

# Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick

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פרשת בלק תשפ"ה

## *What lesson can we learn from Bilaam and his donkey?*

ויקם בלעם בבקר ויחבש את אֶתְנֹו וילך עם שְׂרֵי מוֹאָב: (כב כ)

Rashi explains ויקם בלעם בבקר From here we learn that hate causes a disregard for the standard of dignified conduct, for he saddled it himself. The Holy One, blessed is He, said, "Wicked one, their father Avraham has already preceded you, as it says, 'Avraham arose in the morning and saddled his donkey'" *The donkey saw the angel of the Lord stationed on the road with his sword drawn in his hand; so the she-donkey turned aside from the road and went into a field. Bilaam beat the she-donkey to get it back onto the road. The donkey saw the angel of the Lord, and it crouched down under Bilaam. Bilaam's anger flared, and he beat the donkey with a stick. The Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Bilaam, "What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?" Bilaam said to the donkey, "For you have humiliated me; if I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now." The she-donkey said to Bilaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden since you first started until now? Have I been accustomed to do this to you?" He said, "No."* (22:21-30)

Bilaam doesn't even seem surprised when his donkey started talking to him! He just answers back! Bilaam seems to express no surprise over his donkey's sudden capacity to speak. He responds right away, as if he were talking to any other person. The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 20:12) notes this was a miracle that there was never like it ever before." But Bilaam apparently took it in stride. The Midrash continues: Hashem wanted Bilaam to realize that the ability to speak is a gift from Hashem. He can grant it even to a beast if He so desires, and He can remove it from a human if that human opposes His will.

Rabbeinu Bechaye, explains that Hashem performed such an extraordinary miracle specifically in order to shock Bilaam. Hashem wanted to wake Bilaam up, so that he would realize that Hashem did not want him to go. But

Bilaam, due to his cruel, wicked nature and his strong desire to curse Israel took no heed. He responded to his donkey almost without flinching and moved on. This is the modern expression: "He was in his box." Bilaam should have understood this and realized he will never be able to curse Israel against God's will. But this message too was lost on Bilaam, who in his wicked zeal would not be stopped. The Mishna in Avos 5:19 says: Bilaam, was wicked, had an evil eye, a haughty spirit and a limitless appetite for kavod, honor.

The key to understanding the reasoning of Bilaam, is found in Sefer Chesed L'Avraham the Radomsker Rebbe. Bilaam as most people do, believe that the world is run by nature. Even when something extra ordinary happens, they would always find an answer, whether it was a meteor or a star or fate that caused the reaction. Therefore, their lives are full with fantasies and in denial. Hashem wanted to prove to Bilaam, that the opening of the mouth of the donkey was a miracle. "The Lord opened Bilaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road." Then Bilaam understood, that his sins caused him from believing that everything in this world is a message and and from Hashem. Therefore, says the Radomsker Rebbe, Bilaam confessed: "הִפְסַתִּי בִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי" "I have sinned, therefore I did not know that you were standing on the road before me. I thought it was nature. Now, if it displeases you, I will return." I sinned, but I will return and repent. Now Bilaam's hate was softened, and spoke with respect towards Klal Yisrael. Our sins cause us to also think everything is done by nature. Let us do teshuva and come closer to Hashem, and we would see that Hashem has a master plan with precise details for everything that happens to us. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

## STORY OF THE WEEK (By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

\*\*\*\*\* *A Partnership with the Alexander Rebbe brings wealth to a chosid* \*\*\*\*\*

A group of Alexander Chassidim once traveled and spent a Shabbos with the Yismach Yisrael, Harav Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchok Danziger. On their way home, they stopped at a hotel to rest. There, they met a Yid who got excited when he heard they were coming from Alexander. I will tell you something that happened to me personally with your Rebbe." The chassidim gathered around to listen to the shoemaker tell his story.

"I live in the town of Kaluzshin. It has always been difficult for me to make a living. They were offering a *shidduch* for my daughter, but I had no money for dowry to offer the *chosson*. "I heard that in Alexander there was a tzaddik that would *bentch* every Yid, no matter how heartbroken he was, and everyone who received his *brachos* was helped. I therefore decided that I would travel to Alexander and get a *brachah* from this tzaddik.

