

THE TESUVAH SHMUZ 5772

HASHEM WAITS FOR OUR TESHUVAH

Background

Balak was in danger. The Jewish Nation had just destroyed Sichon, and Moav was next. Out of desperation, he sent messengers to Bilaam, the gentile prophet. “Please curse this nation so that we can remain on our land.”

Bilaam was more than willing to curse the Jews. He hated them more than Balak, explains Rashi. Balak only asked for help defending himself against the Jews, but Bilaam wanted them dead. And so, Bilaam asked HASHEM for permission to destroy the Chosen Nation.

HASHEM said to Bilaam, “You may go, but do not say anything I don’t tell you to say.” Bilaam then set off on his donkey to curse the Jews. Along the way, a *moloch* stopped the donkey. Bilaam beat the donkey. The donkey continued. Again, a *moloch* stopped the donkey. And again, Bilaam beat it. Finally, the donkey opened its mouth and spoke. An overt miracle.

The *Siforno* explains that HASHEM brought about this miracle so that Bilaam would realize his mistake and do *teshuvah*. Even though HASHEM doesn’t normally create obvious miracles, nevertheless, HASHEM didn’t want a man as important as Bilaam to be lost.

Questions

Can we imagine anyone more evil than Bilaam? Gifted with the status of a *navi*, he was granted a fantastic power: the ability to bless or curse. His words were weapons, and he was now going to use those weapons to annihilate a people. His intentions were to wipe out the Jews — every man, woman and child. And he would have succeeded, had HASHEM not stopped him. This was a man on the level of an Adolph Hitler.

Why would HASHEM allow such a man to do *teshuva*? And even more, why would HASHEM change nature to save such a lowlife?

ספר במדבר פרק כב

כב) וַיַּחַר אֶף אֱלֹהִים כִּי הוֹלֵךְ הוּא וַיִּתְּצֵב מִלְאָךְ יְדוּד בְּדֶרֶךְ לְשֹׁטֵן לוֹ וְהוּא רָכַב עַל אֶתְנֹו וּשְׁנֵי נְעָרָיו עִמּוֹ

HASHEM's anger flared because he was going, and an angel of HASHEM stood on the road to thwart him, and he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

ספורנו עה"ת ספר במדבר פרק כב פסוק כח

כח) ויפתח ה' את פי האתון. נתן בה כח לדבר, כענין ה' שפתי תפתח וכל זה היה כדי שיתעורר בלעם לשוב בתשובה, בזכרו כי מה' מענה לשון גם לבלתי מוכן, כל שכן שיוכל להסירו מן המוכן כרצונו, ואל זה כדי שלא יאבד איש כמוהו