

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 mishihi*,” 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.

Megilat Esther: Returning From The Depths

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The *Megilah* tells us, “And Mordechai knew all that had occurred.” He not only knew the events, but all the factors in the chain that led to it. His eyes could see all the way back to the era of the First Temple, to the Jews bowing down to the idol of Nevuchadnezzar, and to his ancestor Binyamin who didn’t bow to Esav. He understood how each link fit and that he was destined to help the Jews rectify where they had failed. “And Mordechai tore his clothing.” We tear clothing in mourning because just as when you tear a garment and then sew it up it’s not the same, so too when there is loss, there may be healing, but it’s not the same. The Jews were never closer to absolute destruction than they were before the Purim miracle. Desire and pleasure drove them to take part in the feast of Achashveirosh. They chose to have an identity tied to the body instead of the soul. Therefore Mordechai donned sack cloth and ashes to awaken a

sense of mortality and humbleness. He wanted to bring the Jews to the realization of what they had become and where it could lead them.

The *Megilah* says about Mordechai, “He cried a great and bitter outcry.” The same language is used regarding Esav when he realized Yaakov had taken the blessings. There was something of Yaakov within Esav that longed for meaning and focus and that is why he wept. The desire to rule the world is the trace of Esav within us. However it can be a means to an end, to raise the world to holiness, so that the point of dominance becomes sanctified. Esav’s crying for the part of him that was Yaakov that couldn’t be expressed, was paralleled by Mordechai’s crying for the Jews’ continuity, for their ability to rectify the world that was now in jeopardy.

The *Megilah* writes how Mordechai came till the gate of the king but could not go further because he was clad in mourning. Likewise, prayer has the ability to pass the heavenly gates and ascend to the divine throne, but only if there is joy and respect accompanying it. “In every state, in every place where the king’s written word and law reached there was great mourning.” The Jews realized that they were at the brink of annihilation and they reacted accordingly. They didn’t go into denial or engage in political or economic schemes to save the situation. They responded with fasting and repentance. They were mourning not only their individual fate but the fate of the nation. They realized if they would be destroyed, it would leave a gaping void that would be impossible to fill.

Mordechai tells Hasach to tell Esther to go to the king and plead for mercy. Esther was a

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master of *tzniut* and *tefilah*. *Tzniut* is about having an identity that's not externalized. It's about tapping into the true internal self. The deeper a person is, the fewer the hurdles they have to jump over for their *tefilah* to work. Many of us have trouble focusing in on *tefilah*. Material thoughts grab us because our identity is to a large degree external. If we would work on developing a stronger inner self, our minds wouldn't wander that way. Esther was the perfect emissary. Even so, she told Mordechai to gather the Jews and pray. She said, my prayers alone won't do it. She knew that collective *tefilah* and *teshuva* have enormous power over an individual's efforts.

Purim is *yom k'Purim*, like Yom Kippur. It's about forgiveness, wiping away sins, erasing

the ugliness, and revealing what's beautiful. The ugliness was the banquet which wasn't technically forbidden but was disastrous to their inner identity. Esther demanded a three day fast. She needed them to get to the very edge and to do so in a committed way. In that place of longing and redefining and saying, "I know who I want to be, not who I don't want to be," something greater than Yom Kippur came forth. The vision Mordechai and Esther had was almost completely future oriented. They guided the Jews to return to Hashem with love. True repentance is not just a matter of looking back and saying, "This wasn't right," but a matter of looking forward and saying, "This is who I want to be and can be." At the Splitting of the Sea Hashem silenced the angels, "My handiwork is perishing and you're singing." If

Hashem mourned the lost potential of cruel Egyptians, imagine how much He mourns the loss of a single Jew. Imagine how much He rejoices when we come back and validate the world's purpose. We have to look at each other through Hashem's eyes. We have to be able to say what Esther said, "Gather all the Jews" not just the *tzadikim* but everyone, because we all have limitless potential. The more we recognize our inherent greatness, the more we can tap into the place where *teshuva m'ahava* stems from. At Sinai, the Jews accepted the Torah out of fear but on Purim they reached a higher level with love. *Teshuva m'ahava* tells Hashem, "I want *deveikut* with you. I don't want anything to stand in the way, not sin, desire, or exile. May we merit to return to Him with love and joy.

Purim Today

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

In the story of Purim, we read about how Haman declared war against *Klal Yisrael*. Throughout history we've faced many wars. Wars between nations seem unrelated to us, but in fact they do have a connection. The Torah tells us about the first war in *Bereishit*. Wherever a topic is discussed the first time in the *Torah*, we find its essence and definition. The source for all wars began at *dor haflaga*. This world is a result of the will of Hashem. He had a plan and purpose for it. Hashem created man in His image which means we have divine powers. Rav Dessler explains that just as the will of Hashem created the world, the will of a human being can move mountains. *Chazal* say, "There is nothing that can stand in the way of the will of a person." Yet we know many times things we want don't happen. Rav Dessler explains that this is because there are other people who want the opposite, and being that there are two wills, one might overcome the other. However, if everyone will unite with one goal, we can accomplish great things. In *dor haflaga* all of mankind united with a desire to disconnect the upper realm from the lower realm. They wanted to forget about Hashem. Hashem saw the danger. The world would be left without a purpose. Hashem doesn't interfere in man's free will. But He will manipulate events to destroy corruption. Hashem dispersed *dor*

haflaga around the world and created different cultures and languages so that unity among the nations would no longer be possible.

It says in Yeshaya, "For the sake of *Tzion* I will not be silent, for the sake of Yerushalayim I won't be still." Rav Dessler explains based on the Targum that as long as *Zion* is not rebuilt, as long as we are still waiting for *Mashiach*, there will always be wars among nations. The nations are not interested in a life focused on spirituality and a relationship with Hashem. They are concerned with their own physical needs and desires and if they will unite, there is a danger that the world will lose its purpose. The war we are in the midst of now came from a desire for power and control. What should be our response? We have to pray and offer physical help.

When Haman wanted to convince Achashveirosh to kill the Jews he said, "There is one nation spread out and divided among the nations." ... The *Midrash* interprets one as referring to Hashem. Haman reassured Achashveirosh that their Creator was asleep and would not watch over them because they were divided. In fact, it was a time of concealment. But *Chazal* say Hashem told Haman- Although it appears as if I am asleep, I will wake up and save *Klal Yisrael*. Our mission is

to bring the world to its purpose and we can only do that when we are united. Rabeinu Yonah quotes *Mishlei*, separation comes from focusing on physical desires. As people are naturally different, the only way to unite is having a common spiritual goal. *Chazal* say the unity of *dor haflaga* was like that of a group of thieves. They are loyal to each other because they need each other, but they aren't really united. So, when we say *Klal Yisrael* were divided it means they were influenced by the physicality of the Persian exile. Hashem orchestrated the Purim story to bring them back. When all Jews unite to do the will of Hashem it has a tremendous power and can overcome all our enemies. Esther told Mordechai, "Gather all the Jews..." When we are united, we sanctify the name of Hashem and that is the beginning of the salvation.

The Gra quotes from the *Megilah*, "...*Nikhalu v'amod al nafshom...*" *V'amod* is in the singular. The key to the miracle of Purim was unity. On Purim, we give *mishloach manot* and share what we have with others. The unity engendered among us bring us closer to Hashem. Rav Gadol Eisner explains, number 1-9 are separate entities. When 1 and 0 nullify themselves to become ten, they rise to a higher level. It is only with *achdut* that we can overpower Amalek and bring *Mashiach*.