

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT BALAK

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

SMALL ACTIONS

The great Sage Rav stated (Gemara Nazir 23b) a person should always endeavor to study Torah and perform Mitzvot, even if he is performing the Mitzvot for an alternative reason and not for the sake of Heaven (Aflu SheLelo Lishma – Shemitoch Shelo Lishma Ba Lishma). For, through performing the Mitzvot even for the wrong means, he will eventually come to perform the Mitzvot through the right means.

This is an awesome statement inferring that even though a person might have ulterior motives when performing G-d's command, nevertheless, he is encouraged to carry out the Mitzvah, rather than not to perform it at all. For eventually it is guaranteed that he will perform the act appropriately.

Such a statement requires written verification from the Torah and Rav goes on to bring proof from none other than Balak! The Torah states that in his enthusiasm to curse Am Yisrael, he applied all weapons possible at his disposal, including offering up Korbanot – sacrifices to Hashem! In total he offered up 42 Korbanot (14 sacrifices in 3 different places) in order to pray and supplement Hashem to destroy Am Yisrael.

There is no greater Shelo Lishma than that; using such a holy thing as Korbanot, a form of coming closer to Hashem, in order to ask for the destruction of Hashem's People. Yet nevertheless, states Rav, Balak was rewarded for this action with a great descendant – Rut, who in turn was the great grandmother of King David. Thus even Balak HaRasha has a hand in the coming of Mashiach Ben David! Although this is difficult to comprehend, nevertheless this is a fact - the power of a

Mitzvah. Every act is judged by Hashem and reward and punishment are dealt accordingly.

The Gemara Sota (47a) states that in the time of Elisha, 42 children were devoured by Bears. The Gemara ascribes this tragedy in essence to the 42 Korbanot that Balak offered up. His intention was to destroy Am Yisrael and even though Hashem protected Am Yisrael at that time, nevertheless his intention was fulfilled in some respect many generations later in Elisha's time.

How does this compliment with the statement of Rav? Surely we see over here that the outcome of Balak's action was destructive and not beneficial? The Gemara goes on to explain, that although the outcome of his action was good (Rut), the outcome of his intention led to bad (the death of the 42 children).

Rav Nevensal comments that there are three stages involved with performing a mitzvah, each one with its own level of reward and each one worthy of performing. First, is the performance of the mitzvah even without the correct intention. Second we should vanquish all bad intentions, and third we should perform it for the sake of Heaven.

When a Non-Jew gives his wife a cup of coffee he is making her happy and ensuring a content and peaceful coexistence. Where is the difference between a Non-Jew and a Jew? It is in the intention of the action. When a Jew does the same action, if he were to pause before the action and think that he is about to perform multiple Mitzvot - VeAhvta LereAcha Kamocho – love your neighbor as yourself, Gemilut Chasadim, Vedavakta Bo – clinging to Hashem - then he would be transforming his action into one that will not only ensure him Olam Hazeh, but also Olam Habah.

There are so many Mitsvot that we perform daily. Some are due to performance from our

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youth, such as Tefilla – prayer, and others because it is the norm, such as preparing the meal, giving children to eat. All these actions are Mitzvot, yet with the addition of one small thought, one can transform the Mitzvah into a Mitzvah Lishma. And if Balak who performed a Mitzvah but lacked the Lishma was rewarded with a hand in the Mashiah, so much more so, will we be rewarded when we perform each Mitzvah Lishma!

Rav Shalom Schwadron's zsl daughter once became seriously ill with a disease. The Rav was worried that she would transmit the disease to the rest of the children and decided that he was going

to take his children to stay with their grandparents until her disease would cure. On his way to the grandparents he came across the revered Mashgiach of Slobodka, HaRav Isaac Sher. Rav Isaac asked him where he was going.

"Unfortunately my daughter is very sick, so I am taking my children to the grandparents until Bezrat Hashem she gets better." Rav Isaac looked at him and said "So what?"

