

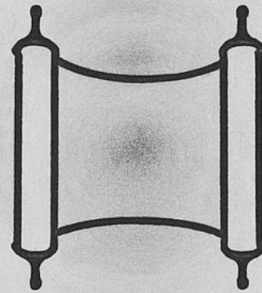
בס"ד

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Parshas Ki Teitzei

שִׁיר לְסוּף הַבְּיָאוֹר עַל פְּסוּק וְלֹא אָבָה



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שִׁיבָה לְסוּף הַבְּיָאוּר עַל פְּסוּק וְלֹא אָבָה

Introduction

This discourse of the Tzemach Tzedek takes us deep into the relationship between Klal Yisrael and Hashem, anchored in the verse “ולא אבה הוי' אלקיך לשמוע אל בלעם ויהפוך הוי' אלקיך לך את הקללה לברכה” (Devarim 23:6).

Through examining the paradox of Bilaam’s attempted curses and their transformation into blessings, the Tzemach Tzedek weaves together Gemara, Zohar, Midrash, and Kabbalah. The maamar highlights two core themes: the spiritual power of Shema and its forty-two words (paralleling Ana B’koach and the forty-two journeys from Egypt), and the dynamic of gevurah within chesed that Bilaam sought to exploit. The Tzemach Tzedek guides us to see how the Jewish people’s acceptance of Torah (“נעשה ונשמע”) and their service through both positive mitzvos and refraining from transgressions are what channel the divine light, reversing curse into blessing.

This is related to the end of the explanation on the verse

“And Hashem your G-d did not want.” And see about the matter of “and He turned” in Berachos chapter 9, page 55b, and what is written on the verse “He turned the sea to dry land” in the discourse “Ashira laHashem ki ga’oh ga’ah,” that therefore the drawing must be from a very high place.

שִׁיבָה לְסוּף הַבְּיָאוּר עַל פְּסוּק וְלֹא אָבָה. וְעִינֵינוּ מֵעִנְיָנו וְיִהְיֶה כּוֹן פֶּרֶק ט' דְּבִרְכוֹת דִּף נ"ה ע"ב וְעַמ"ש עַל פְּסוּק הַפֶּה יָם לִיבְשָׁה בְּד"ה אֲשִׁירָה לֵה' כִּי גָאָה גָאָה שְׁלֵזָה צְרִידָה לֹאמַר הַמְשֻׁבָּה מִמְקוֹם גְּבוּהָ מֵאֵד.

And similarly, and all the more so, regarding the matter of turning from curse to blessing. And see from this in Zohar III, Naso 147b and 151a, and in the Gemara, Berachos 7a, on the verse “What shall I curse, for G-d has not cursed.” And see further on the matter of “and He turned” in Shnei Luchos HaBris, beginning of Parshas Balak, in the section Torah Or.

וְכַמוֹכּוֹ וְכִשְׁכּוֹ לְעִנְיָנו הַהֶפֶךְ מִקְלָלָה לְבִרְכָה. וְעִינֵינוּ מִזֶּה בְּזוֹחַר ג' נִשְׂאָ דִף קמ"ז סע"ב וְדִף קנ"א ע"א וּבִגְמָרָא פֶּרֶק קמ"א דְּבִרְכוֹת דִּף ז' ע"א עַל פְּסוּק מַה אֲקוּב לֹא קְבֵה אֵל. וְעִינֵינוּ עוֹד מֵעִנְיָנו וְיִהְיֶה בְּשִׁנֵי לְוַחֲוֹת הַבְּרִית רִישׁ פְּרִשְׁת בְּלֶק בְּפֶרֶק תוֹרָה אוֹר.

And it is possible to note regarding the two Names of Havayah in this verse: concerning “And Hashem your G-d did not want” and concerning “and Hashem turned.” These correspond to the two Names Havayah in the Shema. For behold, Rabbi David Abudarham in the name of the Ramban explains that the first verse of Shema is the acceptance of the two commandments, “I am” and “You shall have no other gods.” That is, as it says “I am Havayah your G-d,” that the Name Havayah is drawn into the soul itself to be your G-d, as is also written in the discourse “Re’eh Anochi Nosein.” On this we say “Hear, O Israel, Havayah is our G-d,” and this is what is written in the commentary on “And Hashem your G-d did not want.”

