

VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

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In English

ערב שב"ק פרשת

Balak

שנת תשפ"ה

בס"ד

Hashem Speaks to Us Through Events That Occur All Around Us!

» The Miracle of the Talking Donkey

The *pasuk* states (22:28): "And Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey."

The Ramban (ibid:23) writes: "The reason for this miracle was to show Bilaam who gives a person the power of speech and who makes him mute. He was being told that Hashem opens the mouths of creatures that do not have the power of speech, and He certainly can render people unable to speak. Furthermore, He is the One who puts words into their mouths to speak according to His will because He is all-powerful. This was a warning to him not to curse the Jewish people..."

Similarly, the Medrash (Medrash Yelamdeinu, quoted in Yalkut Talmud Torah) states: "Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey to teach Bilaam that the mouth and tongue are in the hands of Hashem. He opened the closed mouth of a donkey and He was showing that He could also force closed a person's open mouth and not allow him to curse the Jewish people."

In other words, this was a lesson that everything that occurs in this world is orchestrated by Hashem as part of His Divine Providence, and one cannot do anything unless it is His will for him to do that thing.

The Meforshim (see Sefas Emes 5632) also use this idea to explain the *pasuk* (22:5-6): "Behold, a nation has come up from Egypt and, behold, they cover the eye of the world and they are sitting opposite me. And now, please go and curse this people."

This verse is explaining the evil intentions of Bilaam and Balak. Their worldview was that this world operates according to the laws of nature and the actions of men. Thus, Balak said that "a nation went up from Egypt", meaning that he believed they went up on their own, as a result of their strength and might.

Klal Yisroel, however, "covered the eye of the land", meaning that they paid no attention to the way things looked to the earthly eye. They did not look at the events as "natural." Rather, they believed that everything was decreed by Hashem and orchestrated by Him.

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Balak could not abide this display of *emunah*, which went against everything he believed in. Therefore, he called Bilaam to curse them. He said that this nation was "sitting opposite me", meaning that they were against everything he stood for and, therefore, he had to destroy them before they destroyed him.

» Bitachon is the Best Insurance!

The Maharal of Prague *zt"l* (Nesivos Olam Nesiv Habitachon) writes: "The attribute of *bitachon* is that one who trusts in Hashem and has decreed against him something bad such as a tragedy or a hardship, still and all, because he trusts in Hashem no bad occurrence, tragedy or hardship shall befall him. The reason for this is because Hashem will have mercy upon him even if he is unworthy of it. This is only on the condition that he has genuine *bitachon* from the depth of his heart. In the merit of his *bitachon*, he will succeed in being saved from every suffering and disease."

He adds that it is brought in the Zohar (Va'eirah 22A) that one who genuinely trusts in Hashem cannot be harmed by anyone. Even if his astrological luck is bad, Hashem will send abundance upon him from the upper realms that are above astrological signs.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner *zt"l* writes similarly the Maharal in his Sefer Nefesh Hachaim (Shar 3 Perek 12). He writes: "A great concept and a wondrous remedy to remove and annul from upon oneself all judgments and the desires of others to harm him and to disable them from hurting him or making any blemish in him is when a person establishes in his heart to say: Hashem is the true G-d. There is nothing besides Him. There is no other power in this or any other world. Everything is solely due to His Omnipresence, may His Name be blessed."

"And one should totally remove from his heart and pay no attention at all to any other force or will in the world. And he should subjugate himself and attach himself with pure thoughts purely for The Singular Master, may His Name be blessed. Then, He will provide for his needs. All other forces and wills will automatically be annulled from upon him and will be unable to affect him at all."

According to the Maharal and Rav Chaim Volozhiner, *bitachon* will ensure that no outside forces can cause harm in any way. However, it does not ensure that one will receive whatever he wants. Rather, it ensures that damaging forces will be unable to harm him.

