

# בלעם על גב האתון: Bil'am and His Donkey

ב וַיֵּרָא בַלְעָם בְּרֹצְפוֹר אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאַמְרֵי: וַיִּגְדַּר מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי הָעָם מְאֹד כִּי רַב־הוּא וַיִּקְנֶה מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֵּאמֶר מוֹאָב אֶל־זִקְנֵי מְדִיָּן עֲתָה יִלְחָכוּ הַקְּהָל אֶת־כָּל־סַבִּיבֵינֵינוּ בְּלַחֲךָ הַשּׁוֹר אֶת יֶרֶק הַשָּׂדֶה וּבַלֶּק בְּרֹצְפוֹר מִלֶּךְ לְמוֹאָב בַּעַת הַהוּא: ה וַיִּשְׁלַח מִלְּאִכִּים אֶל־בַּלְעָם בְּרֹצְפוֹר אֶת־הַנְּהָר אֲרִיץ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹ לְקַרְאֵלוֹ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה עִם יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם הַנְּהָר כֶּסֶף אֶת־עֵינַי הָאָרֶץ וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב מִמְּלִי: ו וְעַתָּה לְכֵה־נָא אֲרַהֲלֵי אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי־עַצּוֹם הוּא מִמֶּנִּי אוּלַי אוּכַל נְכַהֲבֹ וַאֲגַדְשֵׁנוּ מִן הָאָרֶץ כִּי יִדְעֵתִי אֶת־תְּבַרְךָ מִבְּרַךְ וְאֲשֶׁר תֵּאדָר יוֹאֵר: ז וַיֵּלְכוּ זִקְנֵי מוֹאָב וְזִקְנֵי מְדִיָּן וַיִּקְסְמוּ בְּיָדָם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל־בַּלְעָם וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵלָיו דְּבָרֵי בַלֶּק: ח וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם לֵינוּ פֹה הַלַּיְלָה וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אִתְּכֶם דִּבֶּר כְּאֲשֶׁר יִדְבֵר ה' אֵלַי וַיִּשְׁבוּ שְׂרֵי־מוֹאָב עִם־בַּלְעָם: ט וַיָּבֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶל־בַּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה עִמָּךְ: י וַיֹּאמֶר בַּלְעָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים בַּלֶּק בְּרֹצְפוֹר מִלֶּךְ מוֹאָב שָׁלַח אֵלָי: יא הִנֵּה הָעָם הַיֵּצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיִּכַּס אֶת־עֵינַי הָאָרֶץ עֲתָה לְכֵה קְבֵה־לִי אֹתוֹ אוּלַי אוּכַל לְהַלְחֵם בּוֹ וַיִּגְדַּשְׁתִּיו: יב וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־בַּלְעָם **לֹא תִלְךָ עִמָּהֶם לֹא תֵאדָר אֶת־הָעָם כִּי בְרוּךְ הוּא: יג** וַיִּקַּס בַּלְעָם בְּפִקְדוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־שְׂרֵי בַלֶּק לְכוּ אֶל־אַרְעֵכֶם כִּי מֵאֵן ה' לְתַתִּי לְהִלְךָ עִמָּכֶם: יד וַיִּקְוּמוּ שְׂרֵי מוֹאָב וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל־בַּלֶּק וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵאֵן בַּלְעָם הִלַּךְ עִמָּנוּ: טו וַיֹּסֵף עוֹד בַּלֶּק שְׁלַח שְׂרֵי רַבִּים וְנִכְבָּדִים מֵאֵלֶּה: טז וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל־בַּלְעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ כֹּה אָמַר בַּלֶּק בְּרֹצְפוֹר אֶל־נָא תִמְנַע מֵהִלֵּךְ אֵלָי: יז כִּי־כִבַּד אֶכְבְּדְךָ מְאֹד וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־תֹּאמַר אֵלַי אֲעֹשֶׂה וְלִכְהֵנָּה קְבֵה־לִי אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה: יח וַיַּעַן בַּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־עַבְדֵי בַלֶּק אֲסִיִּתְוִלִּי בַלֶּק מִלֵּא בֵיתוֹ כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב לֹא אוּכַל לַעֲבֹד אֶת־פִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵי לַעֲשׂוֹת קִטְנָה אוֹ גְדוּלָה: יט וְעַתָּה שָׁבוּ נָא