## Leaving One's **Comfort Zone**

In Parshat Balak, Bilam is hired by Balak to curse the Jews. Bilam seeks God's permission, which he does not immediately receive. Bilam, however, is persistent with executing upon his desired request and seeks ways to accomplish his goal.

There is one event in particular that stands out due to its unique nature, or rather supernatural component. A donkey miraculously speaks to Bilam. This is something that is far from ordinary, yet Bilam dismisses it as if it was routine and unremarkable.

Most people experiencing a talking donkey would likely be in shock at this unnatural phenomenon and recognize that it contains a message from God. How is it that Bilam who himself was a prophet ignored the significance of this extraordinary miracle?

Rabbenu Bechaya explains that Bilam was so fixated on his goal, his brazenness prevented him from recognizing the obvious. If one does not internalize what is before their eyes, the event has no impact on their future.

## Jonathan Rosenblum, DPM 050-595-5161

Pediatric and Geriatric Foot Care, Bunions, Hammertoes, and Diabetic Wound Care In the Haggada we state צא ולמד מה בשם "go out and learn what Lavan desired to do...". The Lubavitcher Rebbe asks - why is it necessary to include the word tzei, go out? It would have sufficed to just state lemad, learn. What does the word tzei add?

In the Haggada, the statement precedes a section of quotes and interpretations of *pesukim* from the Torah. The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the word *tzei* is hinting to us that we should have a certain attitude when we learn Torah. At times, one hears a halacha *shiur* or learns a new law and reacts negatively, stating, what I do and have done is correct. The new idea must be a "chumra" (stringency). I can ignore it. However, we must be honest with ourselves regarding our *avodat Hashem*.

We all have preconceived notions of what we think is correct and what we think "should be" the halacha. *Tzei ulemad*, whenever we learn something, we have to *go out* of our **comfort zone**, leaving behind our assumptions and preconceived notions, and have an open heart and mind to seek the truth.

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About twenty years ago, I gave a *shiur* on the topic of *tevilat keilim*, the requirement to immerse dishes made by a non-Jew in a mikve. One of my students informed me that the next day, all day, he was busy immersing all of his family's dishes, pots, cutlery, and so forth into a mikve. Apparently, he told his mother what we had learned and his mother, who was unfamiliar with this halacha, contacted her Rabbi to inquire as to whether this was an extra stringency or an actual requirement. After she was told it is in fact a halachic requirement, she immediately requested that all of their utensils be immersed in a local mikve, despite the hardship. She acted in a noble fashion, allowing halacha to shape her life and implementing a tzei ulemad approach.

Bilam's failure in part was due to his stubbornness, which led him to ignore the miraculous communication from God before his eyes. May we be able to keep an open mind and leave our comfort zone so that we can always act in the correct manner. This is true with respect to halachic issues as well with respect to the way to listen to and treat others. As we see from Bilam's behavior, stubbornness prevents growth and can ultimately lead to failure.



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