

”מה טובו אוהליך יעקב”

The Berachah Regarding the Synagogues and Study-halls Enables Us to Transform All of the Kelalos into Berachos

In this week’s parsha, parshas Balak, we read about Balak, the King of Moav. He hired the wicked Bilam to curse Yisrael; however, HKB”H, in His infinite mercy, prevented Bilam from doing so. Initially, HKB”H sent a malach to block his path. Subsequently, HKB”H introduced something in his mouth, forcing him to bless Yisrael. Let us endeavor to understand the source of Bilam’s ability to curse Yisrael.

Additionally, let us examine a Jewish minhag mentioned by the Rama in Darkei Moshe (O.C. 6, 3): “כשבא אדם לבית הכנסת: “יאמר מה טובו”—when a person comes to the Beis Kenesses, he should recite “Mah tovu.” The source for this minhag is found in the seder of Rav Amram Gaon (149).

However, in the responsa of the Maharshal (64), he writes that it was not his practice to recite these lines: “ובבוקר כשאני בא לבית הכנסת, מתחיל אני בפסוק ואני ברוב חסדך, ומדלג הפסוק הראשון מה—טובו אוהליך שאמרו בלעם, ואף הוא אומר לקללה כדאיתא בפרק חלק”—in the morning, when I arrive at the Beis Kenesses, I begin with the passuk: “ואני ברוב חסדך,” and I skip the first passuk: “מה טובו אוהליך” that Bilam said. For, even it was uttered as a curse, as it is explained in the chapter of Cheilek. He is referring to the Gemara’s (Sanhedrin 105b) clarification—that Bilam’s sole intent was to curse them. Nevertheless, in all siddurim, including those of the Arizal, this minhag is present. Hence, we must endeavor to explain the reason this is so.

Bilam Attempted to Curse Yisrael in Three Distinct Locations

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by addressing the fact that Balak took the wicked Bilam to three separate locations from which to curse Yisrael. On each occasion, HKB”H thwarted his efforts by introducing sublime Berachos in his mouth.

On the first occasion (Bamidbar 22, 41): “ויקח בלק את בלעם—Balak took Bilam and brought him up to the heights of Ba’al. There, he blessed Yisrael as follows (ibid. 23, 9): “כי מראש צורים אראנו ומגבעות אשורנו, הן עם לבדד ישכון—for from its origin, I see it rock-like, and from hills do I view it. Behold! It is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations.

On the second occasion (ibid. 14): “ויקחהו שדה צופים אל ראש—he took him to the field of lookouts, to the top of the peak. There, he uttered the following berachah (ibid. 21): “לא הביט און ביעקב ולא ראה עמל בישראל ה’ אלקיו עמו ותרועת מלך בו”—He perceived no iniquity in Yaakov, and saw no perversity in Yisrael. Hashem, his G-d, is with him, and he is the King’s beloved friend.

On the third occasion (ibid. 28): “ויקח בלק את בלעם ראש הפעור—Balak took Bilam to the summit of the Peor that overlooks the face of the Yeshimon. There, he uttered three pesukim of berachah (ibid. 24, 5): “מה טובו אוהליך יעקב משכנותיך ישראל. כנחלים נטיו כגנות עלי נהר כאהלים נטע ה’ כארזים—עלי מים. יזל מים מדליו וזרעו במים רבים וירום מאגג מלכו ותינשא מלכותו”—how goodly are your tents, Yaakov, your dwelling places, Yisrael. Like streams spread out, like gardens by a river, like aloes which Hashem planted, like cedars by water. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be by abundant waters. His king shall be exalted over Agag, and his kingdom shall be upraised.

In Netzach Yisrael (end of Chapter 59), the Maharal explains that HKB”H arranged for Bilam to bless Yisrael in these three locations, in the merit of the three holy Avos. The first berachah: “כי מראש צורים אראנו”—corresponds to

Avraham, the original rock from which Yisrael were chiseled and formed. The second berachah: **“לא הביט און ביעקב ולא ראה”**—**“עמל בישראל”**—corresponds to Yitzchak Avinu. This association can be understood based on the Gemara (Shabbas 89b) that depicts how Yitzchak Avinu will defend Yisrael in the future. The third berachah: **“מה טובו אוהליך יעקב ומשכנותיך ישראל”**—corresponds to Yaakov Avinu. He is called both Yaakov and Yisrael, and he used to dwell in tents, as it states (Bereishis 25, 27): **“זיעקב איש תם יושב אהלים”**-- **Yaakov was a wholesome man, dwelling in tents.**

