

Balak / בַּלַּק

Compliments and Criticism



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Continued from last week...

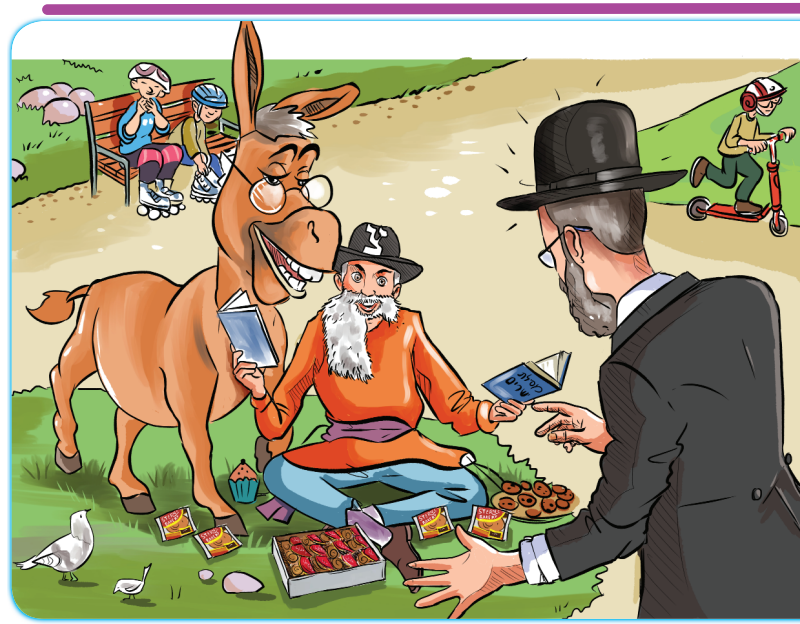
“What gorgeous weather Hashem gave us today,” thought Rav Volender as he finished giving the shiur to the prisoners in the Jerusalem Prison. “I think I’ll go for another walk in the park. Hopefully today I won’t see any animals other than the usual birds and stray cats.”

A buzzing sound in a rose bush drew Rav Volender’s attention. He bent down to watch hundreds of honey bees as they busily went from flower to flower.

“Ah! How lucky I am to witness the beauty of Hashem’s creation,” Rav Volender said. “I never get tired of watching how these amazing insects collect nectar to make us honey, while at the same time pollinate the flowers so that they can produce seeds which will bring us even more sweet-smelling flowers!”

Just then Rav Volender heard a loud braying sound. Rav Volender looked up from the roses and saw that there was a donkey in the park! And sitting on the grass talking to the donkey and holding a sefer was none other than Tzadok “Hatzadik”!

“Tzadok!” said Rav Volender, walking over. “What’s going on? I thought we said we were finished with these silly ideas of yours and you were going to start working on becoming an eved Hashem. And yet here you are again with yet another animal.”



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"This is not a silly idea!" Tzadok replied indignantly. "I am teaching my donkey to talk! And what better way to do it than by learning from the sefer which you said will earn me Olam Haba! Why do you always have to criticize everything I do?"

"Um..." Rav Volender stammered. "May I ask why you want to teach a donkey to speak?"

"Because I want to be like Bilaam," Tzadok replied. "He had a talking donkey and if I have one then I will be just like him. And besides, his hairs will probably sell for a fortune!"

"You want to be like Bilaam?!?!" exclaimed Rav Volender, shocked. "Why on earth would you want that?"

"Because I want to be a navi," Tzadok said.

"Well first of all, we don't have neviim anymore," said Rav Volender. "And second of all, out of all of the holy neviim in history, why would you pick Bilaam?"

"Well, I read about all of the neviim in Tanach and they didn't seem to like us," Tzadok explained. "They all were always just pointing out the things that Klal Yisroel were doing wrong, just like you do whenever you see me doing something you disapprove of. But Bilaam's nevuos were all about how good we are. And I think that's much nicer."

"Tzadok," said Rav Volender gently. "Hashem didn't send us neviim to tell us how good we are."

"But why not?" asked Tzadok. "It's much nicer to hear good things."

"Because Hashem wants us to continually work on improving ourselves so that we can earn more Olam Haba," said Rav Volender. "And if the neviim would just give us compliments then we would never realize how we need to become better people."

"But then why did Bilaam say nice things?" asked Tzadok.

"Ah, you see Bilaam wasn't a Yid," answered Rav Volender. "And Bilaam didn't want to say nice things about us. He wanted to curse us and make us do aveiros. But Hashem said 'Oh no! Only those who love my holy children are allowed to criticize them. But you are a goy and a rasha who hates them - you don't get to do that. If you're going to say anything about the Am Hakadosh, it will only be nice things!'"

Rav Volender gently put his hand on Tzadok's shoulder before continuing.

"Tzadok, I want you to understand that when I tell you that you're doing something wrong, it's because I love you and I want you to be happy."

"You do?" asked Tzadok. "Because I didn't feel happy when you told me to stop selling segulot or to not paint my cow red."

"Of course I want you to be happy!" Rav Volender smiled. "I want you to have the best type of happiness in the world! By showing you the right way to do things, you have the opportunity to serve Hashem properly. And not only will that make you a happier person, but it will also earn you Olam Haba, where you will be happy forever!"

"Forever?" asked Tzadok in wonder. "Really?"

"Yes," smiled Rav Volender. "Now I happened to have heard the Arab janitor in the prison say he's looking to buy a new donkey. Why don't we go sell it to him and then we can learn Mesillas Yesharim together."

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

Takeaway:

It's very nice to be complimented and we should always try to compliment our friends and siblings as much as possible. But when we are criticized by a parent or teacher, we should listen carefully, because that's how we get better.



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