

This is why David *Hamelech* sang when he realized that his pursuer was his own son. A son does not kill his father. One that does is acting unnaturally. This idea emboldened David, because he now realized that Hashem still cared.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, supplements this idea, examining the unusual, totally insane actions of the Jihadists and suicide bombers, whom he feels manifest a form of vicious hatred unparalleled in the annals of history. Anyone with a modicum of common sense understands that conventional warfare is not necessarily effective – or even appropriate – against such a sick mentality. He cites an incident in which a young Palestinian woman, who had just given birth to a child, went together with her newborn in an ambulance, supposedly to seek medical treatment in an Israeli hospital. For some “reason,” the Israel border guards decided to search the woman. She was found to be carrying explosives which she would have set off in *Eretz Yisrael*, quite possibly at the hospital, an act of terrorism which would have killed her, her newborn and a number of innocent victims. Such senseless, implacable hatred is unreal and unnatural. Clearly, it is Hashem’s message to us: “I have not forsaken you. It is time to return to Me.” The only way to battle such an enemy is through increased *avoda*, service to Hashem, thereby forging a stronger bond with Him.

ישחם אתו במקום אשר ישחם את העולה לפני ד' חטאת הוא

And he shall slaughter it in the place where he would slaughter the Burnt-offering before Hashem; it is a Sin-offering. (4:24)

Interestingly, the Torah does not simply say that the *Korban Chatas*, Sin-offering, is to be slaughtered in the north, but instead tells us to slaughter it “in the place where he would slaughter the Burnt-offering.” Why bring in *Korban Olah*, Burnt-offering, when the *pasuk* is addressing the laws of the *Chatas*? **Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl**, derives from here that, to some extent, the *Korban Chatas* is similar to the *Korban Olah*. Neither of these *korbanos* is eaten by the one who brings them. While the *Kohanim* partake from the *Korban Chatas*, the *Olah* is totally off-limits.

Rav Moshe explains the relationship between the two *korbanos* and the lesson imparted by this relationship. Man’s mission in life is to infuse *kedushah*, holiness, into everything with which he comes in contact. Sin represents a shortcoming in this mission. Apparently, he has failed to instill *kedushah* into an area of his life. Hence, we have sin. The mundane aspects of his life have remained earthly and routine. He has demonstrated a deficit in his ability to elevate these aspects, to sanctify them with greater meaning and value.

How does one correct this failing? *Rav* Moshe explains that he must first disassociate himself from the mundane, elevate himself and learn to imbue all matter with *kedushah*. These lessons are to be derived from the *Korban Chatas*. First, the sinner does not eat from the *korban*, thereby

separating himself from the mundane. Second, when he observes it, instead, being eaten by the *Kohanim*, *b'kedushah u'betaharah*, amid sanctity and purity, he realizes the type of behavior he must emulate: actions that infuse the mundane with holiness.

Va'ani Tefillah

לעשות נקמה בגוים תוכחות בלאומים – La'asos nekamah ba'goyim tocheichos ba'leumim.

To effect revenge against certain nations; Admonishments against certain states.

Why do we ask that vengeance be meted out against the nations? Instead of asking for their harm, we should pray that we are liberated from their midst, so that we will no longer suffer at their hands. Is not seeking reprisal for a wrong – or any form of retaliation -- an attitude that leaves much to be desired? Obviously, the *pasuk* is not addressing the sort of vengeance which is common among ordinary people, because, indeed, this is deplorable. The Torah commands us not to take revenge. Why would we ask Hashem to act in a manner which He admonishes us against? **Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl**, explains that true *nekamah*, vengeance, is the manifestation and revelation of the enactment of justice in the world. True *nekamah* can effect an unparalleled *kavod Shomayim*, glory for Heaven. It demonstrates that there is an ultimate Judge, and that justice will be carried out. Hashem will not overlook the evil perpetrated by the wicked.

Rav Chaim notes that, although the purpose of *nekamah* is to reveal Hashem’s justice, the individual is the injured party, thus obligated to carry it out. Having been wronged, he is more sensitive to the injury, and, therefore, more keenly attuned to the need for justice. *Chazal* (*Berachos* 33a) note that “great is vengeance which has been placed between two Names of G-d,” as it says, *Keil nekamos Hashem*, “Hashem is the G-d of vengeance.” Also, the *pasuk* continues, *Keil nekamos hofia*, “The G-d of vengeance has appeared.” This refers to both reward and punishment. Even reward is referred to as *nekamah*, because both reward and punishment are equal evidence of Hashem’s just dominion over the world.

In memory of our beloved parents
Rabbi Dr. Avrohom Yitzchok Wolf
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Peninim is published weekly by *Peninim Publications* in conjunction with the *Hebrew Academy of Cleveland*, 1860 S. Taylor Rd. Cleveland, Ohio 44118