בֹזֵה גַם־אַתֶּם הַלַּיְלָה וְאֲדַעְהָ מִה־יֹסֵף ה' דְּבַר עִמִּי: כ וַיָּבֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶל־בַּלְעָם לִילָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֲסִיִּתְוִלִּי לְךָ בָּאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים קוֹם לֶךְ אִתָּם וְאֵךְ אֶת־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־אָדַבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ אֹתוֹ תַעֲשֶׂה: כא וַיִּקַּס בַּלְעָם בְּפִקְדוֹ וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ אֶת־אַתְנֹו וַיִּלְךָ עִם־שְׂרֵי מוֹאָב: כב **וַיַּחֲרַף אֱלֹהִים כִּי־הוֹלֵךְ הוּא וַיִּתְיַעַב מִלֵּאךְ ה' בַּדֶּרֶךְ לִשְׁטָן לוֹ וְהוּא רֹכֵב עַל־אַתְנֹו וּשְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו עִמּוֹ: כג** וַתֵּרָא הָאֲתוֹן אֶת־מִלְאָךְ ה' נֹצֵב בַּדֶּרֶךְ וַחֲרָבוּ שְׁלוֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ וַתֵּט הָאֲתוֹן מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ וַתִּלְךָ בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיֵּךְ בַּלְעָם אֶת־הָאֲתוֹן לְהַטִּיחָה הַדֶּרֶךְ: כד וַיַּעֲמֵד מִלְאָךְ ה' בְּמִשְׁעוֹל הַכֹּרְמִים גָּדַר מִזֶּה וַגְּדַר מִזֶּה: כה **וַתֵּרָא הָאֲתוֹן אֶת־מִלְאָךְ ה' וַתִּלְחַץ אֶת־רַגְלֵי בַלְעָם אֶל־הַקִּיר וַיֹּסֵף לְהַכְתִּיחָה: כו** וַיֹּסֵף מִלְאָךְ ה' עָבֹר וַיַּעֲמֵד בְּמִקּוֹם צָר אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶן־דֶּרֶךְ לְנִטּוֹת יַמִּין וּשְׂמֹאל: כז **וַתֵּרָא הָאֲתוֹן אֶת־מִלְאָךְ ה' וַתִּרְבֵּץ תַּחַת בַּלְעָם וַיַּחֲרַף אֱלֹהִים בַּלְעָם וַיִּךְ אֶת־הָאֲתוֹן בְּמִקְלֵ: כח** וַיִּפְתַּח ה' אֶת־פִּי הָאֲתוֹן וַתֹּאמֶר לְבַלְעָם מִה־עֲשִׂיתִי לְךָ כִּי הִכִּיתֵנִי זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ רַגְלִים הָאֲתוֹן: כט וַיֹּאמֶר בַּלְעָם לְאֲתוֹן כִּי הִתְעַלְלַת בִּי לוֹ יִשְׁחָרֵב בְּיָדֵי כִּי עַתָּה הִרְגַתִּיךָ: ל וַתֹּאמֶר הָאֲתוֹן אֶל־בַּלְעָם הֲלוֹא אֲנִי אֲתַנְּךָ אֲשֶׁר־רִכַּבְתָּ עָלַי מֵעוֹדךָ עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הֲהִסְכַּן הַסְכַּנְתִּי לַעֲשׂוֹת לְךָ כֹּה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא: לא **וַיִּגַּל ה' אֶת־עֵינֵי בַלְעָם וַיֵּרָא אֶת־מִלְאָךְ ה' נֹצֵב בַּדֶּרֶךְ וַחֲרָבוּ שְׁלֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ וַיִּקַּד וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ לְאַפָּיו: לב** וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מִלְאָךְ ה' עַל־מָה הִכִּיתָ אֶת־אַתְנֹנִי זֶה שְׁלוֹשׁ רַגְלִים הִנֵּה אֲנִי יֵצְאֵתִי לִשְׁטָן כִּי־יִרֹט הַדֶּרֶךְ לְנִגְדֵי: לג וַתֵּרָאֵנִי הָאֲתוֹן וַתֵּט לְפָנָי זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ רַגְלִים אוּלַי נִטְתָה מִפְּנֵי כִּי עַתָּה גַם־אַתְכָּה הִרְגַתִּי וְאוֹתָהּ הִחַיִּיתִי: לד וַיֹּאמֶר בַּלְעָם אֶל־מִלְאָךְ ה' חֲטָאתִי כִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אַתָּה נֹצֵב לְקַרְאֵתִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ וְעַתָּה אֲסַדַּע בְּעֵינַיךָ אֲשׁוּבָה לִּי: לה וַיֹּאמֶר מִלְאָךְ ה' אֶל־בַּלְעָם לֶךְ עִם־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְאַפְסָ אֶת־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־אָדַבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ אֹתוֹ תִדְבֹר וַיִּלְךָ בַּלְעָם עִם־שְׂרֵי בַלֶּק:

