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Parashat BALAK

Shabbat Begins 21:06

Shabbat Ends 22:24

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COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET



Rabbi Jonathan Tawil
Director TAL

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 (Afilu 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.

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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 - VeAhavta LereAcha Kamocho – love your neighbor



THINK, THINK, THINK!

Bilom's strength was in knowing the exact moment that Hashem is angry every day. However, since this anger only lasts a moment, what could Bilom have said in such a short time to curse the Jews?

Either he would have said the one word "kaleim", destroy them. Or, as long as he started cursing in that moment of anger, he could continue afterwards and his words would have an effect. (Tosfas Brochos 7a)

Which famous Jewish person descended from Bolok and why did he merit this?

Rus descended from Bolok in the merit of his bringing 42 korbanos, sacrifices, with the right intentions. He was not looking to annihilate the Jews for who they were, but rather was acting in self defense because he felt they were threatening his country. (Gemora Sota 47a)

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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 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 Mitsvot, 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 Mashiach, so much more so, will we be rewarded when we perform each Mitzvah Lishma!

Rav Shalom Schwadron's zs"l 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 Mashiach!



R' Danny Stone
Mi K'Aamcho(UK)

PARASHAT BALAK

Some remarkable statistics:

Between the years 1918-1933 Jews made up 0.78% of the German population but accounted for approximately 15% of doctors and dentists, 25% of the lawyers and 80% of the key positions in the country's stock exchange.

Polish Jews made up 10% of the population in 1931 but accounted for 33% of the lawyers, 24% of the pharmacists and 56% of doctors in private practice.

16% of Nobel prize - winners in the science category between the years 1901 - 1962 were Jewish. Jews were overrepresented when compared with other groups by a factor of 6.6.

By 1919, 20% of students in all colleges at Harvard were Jewish. Other Ivy League colleges experienced a similar Jewish intake. At Columbia Jews made up 40% of the student body.

(Personality and Individual Differences 44 (2008))

Various theories have been advanced over time to pinpoint the secret of the Jews' remarkably disproportionate success (greater intelligence, work ethic, will power etc.). One of the more interesting theories posited is that Jewish mothers push their children to succeed more than their gentile counterparts (Marjoribanks (1972)). Now whilst some of us may find this latter theory compelling to a degree (do not grin), I think

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the expected general response to that theory will be one of raised eyebrows.

From our point of view, the statistics cited above come as no surprise.

In this week's *sedra* the subject of the relationship between the Jews and their surrounding nations is the focal point of *Bilaam's* landmark monologue.

Bilaam's first observation or *beracha* is that

"(Klal Yisroel)...will dwell l'vadad (alone); they will not be counted amongst the nations". (23;9)

Now at first thoughts it is unclear exactly what *beracha* lies behind these words. Is living in isolation a blessing? Does Israel enjoy the multi – directional media onslaught which awaits its' every move?

A quick look at the *Kli Yakar* and *Ramban's* comments on this *pasuk* resolves this question.

The *Kli Yakar* writes that at the time of *Avraham Avinu's* first interactions with *Hashem*, *Klal Yisroel* were selected by *Hashem* to be his people. They were "eternally separated from all the nations of the world with no attachment to any other nation" The greatest proof of this was that *Hashem* chose, on more than one occasion to take a population count of the Jews, whilst never choosing to take a census of other nations. One only counts what is most precious to him. *Hashem* took a further census of *Klal Yisroel* once they had set themselves in the formation of *degalim*, with the twelve tribes split into four camps. This purpose of this census was to show that the four camps - one of which was positioned in the North, one in the South, one in the East and one in the West - were a microcosm of the world itself, the message being that these camps were what mattered most to *Hashem* in his world.

↪ p4



Tales Of Tzadikim The Ohr HaChaim

After his petirah, the Ohr HaChaim was buried in Har Hazeisim in Yerushalayim, where it is known that tefillot recited at his grave do not go unheeded.

During World War II, the Germans invaded North Africa and advanced steadily northwards towards the Middle East.

The Yidden of Eretz Yisrael were terrified that soon the Nazi hand might, chas vesholom, have them in its grip.