וְאֶפְשֵׁר לְהַעֲרוֹת לְעִנְיָנו ב' שְׁמוֹת הוֹי' שְׁבַפְסוּק זֶה גְּבִי וְלֹא אָבָה, וְגַבִּי וְיִהְיֶה מִשְׁנֵי שְׁמוֹת הוֹי' שְׁבַקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע, דְּהִנֵּה פִירוּשׁ הַרְד"א בְּשֵׁם הַרְמְב"ן אֲשֶׁר פְּסוּק הַרְאִשׁוֹן דְּקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע הוּא קְבָלוֹת שְׁנֵי הַדְּבָרוֹת אֲנֹכִי וְלֹא יִהְיֶה לָךְ, דְּהִינּוּ מַה שְׁכַתוּב אֲנֹכִי הוֹי' אֲלֵקִידָה שְׁנִמְשָׁד שֵׁם הוֹי' בְּנִפְשׁ מִמֶּשׁ לְהִיּוֹת אֲלֵקִידָה, וְכִמוֹ שְׁכַתוּב מִזֶּה גַם כֵּן בְּד"ה רִאֵה אֲנֹכִי בּוֹתֵן. עַל זֶה אָנוּ אוֹמְרִים שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹי' אֲלֵקִינוּ וְזֶהוּ מַה שְׁכַתוּב בְּפִירוּשׁ וְלֹא אָבָה הוֹי' אֲלֵקִידָה.

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שיף לְסוּף הַבְּיאוּר עַל פְּסוּק וְלֹא אָבָה

And it can also be said that since they placed “we will do” before “we will hear,” therefore measure for measure, “And Hashem your G-d did not want to hear.” And the matter of “Hashem is One” is the acceptance of the commandment “You shall have no other gods,” which is the source of all 365 prohibitions. The guarding of the 365 prohibitions is higher than the fulfillment of the 248 positive commandments, as explained, since it is the uprooting of the will from evil, similar to the aspect of teshuvah. And through this one draws down that “Hashem will turn for you the curse into a blessing.” And this is the meaning of “Hashem is One,” for behold, sometimes it says “I will clothe the heavens with darkness,” which is the concealment to obscure the light of G-dliness, as is explained on the verse “My dove in the clefts of the rock.”

But the explanation of “Hashem is One” means One in the seven heavens and the earth, which is the revelation of His G-dliness without concealment or covering. And furthermore, behold in Shema, from “And you shall love” until “in your gates,” there are 42 words, corresponding to the Name of 42 of Ana B’koach and to the 42 journeys from Egypt, as explained in Parshas Va’eschanan in the discourse “And you shall love Hashem,” that this is the aspect of the light of gevurah in the vessel of chesed, meaning “with all your might.”

And this is the idea of “mighty as a lion to do the will of your Father in heaven,” for lion in gematria is gevurah, and nevertheless the lion’s face is to the right. And behold, Balak and Bilaam offered 42 sacrifices, for he wanted to curse them with the Name of 42, which is the light of gevurah, and even though it is in the vessel of chesed, he wanted to draw a curse from it through his accusations. This is like “if your enemy is hungry feed him bread, for coals you are heaping,” which is also gevurah in the vessel of chesed.

וגם יש לומר שְלִפִי שֶהִקְדִּימוּ בַעֲשֵׂה לְנִשְׁמָע עַל כֵּן מִדָּה כְּנֶגֶד מִדָּה וְלֹא אָבָה הוּא אֱלֹקִיךָ לְשִׁמוֹעַ כּו'. וְעַנְּנָן הוּא אֶחָד הוּא קִבְּלַת הַדְּבוּר לֹא יִהְיֶה לָךְ שֶהוּא מְקוּר לְכָל שֵׁם"ה ל"ת, אֲשֶׁר שְׁמִירַת שֵׁם"ה ל"ת גְּבוּהָ מִקִּיּוּם רמ"ח מ"ע כְּמוֹ שֶׁבִּיאָרוּ לְפִי שְׁנֵהוּ עֲקִירַת הַרְצוֹן מִהֲרַע וּכְעַנְּנָן בְּחִינַת תְּשׁוּבָה. וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה מְמַשְׁכִּיכִים לְהִיּוֹת וַיִּהְפֹּךְ ה' לָךְ אֶת הַקְּלָלָה לְבִרְכָה. וְזֶהוּ עַנְּנָן הוּא אֶחָד כִּי הִנֵּה לְפַעֲמִים נֶאֱמַר אֲלֵכִישׁ שְׁמִים קְדוֹת כּו' שֶהוּא הַהֶסְתֵּר לְהַעֲלִים אוֹר הָאֱלוּקוֹת וְכֵמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב מִזֶּה בְּבִיאוּר עַל פְּסוּק יוֹנִתִי בְּחִגְוֵי הַסֵּלַע

