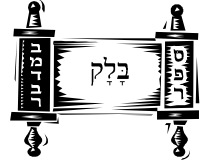


מה עשיתי לך



KINDER TORAH®



For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table
Parshas Balak

Never Say Never

"Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey and it said to Bilaam, 'What have I done to you that you struck me these three times?'" (Bamidbar 22:28). This was an awesome miracle, which went totally against the laws of nature. This miracle was so unique that it needed to be created during the six days of creation (Pirkei Avos 5:6). Who was deserving of such a miracle and why was it performed? Bilaam HaRasha (the evil one). The Tanna in Pirkei Avos (5:19) describes Bilaam as being jealous, craving honor, and having lust for pleasures, three of the worst possible qualities of a human being. In addition to that, he defied Hashem's will by going to curse the Jewish people. He continually ignored Hashem's attempts to convince him to stop his evil ways. We might think that a person such as this is lost. There is no hope for him. Give up on him. The Sforno disagrees. "Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey." Why? In order to arouse Bilaam to do *teshuvah* (repent). To show him that Hashem gives the power of speech. He can also remove the power of speech. All this was done in order to avoid having to destroy Bilaam. Although he was so evil, Hashem did not give up on him. On the contrary, He performed a tremendous miracle to attempt to save him.

Kinderlach . . .

Never say that you will never change. You may have done an aveiyrah (sin) 100 times. So what? Now is the time to change, before you do it the 101st time. Bilaam committed some of the worst aveiyros possible. Hashem did not give up on him. He does not give up on you, and therefore you should not despair either. Similarly, do not give up on others. This may be the time that they change. All they need is a little encouragement from you. Help yourself and help them. Never say never.

Who is Your Teacher? Avraham or Bilaam?

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (5:19)

writes that one who has the three character traits of "a good eye", "low spirit", and "low physical desires" is a student of Avraham Avinu. "A good eye" means that the person looks favorably on another's possessions. He is not jealous. "A low spirit" characterizes a humble person. One who has "low physical desires" is happy with his standard of living. One who has the opposite character traits of jealousy, craving for honor, and lust for pleasures is a student of Bilaam HaRasha. Rashi writes that Bilaam wanted to put an *ayin hora* (evil eye) on the Jewish people. His craving for honor is exhibited by the fact that he wanted to travel in grand style, with the most prestigious officers that Balak could send. His allusion to a house filled with silver and gold shows his desire for physical pleasures. The students of Avraham Avinu have a good life in this world and in the next world. The students of Bilaam suffer in the next world. Some say that they do not enjoy this world either. The Mishna is telling us the great reward that we will receive if we are like Avraham Avinu.

Kinderlach . . .

When our brother or our friend receives a gift, who are we going to be like? Are we going to be like Bilaam and be jealous, or be like Avraham Avinu and be happy for him? Are we going to be like Bilaam and do things just for recognition, so others will notice? Or, are we going to be like Avraham and do what is right and not worry about the honor. When Imma says no more treats are we going to complain that we want more like Bilaam? Or are we going to be happy with what we have, like Avraham?

Not A Burden

Instead of cursing the Jewish people, Bilaam blessed us. "He did not see any struggling in Israel" (Bamidbar 23:21). How could he say that the Jewish people do not struggle? We learned just a few weeks ago in parshas Bechukosai that we must toil in Torah (*omel batorah*). To learn Torah properly you must struggle. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that although we work hard, it does

not feel like a burden. When you are working at something, that you love and you know that it is worthwhile, you do not feel strained. On the contrary. It is your greatest pleasure and enjoyment to work hard. You express your creativity and feel great accomplishment. Toiling in Torah learning is not a burden. It is our privilege.

Kinderlach . . .

Do you remember last year's summer vacation? I'm sure that there were lots of preparations. Packing the clothes, food, and toys take time. Schleppling the suitcases, making the reservations, packing up the car, and preparing the house. The list is endless. Does anyone ever say, "Oy vey, vacation is such a struggle?" Of course not. Vacation is a pleasure. Sure it is hard work. But that hard work is for a good purpose. The whole family goes away together, sees some new sights, and gets plenty of rest and relaxation. This builds family unity, and everyone arrives back home refreshed with new energy for school and their jobs. The hard work is anything but a struggle. So too with Torah and mitzvos. Sure they are hard work. But they are not a struggle. Our Torah learning keeps the world going and is a source of blessing in our lives. Mitzvos bring us closer to Hashem and earn tremendous rewards for us. How could anything so important and satisfying be a struggle?

KINDER TORAH® Copyright 2000

All rights reserved to the author
Simcha Groffman

4500 copies of Kinder Torah
are distributed each week in:

Ashdod, Ashkelon, Avnei Cheifetz, Bayit Vegan, Beit E-I, Beit Shemesh, Beit Yisrael, Betar, Bnei Brak, Boston, Dallas, Detroit, Edgware, Edmonton, Effrat, Ezras Torah, Gateshead, Gilo, Geula, Givat Shaul, Givat Zev, Golders Green, Har Nof, Haifa, Hayishuv Einav, Hendon, Johannesburg, Kiryat Sefer, the Kosel HaMaaravi, Lakewood, Los Angeles, Maale Adumim, Maalot Dafna, Manchester, Mattersdorf, Matitsyahu, Mea Shearim, Miami Beach, Monsey, Montreal, Netanya, Neve Yaakov, Passaic, Philadelphia, Pisgat Zev, Queens, Ramat Gan, Ramat Shalev, Ramat Shlomo, Ramot, Rannana, Redhasim, Romema, Redhovot, San Simone, Sanhedria, HaMurchevet, Shaar Chesed, Shevi Shomron, Stamford Hill, Telz Stone, The Bronx, Toronto, Unsford, Zichron Moshe, Zichron Yaakov, and other cities.

To support Kinder Torah, please contact the author
at 585-2216, P.O. B. 5538, Jlm, Israel 91052

All contributions are deductible from
Ma'aser Kesafim.