



Parshat Vayikra: Giving For Hashem

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The first verse in Parshat Vayikra tells how Hashem called to Moshe and spoke to him from the *Mishkan*. The *midrash* points out that while all the other prophets were initially summoned by an angel, Hashem himself called Moshe. Why is this significant?

The Avnei Nezer explains that when Hashem spoke to the evil prophet Bilam, the Torah uses the expression "*Vayikar*," to meet. Hashem met Bilam and spoke to him, but Bilam did not change as a result of the lofty encounter. In contrast, Rashi notes that when Hashem called Moshe with the word "*Vayikra*," it was an expression of G-d's love and, for Moshe, a process of profound change.

How could Bilam remain unaffected by Hashem's word? The Shem MiShmuel answers that Bilam desired the Divine experience only because it was pleasurable. He was unwilling, however, to give up his lustful and sinful lifestyle. Hashem allowed him to have it his way and that is why he did not change.

In contrast, Moshe was named Moshe, "*Ki min hamayim mishisihu*," he was drawn from the water. Water represents physical

pleasures. Moshe gave up all worldly pleasures to be close to Hashem. He spent forty days and nights without food or drink and came close to death in order to receive the Torah. He worked on himself for decades as a shepherd to reach a lofty level of prophecy.

Chazal compare Moshe to a wife and Bilam to a concubine. A wife joins her husband via a holy union called *kiddushin*. A concubine relationship has no sanctity, it is purely practical. Bilam merely met Hashem, but did not develop a relationship, while Moshe reached the highest state of prophecy.

Although Hashem addressed the other Jewish prophets with the loving expression "*Vayikra*," they still required an angel to pull them from reality. They were righteous and functioned at an elevated level but they lived normal physical lives. In contrast, Moshe was the only prophet who was in a constant state of prophetic consciousness. He could talk to people and concurrently converse and listen to Hashem directly, without the aid of angels.

The Shem MiShmuel explains a puzzling phrase found in the Shabbat morning davening. "*Yismach Moshe b'matnat chelko*."

Moshe rejoices with his gift of being a true servant of Hashem." How does this relate to Shabbat? The Arizal says that Moshe had the ability to commune with Hashem while consciously living in this world. It is this gift that he shares with the Jewish people every Shabbat. It is the special blend of spiritual and physical with which we connect with Hashem in a different, more elevated realm.

In Kabbalah, every energy is expressed in triple form. Moshe is the soul of Shabbat, Yerushalayim is the place, and Shabbat in time. On Shabbat we come face to face with Hashem. The Shem MiShmuel writes that when we sing *Shalom Aleichem* Friday night we welcome the angels, but we very quickly bid them farewell. This is because on Shabbat we merit to reach the level of Moshe who had no need for angels.

Our Sages say, "He who struggles before Shabbat will enjoy the Shabbat." Moshe gave up everything for Hashem and merited to become the embodiment of Shabbat. Similarly, during the six days of the week we struggle to overcome our physical and spiritual challenges in order to ultimately achieve that special connection with Hashem on Shabbat.

Unraveling The Hagada: Lowly Origins #2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Chana Prero

The Mishna tells us, "*Matchil bi'genut u'mesayem b'shevach*." When we tell the story of redemption we begin with the negative and end with praise. The Gemara in Pesachim discusses an argument between Rav and Shmuel as to which negative aspect one should start with. Rav says to commence with the paragraph, "*Metichela*, In the beginning our ancestors served idols." Shmuel maintains that one should start with "*Avadim Hayinu*, We were slaves in Egypt."

There are a number of ways to explain this disagreement. The Rambam's view is that both aspects are important. One should begin by stating that our ancestors served idols and then mention our slavery.

What is the basis of the disagreement between Rav and Shmuel? The Avudraham explains that Rav held that one should begin with idol worship because spiritual degradation is much more negative than physical subjugation. Shmuel's view was to begin with slavery because the essence of

the Seder night is redemption from slavery. The *machloket* really is about whether we concentrate on the theme of the seder, or whether we focus on the complete history of the Jewish nation. In the second approach we mention the most negative aspect of our history, idol worship.

Why must we begin the story of our redemption with a negative memory? The Malbim answers that when we contrast the experience of one extreme with another, we emphasize the miraculous nature of our overall experience. When we talk about how low we fell, we can more deeply appreciate how Hashem elevated us. Therefore, the view that maintains that the essence of the night is redemption maintains that we should start with our extreme subjugation. The opinion that says that we should begin with our idol worship maintains that we will then appreciate our spiritual level, and the opportunities we have today to serve Hashem.

Rav Kasher notes that the question of the

argument is on which component of the redemption to focus. The view that holds we begin with slavery maintains that we should concentrate on our physical redemption. The opinion that says to begin with our idol worship instructs us to focus on our spiritual redemption. In essence, one must feel both the spiritual redemption as we achieved a national identity independent of Egypt, and the physical redemption with our freedom from bondage.

Why indeed did we need to undergo the physical degradation and spiritual redemption of Egypt? Our ancestors were idol worshippers and that polluted the soul of the Jewish nation. We had to be purified in the smelting pot of Egypt in order to merit the three great gifts, Torah, the Land of Israel, and the World to Come. The Talmud says all three can only be attained through suffering. This is the connection between the two negative aspects, idol worship and slavery. The idol worship eventually brought slavery upon us.

