



דרכים בפרשה

בלק



הנה עם יצא ממצרים הנה כסה את עין הארץ והוא ישוב ממלי. ועתה לכה נא ארה לי את העם
הזה כי עצום הוא ממני אולי אוכל נכה בו ואגרשנו מן הארץ כי ידעתי את אשר תברך מברך
ואשר תאר יואר

Behold a People has come out of Egypt, behold, it has covered the surface of the earth and sits opposite me. So now, please come and curse this people for me, for it is too powerful for me, perhaps I will be able to strike it and drive it away from the land. For I know that whomever you bless is blessed and whomever you curse is cursed. (22:5-6)

Balak came to Bilaam with the comments: a) Behold, a nation has left Mitzrayim; b) The future doesn't look good as they will seek to destroy us; and c) please come and curse this nation because they are too powerful for us to drive away alone, but you have the power of the curse and whomever you bless is blessed and whomever you curse is cursed.

Upon examining these comments, we can readily understand the need for the second and third. First you explain the danger and then you explain why you need help. But what was the need of telling Bilaam that they left Mitzrayim? Was there anyone in the entire world that did not know this historical fact? (Rashi seems to pick up on this question as well by saying that Bilaam asked what difference does it make that Bnai Yisroel left.)

The Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh explains that earlier on when Bilaam was an advisor to Pharaoh, his principle job was to ensure that the Jews never leave Mitzrayim. Furthermore, at some point, Balak himself asked Bilaam how to deal with the Jews in the future, to which Bilaam responded that they are stuck in Mitzrayim and will never get out.

Accordingly, the conversation is now understood. Balak came pointing his finger at Bilaam. The Jews picked up and left Mitzrayim. This is all your fault; you have not done your job, and you now need to clean up the mess.

On a deeper level, it seems that there is something about *yetzias Mitzrayim* that is

even more troubling to Balak. Later in the parsha Bilaam proclaims that HaShem **took** the Bnai Yisroel out of Mitzrayim, but Balak says that Bnai Yisroel **left**, implying that it was on their own.

Why was Balak so bothered by the idea of HaShem taking us out, that he needed to deny it and say that we went out on our own?

I heard from Rav Binyamin Eisenberger shlita the following answer, which I believe is something that every Jew must know and internalize:

Balak came to Bilaam because of his ability to curse. Bilaam “knew” the moment of HaShem’s daily anger and could take advantage of that moment by issuing a curse. Under normal circumstances, even if one deserves a punishment, HaShem acts with compassion and will either delay it or repress it. During that nanosecond of anger, HaShem’s compassion is suppressed and a curse can produce deadly results.

Although this calculation seemed logical, Balak failed to take into account one major factor. He did not acknowledge that HaShem’s love for His children is an **אהבה תלויה בדבר** - *unconditional love*. This love is so profound and passionate that it defies moments and circumstances. It is unswayable, ever present (even in the darkest moments), and cannot be shaken. This love is an unbreakable bond between HaShem and His kinderlach.

For everyone else, HaShem does not use (what appears to us as) emotions. There are

no emotions in judicial calculus, only the cold hard facts. But when it comes to Klal Yisroel, HaShem allows His emotions to take over and He will even ignore justice and show favouritism.

Bilaam understood this as is demonstrated in the beautiful brachah of Mah Tov. As much as Bilaam wanted to deny it, ultimately, he was forced to acknowledge this in a public and personally embarrassing manner.

The Zohar tells us that when the *Malachim* (Angels) did not readily split the sea for Klal Yisroel, citing the reason that they sinned just as badly as the Egyptians, HaShem responded that the bond of love and sublime *keshet* that HaShem shared with His children would cause Him to overlook the sins.

Balak refused to acknowledge this great bond with HaShem, so instead of saying that HaShem took us out, he proclaimed that we left on our own.

Knowing of this great love is heartwarming and special, but what can we do to maximize it in our lives?

Unfortunately, many people have a quid pro quo relationship with HaShem. When things are going fine and dandy, we love HaShem. However, when the going gets tough, and times of difficulty arrive, we begin to question Him. We feel let down and at times even abused and abandoned. Instead of using the low points and hard times in life to come closer to Him and seek Him out, we ask questions of how and why and it's not fair.

If we can be honest with ourselves for a moment and wonder where these reactions stem from, we would realize that it is not from a place of unconditional love. If it was unconditional, our love would stay the same when receiving a slap and/or falling flat on our faces. We need to show HaShem and maintain the same unconditional love that He shows us. We need to realize that HaShem

loves us more than we can ever understand, and that He is constantly doing what is best for us.

There is a beautiful story that further brings out this point, as related by a secular professor from an Israeli university in his personal diary. While in Rome waiting to board a flight, the professor noticed the Ponevizher rav, Rav Kahanamin. Although in Israel he would have most likely crossed to the other side of the street, something pulled him to say hello to another Jew. Walking over to the rav, he extended his hand and said Shalom Aleichem. The rav looked at this bare-headed man and asked, "Atah Yehudi? Are you a Yid"? The professor nodded his head affirmatively. Immediately, the rav gave him a warm hug and loving kiss on his cheek. Suddenly feeling uncomfortable, the professor said, "If you would only know what kind of sinner I am, you would never hug and kiss me". The Ponevizher Rav looked at him and responded, "If you would only know how much HaShem loves you, despite the fact that you are a sinner, you wouldn't sin so much".

This is the limud from our parsha. HaShem loves us and will always look at us favourably. If we truly believe this with every fibre of our being, that the love is unconditional and it makes no difference what has been done, then we would be able to live our lives with joy and reciprocal love for Him, even in the difficult times, knowing that no matter where we are in life, no matter how far we have fallen, no matter how bleak our situation, HaShem loves us more than we can ever know.

May we be *zoche* (merit) to come to a full giluy of ahavah between HaShem and Klal Yisroel.

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפיל



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