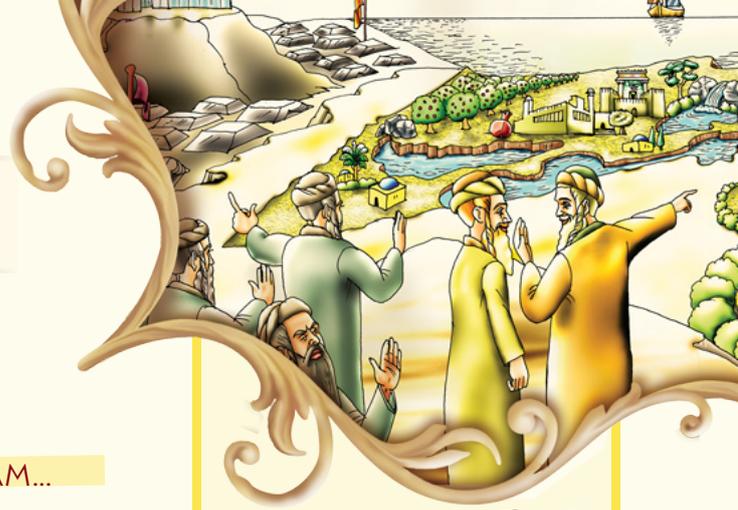
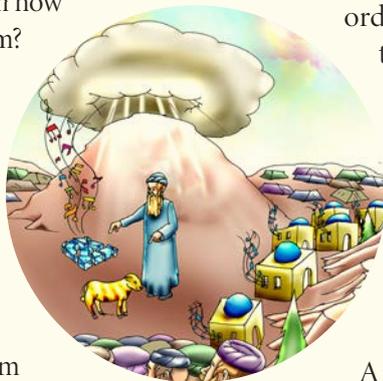
The next morning, the king called his son and told him, "I want to show you something very important." He took him down into the tunnel and started

walking through it. "Why are you taking me to this dark place? I can hardly breathe here!" complained the prince. "I want you to see how much I love you," replied the king. "But why in such a way," the prince couldn't understand, "I know how much you love me, so why show it to me in such an uncomfortable manner?!"

The king replied, "Wait and you will soon see that my love for you is much greater than you think." And as they walked through the tunnel, the king explained to his son how much hardship and suffering he underwent in order to care for him all the years, that he should be able to grow up in the magnificent and spacious palace; "This way you have a little taste of my hardships" concluded the king.

And so they walked through the tunnel until they reached the bound up enemies. The king's soldiers then ordered them to confess their intentions; they told all about their plan to kidnap the prince and show him off to all the nations, to show everyone how the great and intelligent prince is in their hands. And he would be returned only if the king would give them a big part of his empire for them to rule; or else they would kill the prince with much torture.

Shaken, unable to utter a word, the prince looked at his father who said to him, "Had they taken one more step, you would be in their hands and I would have no way to rescue you!"



MY STORY!

Who Is Childless?...

Reaching age twenty, I married a girl from a distinguished family. Unfortunately, already in the first month things went wrong and I had to give her a *get*. We both went our own ways, but to my dismay, only a few days after the divorce I found out that she is going around spreading bad rumors, that I cannot have children and therefore had to divorce her.

The shame was very painful, everywhere I turned people looked at me as a sick man, and treated me degradingly. It depressed me very much that I just stayed home for three months, without coming out even once. All these days I just cried because no *shadchan* wanted to offer me any *shiduch* because of the bad rumors.

After a while I realized that all this bitterness could drive me insane, so I overcame the shame and decided to walk outside; where to? Nowhere, I just wanted to get back outside. I walked for a few blocks trying hard to avoid others' starings, until I came to a small *shul*. I saw that the *shul* was empty, so I walked in and stood before the *aron kodesh*. There, I began pouring out my heart, crying to Hashem to have mercy on me and take my shame away; and I should merit to marry a decent wife and have good children with her.

When I had no more strength, I sat on one of the benches for a few minutes, then I got up,

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THE NIMASHAL – The Concealed Rescue...

Hashem performed many miracles during the exodus from Egypt and in the wilderness – the Mann and the Clouds of Glory etc. Though they showed us Hashem's love for us, but here in *Parshas Balak* we are taught about Hashem's concealed miracles, when He saved us without us even knowing of the grave danger that was on its way.

As the Chasam Sofer writes (end of Y"ד), "*The entire Torah was seen with our own eyes except Parshas Bilam; whoever told us what had occurred between the king of Moav and a magician named Bilam who had come to his country? Why did he come, and who sent him there? Who knew about the altars he had built and his curse that turned into blessing? Who had known of their secret? Israel were in the wilderness, how would they know that people are watching them from on top of the mountain drawing up plans? Even Moshe knew nothing, only from Hashem's mouth was it written.*"

Hashem's Extra Love For Us...

This whole story ought to show us how great is Hashem's love for us, and how he cared for us in those terrible times that we had no idea of; how He prevented all Bilam's attempts to curse the Jewish Nation, and even made him give blessings. Otherwise, why would the Torah tell us at such length about the wicked Bilam, how he tried 'persuading' Hashem in every possible way to let him curse, all his tricks and adventures; why not tell only about his blessings?!

