

## The angel of Hashem said to Bilaam, “Go with the men.” (22:35)

Hashem originally instructed Bilaam not to go with the Moavite emissaries. Then, He changed the message. He could go with them. *Rashi* explains this based upon the Talmudic dictum, *B'derech she'adam rotzeh leilech bah molichin oso*, “The path that a person chooses to follow, they bring him (and allow him to go) down that path.” In other words, Bilaam indicated that he would like to join the officers of Moav. When Hashem saw that Bilaam yearned to accompany them, He said, “Go!” *Chazal's* statement leaves us with a question about the text. What is the meaning of the word *bah*, it?

The *Maharsha* wonders who the “they” is that lead him on his selected path. He explains that, when one has a good *machshavah*, thought, he creates a good *malach*, angel. When his thought is bad, when he plans to do something that runs counter to the Torah, he creates a bad *malach*. It is those *malachim*, angels, whom he created with his positive or negative thoughts who lead him on his preselected path. The path one chooses for himself is not one that he travels alone. The angels that he created guide him along his selected path. Thus, the *Tanna* of this *Mishnah* teaches: On the path that one selects for himself – *bah* – it, the choice he made leads him. How does the choice lead him? He created angels that accompany him. They are his choice, and they are the ones who are *molichin oso*, bring him down that path.

Alternatively, *bah* means specifically “it,” with complete adherence to his will. *Horav Chaim Toito, Shlita*, relates an incident that occurred concerning *Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl, Mashgiach* of Kamenitz, Yerushalayim, which underscores this point. When *Rav Moshe Aharon* was a lad of eight years old, he became deathly ill. His parents took him to the finest doctors, the biggest specialists. They responded, “Say a prayer.” *Tehillim* was all that was left for them to do. People recited *Tehillim* for him around the clock. One day, his father looked at him and said, “Look, everyone is reciting *Tehillim* for you; everyone is petitioning Hashem for your speedy recovery – everyone – but you.” The young boy asked his father, “What should I do? I, too, am reciting *Tehillim*. Is there anything else I can do?” His father replied, “Accept upon yourself a *hanhagah tovah*, good practice, a special deed to which you will commit yourself, regardless of the circumstances.” “Does Father have a suggestion for me?” the boy asked. His father thought a moment and replied, “Yes. Accept upon yourself that, upon being cured from this illness, you commit yourself to always *daven* with a *minyan*.” The young boy agreed to accept this policy as a commitment for life. Indeed, he doubled down on his learning, his *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, and strengthened his *minyan* attendance. He would go out of his way to see to it that, under all circumstances, he would *daven* with a *minyan*.

Once he became *Mashgiach* of Kamenitz, his duties changed commensurably. He now had to shoulder responsibility for maintaining the fiscal obligations of the *yeshivah*. As the *yeshivah* grew in size, his obligations also grew. It meant taking off time from the *yeshivah* to travel to the diaspora

to raise funds for the *yeshivah*. While this presented a problem concerning the time he spent with his students, it also presented a logistical nightmare with regard to his commitment to *daven* with a *minyan*. Therefore, whenever he purchased a ticket to travel out of the country, he made sure that either there was a *minyan* on the plane or he took a flight that had a layover which afforded him the opportunity to locate and *daven* with a *minyan*.

Once, on a trip to America, he asked the agent if there would be a *minyan* at the airport. The response was to be expected, "It is an airport, not a *shul*." He could not promise him a *minyan*, but, if there were enough observant Jewish travelers (which there are at Ben Gurion airport), there would be a *minyan*. If *minyan* was so important to him, however, the agent suggested that the *Mashgiach* take a stopover flight which would allow him a few hours to leave the airport, locate a *shul* and *daven* before returning for the continuation of his flight. Thus, on his next flight to the United States, he booked a flight that had a layover in Amsterdam. He figured he would have sufficient time to take a taxi from the airport to a *shul*, *daven* and return in time for his flight to the States. The plane landed in Amsterdam for a two-hour layover. He walked outside the terminal and searched for a taxi/car service. He had been standing there a few moments when a car pulled up, and the driver asked him in *Ivrit*, "Where is the *Rav* going?" *Rav* Moshe Aharon replied, "I require a *minyan*." During the trip, the driver informed the *Mashgiach* that he lived outside of the city, and every morning he drove into the city to *daven* and go to work. After a short while, the car came to a stop in a small alley. They alighted and went into a small *shul*, in which were assembled eight Jews, who were waiting for two more Jews to complete the *minyan*. The *Mashgiach davened* and returned to the airport in time for his flight. He did not miss *davening* with a *minyan*.

When the *Mashgiach* related this story, his eyes shone brightly as he would say, "Imagine, eight Jews arise in the morning prepared to *daven*, knowing that they are eight; number nine must drive in from the suburbs and they must hope that number ten will somehow, from somewhere, materialize. This time they were "gifted" a Jew who was traveling to the United States whose commitment to *minyan* was so strong that he was 'availed' the opportunity to join their *minyan* that morning."

We derive from here that just, *rotzeh leilech*, wanting to go in a certain direction, is insufficient. One must commit strongly to this path. Then he can be assured that, if he commits *bah*, to it, with strong intention, he will be led there. He must, however, have a *bah*," a specific, unequivocal commitment to "it."