

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Background

Balak was afraid that the Jewish nation was going to evict him from his land. He hired the prophet of the gentiles, Bilam, to curse the Jews. Bilam advised Balak to offer various sacrifices because this was the method of getting HASHEM to curse the Jewish nation. But Balak was not successful. In fact, against his will, Bilam blessed the Jewish nation. The Gemara tells us that Balak still received reward for the sacrifices that he brought. His reward was having Rus, the mother of Dovid Hamelech, descend from his lineage.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת
סנהדרין דף קה/ב

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב לעולם יעסוק אדם בתורה ובמצוה אפילו שלא לשמה שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה שבשכר ארבעים ושתים קרבנות שהקריב בלק זכה ויצאה ממנו רות

אמר רבי יוסי בר הונא רות בתו של עגלון בן בנו של בלק מלך מואב היתה

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, "Always should a man be involved in Torah study and performance of mitzvos, even if not for their true intent because if he does them with improper intent, he will come to do them with the proper intent. In reward for the 42 sacrifices that Balak brought, he merited having Rus come from his lineage."

Rav Ashi, the son of Rav Huna, says Rus was the daughter of Egloyn, the granddaughter of Balak, the king of Moav.

Questions

What possible merit would Balak have for bringing these sacrifices? His entire intent was wrong! His sole motivation in bringing them was not to serve HASHEM, but to fight against HASHEM's people. Not only is Balak's intent improper, it is sinful. He is using the very *mitzvah* to do something wrong. What possible reward could he have for something like that?