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If spiritual redemption is greater than physical redemption, why do we begin with physical redemption? Rav Yaakov Emden explains that our physical suffering and redemption led to our spiritual redemption. Similarly, the Sefat Emet writes that our experiences in Egypt enabled us to receive

the Torah. The *makot* and the great miracles at the splitting of the sea uprooted the negative Egyptian philosophies within the Jewish heart and, in place implanted belief in Hashem. This brought them up to a level where they could connect with Hashem and receive the Torah.

The Hagada tells us, "*Chayav adam lirot et atzmo ke'ilu hu yatza mi'Mitzrayim*. A person is obligated to feel as if he himself left Egypt." Let us see this Pesach as a true and eternal redemption.

Bringing Torah To Life #9-Helping Children Feel Content

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

We continue our discussion from last week Children from ages six to ten can comprehend a lot more. Teach them gratitude by pointing out the details of things they receive both from Hashem and people. For example you can say, "Look what a beautiful wallet Aunt Ruthie bought you. It has such intricate stitching. She must have had to travel on a bus all the way to Geulah to buy it and it must have cost a lot of money." This makes the wallet a lot more significant. If you have a child who is curious, he may enjoy looking at the Malchut series of books with you. You can admire the details of the pictures together with him and discuss the wonders of nature. You can then point out how much Hashem cares about us and how He tailor-made a world for us to enjoy. Almost all children can appreciate the goodness of having when there's a possibility of not having. Tell stories of *tzaddikim* and discuss the hardships people had to endure in the olden days. Contrast the mode of travel once used and our easy transportation system today. Talk about Rivka at the well and how good it is to have running water in our homes.

Achievement and connection are where real *simcha* comes from. At this age the pleasure of giving can be much more sophisticated. Depending on what the child enjoys doing, create situations for them to do chesed. Have them be your *shaliach mitzva*. Let them stuff envelopes, deliver

tzedaka, or pack food packages. Let them see how they made a difference by telling them what they did. For example you can say, "That was so kind of you to bring our guest a glass of water." Don't tell them who they are, talk about their actions. This is much more credible to them. Kids like using their talents and abilities. Be creative in finding good outlets for them.

Spend time with your child. Go for a walk or take them out for coffee or an ice cream. Anything that is just the two of you together will make your child feel special. Help them be part of something larger. Encourage them to join a *tehillim* group or a Shabbat group where they'll achieve that good feeling of social connection, interest, and achievement.

It's important for you to be happy. Children feed on the *simcha* you create in the home. If all the child hears is complaining and a litany of "poor me" it will make him feel like a burden. In addition, he will pick up the negativity of the environment and he will not want a family with many children. Don't complain to your children or husband. It's not even the best basis for a friendship. The only one to address your feelings to should be Hashem. Ask Him for strength, mercy, and joy. He can give you everything. All you need to do is ask.

Kids from ages eleven to fourteen are more intelligent. This is a good age for challenging trips where they can see the depth, breadth,

and beauty of nature and develop a sensitivity for the Creator. Help your child channel his talents and abilities so that he feels contributive and accomplished. Getting recognition for their individuality is important. Give them opportunities to discover their own goodness. Let your daughter be creative in the kitchen even if the mess makes it seem almost not worth it. Have her feel like she did something visible and big.

As children approach the teen years what they own and who they are become enmeshed. Buying them something significant will mean a lot more to them than buying a toy for a young child. Older children derive even more happiness in shared social experiences. Spend time with your child. Go out for a coffee or a snack together. Belonging to a shul or a Chassidic or Yeshiva community can bring *simchat hachaim*. This is important for your child as it will make him feel as if he is no longer an appendage but rather a member of a larger group.

In summary, *simchat hachaim* is about gratitude, achievement, inclusion, and nurturing close relationships. May Hashem help you discover the *tzaddik* within each of your children and may they merit to grow up with a lot of light, *simcha*, and genuine inner joy.

Rebbetzin's Perspective I Part 1

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

Question:

I am afraid to be as religious as I can be because I don't want people commenting on it. The more irreligious the person I'm with is, the more irreligious I claim to be. I'll hold myself back from doing good just so that I can feel accepted. I know this is hurting my soul. What can I do to improve?

Answer:

Read the section in Mesilat Yesharim that discusses arrogance. He explicitly writes about this problem. The *yetzer hara* is very

clever. He tries to convince you not to seem too good so people won't perceive you as arrogant or superior. If you adjust yourself to other people you'll be normal. We all like acceptance.

The Rambam says this is human nature. Most people tend to want to be like the people around them because it erases borders and makes us feel more accepted.

You're behaving normally, but it doesn't mean you're on the right path. You have to bite the bullet and say, "Hashem created me as an individual with a unique background

and way of thinking. I will be myself – not because it's good for me (which it is), but because I want to serve Hashem with the tools He gave me."

If you have access to the *mitzvot*, and have integrated them into your lifestyle, make a commitment to keep them because you are Hashem's servant. This issue is between you and Hashem, not between you and others. It's not a psychological problem, it's a spiritual one. Study the chapter in Mesilat Yesharim well. It will give you the direction and courage you need to change.