

# Kindert Torah

ד'בס

Parashas Balak

## Fiery Prayers

“Our community is in trouble.”

“What is the problem?”

“The government has levied a heavy tax which will adversely affect our livelihood.”

“Oy vey.”

“We must unite and send a representative to plead our cause.”

“Who shall we send?”

“Let us ask Mr. Kapeida. He has many political contacts.”

*The concerned community members find Mr. Kapeida at home. They explain the situation to him. He thinks for a moment and then responds.*

“I hear what you gentleman are saying and understand your request. However, I myself am not so fond of many of the members of the community. I cannot plead for those whom I am not at peace with.”

*The community members are a bit shocked by Mr. Kapeida's response. However, they understand his logic. They do not despair. They proceed to the home of the tsaddik, Mr. Lev Tov. They place their request before him. He smiles and responds.*

“My fellow community members are in trouble. I love them all dearly. I will plead for them from the depths of my heart.”

*And so, Mr. Lev Tov goes before the government official, imploring him to rescind the tax. His words are heard and the tax law is repealed.*



“Be pleased Hashem, our G-d with Your people Israel and their prayers.” This is the beginning of the seventeenth blessing of the *Amidah* prayer, in which we ask Hashem to be pleased with His nation Israel and their *tefillos*. The Darchei Chaim<sup>1</sup> asks a penetrating question. How can we ask Hashem to be pleased with our fellow Jews if we ourselves are not pleased with them? Mr. Kapeida could not plead for the people that he was not fond of. Therefore, before a person begins this *bracha*, he should fix love in his heart for every Jew, from every place and from every group. Then his request will come from the heart, like Mr. Lev Tov. He should keep in mind that we are praying for the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash. The main obstacle to its rebuilding is *sinas chinam* (senseless hatred). Therefore, we must strengthen ourselves with all of our power to eradicate this abominable sin.

A congregation praying together can create an “*eis ratzon*” (time of favor) for their prayers to reach the most exalted place. We entreat Hashem to make the time of this prayer an “*eis ratzon*”.<sup>2</sup> May He answer our prayers and return the Divine Service to the Holy of Holies. This

spiritual pinnacle of the Beis HaMikdash is referred to as “*Devir Baysecha*”, for the “*dibur*” – word of Hashem – came from there.<sup>3</sup> A person should think with great longing, “I wait and anticipate the day when we will merit Your return to Zion.”<sup>4</sup> “I long for the privilege to eat from a *korbon* (sacrifice) that gave a pleasing aroma to Hashem.”<sup>5</sup>

“Accept the fire-offerings of Israel and their prayers with love and favor.” What are the fire-offerings of Israel? The Gemora (Menachos 110a) recounts that the great officer Michoyel sacrifices fire-offerings on the Mizbeach. The Baalei Tosfos explain that these sacrifices are the souls of *tsaddikim*. Another opinion is that they are lambs made of fire, and the expression “fire-offerings of Israel” refers to these lambs. The Bach<sup>6</sup> relates this expression to the three daily *tefillos*, which our Elders fixed in place of the daily offerings (*temidim*). “Their prayers” refers to the non-compulsory *tefillos* of individuals. Although we have no *korbonos* nowadays, we pray that our *tefillah* (which is in place of *korbonos*) be accepted with favor.<sup>7</sup>

This blessing originated on that momentous day when the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) came to rest on the Mishkan. The *malachim* proclaimed, “Blessed are You Hashem, who returns His *Shechina* to Zion.”<sup>8</sup> And so, we give great thanks to Hashem, for we know that He will definitely return His Holy *Shechina* to Zion.<sup>4</sup> The Almighty promised to redeem us based upon our merits, namely, that we suffer the bitter *golus* (exile), accept it with love, and believe in His Oneness and His salvation as it was in *Mitzrayim*. They were redeemed in the merit of their *emunah*, and we will follow suit.<sup>5</sup> We fervently pray that He will bring it close with His great *rachmonus* (mercy) speedily in our days.

### Kinderlach . . .

*The blessing of “retze” comes after we finish the first sixteen blessings of the Amidah. Fountains of praise and supplications have poured forth from our hearts. Now, we humbly entreat the Almighty to accept our prayers, and indeed those of all Klal Yisrael. We recall the times when our avodah consisted of korbonos – fiery offerings brought upon the Mizbeach. Nowadays, our daily tefillos are in place of those korbonos, but oh how we long for the Beis HaMikdash to return! And so it will, with our emunah, love for all Klal Yisrael, and Hashem's great rachmonus, speedily in our days, amen.*

## It's a Fire

Bilaam was in a big hurry. He was on his way to curse Klal Yisrael, the nation he hated. He was on his way to receive a big salary for his curses – silver, gold,

honor, and prestige. He would let nothing stand in his way. His donkey turned off the road, then pressed his leg into a wall, and finally stopped altogether. Bilaam struck the donkey each time. Hashem then opened the donkey's mouth and she spoke. “What have I done to you that you struck me these three times?” Bilaam answered back to the donkey, “If only there were a sword in my hand now, I would have killed you” (Bamidbar 22:28,29). Bilaam had no mercy on his donkey.

Rav Shmuel Hominer, in his sefer *Eved HaMelech* cites the *Sefer Chassidim* who makes a frightening statement. Any deed that causes *tsaar* (distress) will be punished; even if one places a load upon an animal that is too heavy, and then strikes the animal for not moving. We learn this from Bilaam, who hit his donkey. He then told her that he would have killed her with a sword. What was his punishment? He was killed by the sword (Bamidbar 31:8). We are speaking about the *tsaar* of hitting and cursing a donkey. How much more so causing *tsaar* to a human being will be punished.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt”l expands on this concept. *Tsaar* is like a fire. One who sticks his hand into a fire gets burned. We learn this from Peninah. She had many children, while her co-wife – Channah, had none. She genuinely empathized with Channah and wanted nothing more than for her to have children. Peninah wanted Channah to pray with all of her might - from the depths of the heart. Therefore she provoked Channah and irritated her, in order to get her to pray with more sincerity. Baruch Hashem, Channah gave birth to Shmuel HaNovi, and then other children. Peninah, however, was punished with the death of her children (Shmuel I 1-2). Why was Peninah punished? Her intentions were *li'shaim Shomayim* (for the sake of Heaven). Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz answers that she caused Channah *tsaar*. And *tsaar* is like a fire. It burns.

### Kinderlach . . .

*Don't play with fire! You will get burned! Tsaar is a fire. It burns. Don't cause anyone tsaar. There is physical tsaar – hitting someone or causing him discomfort. There is verbal tsaar – insulting him, mocking him, or speaking loshon hora about him. There is emotional tsaar – ignoring him when he needs attention, hating him when you should love him. These are all very dangerous*

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Avodas HaTefillah

<sup>2</sup> Maggid Tsedek

<sup>3</sup> Iyun Tefillah

<sup>4</sup> Yesod Vi'shoresh Ho'avodah

<sup>5</sup> Yaaros Devash

<sup>6</sup> Orach Chaim 120

<sup>7</sup> Tur Orach Chaim 120

<sup>8</sup> Levush