

פרשת בלק

בלעם writes that this was very humiliating for בלעם. Here he was going to destroy an entire nation with the power of his mouth, but over his own donkey he needed a sword. Similarly in פסוק לד', when בלעם tells the מלאך that he wasn't aware that he was there, רש"י comments that this was also an embarrassment for בלעם who claimed to be privy to heavenly knowledge. Indeed, the whole conversation between בלעם and his donkey (mentioned in מס' ע"ז דף ד') was very embarrassing for him. It would seem, that Hashem was deliberately orchestrating the humiliation of בלעם. This seems to contradict another comment of רש"י. In פסוק לג', רש"י says, that after talking to בלעם, the donkey died, because Hashem is sensitive to the honor and respect of people. If the donkey would remain alive it would be an embarrassment to בלעם. Is Hashem concerned for בלעם's embarrassment or is Hashem trying to humiliate him?

רש"י in פסוק כב' comments that the מלאך that was sent to stop בלעם was a מלאך של רחמים, an angel of mercy. Hashem was sending a מלאך to get בלעם to do תשובה. The משנה in אבות (פ"ה) tells us that there are three defining character traits of בלעם, and those who follow in his footsteps. עין רעה, jealousy, רוח גבוהה, haughtiness, and נפש רחבה, a craving soul. As long as בלעם had גאווה, it would prevent him from doing תשובה. In order to do תשובה, one must have the proper הכנעה, humility and subservience to Hashem. Someone with גאווה will not have that הכנעה. Therefore, Hashem had to embarrass and humiliate him to lower his ego, thereby enabling him to do תשובה. Once this was accomplished, there was no more reason to cause בלעם humiliation, so the donkey died.

Although Hashem tried repeatedly to stop בלעם, and sent him many messages, he refused to listen and continued with his attempt to curse כלל ישראל. This was due to his bad character as mentioned in the משנה in אבות. We all are sent messages by Hashem. To properly receive them, we must make sure that there are no obstacles in our way. The משנה says that תלמידי אברהם אבינו, those who follow in the ways of אברהם אבינו, are defined by עין טובה, רוח נמוכה, and נפש שפילה, the opposite of בלעם. If we work on our מידות, to change our character to follow our forefathers in becoming less self-centered, we will surely achieve a closer relationship with Hashem.

Have a good Shabbos.

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