

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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This week's Parasha Sheet is sponsored in memory and Lelluy Nishmat Sarah bat Nachum Hanassab Z'l.

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.

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? ►

” **THE WEEKLY QUOTE**
“There is no better exercise for your heart than reaching down and helping to lift someone up.”



DVAR TORAH

Small Actions
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

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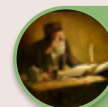


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It is in the intention of the action. When a Jew does the same action, if he were to pause before the action and think that he is about to perform multiple Mitzvot - VeAhavta LereAcha Kamocho - love your neighbor as yourself, Gemilut Chasadim, Vedavakta 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 Mitzvot 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 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 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 Kamocho (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!

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

GUEST WRITER

DVAR TORAH

PARASHA INSIGHTS

In this week's Parsha we read about the evil intentions of Balak who hired Bilam to curse our nation.

The Almighty God turned the curses of Bilam into blessings.

Let us delve a little deeper and see what Bilam really wanted.

There is a well known halacha called Be'alav Imo... which teaches us that if a borrower borrows an item and while he borrows it he asks the owner to be with him even momentarily, then it isn't considered as if it has been borrowed and hasn't quite left the property of the owner, resulting in a special clause.

Subsequently if the borrower lost this item, although normally one would have said that a borrower is liable, in such a case he is exempted.

Be'alav Imo.

The Sefas Emes adds that we can learn from the blessings of Bilam, as to what he was trying to say.

He blessed us, that "Lo hibit aven b'Yaakov", the God Almighty doesn't see any problem with His nation, because "Hashem Elokav Imo", we are a nation always with and connected to our God.

The greatest blessing we could dream for is that we are always close to our God.

There is a well known story about a wine dealer who's blessings were always fulfilled.

The Apia (Apter?) Rov observed this individual and couldn't see anything outstanding in his outward behaviour that merited this power and decided to speak to the dealer.

The wine dealer humbly explained that as his business had started to go downhill, he wanted to look for a partner with whom he could work together on a fifty/fifty basis.

He then decided that his best bet would be to work together with Hashem.

He davened to Hashem that He should help him and he'd give Him fifty percent of all profits.

Needless to say, when working with Hashem, it can only bring blessings.

In Tehillim we say "Achas sha'alti", I have borrowed one thing from Hashem and therefore I'm worried that if I don't look after it properly, "Shivti b'veis Hashem" I would like to remain close to Hashem and live in the Beis hamedrash which will mean that I am exempt from responsibility as I am a partner with Hashem.

We can do no better than working together with Hashem, involving Him in our everyday lives and activities and we'll be the best way can be.

There's no better way forward.

Even Bilam knew that and he wanted to break that bond. We must tighten this connection and reinvest in our partnership.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI CHAIM FALADJI

Rabbi Chaim Faladji, the Rav of Izmir, Turkey, was one of the great sages of his generation. Born in 1788 (5548), he took upon himself the responsibility, in every sense of the word, of the community with grace and an attitude that was unequalled in thoughtfulness and attentiveness. At the same time, he was known for his extreme diligence in Torah study, a diligence that found expression in the enormous number of books that he authored, the total of which numbers 95. Among these are Guinzei Chaim and Hukei Chaim.

A heavy yolk rested upon Rabbi Chaim Faladji's shoulders, one that stole much of his time. One marvels at discovering just how exhaustively he succeeded in studying Torah, how he managed to give his own explanations, and how he arrived at writing such a large number of books, ones which opened the eyes of the Jewish world. His story is in fact one of time optimization. His books testify to the fact that one can arrive at finding the time to accomplish many more things than we, ordinary people, can even imagine. The works of Rabbi Chaim deal with many tractates of the Gemara and offer explanations on Halachah and Aggadah. They deal with the work of the Rambam, with the four sections of the Shulchan Aruch, and give thousands of responses to Halachic questions. His works offer explanations on the weekly Torah sections and comprise, moreover, over 100 discourses and 14 volumes on the entire Tanach. One of his books deals with questions pertinent to dayanim, another on the laws of sacrifice, another on laws pertaining to the community, etc., etc. It is simply impossible in this article to detail the 95 books that he wrote. How did he find the time to write all of these books?