One should not think that *bitachon* is merely a good *middah*, as there are Rishonim who are of the opinion that it is an actual mitzvah (Sefer Charedim, Perek 9, Ois 51, in the name of the Ramban, Semak and others). Even if a person sees no way out of a difficult predicament – for example if he is struggling with *parnassah* or if a family member is going through a serious medical issue – he is obligated to maintain a high level of *emunah* and *bitachon*.

He must believe that even though he sees no natural means of salvation, Hashem can find a way to save him. One must recognize that Hashem can even save a person with a sword upon his neck, as there is no danger that He cannot completely remove.

In this vein, the Mishtav M'Eliyahu (Chelek 1, Maamar Hateva Hester Hanissim) writes that it often occurs that a person works hard to find a source of livelihood through natural means but he ultimately sees that he was helped in an unexpected manner. When he thinks about how his life became so much easier, he realizes that his salvation came in a way that he never could have imagined because Hashem decreed that he would be helped in this way and, therefore, nothing stood in the way of making it happen.

» How Can a Simple Person Have Genuine Bitachon?

One may ask: It is understandable that a *tzadik* who is careful to avoid any trace of sin in his entire life has the ability to believe and trust in Hashem to always be there to help him in the merit of his many good deeds. But how can a simple Jew, who is not holding on that level, trust in Hashem completely and expect Him to always send his salvation? How can one who is unworthy depend on Him to extricate him from difficult situation when he knows that he is undeserving of such *heko*?

The answer is that one must accept the fact that if he has *bitachon* and places his trust in Hashem, He will help him even if he is unworthy. *Bitachon* does not depend on a person's spiritual level. Rather, even if a wicked man trusts in Hashem and relies on His assistance, He will help him.

This is seen in the Yalkut Shimoni (Tehillim 34:10), on the verse (Tehillim 32:10): "Many are the pains of the wicked, but as for he who trusts in Hashem, kindness will encompass him." The Yalkut states that even a wicked man who places his trust in Hashem will be encompassed by His kindness. Since he trusted in Him, he will be saved by Him.

Rav Mordechai of Lechovitch zt"l (Toras Avos, page 149) uses this idea to explain the *pasuk* in Tehillim (116:10): "*He'emanti ki adaber.*" (I believed, so I spoke.) He understands this to mean that if anyone speaks about *emunah* with his mouth, he will end up having *emunah* in his heart. Thus, he explains the words to mean: "I believed because I spoke."

If one constantly uses the phrases "Boruch Hashem" and "B'ezras Hashem", expressing the belief that it is up to Hashem to help him in his business, learning, dealings with the authorities, and every other aspect of life, *emunah* will become ingrained within his heart.

After saying these words many times, one will truly come to believe that no other force in the world can help him in any way besides for Hashem. Once he reaches this level of *emunah*, he will be able to have true *bitachon*, relying on Hashem's help alone. The idea that *emunah* leads to *bitachon* is seen from the Ramban, who writes (Emunah U'Bitachon) that "*emunah* is the tree and *bitachon* is the fruit that grows from it."

» Hashem Speaks to Every Individual!

One must recognize that Hashem is constantly speaking to us through the events that occur in our lives. Everything that we experience is a message from Hashem that is sent just for us. Therefore, whenever anything happens one must contemplate what just occurred, why it occurred, and what Hashem is trying to tell him with this occurrence. If one does this regularly, he will eventually reach a very

high level of *bitachon*.

The verse states (Bereishis 6:3): "Hashem said, 'Let My spirit not deal forever concerning man, because he is also only flesh, and his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.'"

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh explains that in the beginning of time, Hashem spoke directly to his creations when He needed to communicate with them (as we see

"...Hashem never stopped speaking to people. However, He now speaks to us indirectly, through events that occur in our lives. Although we are not on the level to hear His voice directly, we still receive messages from Him that we are meant to interpret..."

He spoke directly to Odom, Chava, the snake, and Kayin). But when man became more connected to the earthly word, He said that he would no longer speak directly to people. He would not communicate them face-to-face anymore.

