



Adapted from the sefer **חמין במוצאי שבת** and **דעותא דזעיר אנפין** collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at **Seuda Shlishis** and **Melave Malka**

Melave Malka Parshas Balak 5767

I heard a story related to our *parsha* from a concentration camp survivor by the name of R' Leibish Reich z"l.

Before the war, R' Leibish lived in the town of Ozharkov, which was home to many *chasidim* and *anshei kodesh*. His father told him that during the years of the *Sfas Emes zy"ra* many Gerrer Chasidim lived in the town. Like most of the Jews in town, most of them were extremely poor.

Their *minhag* was that throughout the year their entire community set aside money in order to cover the expenses of travelling to the *Sfas Emes*. They were so impoverished that the total amount collected was sufficient to enable only one person to travel to the Rebbe. Each year, a lottery was held in order to determine who would travel that year.

The designated traveler would take along all of the *kvitlach* written by the *chasidim* in Ozharkov, and would place them on the table of the *Sfas Emes*. He would stay for one Shabbos, and upon his return he would share everything that he had seen and heard.

One year, the lucky winner of the lottery happened to be an unlearned *Am Ha'aretz*. A few weeks after he returned from his journey to the Rebbe, a gathering of the entire community was organized in order to hear every detail of what the man saw in the Rebbe's *chatzer* - court.

He shared everything that he saw and heard, from the day he arrived until his departure. He told them that at *Seuda Shlishis* he had the *zechus* to hear one part of the Rebbe's *Divrei Torah* in which the *Sfas Emes* said



[1]

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פתחו לי פתח כפתחו של בלעם - Open for me an opening like the opening of Bilam.

Everyone in the audience were sure that, in his ignorance, the *Am Ha'aretz* had mixed up the Rebbe's statements. They assumed that the Rebbe spoke about Bilam, and also referenced *Chazal's* oft-quoted statement **פתחו לי פתח כחודו של מחט, ואני אפתח לכם פתח כפתחו של אולם**. Hashem tells each Jew, "Open for me an opening like the eye of a needle, and I will open for you an opening like the entrance to a vast banquet hall". Somehow, the man combined the two topics and told them that the Rebbe said, "Open for me an opening like the opening of Bilam"

Among the audience was the venerable Rav of the city, Rav Wolf Ber zt"l, who had been a *chasid* of the Kotzker Rebbe zt"l. He told the *tzibur* that he would explain the intention of the statement as transmitted by traveler.

In the *Yalkut Shimoni* (בלק רמז תש"ע) *Chazal* explain:

“וישא בלעם את עיניו וירא את ישראל” - And Bilam raised his eyes and saw *Yisrael*. (במדבר כ"ד:ב) - What did he see? He saw that the openings of their tents (פתחיהן) didn't face each other”

The openings that Bilam saw weren't merely entrances to tents. He also saw the openings described in the *Midrash*. (שיר השירים רבה ה:ב)

“Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to *Yisrael*, ‘my children, open for me one opening of *teshuva* like the eye of a needle, and I will open for you entrances that wagons and carriages can drive through.”

The *Chida* zt"l in his *sefer Chomas Anach* (הושע י"ג:), brings the conclusion of the statement as **כפתחו של אולם** - like the entranceway of a banquet hall, and explains;



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“Bilam saw that the entrances that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* opened for *Bnei Yisrael* weren't proportional to those opened by *Bnei Yisrael*. For *Bnei Yisrael* only created a narrow opening like the eye of a needle, whereas *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* rewards them by creating an opening as vast as the entrance to a banquet hall.”

The *Rav* explained that this is the deep intention of the statement heard by the unlearned traveler. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* asks us to create an opening like the opening of *Bilam*. This refers to the tiny openings created by *Bnei Yisrael* that caused *Bilam* and other opponents throughout the ages to wonder how *Hashem* rewards us by creating vast opening for us. They can't comprehend the power of even the smallest act of *teshuva*!

I met a Jew who undertook a very special *mitzva* - visiting Jews who have been imprisoned, and trying to raise their spirits and encourage them.

He told me that he went in to the *Pnei Menachem zy"ta* to receive his *bracha*. After he described the life of the prisoners to the *Rebbe*, the *Rebbe* quoted a *Midrash*.

“Balak said to him (*Bilam*), ‘since you aren't able to touch them because *Moshe* takes care of them, look to the one who will lead them after him, and see what will be’. He said to Balak ‘even that one is as strong, (במדבר כ"ג:א) - ותרועת מלך בו - the *truah* of the King is within him- He blows *tekios* and *teruos* and knocks down walls’.”

The *Pnei Menachem* said that we see from here that the power to knock down walls, remains with *Am Yisrael* throughout the generations. Therefore, even an innocent Jew who was wrongly imprisoned, or even a Jewish prisoner who wouldn't have received such a penalty according to *din Torah*, must *daven* intensely and knock down the walls that imprison them.



[3]

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On his subsequent prison visits, he shared the *Rebbe's* message with Torah observant prisoners who could appreciate it. One prisoner wrote a *kvittel* and asked the man to bring it to the *Pnei Menachem* and to ask the *Rebbe* to blow those *tekios* and *teruos* by *davening* for the walls to come down, enabling him to go free.

When the *Pnei Menachem* heard the story and read the *kvittel*, he said, "When the *Midrash* says that Yehoshua blew *tekios* and *teruos* and knocked the wall down, it refers primarily to the walls inside of you. First and foremost, a person must knock down the stone walls in his heart, for everything depends on that. Then he can go free."

As daunting as the task of breaking down the stone walls in our hearts may seem, we must remember that *Im Yirtzeh Hashem*, if we make even the smallest crack in the wall, like the eye of a needle, Hashem will respond by making an opening as vast as the entrance of a great hall, אכי"ר.



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