אֲבָל פִּירוּשׁ הוּא אֶחָד, אֶחָד בְּשִׁבְעָה רְקִיעִים וְהָאֲרֶזׁן זֶהוּ גִילוּי אֱלֹקוּתוֹ יִתְבַּרַךְ בְּלִי שׁוֹם הָעֵלָם וְהַסֵּתֵר, וְעוֹד זֹאת דְּהִנֵּה בְּקִרְיַת שְׁמַע וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ עַד וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ יֵשׁ מ"ב תִּיבִין, שֶהוּא כְּנֶגֶד שֵׁם מ"ב דְּאֵנָּה בְּכַח, וְכְנֶגֶד מ"ב מִסְעוֹת שְׁנֹסְעוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, כְּמ"ש בְּפָרֻשׁת׃ וְאֶתְחַנֵּן בְּד"ה וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ אֶת הוּא, שֶהוּא עַנְּנָן אוֹר הַגְּבוּרָה בְּכִלֵי הַחֶסֶד, דְּהֵינּוּ בְּחִינַת כָּל מְאֹדָּה

וְזֶהוּ עַנְּנָן גְּבוּרָה כְּאֵרִי לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן אָבִיךָ שְׁבִשְׁמִים, כִּי אֲרִיָּה גִימְטְרִיא גְבוּרָה, וּמְפַל מְקוֹם פְּנֵי אֲרִיָּה אֵל הַיָּמִין. וְהִנֵּה בְּלֹק וּבְלֵעָם הַקְּרִיבוּ מ"ב קְרָבָנוֹת, שְׂרָצָה לְקַלְלֵם בְּשֵׁם מ"ב, שֶהוּא אוֹר הַגְּבוּרָה, וְאֵף שֶהוּא בְּכִלֵי הַחֶסֶד רָצָה לְהַמְשִׁיךְ מִזֶּה הַקְּלָלָה עַל יְדֵי הַקְּטְרוּגִים. וְזֶהוּ כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אִם רָעַב שִׁנְאָדָּה הָאֲכִילֵהוּ לֶחֶם כִּי גִתְלִים אֶתָּה חֲתָה כּו', שְׁנֵהוּ גַם כֵּן עַנְּנָן גְּבוּרָה בְּכִלֵי הַחֶסֶד

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Parshas Ki Teitzei

שִׁיף לְסוּף הַבְּיָאוֹר עַל פְּסוּק וְלֹא אָבָה

And behold, 42 is three times 14, as explained in the commentary on “These are the journeys,” that they are the great hand, the strong hand, and the exalted hand, which are the three forefathers. Therefore he made opposite this three altars, and on each altar seven bulls and seven rams — all in order to curse them with the Name of 42. And just as from the lion of the holy chariot there extends below, through the breaking of the vessels, the physical lion which tramples and damages, so too in this matter.

And similarly, our Sages said (Sotah 47a) that because of the 42 sacrifices that Balak offered, 42 children were torn from Israel. And see this in Kli Yakar, Melachim II, chapter 2, on the verse “And he cursed them in the Name of Hashem, and two bears came out.” He explained this in the name of the Arizal, and it is also explained in Chibbur Pikkudei 224a. And behold, the explanation of “and he cursed them in the Name of Hashem” is, as explained by the Bechayei on Parshas Shemos, that it is also with the Name of 42, known only to prophets. Therefore 42 children were torn.

But the explanation of “and Hashem turned the curse into a blessing” is that what Bilaam wanted, to curse them with the Name of 42, was turned into a blessing. And this is the matter of the 42 words from “And you shall love” until “in your gates,” which is the elevation of the soul in great love, the level of “with all your might.” And through this there is then drawn in the paragraph “And it shall come to pass if you will listen,” the Name of 72, the aspect of supernal chesed.

[NOTE Summary

The maamar begins by analyzing the phrase “ולא אבה הוי' אליקיד” in connection with the two Sheimos Havayah in Shema. One represents the revelation of G-dliness as “Anochi Hashem Elokecha,” and the other embodies “Hashem Echad,” the acceptance of “Lo Yihyeh Lecha” — the root of all 365 prohibitions. The Tzemach Tzedek explains that observing the 365 prohibitions is even higher than fulfilling the 248 positive commandments, since it uproots the very desire for evil, resembling the essence of teshuvah. Through this avodah, Hashem turns curse into blessing.

וְהִנֵּה מ"ב הַיָּנוּ ג' פְּעָמִים י"ד, כַּמ"ש בְּבִיאוֹר דְּאֵלֶּה מִסְעֵי, שְׁהֵם יַד הַגְּדוּלָּה, יַד הַחֲזָקָה, יַד הַרְמָה, שְׁהֵם ג' הָאֲבוֹת. עַל כֵּן עָשָׂה לְגַגֵּד זֶה ג' מִזְבְּחוֹת, וּבְכָל אֶחָד שִׁבְעָה פָּרִים וְשִׁבְעָה אֵילִים. וְכָל זֶה בְּשִׁבִיל לְקַלְלֵם בְּשֵׁם מ"ב. וְכִמוֹ שֶׁמִּפְּנֵי אַרְיֵה שֶׁבְּמִרְכָּבָה הַקְּדוּשָׁה נִשְׁתַּלְשַׁל לְמִטָּה עַל יְדֵי שְׁבִירַת הַכְּלִים בְּחֵינַת אַרְיֵה. הַגִּשְׁמִי שֶׁהוּא דוֹרֵס וּמְזִיק כּו