Bilam’s Ten Berachos Correspond to Yitzchak’s Ten Berachos

This agrees beautifully with the remarks of the Maharal (ibid.). He focuses on our blessed sages’ revelation that from the berachah Bilam uttered at the third venue, we can deduce all of the Kelalos he intended to curse Yisrael. Here is what we have learned in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 105b):

“אמר רבי יוחנן, מברכתו של אותו רשע אתה למוד מה היה בלבו. ביקש לומר שלא יהו להם בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות [והוכרח לברך] מה טובו אוהליך יעקב. לא תשרה שכינה עליהם [והוכרח לברך] ומשכנותיך ישראל. לא תהא מלכותן נמשכת [והוכרח לברך] כנחלים נטיו. לא יהא להם זיתים וכרמים [והוכרח לברך] כגנות עלי נהר. לא יהא ריחן גודף [והוכרח לברך] כאהלים נטע ה’. לא יהיו להם מלכים בעלי קומה [והוכרח לברך] כארזים עלי מים. לא יהיה להם מלך בן מלך [והוכרח לברך] יזל מים מדליו. לא תהא מלכותן שולטת באומות [והוכרח לברך] וזרעו במים רבים. לא תהא עזה מלכותן [והוכרח לברך] וירום מאגג מלכו. לא תהא אימת מלכותן [והוכרח לברך] ותינשא מלכותו.”

Rabbi Yochanan said: From that wicked man’s berachah, you learn what was really in his heart. He intended to say: **(1) that they should not have synagogues and study-halls, but was compelled to say: “How goodly are your tents, Yaakov,” (2) that the Shechinah should not rest upon them, but he was compelled to say: “And your dwelling places, Yisrael,” (3) that their sovereignty should not continue, but he was compelled to say: “Like streams spread out,” (4) that they should not have olive orchards and vineyards, but he was compelled to say: “Like gardens by a river,” (5) that their scent should not disseminate, but he was compelled to say: “Like aloes which Hashem planted,” (6) that they should not have kings of imposing stature, but he was compelled to say: “Like cedars by water,” (7) that they should not have a king, the son of**

a king, but he was compelled to say: “Water shall flow from his buckets,” (8) that their sovereignty should not reign over the nations, but he was compelled to say: “And his seed shall be by abundant waters,” (9) that their sovereignty should not be mighty, but he was compelled to say: “His king shall be exalted over Agag,” and (10) that their sovereignty should not be inspire fear, but he was compelled to say: “And his kingdom shall be exalted.”

In Netzach Yisrael (ibid.), the Maharal comments that we find ten consecutive Berachos here, corresponding to the berachah Yaakov received, which was also comprised of ten. Let us enumerate the Berachos Bilam bestowed upon Yisrael: (1) that they should have synagogues and study-halls, (2) that the Shechinah should rest upon them, (3) that their reign should endure, (4) that they should have olive orchards and vineyards, (5) that their scent should carry afar, (6) that they should have impressive kings, (7) that they should have a lineage of kings, (8) that their sovereignty should reign over the nations, (9) that their sovereignty should be mighty, and (10) that all of the nations should be in awe of and fear their sovereignty.

The Maharal explains that these ten Berachos correspond to the ten Berachos Yitzchak bestowed upon Yaakov, as explained in the Midrash (D.R. 1, 18). The ten Berachos are: **(1) “ויתן לך האלקים מטל השמים”--and may G-d give you of the dew of the heavens, (2) “ומשמני הארץ”-- and of the fatness of the earth, (3) “ורוב דגן”-- and abundant grain, (4) “ותירוש”-- and wine, (5) “יעבדוך עמים”--nations will serve you, (6) “וישתחו לך לאומים”-- and regimes will prostrate themselves to you, (7) “הוה גביר לאחיך”-- be a lord to your brothers, (8) “וישתחו לך בני אמך”-- and your mother’s sons will prostrate themselves to you, (9) “אורריך ארור”-- may those who curse you be cursed, and (10) “ומברכיך ברוך”-- and those who bless you be blessed.**

Thus we learn from the Maharal that Bilam intended to inflict ten Kelalos upon Yisrael in order to annul the ten Berachos that Yitzchak bestowed upon Yaakov. This coincides magnificently with the Maharal’s contention that the Berachos uttered at the third venue correspond to Yaakov Avinu. Therefore, Bilam began this sequence of ten Berachos with the words: **“מה טובו אוהליך יעקב”**—**how goodly are your tents, Yaakov.**

Just as Eisav's ministering angel was compelled to concede the legitimacy of the Berachos to Yaakov; in similar fashion, HKB"H compelled Bilam to concede these Berachos to Yisrael.