In the blessing before *krias Shema* we say, "אֵהָבָה רַבָּה אֶהְבֶּתֶנּוּ", which is about Hashem's love for us that is recognized through His kindnesses that are mentioned in *krias shema* – our healthy heart and soul, the grains, wine and olive oil. חֲמֵלָה גְדוּלָה וִיטְרָה

חֲמֵלָתָ עָלֵינוּ, refers to the 'extra' and special kindness – here we thank Hashem for the concealed miracles He performs; saving us from the wicked gentiles' plans to destroy us. Like the lessons we learn from *Parshas Balak*, where Hashem put this plan in their mind in order to show us his 'extra' love for us.

Parshas Balak Instead of Shema...?

Therefore, "*The Sages sought to establish the portion of Balak in the recitation of Shema. And why did they not establish it? Because of encumbrance on the congregation.*" (Berachos 12b). Why not any other portions, like the miracle of *krias Yam Suf* or the Mann?

The first *parsha* of *Shema* speaks of our healthy heart and soul, which out of gratitude for them we must come to love Hashem with all our heart [- "בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשֶׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדֶךָ"]. The second *parsha* speaks of Hashem's kindness of providing us with means of sustenance – grains, wine and olive oil, which is given as a reward for serving Hashem, in order that we serve Hashem with even more gratitude for them [- "וְדִגְנֶךָ וְתִירְשֶׁךָ" וְיִצְהָרֶךָ]. *Parshas Balak*, on the other hand, reveals Hashem's kindness of miracles that He performs in hidden. Therefore, the Sages wanted it to be in *krias Shema*, to remind us that only Hashem has the power to save us from dangers and is constantly rescuing us without us even knowing.

The blessings of "יּוֹצֵר אוֹר" and "אֶהְבֶּת עוֹלָם", would have referred also to that *parsha*; blessing Hashem for the angels and messengers that He had sent to stop Bilam on his way to curse the Jews, and the blessing for Hashem's 'extra' love for us. Because recognizing the hidden kindnesses is the best form of gratitude to Hashem and includes all other kinds; just as in the *mashal*, where the king wanted most that his

THE SWEETNESS OF HIDDEN LOVE...

The king takes his son through the tunnel that was dug out by the enemies, who intended to kidnap the prince, torture him to death and shame the kingdom. The prince sees the bound up enemies, shocked of his father's tremendous love and care for him, saving his life without him even knowing he was in danger...

See full description in article above.



son appreciate his concealed kindness for him.

Do Not Have Complaints Against Hashem!

Now, everyone has times of stress and hardships, and usually he blames it on others but inside his heart he complains against Hashem that it's all His fault. Like Shlomo Hamelech said, "אָנֶלֶת, אָדָם תְּסַלֵּף דְּרִכּוֹ וְעַל ה' יִזְעַף לְבוֹ" – a man's own foolishness

causes his troubles, yet his heart rages against Hashem, as well as on other people especially the sages which through them Hashem's word comes to us.

At times a man is happy because he sees the miracles that Hashem does with him. However, at times Hashem does hidden miracles, and when a man sees those miracles – as in the case with the Emorim that Hashem crushed between two

THE BITTERNESS OF DOUBTS IN SAVING LIVES!



The Mishnah (Avos 2:1) says, “*Be careful with a light commandment as with a grave one, for you do not know the reward for the fulfillment of the commandments.*” What does this come to teach us, if a man knows the level of a *mitzvah* then doesn't he know the difference in their reward?!

Shabbos, for example, is a very severe *mitzvah* and is the essence of Judaism; one who observes it is considered as if he fulfilled the entire Torah and even idol worship is atoned for. In its severity, the Shabbos is not to be violated even if the *Beis Hamikdash* is on fire. Why not? Because the *Beis Hamikdash* being on fire is for the sins of the people, that they did not care enough to keep the Torah's commandments; so those

who care for the Torah and *Luchos* being burnt and come to put the fire out, are told, “*You did not care for the Torah until now, don't make yourself now as if you care and so do not put the fire out!*”

However, a simple house that is on fire and might endanger human lives, must be put out – violating the Shabbos, and “*One who hurries to do this is praised, one who asks about this is a murderer;*” (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 328); because saving a life is more important than observing Shabbos.

This is what the Mishnah wants to teach us, you don't know the difference in the *mitzvos* – when to make it 'light' and when not to, only Hashem knows and orders us how to act; therefore, in case of life in danger hurry and

make the Shabbos 'light' and saving a life – 'severe', with no doubts and uncertainty!

One who is unsure of violating the Shabbos in time of need, proves that the whole reason for him to keep Shabbos is only out of rote, and he feels uncomfortable to violate it. If he would keep the Shabbos to honor Hashem – to have time to study Hashem's kindness of the creation of the world in six days – he would understand that the entire creation was meant only for the human being that was created in the sixth day, and it is Hashem's desire that the Shabbos should be violated to save life, because how can we study Hashem's creation when another man is in danger?!

mountains to save the Jews – He ought to learn not to have any complaints against Hashem, because he sees that even when he does not see Hashem’s love and care for him, Hashem could be saving him from troubles and secretly preparing a lot of good for him.