**The questions:**

- 1) Why did ה' allow בלעם to go a second time, after He forbade him the first time?
- 2) Why did ה' then get angry with בלעם when he went with the 2<sup>nd</sup> entourage – after having allowed it?
- 3) Why did it take 3 times until the מלאך “revealed himself” to בלעם?
- 4) Why didn't his entourage – or two “caddies” - see any of this odd behavior with the מלאך and the donkey?
- 5) Why didn't בלעם say anything to בלק about his strange encounter?
- 6) “Talking Donkey”???
- 7) Why is this scene so similar...in so many ways...to אברהם's journey to המוריה?

2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many; and Moab was overcome with dread because of the children of Israel. 4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian: 'Now will this multitude lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field.'--And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time.-- 5 And he sent messengers unto Balaam the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the River, to the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying: 'Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. 6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me; peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom you blesses is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.' 7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spoke unto him the words of Balak. 8 And he said unto them: 'Lodge here this night, and I will bring you back word, as Hashem may speak unto me'; and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. 9 And God came unto Balaam, and said: 'What men are these with thee?' 10 And Balaam said unto God: 'Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me [saying]: 11 Behold the people that is come out of Egypt, it covers the face of the earth; now, come curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to fight against them, and shall drive them out.' 12 And God said unto Balaam: 'Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people; for they are blessed.' 13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak: 'Get you into your land; for Hashem refuses to give me leave to go with you.' 14 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said: 'Balaam refuses to come with us.' 15 And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honorable than they. 16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him: 'Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor: Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me; 17 for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and whatsoever thou say to me I will do; come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.' 18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak: 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Hashem my God, to do anything, small or great. 19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what Hashem will speak unto me more.' 20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him: 'If the men are come to call thee, rise up, go with them; but only the word which I speak unto thee, that shalt thou do.' 21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. 22 And God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of Hashem placed himself in the way for an adversary against him.--Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.-- 23 And the ass saw the angel of Hashem standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field; and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. 24 Then the angel of Hashem stood in a hollow way between the vineyards, a fence being on this side, and a fence on that side. 25 And the ass saw the angel of the LORD, and she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; and he smote her again. 26 And the angel of Hashem went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. 27 And the ass saw the angel of Hashem, and she lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with his staff. 28 And Hashem opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam: 'What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?' 29 And Balaam said unto the ass: 'Because thou hast mocked me; I would there were a sword in my hand, for now I had killed thee.' 30 And the ass said unto Balaam: 'Am not I your ass, upon which you have ridden all your life unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee?' And he said: 'Nay.' 31 Then Hashem opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed his head and fell on his face. 32 And the angel of Hashem said unto him: 'Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I am come forth for an adversary, because thy way is contrary unto me; 33 and the ass saw me, and turned aside before me these three times; unless she had turned aside from me, surely now I had even slain thee, and saved her alive.' 34 And Balaam said unto the angel of Hashem: 'I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stood in the way against me; now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back.' 35 And the angel of Hashem said unto Balaam: 'Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak.' So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.