Rav Shalom didn't quite understand Rav Isaac's question and thought maybe he didn't hear him the first time, so he repeated the reason to him again.

Rav Isaac told him the cow leads the calf. Now Rav Shalom really was confused!?

The Rav continued... "you take your children because you are worried for their safety, but so does the cow take his calf when they are in need of help. What is the difference between you? Of course you need to take care of your children's health, but not because you are worried, rather because Hashem has commanded you Venishmartem MeOd Lenafshotechem (Devarim 4:15), VeAhavta LereAcha Kamocha (Vayikra 18:19), Loh Ta'amod Al Dam ReAcha (16:19). That is why you are taking the children to their grandparents!"

One small thought changes going to Savta into spiritual actions and helps bring the Mashiah!



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

THE LOVE THAT PRECEDES ALL

Eliyahu HaNavi recounts in Tanna D'vei Eliyahu a striking conversation: "A man came to me and said, 'Rabbi, I have two things in my heart that I love—the Torah and the Jewish people. And I don't know which one comes first?' Eliyahu replied: "People often say: the Torah comes first. But I say: the Jewish people precede all." This statement is not a poetic exaggeration—it is a fundamental truth. The world was not created because of the Torah alone. It was created for the Jewish people. As Chazal say, "Bereishit"—for the sake of Israel, who are called reishit, the world was created.

This is why the term "love" in the language of Chazal does not refer to a passing emotional state. G-d's "love" for Israel is not a reaction to our mitzvot or our spiritual level. It is a declaration of who we are—His people, inherently bound to Him. This is not sentiment; it is identity.

The Tana Rabbi Meir famously says: "Whether they behave as children or not, they are still called the children of G-d." This is not about leniency—it is about reality. A child does not become a stranger because of misbehavior. The connection is not conditional.

Even Bilaam, who came with the intention to curse, attempted to highlight Israel's sins. But he came to realize something profound: "It was good in G-d's eyes to bless Israel." The flaws he pointed out were real—but irrelevant.

G-d's commitment to His people is not contingent on their record, but on their role. The Jewish people are not loved because they succeed—they are loved because they are Israel.

Therefore, when Eliyahu quotes G-d saying, "My beloved children, do I lack anything that I should ask from you? What do I ask from you but that you love and respect one another"—this is not a request for sentiment, but for clarity. If we are all bound to G-d by essence, then we must see each other through that same lens—not as products of behavior, but as carriers of identity.

This is the love that precedes Torah. And this is the foundation of redemption: to see the irreducible worth of each Jew—not because of what they've done, but because of who they are.



RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

למה יהיה תעמך ברחוק תעלים לעתות בצרה: - Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 10

FOR YOUR SAKE - NOT OURS - PART 1

Some years ago, before prayers on Rosh Hashana, Rabbi Dovid Stern Shlit"a of Ohel Moshe, Golders Green, gave over a

life-changing thought. He described how the vast majority of us have our own needs and desires in mind as we approach the day of judgement. "Who will live, Who will die?; Who will live in tranquillity? Who will suffer?" . We pray for our health, our livelihood and our children - but the list is endless. Rabbi Stern suggested a radically different perspective which we might wish

to take.

We find in the gemarah (Berachot, (3a)) that Hashem roars in pain at regular intervals during the day, bemoaning the condition of his people and the country from which they have been exiled. The Jews are described as Hashem's "children who have been exiled from their father's table (ibid)". It seems therefore

that our Father, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, is suffering greatly in this world, a world which has taken a left turn from its intended path.

Based on sources, Rabbi Stern made the following mind-blowing statement: "I promise each and every one of you, that if you pray for Hashem Himself to be comforted and satisfied rather than focusing on your own problems and needs - then your prayers relating to your own lives will DEFINITELY be answered for the good".

From time to time you might look at another person and wonder why they merit such great success. You have heard them speak lashon hara almost without interruption, you have noted how their adherence to religious practice is only skin deep and how they treat others with little sensitivity. It pains you how they seem to escape justice.

But why does it pain you? For your sake or for the sake of Hashem's glory?