A yom tefillah was announced and all residents of Yerushalayim and its

surroundings converged on Har Hazeisim to the tziyun of the Ohr HaChaim.

Led by the Husyatiner Rebbe, zt"l, and by R' Shlomke of Zvhill, zt"l, the Yidden poured out their hearts, entreating the Ohr HaChaim to intercede in Heaven and nullify the destructive decree that was hanging over their heads.

Upon completing the fervent tefillot, the Husyatiner turned to the crowd and announced, "Boruch Hashem! Hashem Yisborach will help, for we have achieved a yeshua and our enemies' downfall."

Sure enough, after a few days, the Germans were driven back in a Heavenly ordained twist of fate and the Jews of Eretz Yisrael were spared.

When Chassidim asked the Husyatiner how he had been so sure of the salvation, he revealed, "As we finished davening at the grave of the Ohr HaChaim, we saw the Name of Hashem lighting up the tziyun and I understood that Heaven was sending us a message that the yeshua was close at hand."

THINK, THINK, THINK!

When Bolok sends messengers to fetch Bilom he gives them many details: his father's name, city's name and its location. Why the need for all this?

The Ohr HaChayim (22:5) answers that this demonstrates Bolok's desperation to destroy the Jewish people without delay. To remove all doubt regarding who was the correct Bilom, he gave all these specifications.

Chazal tell us how Bilom advised Bolok to use the daughters of Moav to seduce the Jewish men. At the end of the parsha Hashem commands Moshe to kill the leaders of the sinners specifically in the light of day, "neged hashemesh". Why?

The Sforno (25:4) explains that Hashem wanted the people to see the killing and not protest. This would act as an atonement for their remaining quiet and not protesting when seeing them sin.

What is the connection between the parsha and the haftora?

In the haftora it mentions the possuk (Micha, 6:5) – "My people, hear now what Bolok, King of Moav, schemed and what Bilom son of Beor answered him, [and all the events] from Shittim to Gilgal – in order to recognize the righteous acts of Hashem." The Gemora Brochos 6a brings that "the righteous acts of Hashem" refers to Him not getting angry during the days that Bilom tried cursing the Jews, as had He done so, the results would have, G-d forbid, been catastrophic. The Chida, mentions this as one of ten daily remembrances to be said after shacharis, as is done by the Sefardim.

Which possuk, verse, in Parshas Bolok, do we say everyday in davening?

The possuk of "Ma Toyvu Oyholeche Yakov" (24:5) – "How goodly are your tents, O Yakov."

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Dear Rabbi,

In the Hebrew Bible it states that in Biblical times people lived to be hundreds of years old. How is this possible given the fact that people don't live nearly as long today even with the advances in medical technology?

Until the Great Flood, there were no seasons; the weather was always temperate. After the Flood, G-d tells Noah that there will be constant seasonal changes (Genesis 8:22).

Rabbi Meir Leibush (Malbim) explains this as follows: Until the Flood, the earth's axis had no tilt relative to the sun. As a result of the flood, the earth's axis tilted in relation to the sun. Thus, the earth's climate changed drastically, resulting in a weakening of the human constitution and ability to withstand these constant changes in weather.

Thus, as a prelude to the Flood, G-d says "I won't constantly contend concerning Man ... his life-span shall be 120 years (Genesis 6:3). The Ibn Ezra explain this to mean that lifetimes would gradually decrease, until the maximum will be around 120.

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The *Ramban* adds that *Bilaam's* point was

“Just as I can see the Jews encamped in isolation, so too will they forever be separated (from other nations), living in security...They will sit at the top of the world, no nation will be able to defeat them and they will never become insignificant when compared to the other nations of the world.

In view of the above, the meaning of the *pasuk* when it tells us that *Klal Yisroel* will dwell “*I'vadad*” is not simply that *klal Yisroel* will live in physical isolation, but rather that they will be *outstanding*. Their achievements will be exemplary when set against those of other nations.

We are now drawing near to explaining those remarkable statistics cited above.