All of the Berachos Reverted to Kelalos except for One

Chazal teach us a fascinating fact about these Berachos that Bilam was coerced to bestow upon Yisrael instead of Kelalos (Sanhedrin 105b): **“אמר רבי אבא בר כהנא, כולם חזרו לקללה חוץ מבתי כנסיות ומבתי מדרשות, שנאמר (דברים כג-1) ויהפוך ה' אלקיך לך—Rabbi Abba the son of Kahana said: They all reverted back to curses except for the one regarding synagogues and study-halls. For it says: “And Hashem, your G-d, transformed the curse into a blessing for you, because Hashem, your G-d, loved you.” The passuk specifically says “curse” (“kelalah”) and not curses (“Kelalos”).** Rashi teaches us that the berachah that did not revert to a kelalah was the one pertaining to synagogues and study-halls; Yisrael will have them forever; they will never cease to be.

Thus, we learn an incredible chiddush. Ultimately, none of Bilam's Berachos remained extant. They all reverted to Kelalos, except for one: **“מה טובו אוהליך יעקב”**. The institutions of the Beis Kenesses and the Beis Midrash will always exist among Yisrael. Interestingly, if we scrutinize the language of this passuk carefully, we find that even this berachah—relating to synagogues and study-halls—initially reverted to a kelalah. For it says: **“And Hashem, your G-d, reversed the curse to a blessing”**—intimating that it, too had been transformed into a curse.

This should cause any intelligent person to wonder: (1) How is it even conceivable that all of the Berachos HKB"H placed in Bilam's mouth transformed into Kelalos? If so, why did HKB"H introduce these Berachos into his holy Torah in the first place? (2) Seeing as even the berachah pertaining to the “basei-kenesses” and “basei-midrash” became a kelalah—until HKB"H turned it back into a berachah—why didn't HKB"H transform all of the Kelalos back into Berachos? (3) Furthermore, the passuk in parshas Ki Seitzei from which Chazal deduce that only one of the Berachos ultimately remained a berachah, concludes: **כי “אהבך ה' אלקיך— because Hashem, your G-d, loved you.** That being the case, why did HKB"H only reverse that single kelalah and not all of the Kelalos?

Bilam's Power Stemmed from His Ability to Arouse the Attribute of “Din”

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation. First, however, I would like to explain the source of Bilam's power to curse Yisrael. Let us refer to this week's haftarah (Michah 6, 5): **“עמי זכר נא מה יעץ בלק מלך מואב, ומה ענה אותו בלעם בן בעור מן: “my people, hear now, what Balak, King of Moav, schemed, and what Bilam son of Beor answered him, from Shittim to Gilgal— so that you may realize the righteous acts of Hashem.** We find the following elucidation in the Gemara (Berachos 7a):

“מאי למען דעת צדקות ה', אמר רבי אלעזר, אמר להם הקב"ה לישראל, דעו כמה צדקות עשיתי עמכם שלא כעסתי בימי בלעם הרשע, שאלמולי כעסתי לא נשתייר משונאייהם של ישראל שריד ופליט, והיינו דקאמר ליה בלעם לבלק (במדבר כג-ח) מה אקוב לא קבה אל ומה אזעום לא זעם ה', מלמד שכל אותן הימים לא זעם, וכמה זעמו רגע... שנאמר (תהלים ל-1) כי רגע באפו חיים ברצונו.”

What is the meaning of: “So that you may realize the righteous acts of Hashem”? Rabbi Elazar said: HKB"H said to Yisrael, “Be aware of how many righteous acts I performed on your behalf—that I did not display wrath in the days of the wicked Bilam. For had I become angry, no remnant whatsoever would have remained from the enemies of Yisrael (a euphemism for the Jews themselves). And this is the meaning of that which Bilam said to Balak: “How can I curse? G-d has not cursed. And how can I display anger? Hashem has not displayed anger.” This teaches us that throughout all those days, He did not become angry. And how long does his anger last? A moment . . . For it is stated: “For His anger endures but a moment; His favor extends for a lifetime.”