Admittedly this question is a demanding one, calling for us to step up to a madraiga (spiritual level) which may not be ours. However it does no harm to try and consider this perspective.

In this chapter, King David questions why Hashem appears to stand back and allow human kind to run on autopilot;

"Why Hashem do you stand from afar?" (10,1)

The rasha (wicked person) persecutes the weak, encouraging his belief in his own powers (10,2). This arrogance is fuelled by his own extraordinary success. Most people will never fulfil their dreams for material ownership. If a person gets hold of one hundred pounds, he will hanker after two hundred pounds (Kohelet 1;1;13). But the rasha manages to even surpass his own ambitions for material

gain and acquires much more than he needs with the result that he is able to "gloat over his own lust for success" (10;3) .

His accomplishments also appears to deviate from established norms. Most businessmen will experience highs and lows. Their chosen enterprise will be subject to seasonal or other external factors and as individuals they might perform well in one area and yet fail miserably in other areas. Not so the rasha. "His ways are successful at all times" (1;5) Every path he takes seems to bear fruit. During times of recession where other businesses appear to be flailing, the rasha's enterprise continues to flourish. Even when external factors are at play, such as famine or war the rasha remains untouched. All this points to the fact that his successes are clearly unnatural and are divinely engineered.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Which Arm Should a Person Use for Tefillin—And What If He Is Left-Handed, Ambidextrous, or Disabled? (Part 1)

The Torah commands us to bind Tefillin "on your arm." But which arm? That question is settled by our Sages: the arm referred to is the weaker arm. So for a right-handed person, Tefillin go on the left arm, and for a left-handed person, they go on the right.

This Halacha examines how the decision is made, and how the Halacha applies to left-handed people, those who are ambidextrous, and individuals with limited use of one arm due to injury, paralysis, or amputation.

What Is the Halachic Rule for Determining Which Arm to Use?

The verse says, "Ukeshartam le'ot ayadekha" – "You shall bind them as a sign upon your arm." The Sages explain that this means the hand opposite the writing hand. That's the basic rule. If you write with your right hand, the Tefillin go on your left arm. If you write with your left hand, they go on your right.

This is how the Shulhan Aruch rules in Orah Haim 27:6. The Mishnah Berura follows the same position. The weaker hand is used for Tefillin, because the act of binding represents control and

submission of our actions to Hashem – and this symbolism applies specifically to the hand that is not dominant.

What If a Person Writes with One Hand but Does Most Tasks with the Other?

This comes up a lot. Let's say someone writes with his left hand but eats, throws, and does everything else with his right. Which is his dominant hand?

The general rule is that writing is the primary indicator of dominance. If a person writes with his left hand, he is considered left-handed for Halachic purposes – and he should wear Tefillin on his right arm. Even if he does many other things with his right hand, the fact that he writes with his left gives it priority in Halacha.

That said, if there's real uncertainty – someone is truly mixed or doesn't feel natural with either – he should speak to a Rav. But in most cases, the writing hand decides the matter.

What If a Person Is Ambidextrous?

In a rare case where someone uses both hands equally and writes comfortably with both, the Halacha treats him like a righty, meaning the Tefillin should be

worn on the left arm. That's the ruling in most Poskim. In cases of doubt, we follow rov – the majority – and most people are right-handed.

What If a Person Loses Use of His Dominant Hand?

If a person becomes permanently unable to use his dominant hand – due to stroke, nerve damage, or any other reason – and now functions primarily with the opposite hand, the Halachic ruling may change. That person is now treated as if his non-dominant hand has become dominant, and the Tefillin should be worn on the new weaker arm.

I once had a case where a man lost full use of his right arm. He was born right-handed, but after an injury, he could no longer write, eat, or function with that arm. He was now doing everything with his left. In that case, we ruled that he was now a lefty and should put Tefillin on his right arm.

