



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת בלק

מה טובו אהלֵיךָ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכְּנֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל. כְּנָחִלִים נָטְיוּ כְּגִזְתַּ עָלַי נָהָר וכו'. (במדבר כד, ה-ו)
'How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov, your dwelling places, O Yisroel. Stretching out like brooks, like gardens by a river ...' (Bamidbar 24:5-6)

In this week's *Sidrah*, Balak expresses his fear of Klal Yisroel and their military victories. To combat this fear, he hires Bilom to curse the Yidden. However, Hashem intervenes and thwarts their plans. Despite Bilom's best efforts to curse the people, he ends up being forced to bless them instead.

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 105b) examines the praise and blessing that Bilom was compelled to deliver to Klal Yisroel. R' Yochanan explains that from the blessing proclaimed by the wicked Bilom, we can infer what was truly in his heart. He intended to say that the Yidden should not have any *shuls* or *botei midroshim*, but instead, he was forced to say: *מה טובו אהלֵיךָ יַעֲקֹב*, *How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov*, referring to the places of davening and learning. Similarly, rather than expressing his desire for the *Shechinah* not to rest upon Klal Yisroel, he was compelled to say: *מִשְׁכְּנֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל*, *your dwelling places, O Yisroel*, signifying *הַשְׁרָאָה הַשְׂכִּינָה*. The Gemara continues along these lines, listing the blessings of Bilom, which were the opposite of the curses he had intended for Klal Yisroel.

The Gemara infers from the *possuk* that although Hashem prevented Bilom from uttering the curses he had in mind, all the blessings eventually turned into the curses intended, except for one - his intended curse concerning the *shuls* and *botei midroshim*. Despite Klal Yisroel ultimately losing the Beis Hamikdash, their land, and their power, places for learning and davening have always endured among Klal Yisroel. However, the Meforshim question how Chazal knew that the enduring nature of *shuls* and *botei midroshim* was the only "curse" that was completely transformed.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* shares an explanation from R' Leib *zatzal*. The *possuk* (*Devorim* 23:6) states: *וַיִּהְיֶה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְךָ אֶת הַקְּלָלָה לְבִרְכָּהּ, כִּי אֶהְבֶּךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ*, *and Hashem your G-d transformed the curse into blessing for you, because Hashem your G-d loves you*. R' Leib asked that if Hashem truly loves us, why was only the expression of *מה טובו אהלֵיךָ יַעֲקֹב* completely transformed from a curse to a blessing? He explains that the answer lies in the significance of this *berachah*, which can be understood through Dovid HaMelech's singular request: *אֶחָד שָׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת ה' אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ, שִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית ה' כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּי, לַחֲזוֹת*, *One thing I asked of Hashem, that shall I seek: That I dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life; to behold the sweetness of Hashem etc...* The greatest demonstration of Hashem's love for us lies in the continued existence and survival of our *shuls* and *botei midroshim*, which play a crucial role in providing us with a meaningful life. (For more insight, see Issue #42.)

Every Yid's *neshamah* recognises and feels that true joy and satisfaction in life stem from our relationship with Hashem, achieved through davening and learning. A person may experience minimal physical pleasures but still feel contentment through spiritual pursuits. Conversely, someone who indulges in every material desire but lacks a sense of closeness to Hashem - typically fostered in

shuls and *botei midroshim* – will often feel empty and miserable. Given that the blessing of *מה טובו* plays a central role in the life of every Yid, Hashem, in His great love, has ensured that these sacred places which facilitate *אלוהים*, will endure forever.

The Midrash Rabbah (*Tazria* 14:1) cites R' Yochanan, who stated: *הָיָה אִם זָכָה אָדָם נוֹחַל שְׁנֵי עוֹלָמוֹת, הַזֶּה וְהַבָּא וכו', וְאִם לֹא זָכָה לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן*, *If a person merits, he inherits the two Worlds - this one and the next; however, if not, he will be held accountable*. This indicates that if someone does not receive both worlds, meaning an enjoyable life in this world and the next, it suggests that he has sinned and is deserving of punishment. However, the Gemara (*Berachos* 5b) relates that R' Yochanan consoled R' Elazar, who was suffering from extreme poverty, by saying *לֹא כָל אָדָם זֹכֶה לְשְׁתֵּי שׁוּלְחָנוֹת*, *Not everyone merits two tables*. This means that a lack of comfort in this world should not be interpreted as a sign of disapproval from Hashem. Do these words of R' Yochanan's consolation not present a contradiction to his statement in the Midrash, which suggests that failing to merit both worlds does indicate a lack of spiritual stature?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* offers a profound insight from R' Yakov Neiman *zatzal*. He discusses two concepts: *עוֹלָמוֹת*, *worlds*, and *שׁוּלְחָנוֹת*, *tables*. The Gemara affirms that not everyone who performs Hashem's will is granted the material wealth represented by a *שׁוּלְחָן*. However, as the Midrash explains, this same person can still experience both *עוֹלָמוֹת*. One who lives with Hashem and finds joy and satisfaction in Torah and *mitzvos* can still have an enjoyable life in this world, even when lacking physical needs. When the *possuk* states (*Tehillim* 34:10): *כִּי אֵין מַחְסוֹר לִירְאָיו*, *for there is no deprivation for His reverent ones*, this does not mean that the righteous possess everything; rather, it teaches that they don't feel a sense of lack because they find happiness in their way of life, as further emphasised in the *possuk* (*ibid.* 105:3): *יִשְׂמַח לֵב מְבַקְשֵׁי ה'*, *glad will be the heart of those who seek Hashem*. A person must strive to experience the fulfilment and joy of possessing both “worlds,” and therefore a lack of this attainment indicates a failure to recognise the true value of a life dedicated to Torah and our ultimate purpose in life.

Hashem's love for us is evident in the way He spares our *shuls* and *botei midroshim*. These places provide us with a significant opportunity to draw closer to Him. Through learning Torah, davening, and performing *mitzvos*, we have the incredibly good fortune to grow and strengthen our connection to Hashem, leading to genuine *simchah* and fulfilment in our lives, even when our physical circumstances may be lacking.