

You Can Create Angels

PARSHA INSIGHTS - BALAK (5757)

IF YOU INSIST, GO AHEAD!

“And G-d said to Bilam, ‘**Do not go with them** (the dignitaries of Moav); do not curse the nation, because it is blessed’“ (*Perek Chof Bais, Pasuk Yud Bais* [chapter 22, verse 12]). “And G-d came to Bilam at night, and He said to him, ‘If the men have come to call upon YOU (you stand to make some money from this deal - *Rashi*), **get up and go with them...**“ (*Perek Chof Bais, Pasuk Chof* [22:20]).

Why the change in policy? If Hashem had told Bilam it was forbidden to go from his land to curse *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel], what prompted Him to suddenly allow it?

You might be familiar with the *Gemara* in *Maccos* 10B. We see from the Torah that in the way a person wants to go - on that path he will be led. Our *psukim* [verses] teach this, since Hashem first forbade Bilam from going, but then He allowed it. It must be that Bilam’s insistence brought about Hashem’s endorsement of his trip. It wasn’t that Bilam was doing the right thing. But when a person is so set in his ways, Hashem does not impede him from carrying out his plans. Obviously, it was improper to go with the princes of Moav to curse *Bnai Yisroel*, but the Heavens do not stop someone who is adamant like Bilam. This is true to such an extent, that G-d Himself even said “Get up and go with them”. It is another way of saying “I see how stubborn and insistent you are - go try your plan and see if it works! Let it not be said that I tried to stop you. The results of your sinister plot will testify that it was a rotten agenda.”

What does this *Gemara* really mean? Let us turn to a classic commentator on *Agada*, the *Maharsha*. He is bothered by the terminology of the *Gemara*. It says “*molichin oso*”- in the way a person wants to go, that is how THEY guide him. Why is the word in the plural form? Isn’t the *Gemara* saying that G-d will lead a person in the way that person wants to go? Isn’t Hashem a singular entity? Who are these beings or forces that will lead him in the way he wants to go? The word “*molichin*” indicates that there is more than one force which will help him pursue his plan.

The *Maharsha* answers that this can only be understood if we remember a major rule mentioned in numerous places in the Oral Torah. Every thought, statement, and action of a person creates a *malach* [an angel], which possesses the attributes of that action. In other words, we are only able to see the natural, visible results of our actions and thoughts. In reality, however, much more than meets the eye is going on in Heaven. A Heavenly being comes into existence whenever we think, say, or do anything. The nature of this angel will be benevolent if the action that created it was a *mitzvah* [good deed]. The converse is also true. It will be an evil angel if a sin was done to create it. The remarkable point here is that each person is, in effect, a true creator of angels!

Because of this, states the *Maharsha*, the *Gemara* uses a plural term. In the way a person wants to go, THEY will lead him in that manner. The angels created by the person’s thoughts and ambitions will guide him toward his intended goal. As *Chazal* [our Sages] state, freedom of choice is granted to every human being to do *mitzvos* [good deeds] or *avairos* [sins]. But something amazing can happen after awhile - the angels created by one’s actions begin to lead him toward a certain path and tendency! He made the choices at the outset, but it becomes harder to change one’s course after creating throngs of these man-made angels.

This, says the *Maharsha*, is the interpretation of the *Gemara* regarding our main character, Bilam. Hashem first told Bilam he was forbidden to go and curse *Bnai Yisroel*, but then He seemed to change His mind. In fact, however, it was not G-d who changed His policy. It was the overwhelming hatred Bilam had for the Jews, his passion to injure them with his curses, which created at least one angel possessing this trait. To quote the *Maharsha*, “His evil desire and mindset to go with them brought about that Hashem sent him an angel according to his will and thought, which said to him ‘get up and go with them.’” In other words, when Hashem said to rise and go with the officers of Moav, it does not mean that this is what Hashem wanted. Rather, He was simply sending Bilam’s own creation to him - the angel that would guide him toward fulfillment of his wicked scheme.

The idea that a person creates *malachim* [angels] from his thoughts, statements, and actions is found in a *Mishna* in *Avos* as well. In *Perek Dalid* [chapter 4], *Mishna Yud Gimmel* [13], we learn that “One who performs

one *mitzvah* acquires one defending angel, but one who commits a single transgression acquires one prosecuting angel". The *Meam Loez* remarks that there are two types of angels. One type are those who speak positively on behalf of a person, but they are Heavenly beings created by Hashem. But the type of *malach* that is even more beneficial to us is the one created by the person himself. Such entities escort a person in all his travels, because they are HIS ACQUISITIONS AND THE CREATIONS OF HIS HANDS.

This *Mishna* is at least very similar to the *Maharsha's* concept mentioned above, that the angels we create take on the properties of our deeds. The *Mishna* is also telling us that these benevolent *malachim* plead on our behalf in front of Hashem, defending us in the Heavenly realm. In short, our personal angels draw us toward certain actions, since these *malachim* are expressions of the choices we have made regarding *avodas* [service of] Hashem. In addition, they defend us in Heaven and accompany us as we move from place to place.

Bilam, as any other human being, was granted the opportunity to decide whether to act in a righteous or corrupt manner. He chose the latter, and in doing so, he created *malachim* that began leading him in that direction more and more. Those entities which guide us on certain chosen routes are the angels created by thought, speech, and action. May we constantly pursue paths of spirituality and peace, thereby filling our personal and communal storehouses with hosts of benevolent angels.

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