



DELVING DEEPER

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR RABBI ADI ROLAND

Opening His Eyes

The Lost Message of the Donkey's Deviations

WE ALL KNOW THE STORY OF BIL'AM'S DONKEY, how she strayed off the road three different times, to avoid the punishing sword of an angel. Much explanation has been offered by the commentaries as to why, specifically, three times were needed, before Hashem would open Bil'am's eyes so he could see the angel.

K'li Yakar offers an interesting explanation.

It's further possible to explain [the donkey's reference (22:28) to] "these three times," [as meaning that Hashem] was hinting to Bil'am: How can you desire to uproot a nation that adheres to the three matters upon which the world stands, which are Torah, *avodah* (serving Hashem

through sacrifices and prayer), and kind deeds (Avos 1:2)? Their nullification [will cause] the destruction of the world!" (commentary to 22:23, final paragraph)

Hashem was trying to reach out to Bil'am and dissuade him from following the path upon which he was going. He did so through the specific places where his donkey deviated. (See K'li Yakar's explanation, *ibid.*)

One may go further and argue that Hashem chose to remind Bil'am of these three areas, in which the Jewish people excel, in order to counteract Bil'am's three undesirable character traits—to encourage Bil'am to look more deeply into himself.

Whoever has... a grudging [literally, "bad"] eye, a haughty spirit, and greed [literally, "an expansive spirit"] is one of Bil'am's disciples. (Mishnah, Avos 5:19)

Rashi's commentary (22:13, 22:18, and 24:2) also picks up this theme.

Perhaps we can say that each of the donkey's deviations, referencing a pillar upon which the world stands, was meant to open Bil'am's eyes and remedy a negative trait, in the following manner:

- 1) Kind deeds counteract a negative eye. When we give to others, we force ourselves to look at them and treat them in a positive way.
- 2) Avodah counteracts a haughty spirit. When we offer sacrifices or pray, we show that Hashem is truly in charge, and that we, His subjects, are dependent on Him—unlike our own ideas of self-reliance.

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PRACTICAL HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Many people wonder if they are permitted, or even encouraged, to write in their wills that they will give away a chunk of their money, after death, to yeshivas or kollelim. Aren't they messing with *y'rusha d'Oraisa*, the Torah's exacting allocation of money to one's children and inheritors?

The Talmud (K'subos 67b) teaches that, before Mar Ukva died, he asked that his charity accounting be brought to him.

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THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On 11 Tammuz, 5535 (1775), the Jews of Algiers established a day of thanksgiving ("Purim Tammuz"), after a Spanish invasion of Algiers failed. Following an attempt by the Moroccan Sultan to force Spain off of the African continent, King Charles III of Spain tried to retaliate by seizing the seemingly weakly-defended city of Algiers. The Spanish assembled an enormous army that included 74 ships of war, 230 transport ships, and 20,000 troops. This invasion force was routed, however, when the Spanish, suffering from the sweltering hot sun and their cannons stuck in deep sand, walked into a trap laid by the Moroccan forces.

This actually marked the second time, since the onset of the Inquisition in 1492, that the Jews of Algiers were saved from a Spanish invasion. The first ("Purim Edom") was on 4 Cheshvan, 5301 (1541). That attack was thwarted by "natural" circumstances, when a storm wrecked most of the invading ships. 🕊

A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Where do we find a Torah commandment to eat meat? (There's more than one answer.)

The answer will appear next week.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE:

Q When would a person say *Kiddush* on bread, even though wine was available? (Hint: Check out O.C. 271.)

A If a person says *Hamotzi*, then remembers, before eating the bread, that he hasn't yet said *Kiddush*, he should say the blessing of *Kiddush* before he eats the bread. (Rama O.C. 271:5) 🕊

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PRACTICAL HALACHA

CONTINUED

He saw that he had given away 7,000 dinarim. "I am about to embark upon a long journey [the eternal afterlife], but the provisions I have set aside [charitable deeds] are insufficient!" Stirred by this thought, Mar Ukva proceeded to give half of his worldly assets to charity.

The Talmud goes on to explain that, even though our Sages set certain limits on how much tzedaka one is allowed to give away, this only applies during a person's lifetime—not at the time of his death.

This law is codified by the *Rama* (Y.D. 249:1)

Aruch haShulchan (Y.D. 249:1) explains that giving away half of one's assets at the time of death is equivalent to splitting one's estate between himself and his heirs—half of his wealth is being designated for the benefit of his soul, and the other half is being set aside for his heirs.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Ig'ros Moshe*, Ch.M. Vol. 2, 50) endorses this concept of giving tzedaka lavishly before someone leaves this world: "If a person fears that he will suffer in *Gehinnom* for his sins, tzedaka will certainly protect him. Even if *Gehinnom* is not his concern, he would do a great, eternal service to his soul by giving charity in order to increase his merits in the afterlife."

G-d willing, in the coming weeks, we will discuss how someone goes about distributing his or her charity without interfering with *y'rusha d'Oraisa*. 📖



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Rabbi Meir Minster.....

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GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

ON LATE SHABBOS AFTERNOONS, Koby Goldman and his yeshiva friends would gather in the Old City to sing, as the sun set behind the Western Wall.

One week, a man in a wheelchair approached Koby after Ma'ariv, with a request: "My name is Chaim. My brother just lost his wife, who was injured in a bombing four months ago. His nine-year-old son refuses to speak to anyone. We have no other family. You seem to be a spirited young man. Perhaps you can pay him a visit?"

When Koby's chavrusa cancelled on him the next night, Koby took it as a sign from G-d.

He got off the bus in Raanana and walked into what seemed like an empty house. Then he saw Chaim, sitting in his wheelchair beside his mourning brother, and he nodded to him. The mourner addressed Koby, and

thanked him for coming. He was hoping Koby could spend time with his son Ari, who still had not spoken since his mother died. He motioned to the back room.

Upon entering, Koby stared at the young boy, who was playing with a broken guitar. After several minutes of heartbroken silence, feeling bad because he had nothing to say, Koby turned to leave.

Suddenly Ari called out. He began to speak, telling over memories and stories of his mother, crying softly as he spoke. He continued until Koby needed to leave.

"Do me a favor," Ari said. "Promise me that when you go back to America, you will tell the Jews over there to pray for the rest of Israel." Koby looked at the distraught nine-year-old with reverence—a grieving boy whose mind was on the rest of his people. 📖

Opening His Eyes CONTINUED

3) Torah learning counteracts greed. Through learning Torah, we can channel our desires in a positive direction—specifically, in terms of Torah learning, through constantly wanting to understand and learn as much as we can.

Unfortunately, these messages went unnoticed, which eventually lead to Bil'am's demise.

However, their lessons are timeless, and they serve as reminders to us to keep an eye open for messages sent our way! 📖