

G-d vs Ego - Bilaam's Tragic Fall

Posted by KiviYVY - 07 Jul 2011 18:46

Go through Parashas Balak with Rashi and see the struggle between Bilaam's ego and G-d's plan.

Bilaam is hired to curse the Jewish People and initially hesitates, saying that he's not being honored enough or paid enough for the mission. He's told from the outset by Hashem not to go on the mission, yet Bilaam, absorbed in his ego, just can't hear the message. He has his own plan. Hashem lets him go, like a father allowing his son to learn from his own experience, and Bilaam misinterprets this allowance as an approval.

Bilaam is finally on his way, but Hashem has not given up on him; he doesn't want him to fall. The Av Harachamim has set his son off to learn the dangers of fire, but, Kavayachol, He can't bear to see him perish.

Hashem puts a Malach with his sword drawn in the way of Bilaam's journey, and makes 3 attempts to stop Bilaam. Bilaam still doesn't get the message. Then Hashem performs an open miracle to stop Bilaam - his own donkey begins to talk! Could anyone be so focused on their self to not be astonished by a talking donkey? Bilaam expresses no surprise that his donkey can speak and talks right back to the donkey, threatening to kill him. Incidentally, among the things the donkey says (Avoda Zara 4b) is he reminds Bilaam of their intimate relationship together, an embarrassing reminder of Bilaam's rock bottom lust addiction.

Bilaam finally sees the Malach. Rashi notes that this Malach is one of Rachamim "???? ?? ?????? ??? ????? ????? ?????? ??????, ??? ????? ??????" How is a Malach bearing a sword a sign of compassion? His Heavenly Father is screaming "Don't do it Bilaam - I don't want you to perish!" The drawn sword, says Rashi, is a sign to Bilaam that if he keeps going he'll be falling further than he's ever fallen - he'll be killed by the sword. Come back son before it's too late!! The Malach Hashem then talks to Bilaam, begs him to return.

Bilaam's response? "I'll stop only if you want me to.." Only if?! How many more signs does he need before he understands what His Will is?! But Hashem won't deny Bilaam his choice - the choice to turn around, to enter recovery, has to come from Bilaam himself. Hashem says, "I see you want to go - I can't deny you of your right to choose so go ahead." Bilaam's eventual unsuccessful mission doesn't deter him from his plans and he eventually sinks deeper into his addiction to self and lust and takes advantage of Klal Yisroel's own weaknesses by tempting

them with the Daughters of Moav, having them escape into his drug of choice, the absolute pursuit of lust. Bilaam blindness to G-d's messages eventually leads him to the death he had been warned of all along.

What a lesson! It's an unfortunate series of events, but one that is too common. Hashem sends us so many messages. I don't think I'm the only one who's computer has frozen up, or the power was cut off, or who's car wouldn't start... I could write a book about all the "talking donkeys" that I've seen attempting to stop me while I'm in the throes of lust. A Mashgiach once told me that he's been told consistently by Talmidim who have consulted him on issues of lust that they've seen all sorts of unexpected impediments thrown in their way when they were hot in the pursuit.

Hashem wants us back, no matter how far we've fallen, but He wants us to make the choice to enter recovery for ourselves. We're not robots, not pre-programmed to choose G-d nor to choose lust. The choice is ours and Hashem will do anything to make it clear that He wants us to choose life...

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