The Ohr Hachaim adds that in the times when Hashem spoke to people directly to give them whatever message He wanted to tell them, everyone was on the level of a prophet. But when people became too connected to earthly matters, He changed the order of things and this level of prophecy was taken from the world.

Still and all, in ensuing generations there always were some righteous people who were able to keep up the old way. These people merited attaining the level of prophecy and were able to be spoken to directly by Hashem.

After the Bais Hamikdosh was destroyed, this level of direct connection to Hashem was lost completely and prophecy ceased to exist, but the level of “*ruach hakodesh*”, the holy spirit, still was found amongst righteous people. In later generations, even the level of *ruach hakodesh* was lost and we no longer can openly feel His spirit in our midst.

The Alshich Hakadosh (Bereishis 3:8) writes similarly that before the sin, the entire world was filled with spirituality and Hashem was able to speak directly to people like a father speaks to his children. After the sin, people became sullied and could no longer speak directly to Hashem. Although some people could still hear His voice, it was not a direct conversation between Him and the man. Instead, Hashem’s voice would be heard floating in the air, and the person was able to hear Him speaking, although He was not speaking directly to the person in the form of a dialogue. In later times, even this was lost and one could no longer even hear an indirect voice of Hashem.

From the words of both the Ohr Hachaim and Alshich, we see that one can only hear the voice of Hashem directly if he is pure of sin. The more a person is dirtied by sin, the less directly he can have a relationship with Hashem.

The Alshich adds (in Parshas Emor) that at Har Sinai, Klal Yisroel was completely cleansed from all sin. Therefore, they were able to hear Hashem’s voice speaking directly towards them, as if He were speaking to them face-to-face. They had reached the level that man was on before the first sin, and were able to have Him speak directly to them from Har Sinai.

What cleansed the nation and allowed them to be spoken to directly from Hashem? It was their declaration of, “*Naaseh V’Nishmah! We will do and we will hear!*” When they said that they would unquestioningly obey the word of Hashem, their bodies became purified.

The same applies to all people. When we declare that we want to follow the ways of Hashem and learn how to live the life that He wants from us, we become purified and we are able to draw closer to Him and, to some extent, hear His voice speaking to us.

The Gemara (Brachos 5A) says: “If a person sees that suffering is coming to him, he should investigate his actions.” A simple explanation of this Gemara is that a person needs to pause at intervals of his life and contemplate what Hashem wants from him. Hashem wants to communicate with us. Although He is unable to speak to us directly because we are not on that level, He speaks to us through events and occurrences. We have to try to understand what message He is sending us and what He is trying to tell us.

We fully believe that Hashem controls all events, and nothing happens on its own. Therefore, we need to attempt to understand why specific things happen to us. We must realize that when we are struck or embarrassed, Hashem is the one who caused it to happen in order to teach us something, and it is up to us to try to figure out what we are meant to learn.

This is how Rashi explains the Gemara in Brachos. He says that one must investigate his actions to determine why Hashem sent us this suffering.

The Rosh Yosef (written by the Pri Megadim) says that one should realize that we are treated measure-for-measure. When Hashem needs to punish a person, he sends a punishment that is similar to the sin the person committed. The reason He does this is so that the person can recognize why he is being punished and what he must do to rectify the situation and atone for his sin. This means of punishment is actually a tremendous kindness from Hashem, as it allows us to improve and correct our mistakes.

We thus see that Hashem never stopped “speaking” to human beings. However, He now speaks to us indirectly, through events that occur in our lives. Although we are not on the level to hear His voice directly, we still receive messages from Him that we are meant to interpret.

The only thing that has changed since the creation of the world is how openly Hashem speaks to man. Although He no longer speaks directly to people, He still sends messages to them, just like He has always done, He just does so in indirect ways.

A person must realize that he can merit to receive clearer messages from Hashem. If he purifies himself and cleanses himself from sin, he will receive clearer messages from Him. If one does so, the messages he receives from Hashem will be more measure-for-measure, and will be much easier to interpret and understand.