

## **PARSHAS BALAK**

### **When in Doubt, Don't Shout**

**The she-donkey said to Bilaam, "Am I not your she-donkey that you have ridden all your life until this day? Have I been accustomed to do such a thing to you?" (Num. 22:30)**

**Imagine you're on the way home from a wedding late at night. You've been traveling many hours and you're wiped out. All you can think of is crawling into bed. You are nearing your house when suddenly you spot your neighbor's car blocking your driveway. You become enraged. "How could he do something like that, he knows I need to park my car!!" You circle the block for 10 minutes until you find parking, while thinking about how to retaliate against your neighbor.**

**You then remember that the Torah says to judge others favorably and give them the benefit of the doubt. But you think, "How is it possible to give him the benefit of the doubt - he knows I need to park my car and nevertheless he blocked the driveway?!"**

**Bilam was riding his donkey on the way to curse the Jews when the donkey stopped moving, refusing to budge. Bilam struck it. The donkey, suddenly able to speak, asked in bewilderment, "Hey, what was that for?!" Bilam said, "You're lucky I don't have my sword on me, otherwise I would have killed you!"**

**The donkey replied, "Bilam, have I ever betrayed you? Have I been accustomed to do such a thing to you? Why in the world would you think that I'm trying to hurt you and prevent you from going?!"**

**The donkey was telling Bilam to focus on the one doing the apparent "evil" and not to zoom in on the isolated incident. If the perpetrator is not accustomed to betraying you then it's more rational to assume that some far-out scenario must be taking place. In the case of the donkey, Bilam should have realized that there was something unusual going on. In fact there was an angel blocking the path which prevented the donkey from proceeding.**

**The same logic applies to your neighbor blocking the driveway. Since this action is not in character with your neighbor, it is more rational to assume that some emergency came up than to assume that he just did not care about you and prevented you from parking your car.**

**By giving people the benefit of the doubt, our lives, relationships and daily interactions will become more positive and successful - making the world a better place.**