

The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn



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Parshas Balak describes Bilaam's attempts to curse Bnei Yisroel, and how Hashem transformed his curses to blessings.

The *possuk* states, "No prophet like Moshe arose among Yisroel." The Sifri comments that only among Yisroel was there never a prophet like Moshe; among the gentiles, however, there was such a person: Bilaam. We see from this that Bilaam was Moshe's antithesis. Both of them shared something in common; the difference between them is that with Moshe this common theme was expressed in *kedushah*, while with Bilaam it was expressed in *kelipah*.

What did Moshe and Bilaam have in common? Kabbalah explains that both represented the level of *daas*: Moshe was *daas* of *kedushah*, and Bilaam was *daas* of *kelipah*.

While these levels certainly reflect spiritual ideas, they are also pertinent to us and our *avodas Hashem*.

A LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE

What is *daas* all about? *Daas* is more than just knowledge; it refers to a deeper type of connection (as in the *possuk*, "Adam *yada*—joined—with his wife Chavah"). *Daas* is an inner feeling that penetrates deeper than the usual, simple understanding of the matter.

We see this concept with regard to a logical *sevara*. You have the person who *understands* the *sevara*, and then you have the person who *feels* it. The is the external dimension of the *sevara* that can be explained and proven. But then there is the *sevara's* inner dimension that cannot be expressed in words; it can only be felt and sensed.

This is the difference between regular *sechel* and *daas*. *Sechel* can only grasp the outer part of the *sevara*, the part that can be analyzed and demonstrated logically. To grasp the inner depths of the *sevara* one must possess the special quality of *daas*, the ability to detect what lies beneath the surface.

Even if someone outwardly appears distant from Yiddishkeit, there are times when his belief comes to the fore.

THE RIGHT TYPE OF DAAS

MOTIVE ANALYSIS

Within *daas* itself there are two opposite approaches: *daas* of *kedushah*, and *daas* of *kelipah*.

Let's take, for example, a person who is doing something positive—he is learning Torah or doing a *mitzvah*. However, it's

possible that he is not doing it purely *lesheim shamayim*, but has a personal agenda behind his actions.

Now, sometimes this personal objective is quite apparent. It is clear to the onlooker that his goal is not to learn Hashem's Torah. It is merely a means to an end, so that others will respect him and consider him a *lamdan* (and similarly with

doing *mitzvos*). In such a case, his motives can be grasped with *sechel*, and there is no need to utilize *daas*.

But then you have a case where the personal motive is much more subtle. In fact, it's possible that the person himself is not that aware of it. Here, you need someone with the quality of *daas* to sense that deep down, his actions are not one-hundred-percent genuine.

This is *daas*, but *daas* of *kelipah*—the ability to feel and bring out the inner negativity found within a person's actions.

FINDING THE GOOD

Then you have the opposite approach—*daas* of *kedushah*, to sense the inner *good* found within a person.

Let's take a Jew who is not acting as he should; in fact, he is doing *aveiros*. With the quality of *daas*, one can uncover the hidden good found within him. As the Rambam writes, since he is a Jew, it is certain that deep down he wants to fulfill Hashem's desire.

The Rambam uses this concept to explain a law regarding divorce. A *get* must be given with the husband's consent; if given under duress, it is invalid. Yet, if the law requires that a husband divorce his wife but he doesn't want to, the *Beis Din* strikes him until he says that he agrees, and the *get* is valid. By contrast, if the law did not require a divorce and the *Beis Din* mistakenly forced him to

say that he agrees, the *get* is *possul*.

This seems difficult to understand. If the prerequisite of consent entails *genuine* consent, why is the *get* valid when the law requires him to divorce? When he says he agrees, he doesn't really mean it; he is only saying so to avoid being hit! And if coerced consent is sufficient, why is the *get possul* when the law does not require a divorce?

The Rambam explains that indeed, the husband's consent must be genuine. However, deep down every Jew wants to fulfill Hashem's Will, and it is only the *yetzer hara* that gets in the way. When he is forced to say that he consents, although he thinks he is agreeing only to avoid getting hit, in truth it is an expression of his *true* desire—to fulfill Hashem's command.

However, this is only the case if it is indeed Hashem's Will that he divorce his wife. If *halachah* does not require a divorce, his consent cannot be said to be an expression of his true desire, and the *get* is *possul*.

This, then, is the meaning of *daas* of *kedushah*: to locate the hidden good found within a Jew. Although on the surface it appears as if he is only agreeing under duress, a deeper look reveals that even such a person truly wants to fulfill Hashem's desire. Indeed, we often see that even if someone outwardly appears distant from Yiddishkeit, there are times when his inner essence comes to the fore, and he demonstrates his belief in Hashem.

MOSHE'S APPROACH

We have here two approaches, both involving *daas*—sensing what's going on beneath the surface. The difference, however, is whether one is searching for the good or the opposite.

Bilaam and Moshe both represent the level of *daas*. The difference is that Bilaam was a *sonai Yisroel*, while Moshe, *lehavdil*, was an *ohav Yisroel*.

Bilaam's goal was to bring negative accusations against the Jews.

Even when outwardly they were acting as they should, he searched for the hidden evil. He mentioned the various sins the Jews had committed, hoping this would evoke the evil lurking within.

Reb Pinchas Koritzer was known for toiling to attain the quality of truth. Once he was approached by a fellow who asked him: "I toil as well—to develop a hatred for falsehood. What is the difference between us two?"

"I'll explain the difference," replied Reb Pinchas. "Every Jew possesses some truth and some falsehood. Your focus is on uncovering and abhorring the falsehood found inside. I, however, toil on revealing and loving the truth found within every Jew."

Sometimes you have someone who looks for the bad within others. Although the other appears good on the outside, he will look beneath the surface and discover that his motives are not entirely pure. He thinks he is doing it *leshem shamayim*; after all, he is searching for the truth! In reality, however, he is adopting the approach of Bilaam. What's more, by discussing the negativity found within others, he is actually taking what was previously

hidden and bringing it out to the open.

Moshe's approach was the exact opposite. He was an *ohav Yisroel*, always looking for the good. When we view another Jew, even if all we see on the outside is negative conduct, our job is to look for and arouse the good hidden within. Moreover, by focusing on the good, and inspiring the other by telling him that he is a Jew and wants to do what's right, we can reveal his inner good and make it shine.

For further study, see *maamar d'h Hashkifah* 5700.

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