The most definite answer to this question is found in his own personal account: "I take Heaven and Earth as my witnesses that from the day that I began to reason for myself, until the day of my twentieth year, I was deeply immersed in Torah study day and night, without the loss of the least moment, for I occupied myself with nothing having to do with the world in general. And from the age of 20 until the age 40, since I had a family to feed, I occupied myself with the affairs of the world in order to survive. Yet when I had no issues to

deal with, I didn't take advantage of it in order to lose my time, but instead returned to my studies. In the same way, from the age of 40 – the age at which I became a Dayan (judge and decision-maker), and when I took charge of the needs of the community – until today, year after year I took upon myself an extremely heavy yolk, for there was no instant in which I wasn't called upon during disputes and communal affairs, both in the city itself and its surroundings. Yet even though the authorities added even more difficult tasks to me, and in several domains, and even though my heart grieved within me because I could not study Torah as I wished, I forced myself to find time where I was free from my tasks – the little spare time that I had – in order to consecrate my eyes and heart to the study of Torah. May my actions be observed and imitated when one is faced with numerous communal and individual worries and pressed for time, that one's eyes and heart not wander in following vain pursuits when given a few moments of freedom from responsibilities, and may blessing be found in one's Torah!"

Next came a promise: "As long as you have a great desire for Torah, and as long as you do not give yourself over to trivial pursuits, and that your mind becomes completely liberated during the hours and minutes that you are free in order not to lose anything, we will help to find time to accomplish what you desire, to study the Torah a little and to practice it a lot. Most of the time, when a man or woman presented themselves before me and I had to speak to them at length in order to comfort them, G-d knows just how much I suffered when they caused me to lose hours of Torah study. However if I pushed them aside, I feared humiliating them and not having shared in their pain. Now we know that 'honorable conduct [derech erez] precedes Torah.' As for that which our Sages told us in Perkei Avoth, that reducing social contacts (derech erez) to a minimum is one of the 48 things by which Torah is acquired, this means that one should avoid extending social contacts in one's private life in order to occupy oneself with Torah, but this does not at all deal with the honor of others, for in that respect one risks causing them pain and humiliation." ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE PROPER WAY TO VOCALIZE THE AMIDAH

Which is the proper way to recite the Amida – silently, or audibly?

The Shulchan Aruch writes (101) that when praying the Amida one must move his lips and enunciate the words; thinking the words in one's mind does not fulfill the obligation, as indicating in the verse describing the prayer of Chana, mother of the prophet Shemuel: "Only her lips were moving..." (Shemuel I 1:13). This ruling of the Shulchan Aruch is shared by all authorities.

There is, however, disagreement among the authorities as to how loudly the Amida should be recited. The Shulchan Aruch rules that one should recite the Amida softly enough so that those standing near him will not hear his prayer, but loudly enough to allow him to hear his own prayer. Among the Kabbalists, however, we find different traditions in this regard. The Chid"i (Rabbi Chayim Yosef David Azulai, Israel, 1724-1806), in his work "Birkei Yosef" (a commentary to the Shulchan Aruch), records a tradition he heard in the name of students of the Arizal (famed Kabbalist, Israel, 1534-1572) that the Amida must be prayed silently. If one's prayer is even slightly audible, the "Chitzonim" (harmful spiritual forces) are capable of disrupting the prayer's efficacy and preventing it from reaching its destination. By contrast, the Siddur Beit Oveid (in Hilchot Tefila, 75), after recording these comments of the Chid"i, cites a ruling from the Kabbalist Mahari Seruk, a student of the Arizal, that one must pray loudly enough to hear his own prayer. Thus, different traditions exist as to the proper way to recite the Amida according to the Kabbalah.

The Ben Ish Chai (Rabbi Yosef Chayim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), in his work "Od Yosef Chai" (Parashat Mishpatim, 3; listen to audio for precise citation), rules that the Halacha on this issue depends on the individual's ability to properly pronounce the words and concentrate on his prayer. One who feels that he can accurately enunciate the words and pray with concentration reciting the Amida inaudibly, then he should do so, in accordance with the tradition cited by the Chid"i. If, however, one suspects that he might swallow his words or experience difficulty concentrating unless he recites the Amida audibly, then he should follow the Shulchan Aruch's ruling and pray the Amida loudly enough to hear his words. The Ben Ish Chai adds that his father followed the practice to recite the Amida audibly.

Chacham Ovadia Yosef, in his work Halichot Olam (vol. 1, p. 157), writes that the Halacha follows the position of the Shulchan Aruch, that the Amida should be recited audibly. This will enhance his concentration and ability to pronounce the words properly.

Of course, those who recite the Amida audibly must ensure to recite it softly enough that only they – and nobody else in the synagogue – can hear their prayer.