Bilam Couldn’t Even Utter One Word...

This is why Hashem caused Bilam to want to curse the Jewish people, and saved us from him. Afterwards, when Bilam caused the Jews to sin with the daughters of Moav, and they discovered that it was his plan; then, they saw openly Hashem’s salvation when Pinchas won the war and killed Bilam. Yet, they did not know of the much more severe circumstance they had been in when Bilam wanted to curse them, and Hashem saved them not letting him curse even one word. As brought in Tosfos that he intended to curse and say just one word, “כָּלֵם” – destroy them.

Hashem had even prepared the פִּי “הַדֹּנָטוֹן, the donkey’s mouth which spoke, since the six days of creation; showing how much Hashem cares for us and in times of need will even change the course of nature.

“To Relate Your Faith in the Night...”

Hashem did all this in secret, so that we should learn never to have complaints against Him, when we feel like we are in the darkness and think that Hashem has left us alone; but He is all the time caring for us in secret. Chizkiyah learned from the way Hashem saved the Jews in the wilderness without their knowing, and wanted to have such faith in Hashem as he said, “*I am going to sleep and You take care of the war and fight for us [against the Sancheriv’s mighty army].*” (Eicha Rabbah 4:15). This is *Emuna* at times of darkness – “וַאֲמוּנַתְךָ בְּלֵילוֹת” – trusting that at all times Hashem comes to our rescue.

This is why the Sages wanted this *parsha* to be in *krias Shema*, in order to remind us always to study the hidden miracles that Hashem does for us. However, it wasn’t established because it would

be ‘a burden on people’. People hardly study the regular miracles that Hashem performs with them all the time openly, and how can we expect them to recognize also the hidden ones?! So it was left out. Yet we should certainly not lose the opportunity, and study the *parsha* well and learn to recognize Hashem’s revealed and concealed miracles as much as possible; and not be an ungrateful person which Hashem hates most.

The Difference Between Bilam and Avraham...

The Mishnah (Avos 5:19) says, “*What is the difference between the disciples of Avraham and the disciples of Bilam? The disciples of Avraham enjoy this world and inherit the world to come ... But the disciples of Bilam inherit gehinnom and descend into the nethermost pit.*” What in the first place is the comparison between them?!

On the outside it looked like they both performed the same service of offering *korbanos*, as it says (Bamidbar Rabbah 20:18), “*Why [did Bilam make] seven altars? Against the seven altars that seven righteous men had built that were accepted: Adam, Hevel and Noach, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and Moshe.*” Bilam tells Balak to stand by his burnt offering, וַיֵּאמֶר בְּלָעָם לְבָלָק הַתִּיָּצֵב, “עַל עֲלֹתֶיךָ” – do not be distracted away from the offering, while I go hopefully to receive a bad prophecy against the Jews.

We see how a person can offer a *korban* like the *kohanim* but his intention is completely wicked. Like here that Bilam’s hatred had upset the natural order; it made him arise early in the morning and saddle his donkey by himself in order to curse the Jews, which although turned out to be a blessing, still it demonstrates his intense hatred to Hashem’s nation. Whereas, Avraham’s love and loyalty to Hashem had upset the natural order, and he arose early to saddle his donkey by himself, in order to fulfill Hashem desire to sacrifice his beloved son Yitzchak; which may seem cruel but actually demonstrates how loyal and grateful he was to Hashem, ready to fulfill anything He commands. (Bereishis Rabbah 55).

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washed my face and headed back out of the *shul*. Exiting the *shul* I bumped into a simple and modest man, so I moved aside and let him in. Seeing that I was a decent young man, he stretched out his hand and gave me a warm handshake, and asked me to sit down with him.

“I came back now from a visit to Israel,” he started telling me. “I went there to pray for my oldest daughter who has a lot of trouble finding the right *shiduch*, thereby, preventing the younger from going ahead. Although she is a perfect girl and has many proposals, all of them good learners and talented, but none with also good character, modesty and piety.” Turning to me he said, “You look like a decent guy, I bet she would be happy to meet you.”

After all these hard months, it was very heartwarming to hear such a compliment; however, I was afraid what he would have to say after he heard that I was divorced. I told him my whole story, and to my surprise he didn’t seem to care, he just asked me if I did not care that she was a bit older than me. Of course I replied that I couldn’t care less. And so, a few weeks later we were engaged.

A Year after we got married, *baruch* Hashem, we had our first son. After him came six more children. By now, the bad rumors on me have evaporated, everyone saw it had no basis. Whereas, my ex-wife who also found a new spouse was childless, and after ten years with her husband she got divorced and got married for the third time, and until this day she has no offspring.

Though I am certainly not happy for her sorrow, but this story sure has important lessons; never let your stressful times cause you to speak against others, certainly not spread false rumors about them, because anything a person does he does only to himself... May this lesson be for her merit to have offspring.

M. G. Borough Park, NY