In one of the earliest interactions between *Hashem* and our people, *Avraham Avinu* is instructed to

“step outside, gaze at the heavens and count the stars, if you can count them...your offspring will be as numerous” (*Bereishit* 15:5)

The *Netziv* (*Ha-emek Davar*) writes that this promise did not relate to the number of *Avraham's* future descendents (which had already been the subject of an earlier *beracha* (see *Bereishit* 13:17)). The promise in fact related to the *nature* of his offspring - that they would be “men of stature”. Although, writes the *Netziv*,

“The nations of the world also develop men of stature, they are a relatively low proportion of those nations as a whole, where as in the case of *Klal Yisroel*, the proportion is much greater”.

Indeed when in *Parashat Voetchanan*, (*Devarim* 7:7) *Hashem* informs *Klal Yisroel* that it is “not because of their great size that I chose you” The *Netziv* writes that the “size” mentioned here does not refer to the total number of Jewish people but their great wisdom, which stood out over and above other nations.

In light of the above are we to conclude that we are guaranteed eternal and unconditional success? Certainly not.

The word “*I'vadad*” - which is understood here to refer to our outstanding success is typically translated as “alone”. The

implication is that our success is inextricably intertwined with the maintaining of our separateness as a people. Indeed our history shows a correlation between *Klal Yisroel's* willingness to assimilate and our corresponding downfall.

The *Ramban* points out here that the unique separateness of the Jewish people which *Bilaam* noted, was facilitated by the universal subscription of *Klal Yisroel* to the authority of the *Torah*.

But what can we do to ensure that we remain subscribed to the authority of the *Torah*?

Before we answer that question lets deal with another.

Amongst all of *Bilaam's berachot*, we only find one which deals with a specific mode of behaviour of one Jew towards another (*ben odom lechavero*). The *gemarah* (*Bava Basra* 42b) states that in observing

“How great are your sanctuaries, *Yaaakov*” (24:5)

Bilaam gazed at the neverending encampment and marvelled at the fact that the entrance to one tent was never set opposite the entrance to another tent “so that one could not peak into his neighbour’s tent”. What was the significance of this behavioural choice? And why is this behavioural habit in particular, the only one highlighted by *Bilaam*?

I recall R' Matisyahu Salamon shlit”a of Lakewood Yeshiva asking why one in general likes to “peak into another’s tent”, to know what is going on in other peoples’ lives. He answered that by nature we like to know the latest gossip because we have an innate desire to pass such information on. R' Matisyahu stated further that we have been given an antidote to this negative inclination – that of learning *Torah*. He explained that the drive to create a *chidush* (original *Torah* thought) is based on a desire to pass that new information onto another person. We can satisfy our desire to gossip by giving over our original *Torah* thoughts to other people.

Rav Matisyahu continued by picking up on an interesting phrase in *teffilat shacharit*. We ask *Hashem* to “light up our eyes with your *Torah*”. Now if the intention here were to simply ask for better understanding of

Torah then surely the request should have been more explicit. What were *Chazal* driving at by using the words “Light up”? Rav Matisyahu explained that the request here is not for greater understanding. We ask to *illuminate* our eyes with *Torah*. When ones’ eyes are illuminated by something bright, one cannot see anything else other than the brightness. So too here, we ask that *Hashem* illuminates our eyes with *Torah*, that we enjoy our learning so much that we do not see or want to know of other matters.

It was through their appreciation and enjoyment of learning that *Klal Yisroel* managed to stay so close to the *Torah* enabling them to lose interest in gossiping; It is this appreciation for *Torah* which *Bilaam* was singling out for praise.

Perhaps it is this enjoyment of *Torah* learning, the making of our learning the “light of our lives”, that is the key to ensuring that we can continue to cling to the *Torah* which - as we have seen in the *Ramban* - is the key to cementing our separateness as a nation. This in turn will guarantee that we are *zoche* to the *beracha* of dwelling “*I'vadad*” and our future success as a people.

QUICK QUOTE



Hmmm...

Please Pray For Refuah Shelaima of:

Yona bat Esther
David Raphael ben Masouda

Shira Ilana bat Susan Shoshana Farha
Tova bat Sara Blima
Mordechai Ben Musha Yeta

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