“When I went in to this tzaddik in Alexander, I told him my story, and told him of the trouble I was in. I begged him to give me a *brachah* that I should be able to marry off my daughter. “The tzaddik gave me a *bracha* “Hashem will help you!” The winter passed without my being helped. Not only that, but things got worse.

Every year I would rent a field from the *poritz*. I would grow lots of fruit. I would sell the fruit and there would be enough money and fruit for my family to eat. But now I lost that, because a *goy* came and rented the field from the *poritz*. I decided then and there to travel a second time to Alexander.

When I got in to see the Rebbe I had tears in my eyes, telling the tzaddik my problems and complaining that I had not yet been helped, and in fact my problems had increased! A *goy* had rented the field and now I was left with nothing.

“The Alexander Rebbe told me, ‘Go home and *You* will rent the field, not the *goy*. And you will marry off your daughter without any problems.’ “I was amazed to hear these words from the tzaddik. I traveled home with my *emunah* in the Rebbe complete.

“When I reached home, I found out that the *goy* had paid the *poritz* in full for the field. “A few weeks later, the *poritz* called for me. When I came to him, he told me that he wanted to order a pair of shoes for himself. While I was measuring his feet, we got into a discussion. He asked me if I was prepared to rent his field again for that year.

“I told him yes, I was ready, willing, and able to rent the field. He explained that the *goy* had backed out of the deal, and the field was now available. I rented the field from the *poritz*, promising the *poritz* thirty ruble for rent for the field. “When I went to the field to check it out, I was in shock. I saw immediately why the *goy* had changed his mind and why the *poritz* had been in such a hurry to rent it to me. The trees had dried out completely, and there was no fruit on them at all. I would have no fruits to sell, and I owed the *poritz* 30 ruble! Now my troubles were even greater.

“That very same day I traveled a third time to Alexander. I told the Rebbe my problems had gotten worse than before. I had agreed to pay the *poritz* thirty rubles that I didn’t have. Where was I going to get thirty ruble, when the trees were not going to give me any fruit? “Rebbe!” I cried out. “I have no dowry for my daughter, no *parnassah* for my family, and an empty field that will

cost me more money for nothing!”

“Immediately, the tzaddik opened his drawer and took out fifteen rubles and said to me, ‘Take this half of the money you owe the *poritz* for the field. In return for this money you have to take me as a partner to share the profit with when the field brings you all the fruit!’

“I was happy to get that money, since my house was empty of food. “I came home,” continued the shoemaker, “and in my house they were sitting and waiting for a *yeshua*. “I couldn’t bear to visit the field anymore. I couldn’t go and work in the field, because I felt it was a waste to put work and money into a lost hope. The trees had shown me that they would not give me any more fruit, and it was obvious that this was the reason the *goy* had backed out of the deal.

“A few days passed, and a merchant from Lodz came to my house. Every year, this merchant came to me to buy fruit from the field and sell it back in Lodz. I was ashamed to go to the field with him. But my wife had more *emunas tzaddikim* than I had, and she told me to go to the field. ‘Go with the merchant to the field! You have a partner already, the Alexander Rebbe! He will certainly be a *brachah* to you!’ “When I arrived at the field, I was amazed. I saw that the trees were full of healthy, very nice fruit. They looked like they came from *Gan Eden*! The fruit was so ripe that some of them had already fallen off the trees. I collected the fruits and the merchant paid me very well for them. I took more fruit off the trees and sold it to more merchants who heard of the good fruit I produced. The more I took off the trees the more grew back. The profits were enormous! “This kept up the entire summer. I sold all the fruit, and more grew back. The money from the profit I put into the box.

“So much fruit grew, that I couldn’t leave my house to go to the Rebbe because I had to go every day and pick the fruit. This continued happening until after Sukkos. “After Sukkos I took the box of money and I traveled to Alexander. I went to the tzaddik and I opened the box of money and poured out the money onto the Rebbe’s desk. It was 900 rubles! I wanted to take 450 rubles, as that would have been my half, and that would have been a lot of money and certainly enough for me. But the tzaddik said, ‘Take 700 rubles. From that money you will have enough to live, and a dowry for your daughter. The 200 rubles that belong to me I’m handing over to you to give to a certain *kallah*, a orphan that I have agreed to marry off, and I want you to be the *shliach* to do that mitzvah.’”

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