



"If you search for it like silver, and seek it like buried treasures, then will you comprehend knowledge of God, and the fear of God will you find."

King Solomon, Proverbs 2:4-5

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Bilam

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Upon studying the events of Balak's hiring Bilam we reach the inescapable conclusion that Balak was truly awed by Bilam's powers. He relentlessly attempts to hire Bilam to curse the Children of Israel. It also seems apparent that G-d did not want Bilam to curse the Children of Israel as he placed many impediments in this attempted mission. G-d ultimately converts Bilam's curse into a blessing.

This entire incident raises many disturbing questions. Why is this story highlighted, throughout the generations many people have cursed us? Furthermore, why is G-d concerned with Bilam's curse? It seems that if Bilam uttered his curse it would have been dangerous, as though it could influence the rova olam?

In order to resolve this difficulty we must analyze the personality of Bilam to appreciate the threat that he posed. Chazal tell us that Bilam possessed great genius and excellent political acumen. He was the advisor that counseled Pharaoh that all Israelite male children should be thrown into the river. He had the political foresight to appreciate that every political movement requires a leader at its forefront.

The Gemara states that Bilam possessed great powers of perception. However, he was also very devious. When he saw a person was in a precarious situation, albeit political or economical, he would curse that person. The individuals ultimate downfall was attributed to Bilam's ostensible supernatural powers. Bilam was a Machiavellian type of personality, a great political genius and adviser to kings. He counseled his clients by exposing their enemies political weakness. We can therefore appreciate the Gemara in Brachos 7a, which tells us that Bilam knew the time

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EXPLAIN "METAPHOR" TO YOUR CHILDREN:

Read the article on Bilam's donkey, and then explain the concept of metaphor to your child. Have your children email us with their questions: questions@mesora.org

SUGGESTED READINGS:

SEE THESE AND OTHER ARTICLES AT OUR SITE

Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

Bilam and the Donkey

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The story of Bilam and his donkey contains many unbelievable events and is described in great detail. As the account in Numbers 22:21 goes, Balak was the king of Moav at that time and was faced with the fear of having the Jews—a nation of millions of people—damage his land by gaining safe passage. To avert this problem, Balak called upon Bilam, a prophet, and requested that Bilam curse the Jews so that Balak would have ease in attacking them and in driving them out. When Balak sent the first group of messengers

God is Our Keeper

RIVKA OLENICK

"The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your soul." Psalm 121:7

How can the Lord keep anyone from all evil if a person can choose evil? What is meant by: "He will keep your soul?" What is intended by the word: will? "He will keep" means he doesn't keep now. "Will keep" is dependent on how we should live in order to merit God as our "keeper."

All the evil that God will keep you from is evil that people bring on themselves and each other, since God does not cause evil. "No evil comes down from above." (Bereshis Rabba Chapter I). Most evil is caused by peoples intentions, desires and opinions regarding religious beliefs and stem from ignorance, not wisdom. The greater a person's ignorance the greater the evil one causes to oneself and others. A person who lives a life dedicated to truth removes him/herself from hatred of the self and the hatred of others. Knowledge of God, which is truth, also removes a person from the hatred that instigates war. In order for The Lord to keep you from all evil, one's life has to be directed to and immersed in truth by being involved in the will of God. Each person has to be cognizant of God at all times, and in all activities. Every person has the ability to use their free will and choose truth or the good, rather than ignorance, which produces evil. We all have the ability to live a life that adapts itself to the highest moral standard. As Jews we were chosen to be the nation that exemplifies this moral standard that the rest of the world must observe. Being kept from all evil is that through our actions and speech

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