

## Hashem opened the mouth of the she-donkey and it said to Bilaam, "What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?" (22:28)

*Chazal* note that the *Torah* does not use the word "*pe'omim*," which means "times." Rather, the *Torah* uses the word "*regalim*" which is an allusion to the *Shalosh Regalim*, Three Festivals -- when *Klal Yisrael* went on Pilgrimage to Yerushalayim -- and to the *Bais Hamikdash*. Bilaam wished to harm a nation whose devotion to Hashem was so strong, whose commitment so intense, that they left their fields and homes three times each year to serve Hashem in Yerushalayim. How could Bilaam think that the Almighty would permit him to harm such a dedicated nation? It is interesting to note that from the vast array of *mitzvos* that the Jew performs, the *Torah* emphasized the *mitzvah* of Pilgrimage during the Three Festivals as catalyzing praise for *Klal Yisrael*. Why? What is unique about the *Shalosh Regalim* that their observance is considered our greatest attribute?

**Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl**, takes a novel approach towards interpreting the words of *Chazal*. The *Torah* is alluding to *Klal Yisrael's* resistance to change. We have had the *Torah* for thousands of years and never have we changed one iota of it. We have never added anything to the *Torah* or to Jewish life that does not have its origin in the *Torah*. We have undergone and survived various catastrophies, some of which might suggest the need for a formal celebration. While our *emunah*, trust, in the Almighty becomes stronger, we do not initiate a new festival. The *Torah* has sanctioned three festivals, and that is to be the extent of our series.

The ability to contain our joy, constrain our celebration, and refrain from creating another festival that is not established by the *Torah*, is indicative of an extraordinary commitment to the *Torah*. In the *Midrash Rus*, *Chazal* tell us how the *zekeinim* and *neviim*, elders and prophets, were distressed before adding *Purim* as an official holiday. How could they add to the *Torah* a festival which its Divine Author had not included. Their anxiety was assuaged only after Hashem illuminated their eyes, so that they discovered allusions to *Purim* in *Tanach*.

Bilaam's she-donkey told her master: A nation whose allegiance is so steadfast that it will be self-sacrificed in order to preserve the integrity and immortality of the *Torah*, will not fall prey to your curses. If we would only retain that sense of fidelity, we might have less to fear from the Bilaams of every generation.