



“It Was Not Yet Forbidden for Them”

It is worthwhile to quote the words of Hagaon Rav Shmuel Vosner *zt”l*, the *Shevet Halevi*, which are very pertinent to this topic in particular and to many aspects of life in general.

After Bilaam’s plan to curse the Jewish people failed, he advised Balak to cause the Jews to sin. Balak followed this advice, and it led to a terrible plague. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin 106*) describes how Bilaam advised Balak to send the daughters of Moav in the guise of peddlers. These girls convinced the Jewish men to drink their wine, as *stam yeinam* (wine produced by non-Jews) was not yet forbidden at that time. After they drank the wine, it was easier to seduce them to sin.

Rav Vosner asks, why did the Gemara deem it necessary to mention that wine produced by non-Jews was still permitted at that time? What is the relevance of

this fact?

He answers that *Chazal* are teaching us an important lesson.

The Jewish men knew well that drinking this wine could lead to serious problems. However, they drank it nonetheless. They convinced themselves that it was okay by noting that it was not yet forbidden according to *halachah*. And this is what led to a terrible, destructive outcome.

We learn from here that if a person knows that a certain action can lead to a destructive outcome, he must avoid this action even if it is not explicitly forbidden by *halachah*!