Thus, we learn from this passage that Bilam's capacity to curse Yisrael stemmed from his ability to discern the precise moment each day that HKB"H would become angry; at that moment, he would invoke the attribute of “din” against them, chas v'shalom. Now, we have a passuk that states explicitly (Kohelet 7, 20): **“כי אדם אין צדיק בארץ אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא”— for there is no tzaddik on earth who does only good and never sins.** Therefore, Bilam intended to curse Yisrael at that precise moment of divine wrath. To prevent this from happening, HKB"H altered His normal modus operandi and did not become angry during those days.

Torah and Tefilah Are Uniquely Suited to Transform “Din” into “Rachamim”

Following this line of reasoning, let us proceed to explain the great battle waged by the wicked Bilam. Of all the ten Kelalos he had in mind to inflict upon Yisrael, he began with the one related to synagogues and study-halls—that they shouldn’t have “basei-kenesses” or “basei-midrash.” Of all the ten Kelalos, HKB”H specifically chose to reverse this kelalah back to a berachah, by compelling Bilam to say: “מה טובו אוהליך יעקב.”

Let us endeavor to explain. In the “basei-kenesses,” we perform the service of prayer—tefilah; whereas in the “basei-midrash,” we engage in Torah-study. These two forms of service—tefilah and Torah—constitute the two holy conduits that connect a person with HKB”H. It is precisely for this reason that the Gemara states (Shabbas 10a): “זמן תפלה לחוד—there is a separate time for tefilah and there is a separate time for Torah.”

Upon further consideration, it is evident that the common denominator shared by these two forms of avodah is their ability to transform “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.” With regards to tefilah, we find the following elucidation in the Gemara (Succah 14a) related to the passuk (Bereishis 25, 21): “ויעתר יצחק לה’ לנכח אשתו כי עקרה היא”—Yitzchak beseeched Hashem on behalf of his wife, because she was barren:

“למה נמשלה תפלתן של צדיקים כעתר, לומר לך, מה עתר זה מהפך את התבואה בגורן ממקום למקום, אף תפלתן של צדיקים מהפכת דעתו של הקב”ה ממדת אכזריות למדת רחמנות”

—why is the tefilah of tzaddikim compared to a pitchfork? To teach you that just as a pitchfork overturns the grain on the threshing floor from place to place, so does the tefilah of tzaddikim overturn the viewpoint of HKB”H from the attribute of cruel, harsh judgment to the attribute of mercy. Thus, we learn that tefilah auspiciously transforms “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.”

The same applies to the study of Torah in the “basei-midrash.” It has the capacity to transform “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim,” as we have learned in the Gemara (Succah 49b):

“מאי דכתיב (משלי לא-כו) פיה פתחה בחכמה ותורת חסד על לשונה, וכי יש תורה של חסד ויש תורה שאינה של חסד, אלא תורה לשמה זו היא תורה של

חסד, שלא לשמה זו היא תורה שאינה של חסד, איכא דאמרי תורה ללמודה זו היא תורה של חסד, שלא ללמודה זו היא תורה שאינה של חסד.”

The passuk in Mishlei employs the expression “**Toras chesed**”—literally: “Torah of kindness.” The Gemara questions the meaning and significance of this phrase. The first opinion defines “**Toras chesed**” as Torah that is pure in purpose; a second opinion suggests that this term refers to Torah that is passed on to others.

According to this Gemara, anyone who learns Torah l’shma—with proper intent—and teaches it to others, his Torah is considered “**Toras chesed**”; it can sweeten and mitigate the force of “din,” transforming it into “chesed.” This provides us with a very nice interpretation of the Gemara’s (Berachos 63b) elucidation of the passuk (Devarim 27, 9): “הסכת ושמע ישראל, עשו כתות כתות ועסקו בתורה, לפי שאין התורה נקנית אלא בחבורה, כדרבי יוסי ברבי חנינא, דאמר רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא, מאי דכתיב (ירמיה נ-לו) חרב אל הבדים ונאלו, חרב על שונאיהם של תלמידי חכמים. The word “הסכת” teaches that **you must form groups** (a play on the word “haskeit”: “asu kitot”) **upon groups to engage in Torah-study. For Torah is only acquired in groups. This accords with the words of Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Chanina. For Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Chanina said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “There will be a sword against those who are alone, v’noalu”?** **There will be a sword against the enemies of those Torah scholars who each sit alone and engage in Torah-study.** Clearly, this deserves further explanation. Why, indeed, does a “talmid-chacham” who studies alone warrant such a severe punishment?