Summary: According to all authorities, one must recite the Amida with his lips, and not merely think the words in his mind. One should recite the Amida audibly, such that he – but nobody else – can hear his prayer. If he feels capable of properly enunciating the words and concentrating while praying silently, the Ben Ish Chai says to pray silently. ■

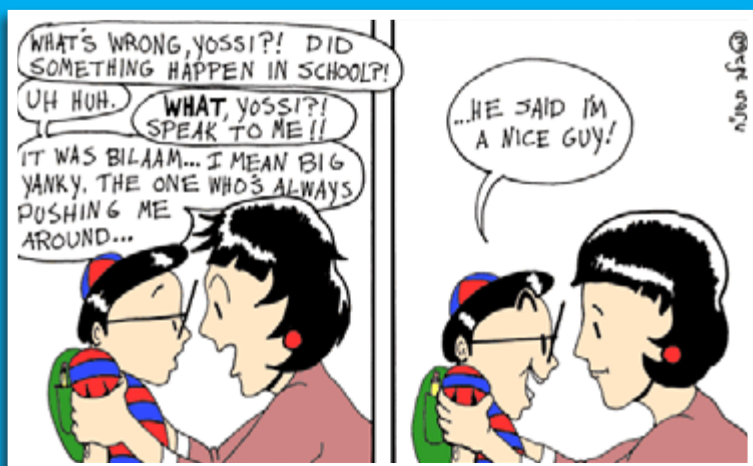
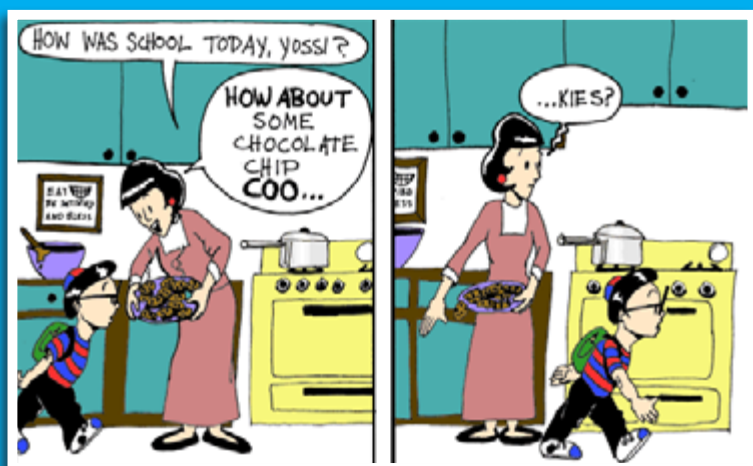
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STORY

DIGNITY

Avi, fancy meeting you here. I thought that I was the only one who knew this shortcut home from school.

Not at all Chaim. I have been going this way for a long time. I like walking past these new homes. Look at that one, the front door is wide open. Wow, you can see straight into the house. Hmmm. That is really interesting. It looks like they are doing some remodeling in there.

Avi, should you be looking into someone's front door?

Well, they left it wide open. They must know that people will look in.

I see that they have left it open. But I still do not think that we should look in. After all, looking into someone's home is an invasion of privacy. People do things inside of their homes that they do not want others to see.

I guess you're right Chaim. But why do they build their home in such a way that you can see right into the front door from the street?

That's a good question Avi. The homes should be built to provide more privacy. Just as it was in the desert.

The desert? Who has a private home in the desert?

The Jewish people's homes were very private during their wanderings in the desert over three thousand years ago.

Didn't they live in tents?

They surely did.

Tents are not very private.

Usually not, Avi. However, they were very careful to pitch their tents in such a way that no two openings faced each other.

That is not so easy to do. How do you know that Chaim?

It is in this week's parsha Avi. Bilaam HaRasha, the wicked Bilaam wanted to curse the Jewish people. G-d would not allow him to curse us. He only let him bless us. He went to the top of a mountain and looked down on the Jewish encampment. He said, "How good are your tents, Jacob, your dwellings, Israel" (Bamidbar 24:5). Rashi comments that Bilaam saw that the openings of their tents were not facing each other. This was a true blessing, complimenting the tznius (dignity) of the Jewish

people. They respected each other's privacy. They would not look into each other's homes.

I see what you mean, Chaim. Looking into someone's house is really prying into their business. We have no right to do that. It shows a lack of self respect and respect for the other person.

Exactly Avi. One of the trademarks of the Jewish people has always been our tznius. We express it in many ways. Our clothing, manner of speech, even the way we walk, all reflect our dignity.

Chaim, I am so proud to be a member of this people. We have maintained our dignity through the many struggles of our three thousand years of history. I have to make my effort to carry on the tradition. I will try never to look into someone's home again. I won't even think of asking them a personal question.

Avi, I am going to stand up the next time that you walk into the room.

Why Chaim?

Because I am in the company of a visiting dignitary.

TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 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 What happens to a field where oxen graze?
- 4 Why did Hashem grant prophecy to the evil Bilaam?
- 5 Why did Balak think Bilaam's curse would work?

Answer

1 22:4 - Since Moshe grew up in Midian, the Moabites thought the Midianites might know where lay Moshe's power. 2 22:4 - He was a prince of Midian. 3 22:4 - It shows no sign of blessing. 4 22:5 - So the other nations couldn't say, "If we had had prophets, we also would have become righteous." 5 22:6 - Because Bilaam's curse had helped Sichon defeat Moav.