

Doing the Right Thing

If it's a matter of choosing between right and wrong, don't trust in Hashem. You must do your job and choose what is right. You have free will; it's not a matter of trust. Watch your step and don't do what's wrong. But when it comes to material things that you need, health or livelihood, then you should put your trust in Hashem.

We are given the gift of free choice. Living a Torah based life and having trust in Hashem will cause us to make the right decisions by Doing the Right Thing in Hashem's eyes. (Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller's teachings with permission from Simchas Hachaim Gedola Bais Yisrael)

Write On

Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky zt"l, one of the greatest Torah scholars of our generation, reviewed the entire *Talmud Babli*, *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Shulhan Aruch*, *Midrash* and *Tanach* every year! In order to complete *Talmud Babli* in one year, one must study about seven and a half pages a day, but Reb Chaim studied eight pages, so as not to feel the pressure to rush his studies during the final month. Reb Chaim completed his daily eight pages by sunrise every morning, in time to pray with the sunrise *minyan*.

In the autumn of 2001, Reb Chaim suffered a stroke. While recuperating in the Mayenei Hayeshua Hospital in Bnei Brak, he began physical therapy. His therapist asked Reb Chaim to write something on a blank sheet of paper, in order to accustom the great Sage to using his hand and fingers. Reb Chaim is the author of over a dozen *sefarim*, so writing is an integral part of his life. Slowly and painstakingly he wrote in Hebrew, "May salvation arise from Heaven" (the opening phrase of the prayer for those who uphold the Torah, recited by Ashkenazim after the Torah reading on Shabbat).

The therapist was impressed by Reb Chaim's choice of words, which were obviously a prayer for his recovery. But the therapist was surprised, as well. "I have been doing this work for years," he said to Reb Chaim. "Every single patient that I ever had always wrote his name when I first asked him to write something. This happened every time without fail. Why did the Rav not write his name?"

Reb Chaim looked out at the therapist from under his thick bushy eyebrows and said with simplicity and sincerity, "*Hazal* teach that a person should not write his name on a blank sheet of paper, lest a dishonest person find it and write above the signature that the undersigned owes him money, and then he would be liable!" (See *Ketubot* 21a).

Who would have thought of this except for Reb Chaim? (Reflections of the Maggid)

The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאַה בְּתַּת בְּהִיָּה

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SHABBAT BALAK ☆ שַׁבַּת בַּלַּק

Haftarah: Michah 5:6-6:8

JULY 15-16, 2022 17 TAMUZ 5782

Shir Hashirim/Minhah:

6:30, 6:45, 6:55, 7:55 pm

Candlelighting: **8:06 pm**

Evening Shema after: **9:04 pm**

Shaharit: **4:40, 6:45, 7:45, 8:25, 9:00 am**

Morning Shema by: **8:24 am**

Shabbat Class: **6:35 pm**

Shabbat Minhah: **1:30 & 7:45 pm**

Shabbat Ends: **9:04, R"Y 9:36 pm**

Weekday Minhah: **7:00 pm**

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

The fast of the 17th of Tamuz will be on Sunday, July 17.

Fast begins at 4:12 a.m. and ends at 8:53 p.m. Minhah with tefillin 7:50 p.m.

The period of the Three Weeks begins on this day. During this time, no weddings or parties with music are permitted.

Mabrook to Richie & Giordana Shalom on the marriage of their daughter, Hannah, to Saul Safdieh.

Mabrook to Benny & Rachel Srour on the birth of a baby boy. Mabrook to the grandparents, Morris & Joyce Srour.

A Message from our Rabbi

"וַיִּפְתַּח ה' אֶת־פִּי הָאֲתוֹן"

"Hashem opened the mouth of the she-donkey" (*Bemidbar* 22:28)

Bilaam was traveling on his donkey and suddenly the donkey started to speak. Did you ever wonder what your car would say to you if it would speak? Are you careful when you drive? How do you speak when you drive? What do you look at when you drive? Do you like to do favors with your car? Do you constantly test your car horn to see if it works – especially at stop signs? Do you constantly criticize your spouse when that person drives? It would be interesting to hear what your car would say.

Rabbi Obadya Yosef zt"l takes the word "aton" (donkey) and teaches an almost funny lesson. The word 'aton' sounds like 'eaton' (newspaper). There are some people who, when they come to eat their meal, open up their newspaper and read it while they eat. "וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־פִּי הָעֵיתוֹן" – "And he opens the mouth of the newspaper." You should know that it's not a good practice. Even the doctors agree that it's not good to read the newspaper while you eat. The reason is that while he reads, he doesn't taste the food,

since his mind is busy with other things. What happened to so-and-so, what's happening to so-and-so. He ends up not tasting his food. The Torah says, "And he satisfies all living things their desire," which means that in order to be satisfied, you must have a desire during the meal in order to be satisfied. It is not for nothing that Hashem gives us so many foods with different flavors. So when a person reads his newspaper, he misses all of this. Everything in its right time – when you eat, you should be involved with eating and nothing else.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

Sorry for Nothing

We are all fascinated by inanimate or animal objects that speak. The '60s had TV viewers kvelling over talking horses, even talking cars. And an entire industry was based on the concept of a talking mouse. But this week the Torah tells us about a talking animal that brought no laughs to its rider and teaches a serious lesson to us all.