Based on our current discussion, we can provide an explanation. When Torah is studied in a group of at least two—such as a Rav and his students or two friends—they are engaging in the Torah of chesed, and are thereby mitigating the force of “din.” A talmid-chacham who studies alone and does not pass on his learning to others is not occupied with the Torah of chesed. Consequently, he is subject to the force of “din,” chas v’shalom. Hence, the elucidation above is applied to him: “**There will be a sword against those who are alone, v’noalu.**” **There will be a sword against the enemies of those Torah scholars who each sit alone and engage in Torah-study.** For, they lack the ability to mitigate the force of “din,” seeing as they are not engaging in the Torah of chesed.

HKB”H Wanted Us to Transform All of Bilam’s Kelalos into Berachos

Now, it is with great pleasure that we can begin to comprehend the wonders and magnitude of Hashem’s plans and actions. He purposely did not prevent all of Bilam’s Berachos from reverting to Kelalos. For, HKB”H did not want the wicked Bilam to receive any credit for the Berachos bestowed upon Yisrael. It is similar to what we find in the Midrash regarding the berachah Betuel and Lavan (who were both wicked) bestowed upon Rivka (B.R. 60, 13): **“מפני מה לא נפקדה רבקה עד שנתפלל עליה יצחק, שלא יהיו עובדי כוכבים אומרים תפלתנו—why wasn’t Rivka remembered (blessed with child) until Yitzchak prayed on her behalf? So that idol-worshippers would not be able to claim, “Our tefilah produced fruit.”** (Betuel and Lavan blessed Rivka (Bereishis 24, 60): “Our sister, may you become thousands of myriads.”) **Instead, “Yitzchak beseeched Hashem on behalf of his wife.”** Therefore, all of Bilam’s Berachos reverted to Kelalos, as he had initially intended.

In truth, however, HKB”H wanted Yisrael to receive all of those Berachos—just as Yaakov Avinu coerced Eisav’s ministering angel to concede the Berachos to him. Therefore, in His abundant mercy, he reversed a single kelalah back to a berachah—the one pertaining to the “basei-kenesses” and the “basei-midrash”: **“שלא יפסקו מישראל לעולם”**. By means of tefilah services in the “basei-kenesses” and Torah-study in the “basei-midrash,” they retained the ability to transform all of the other Kelalos back into Berachos. Thus, in effect, every one of the Berachos will eventually become an actuality for Yisrael, through the power of their tefilah and their Torah-study in the synagogues and study-halls.

This provides us with a very nice interpretation of the passuk (Devarim 23, 6): **“ולא אבה ה’ אלקיך לשמוע אל בלעם”**—**but Hashem, your G-d, refused to listen to Bilam.** In other words, Hashem didn’t even want to listen to his Berachos, lest the nations of the world claim that Yisrael were blessed because of that wicked man. To prevent this from happening (ibid.): **“ויהפוך ה’ אלקיך לך את הקללה לברכה”**—Hashem only reversed the one kelalah, pertaining to the “basei-kenesses” and “basei-midrash,” into a berachah; all of the other Berachos became and remained Kelalos.

Then the passuk proceeds to explain why (ibid.): **“כי אהבך ה’—אלקיך”**—because Hashem loves Yisrael, He wanted to provide them with a means of transforming all of the Kelalos into Berachos. Thus, He ensured that they would always have the avodahs of the “beis-kenesses” and the “beis-midrash”—tefilah and Torah—at their disposal. Note that this passuk purposely employs the two divine names—Havaya and Elokim. Thus, the passuk alludes to the transformation of “midas hadin”—represented by the name Elokim—into “midas harachamim”—represented by the name Havaya. This enabled Chazal to deduce that the kelalah referred to by the passuk was the one related to “basei-kenesses” and “basei-midrash.” For, this specific berachah is the key for transforming all of the Kelalos into Berachos.

Now, we understand why it is the minhag of Yisrael to utter the passuk: **“מה טובו אוהליך יעקב”**—upon entering the “beis-kenesses” in the morning. After all, as we have explained, HKB”H only changed one kelalah—the one related to this passuk—back into a berachah. For, He wants Yisrael to enter their synagogues and study-halls to engage in tefilah and Torah-study, so that all of Bilam’s Kelalos will become everlasting Berachos. Therefore, that is the most propitious and appropriate time to utter this passuk.