וְעַד"ז אָמְרוּ רַבֵּי לְפָרֶק ט' דְּסוּטָה דָּף מ"ז ע"א, בְּשִׁבִיל אֲרַבְעִים וּשְׁנַיִם קַרְבָּנוֹת שֶׁהִקְרִיב בְּלֶק נִבְקְעוּ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מ"ב יְלָדִים. וְעַמ' ש' בְּכָלִי יָקָר בְּמַלְכִים ב' סִימָן ב' עַל פְּסוּק וְיִקְלְלֵם בְּשֵׁם ה', וְתִצְאֲנָה שְׁתֵּים דְּבָיִם, מֵה שֶׁפִּירֵשׁ בְּזֶה בְּשֵׁם הָאֲרִיז"ל. וְהוּא מְבוֹאֵר גַּם כֵּן מִחֲבוּר פְּקוּדֵי דָּף ר"כ"ד ע"א. וְהִנֵּה פִירוּשׁ וְיִקְלְלֵם בְּשֵׁם ה' פִּירֵשׁ הַבְּחִינֵי פְּרִשְׁת שְׁמוֹת, דְּהֵינּוּ גַם כֵּן בְּשֵׁם מ"ב הַנוֹדָע רַק לְנָבִיאִים. לְכֵן וְתִבְקַעְנָה מִהֵם מ"ב יְלָדִים.

אָבָל פִּירוּשׁ וַיִּהְפֹּךְ אֶת הַקְּלָלָה לְבִרְכָּה, יֵשׁ לְפָרֵשׁ דְּהֵינּוּ מֵה שֶׁרְצָה בְּלֵעַם לְקַלְלֵם בְּשֵׁם מ"ב נִהְפֹּךְ לְבִרְכָּה. וְהוּא עֲנִין מ"ב תִּיבִין מְוָאֲהֶבֶת עַד וּבִשְׁעָרֶיהָ, שֶׁהוּא הַעֲלָאת הַנֶּפֶשׁ בְּאֲהָבָה רַבָּה בְּחֵינַת בְּכָל מְאֹדָה כּו'. וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה נִמְשָׁךְ אַחַר כֵּף בְּפִסּוּק וְהִנֵּה אִם שְׁמוֹעַ 'שֵׁם ע"ב בְּחֵינַת חֶסֶד עֲלִיוֹן כּו

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Parshas Ki Teitzei

שִׁיבָה לְסוּף הַבְּיאוּר עַל פְּסוּקַת וְלֹא אָבָה

He further links this to the structure of Shema, where the 42 words of “ואהבת...ובשעריך” correspond to the Shem Mem-Beis, to Ana B’koach, and to the forty-two journeys. This represents gevurah clothed within chesed, the strength to serve Hashem “בכל מאדך.” Bilaam and Balak attempted to corrupt this energy by bringing 42 sacrifices, paralleling the 42 journeys, to channel gevurah into destruction. But Hashem transformed their intent — the very power they sought for curse became the source of blessing.

The maamar elaborates that Bilaam’s scheme was rooted in the dynamic of gevurah within chesed: as when feeding one’s enemy heaps burning coals, strength and severity become hidden within kindness. Yet this very system revealed their downfall: the 42 korbanos of Balak, rooted in misuse of gevurah, only caused destruction for their own camp (as reflected in the punishment of 42 children in Melachim II). By contrast, the Shem Mem-Beis in Shema lifts the soul in ahavah rabbah, opening the channel for the Shem Ayin-Beis (72) in the second paragraph of Shema, representing supernal chesed and boundless blessing.

Practical Takeaway

The discourse teaches that the deepest reversal of negativity comes not only from adding light, but from transforming the very force of opposition. Guarding oneself from transgression and channeling inner discipline allows the soul to rise in love and devotion. Just as Shema elevates us through gevurah within chesed, so too in our lives — by standing firm against inner resistance and dedicating ourselves “בכל מאדך,” we convert potential curses into fountains of blessing.

Chassidic Story

It is told of the Tzemach Tzedek that once a Jew came to him, distressed that his business had suffered heavy losses and that he feared his enemies were invoking curses against him. The Rebbe listened and then instructed him to recite Shema with special kavana on the 42 words up to “ובשעריך.” The man did so faithfully, and in time not only did his situation stabilize, but he saw unexpected success — his “curse” had indeed been transformed into blessing. The Rebbe explained that just as Bilaam’s 42 korbanos were inverted, so too a Jew who channels his inner gevurah into pure devotion releases divine blessing that overturns adversity.

END NOTE]