If the condition is temporary, such as post-surgery or while recovering from an injury, the ruling stays as-is. But if the condition is permanent and the person's habits have shifted accordingly, the Halacha adapts.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Balak

Balak, King of Moav, is in morbid fear of the Bnei Yisrael. He summons a renowned sorcerer named Bilaam to curse them. First, G-d speaks to Bilaam and forbids him to go. But, because Bilaam is so insistent, G-d appears to him a second time and permits him to go. While en route, a malach (emissary from G-d) blocks Bilaam's donkey's path. Unable to contain his frustration, Bilaam strikes the donkey each time it stops or tries to detour.

Miraculously, the donkey speaks, asking Bilaam why he is hitting her. The malach instructs Bilaam regarding what he is permitted to say and what he is forbidden to say about the Jewish People.

When Bilaam arrives, King Balak makes elaborate preparations, hoping that Bilaam will succeed in the curse. Three times Bilaam attempts to curse, and three times blessings are issued instead. Balak, seeing that Bilaam has failed, sends him home in disgrace.

The Bnei Yisrael begin sinning with the

Moabite women and worshipping the Moabite idols, and they are punished with a plague. One of the Jewish leaders brazenly brings a Midianite princess into his tent, in full view of Moshe and the people. Pinchas, a grandson of Aharon, grabs a spear and kills both evildoers.

This act brings an end to the plague – but not before 24,000 people died.

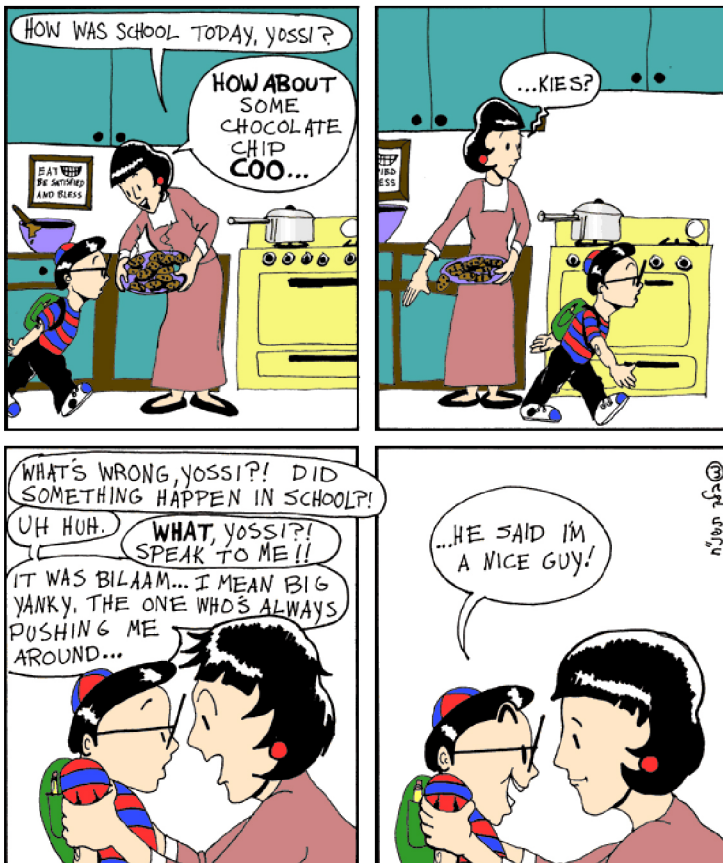
Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. Why did Moav consult specifically with Midian regarding their strategy against the Jews?
2. What was Balak's status before becoming Moav's king?
3. Why did G-d grant prophecy to the evil Bilaam?
4. Why did Balak think Bilaam's curse would work?
5. When did Bilaam receive his prophecies?

A

1. 22:4 - Since Moshe grew up in Midian, the Moabites thought the Midianites might know wherein lay Moshe's power.
2. 22:4 - He was a prince of Midian.
3. 22:5 - So the other nations couldn't say, "If we had had prophets, we also would have become righteous."
4. 22:6 - Because Bilaam's curse had helped Sichon defeat Moav.
5. 22:8 - Only at night.



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