



Balak / בַּלַק

## Choosing The Right Path

# Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings  
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

By: A. Ben-Ami  
Illustrations by: Yocheved Nadell

**Continued from Parshas Chukas:** Yitzky and Shimmy had just walked away with Totty from "Tzadok Hatzadik" and his table full of "segulot", when then the loud sound of a police siren was heard.

"Stop! Police!" shouted two cops as they jumped out of their police car.

Tzadok looked up, startled. "What's going on?" he asked.

"You're under arrest," one of the officers replied. "We have received reports that you are swindling people, selling them useless things and claiming that they have magical properties."

"But these are segulot!" cried Tzadok, as the policemen pulled Tzadok's hands behind his back. "Look, this one will give you success in your job!"

"I'm doing my job pretty successfully right now," said the other officer, as he placed handcuffs on Tzadok's wrist.

"No, I promise!" cried Tzadok. "My segulot help everybody!"

The first policeman smiled. "If your 'segulot' work so well, then why aren't they helping you now?"

Tzadok paused. "Well, you see," he stammered. "The segulot only work when you pay me. Since I can't pay myself, they don't work for me. I do this just to help others



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- I don't even get anything out of it! You can't arrest me - I'm a tzadik! It even says so on my sign!"

One of the officers emptied the big box of cash under the table into an evidence bag. "Hey Erez!" the cop called. "These rocks labeled 'Har Sinai Rocks' aren't even rocks at all! They are just pieces of bricks."

"Of course they're bricks!" Tzadok shouted as he was helped into the back of the police car. "These are the bricks the Bnei Yisrael made in Mitzrayim, which they brought with them to Har Sinai."

"Enough." said the policemen as they started driving Tzadok towards the jail. "You can tell the rest of your stories to the judge."

### Later that evening in Jail

Tzadok sat in his cell, getting ready to go to sleep, when a voice made him look up. He was surprised to see a man with a kapote and hat standing outside his cell door.

"Shalom," the man said. "I am Rav Volender, the rabbi of the jail. I'm sorry to see you got yourself into trouble."

"But I didn't do anything wrong!" said Tzadok. "They just arrested me for selling segulot to help other Jews."

"I've seen you selling that junk before," said Rav Volender. You and I know that those aren't real segulot. You were selling pieces of junk to frum Jews and claiming that they were real."

"What do you mean?" said Tzadok, insulted. "I did nothing wrong. I was successful and made a lot of money. Hashem wouldn't have let me make so much money if I was doing something wrong!"

"Now, Tzadok, do you really believe that? Come on, think about this week's Parsha."

"Parsha?" asked Tzadok.

"Yes," said Rav Volender. "You do know what Parshat Hashavua is, right?"

"Oh yes, yes, of course," said Tzadok uncertainly. "This week is uh - Parshat Lech Lecha?"

"Lech Lecha?" asked Rav Volender incredulously. "Oy vey, no. It's Parshat Balak. Do you know the story of Bilaam?"

"Oh yes, he had a talking donkey!" said Tzadok excitedly. "I sell hairs from that donkey which I found in a cave in the Negev!"

"Listen," said Rav Volender, starting to get a bit exasperated. "The point I want to make is this: When Bilaam first wanted to go and curse the Am Yisrael, Hashem told him, 'No way!'"

"But you know what happened? Bilaam kept asking and asking, and finally Hashem gave Bilaam permission to go, so he went. Now, do you think Bilaam could say 'Well, Hashem let me go so obviously that's what He wanted?' Of course not!"

"Chazal say that we learn a very important lesson from the story with Bilaam: **בְּרַדְךָ שְׂאֵרְךָ רוּצָה לֵילֵךְ מוֹלִיכִיךָ - אוֹתוֹ** - In the way that a person chooses to go, Hashem will allow him to go. The Torah tells us what we should do, but we still have *bechira*, free choice. And not only do we have *bechira*, but we see from Bilaam that if a person keeps trying to do wrong, Hashem might even help him! That's why Hashem finally said, 'Go!' Because if you want to ignore what Hashem wants, don't be surprised if He helps you!"

"Hashem told you 'No!' many times," said Rav Volender. "Hashem told us in the Torah not to steal, lie, or cheat other people in business. But you insisted on continuing down the path of *sheker*, even though many Rabbanim asked you to stop. Chazal Just like Bilaam was able to go against Hashem's will, if we insist on not listening to the Torah, Hashem won't stop us."

"But I want to tell you something, Tzadok, something very important. Chazal tell us that the same thing works the other way too. When a person wants to do something good and he tries and tries and tries to do good, Hashem helps him do that too. And so, if you want to do *teshuva*, if you really want to do a real *teshuva*, you can get started today. And you can be sure that Hashem will help you! And one day you can be a real Tzadok Hatzadik!"

And with that, Rav Volender wished Tzadok a good night and walked away from the lonely jail cell.

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