Bilaam, the greatest prophet that the gentile world had seen, was hired by Balak, King of Moab, for one mission: curse the Jews. Bilaam's feigned reluctance was quickly turned to exuberance when offers of honors and great wealth were added as a signing bonus, and first thing in the morning he saddled his trusted donkey and was on his way. He planned to travel to an overlook, where he would cast his spell on the Jewish Nation as they camped innocently beneath the wicked gaze of Balak and his employee, Bilaam.

But Hashem had different plans. As Bilaam's donkey ambled toward a narrow passage, it saw a frightening sight. An angel, with a sword thrust forward, blocked its path. The beast turned off the road into a field, and Bilaam struck the animal to get it back on the road. But again the angel stood in the passageway and the poor donkey, in fear, squeezed tightly against a stone wall, pressing Bilaam's leg against the wall. The great prophet, who so haughtily straddled the donkey, did not see the angelic figure and reacted violently. Again he hit his donkey; this time harder. But the angel did not retreat. He began approaching the donkey and its rider. The donkey crouched in panic and Bilaam struck it again. But this time the donkey spoke up. Miraculously, Hashem opened her mouth, and she asked Bilaam, "Why did you hit me? Aren't I the same animal that you have ridden your entire life? Should not my strange behavior give cause for concern?"

When the angel, sword in hand, finally revealed himself, and chided Bilaam for striking the innocent animal, Bilaam was flabbergasted. He was left speechless save for one sentence. "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing opposite me on the road. And if you want, I shall return."

What is disturbing is Bilaam's immediate admission of sin. If he could not see the angel why did he admit guilt? Bilaam should have simply stated to the angel, "I did not know you were there and thought my beast was acting in a manner that required discipline." If he truly did not know that the angel was there, why did he admit to sinning?

On one of the final days of the Six Day War the Israeli troops pierced through enemy fortifications and forged their way through the ancient passageways of Jerusalem. As if Divine gravitational force was pulling them, one group of soldiers dodged the Jordanian bullets and proceeded until there was no reason to continue. They had reached the *Kotel*, the Western Wall. The young men, some of whom had yeshiva education, others who came from traditional backgrounds, stood in awe and began to cry in unison. The *Kotel* had been liberated!

One young soldier, who grew up on a totally secular kibbutz gazed at the sight of his comrades crying like children as they stared up at the ancient stones. Suddenly, he, too began to wail. One of the religious soldiers, who had engaged in countless debates with him, put his arm around him and asked, "I don't understand. To us the *Kotel* means so

much. It is our link with the Temple and the holy service. This is the most moving experience of our lives. But why are you crying?"

The young soldier looked at his friend, and amidst the tears simply stated, "I am crying because I am not crying."

Bilaam, the greatest of gentile prophets, realized that something must be wrong. A simple donkey saw the revelation of an angel. He did not. He realized that there are experiences he should have been able to grasp and appreciate. If he didn't it was his fault. He realized then and there that it was he who was lacking.

How often does G-d cry out to us in newspaper headlines, be it earthquakes, wildfires, or human tragedies? We should stare at the sight and see the Divine figure standing with an outstretched sword. We do not. We flip the paper and strike at the donkeys who struck out.

We ought to cry at the tragedies of life, and if we don't realize they are there, we ought to cry about that. Then one day we will all smile. Forever. (Rabbi Mordecai Kamenetzky)

The Epitome of Righteousness

As the Jewish people emerged from the desert and approached the Promised Land, the kingdoms on the periphery became very jittery. Balak, the king of Moab decided to do something about it. He ordered Bilaam, a sorcerer of proven effectiveness, to curse the Jewish people. All the arrangements were made, but at the last moment, Hashem placed unexpected words in Bilaam's mouth. Instead of cursing the Jewish people, Bilaam blessed them.

Let us now take a look into the *Haftarah* that draws on the prophecy of Micah. "O my people," the prophet declares centuries later, "remember, I beg of you, what Balak, the king of Moab, plotted and what Bilaam the son of Beor answered him . . . , thus will you know the righteousness of Hashem!"

Apparently, the prophet felt that the deflection of Bilaam's curses was the ultimate proof of Hashem's righteousness. More so than the plagues visited upon the Egyptians, the splitting of the sea, and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. Why is this so?

The commentators explain that true righteousness is totally altruistic. If we do a righteous deed but expect some reward for it, our righteousness is incomplete. Although the deed itself is righteous, and we undoubtedly deserve credit for doing it, we cannot be considered genuinely righteous people if our motives are less than righteous, if we seek recognition, gratitude or even gratification.

All the dazzling miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish people from the time He brought them forth from Egypt until He brought them in to the Promised Land were, therefore, not absolute proof of His righteousness. They were public spectacles that inspired awe in all who witnessed them, thereby exalting Hashem's honor and glory in the eyes of the people. But the Jewish people passed right by Moab undisturbed; they were completely unaware of the threat posed by Balak and Bilaam and how it was miraculously averted. Hashem had no ulterior motives, so to speak, and therefore, this incident more than any other proved His righteousness.

In our own lives, as we seek to grow spiritually through righteous deeds, we should sometimes step back and take stock of our thoughts and motives. Are we acting out of pure altruism, out of an unadulterated desire to fulfill Hashem's commands? Or are we perhaps motivated by other considerations such as social status or the expectation of some future kindness in return? If it is spiritual reward that we really seek, righteous deeds performed anonymously deliver the greatest dividends. (Rabbi Naftali Reich)