The Presence of Yaakov’s Voice Abolishes the Hands of Eisav

Now, we can begin to appreciate the depth of Chazal’s teachings. In the Midrash (B.R. 65, 20), they expound on the statement Yitzchak Avinu utters prior to bestowing the Berachos upon Yaakov (Bereishis 27, 22): **“הקול קול יעקב והידיים— the voice is Yaakov’s voice, but the hands are Eisav’s hands:**

“לא עמדו פילוסופין בעולם כבלעם בן בעור וכאבנימוס הגרדי, נתכנסו כל אומות העולם אצלו אמרו לו, תאמר שאנו יכולים ליזדווג לאומה זו, אמר לנו וחזרו על בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות שלהן, ואם מצאתם שם תינוקות מצפצפין בקולן, אין אתם יכולים להם, שכבר הבטיחן אביהם ואמר להם הקול קול יעקב, בזמן שקולו של יעקב מצוי בבתי כנסיות אין הידיים ידי עשו, ואם לאו הידיים ידי עשו אתם יכולים להם.”

The Midrash describes Bilam as one of the world’s two greatest philosophers. It says that all of the nations of the world came to Bilam and asked him if it is possible to enter into a relationship with this nation. He told them to go and

check out their synagogues and study-halls. If the voices of children learning are heard, then they cannot be won over or influenced. For, their forefather has already promised them: “The voice is Yaakov’s voice”—implying that as long as Yaakov’s voice is present in the “basei-kenesses,” then Eisav’s hands are ineffective and non-existent. However, if such voices are not heard, then the condition of “Eisav’s hands” is in effect.

Based on what we have discussed, it works out amazingly. For, we have learned from the Maharal of Prague that the wicked Bilam intended to curse Yisrael with a total of ten Kelalos in order to negate the ten Berachos Yitzchak Avinu bestowed upon Yaakov. HKB”H intervened, however, and transformed all of the Kelalos into Berachos by compelling Bilam to bless Yisrael.

Subsequently, all of these Berachos turned back into Kelalos, so that Bilam would not be associated or credited with Yisrael’s success and berachah. Nevertheless, due to His abundant mercy, HKB”H reversed the kelalah pertaining to the “basei-kenesses” and “basei-midrash,” so that Yisrael would transform all of Bilam’s other Kelalos into Berachos by means of their tefilah and Torah. This prompted the nations of the world to approach the wicked Bilam with their inquiry. It would seem that since all of his ten Berachos turned into Kelalos, that they effectively annulled all of the ten Berachos Yitzchak bestowed upon Yaakov. That being the case, they wanted to know if they could now enter into a relationship with Yisrael and dominate them.

To which Bilam responded astonishingly: **Go and see what is going on in their synagogues and study-halls. Are small children chanting words of Torah? If the situation**

is one of “the voice is Yaakov’s voice,” you have no chance of prevailing over them. If not, however, then the “hands of Eisav” are in control, and you can prevail over them. This was the message conveyed by their forefather.

In other words, while it is true that all ten Berachos reverted to Kelalos; nevertheless, they are not doomed. **“Go and check out their “basei-kenesses” and “basei-midrash.”** It will then be evident to you that HKB”H did not forsake them. He reversed the kelalah regarding the “basei-kenesses” and “basei-midrash” back into a berachah; **so that they will be present in Jewish communities forever.**

Then, as the Midrash depicts, Bilam adds a vital point: **Go and see if children are chanting words of Torah in their institutions.** Then you can determine if it is a situation of “הקול” “קול יעקב” or “הידים ידי עשו.” Based on our current discussion, let us interpret the significance and intent of Bilam’s response. Bilam was referring to the words Yitzchak uttered via “ruach hakodesh” to Yaakov, prior to giving him the Berachos: “הקול” “קול יעקב-- the voice is Yaakov’s voice, but the hands are Eisav’s hands.” Yitzchak was informing Yaakov that if he truly wants to merit the ten Berachos of “זיתן לך”-- and thwart the efforts of the wicked Bilam to annul them with his own ten Kelalos—the voices of Bnei Yisrael must be heard. The voices of tefilah must be heard in the “basei-kenesses” and the voices of Torah-study in the “basei-midrash.” This is why the Torah repeats the word “קול” in this passuk: “הקול” “קול יעקב.” It is alluding to the voice of tefilah and the voice of Torah. The sounds of these two voices will successfully transform all of Bilam’s Kelalos into Berachos. For, tefilah and Torah-study possess the amazing power to transform “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.”



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To receive the mamarim by email: mamarim@shvileipinchas.com