

# Parsha Knowledge

TORAH THOUGHTS, STORIES, AND INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

פֶּרֶשֶׁת בְּלָק

י"ד תמוז תשפ"ד

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מה־טבו...

“How goodly ...” (Bamidbar 24:5)

Every morning, we recite the prayer of *Ma Tovu*. It's the first prayer that we recite upon entering the synagogue. It's a beautiful prayer... However, the fact that we say this is very strange. This prayer emanates from a very contaminated and wicked source. This prayer comes from Bilam, an evil man, who wasn't even Jewish. He was a Rasha. However, this prayer is almost universally accepted, and we say it in the prayer service. Why? Why not say a prayer from someone holier? What's going on here? I heard from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer, shlita something incredible: The Lev Simcha, the Rebbe of Ger says that when Bilam said *Ma Tovu* even though he was wicked, depraved, and evil, at that moment - the moment when he said *Ma Tovu*, he was sincere. With genuine feeling and conviction, Bilam turned to Hashem and uttered these words.

This teaches us a fundamental and pivotal lesson in Yiddishkeit and growth. When you are sincere and turn to Hashem out of love, conviction, and sincerity, Hashem loves it. We have this as a daily reminder when we say *Ma Tovu*. Hashem is saying that it doesn't matter who you are or what your past is. If you pray to Hashem - He loves it! Hashem wants to hear from each and every one of us! It doesn't matter on what we did previously. That is why we begin the Shacharis prayer service with a lesson of how effective our *teffilos*, our prayers can be.

I would like to share with you an incredible and powerful story: Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein shlita was once giving a class to physicians. After the class, a doctor came over to Rav Zilberstein holding a child's siddur, a little prayer book. The doctor was clutching

and holding onto the siddur for dear life. It appeared to be very precious and dear to him, but it was a strange sight for a grown man, a doctor, to be seen holding a little child's siddur with such emotion. Rabbi Zilberstein asked the doctor the reason for this, and the doctor shared the following beautiful story: He and his wife were married for over 15 years, but they suffered from infertility - they were told that it was biologically impossible for them to have a baby. They were despondent. As the years went on, they gave up on having a child and decided to adopt a sweet little baby.

This boy grew up and when he was five years old, he had a siddur party where he and his class received their very first siddur. When he received his siddur, the young boy turned to his father and said, "Daddy, I'm so excited to have a siddur." In response, the father said to him, "Why? Why are you so excited to have a siddur?" What the boy said made his father burst into tears. The boy said, "I am so excited because now I can daven and pray for a brother. I always wanted a little brother." What the boy said broke his father's heart because the boy had no idea that he was adopted. The boy didn't know that they couldn't have children. The man didn't have the heart to tell his son that he couldn't have a brother and that they couldn't biologically have a baby. The boy however said, I'm going to pray and beg Hashem for a baby brother.

Now, the doctor with his face full of tears, turned to Rav Zilberstein and said, "Rabbi, the reason why I'm holding this siddur with such emotion is because it's the holiest prayer book in the world. Yesterday I made a *bris milah* (circumcision) for my newborn baby son! Defying against all odds, my wife and I had a baby boy!" Do you know when this all happened? You won't believe this: The baby was born nine months after he received his siddur - right after the boy started davening! Because of his heartfelt prayers, the boy now had a little brother! What a story! What a lesson! The power of sincere prayer!

# *Have a Great Shabbos!*

## *By Aryeh F.*

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