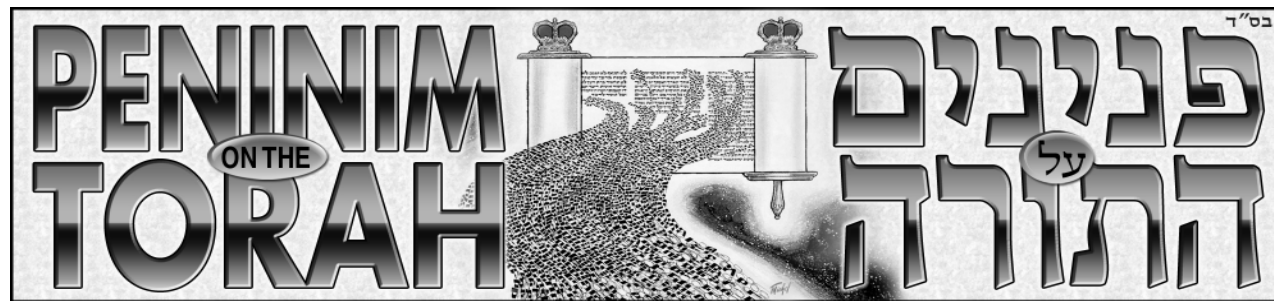
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Parashas Vayikra

תש"ע

פרשת ויקרא

TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE PARSHA

ויקרא אל משה וידבר ד' אליו מאהל מועד

He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Moed. (1:1)

The *Rashbam* considers this *pasuk* to be a transition from the closing *pesukim* of *Parashas Pikudei* (40:35) to this *parsha*. “And Moshe was not able to come to the *Ohel Moed*, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of Hashem filled the *Mishkan*.” It appears that even though Moshe *Rabbeinu* erected the *Mishkan*, he was not able to enter it because the edifice was filled with the glory of Hashem. Therefore, Hashem called for him to come inside. The *Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei Tosfos* add that Moshe feared entering into the *Mishkan*. He had to be invited. Thus, the opening *pasuk* of *Vayikra* is the sequel to the *parshios* that address the construction of the *Mishkan*. Moshe *Rabbeinu* completed the “job.” He supervised the creation of a dwelling place on earth for the Divine Presence. He “seemed,” however, to ignore his own input, for he felt that he was unqualified to enter without Hashem’s explicit welcome.

This incident showcases Moshe’s unusual sense of humility. He judged himself inadequate to partake in the glory of the *Mishkan*. Hashem recognized this unique quality which Moshe exemplified, and He beckoned him to enter. The word *Vayikra* is written with a diminutive *aleph* at the end, transforming the word to appear as if it says, *Vayikar*, “He chanced upon.” The *Baal HaTurim* explains that Moshe did not want to call attention to his relationship with Hashem. In an attempt to play it down, he wrote *Vayikar* without the *aleph*, as if asserting that Hashem “just happened” to speak to him. This is similar to the way Hashem appeared to the wicked Bilaam: by chance. Hashem did not approve of Moshe’s “spelling” of the word and instructed him to write an *aleph* at the end. Moshe wrote the *aleph*, but he made it very small. His sense of humility did not allow him to call attention to himself.

The Torah is, thus, teaching us about Moshe’s humility. Why does the Torah teach the lesson at the beginning of *Sefer Vayikra*, in association with the *korbanos*, animal-offerings? Is this the only place in which the Torah could have taught this lesson? What about the sacrifices renders this *parasha* such fertile ground for observing our leader’s sense of humility?

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, cites a fascinating *Midrash* which can be used to shed light on this question. The *Midrash* notes that, throughout the detailing of the

completion of the *Mishkan*, the Torah constantly reiterates the phrase, *kaasher tzivah Hashem es Moshe*, “As Hashem commanded Moshe.” This may be seen as an analogy to a king who commissioned his servant to build a palace for him. The dedicated servant did as he was asked, erecting an exceptionally beautiful edifice. He then took his own initiative by writing the king’s name on every facet of the place. Every stone, every girder, every window: all had the king’s symbol etched somewhere on its surface. The king was so impressed by his servant’s devotion to him that he felt he owed him a special reward. After all, he was ensconced within the palace, while his servant, who had done so much and demonstrated such unusual devotion, remained outside. The king invited his trusted servant to join him in the palace. Likewise, Hashem saw all that Moshe had done for Him. Everything that Moshe did was executed solely for the sake of Hashem’s Name. Such utter devotion must be acknowledged. Thus, Hashem called to Moshe to enter the *Mishkan*. After all that he had done, he belonged there. Moshe never thought of himself. He was just a “worker,” toiling in Hashem’s field. *Kaasher tzivah Hashem es Moshe*, “as Hashem commanded Moshe”: he was just doing his “job.” Such an attitude warrants recognition. Hashem invited him to enter into the edifice that he so devotedly constructed “for Hashem.”

Rav Schlesinger feels that the Torah alludes to this idea in the *parsha* of the *korbanos*. In the *Talmud Sotah* 5b, *Chazal* note the distinctiveness of those who are unassuming before Hashem. When the *Bais Hamikdash* existed, one who brought a *Korban Olah*, Burnt-offering, received his due for offering a Meal-offering. The individual who is self-effacing is considered to have brought all of the *korbanos*, as David *Hamelech* says in *Tehillim* 51:19, *Zivchei Elokim ruach nishbarah*, “The sacrifices Hashem desires are a broken spirit.” One who is unpretentious is considered before Hashem to have brought all of the sacrifices.

This is signified by the diminutive *aleph*. The *aleph* alludes to *adam*, man. The diminutive *aleph* is a reference to a man who diminishes himself, who is demure and meek. We are being taught that one who acts modestly, without arrogance, is greater than all of the *korbanos*. Humility is the key to connecting with the Almighty.

The idea of living exclusively for the purpose of sanctifying Hashem’s Name – understanding that we are here solely for that purpose – brings to mind a poignant story which I

feel should be shared with the reading public. During the days of the evil Czar Nicholas I of Russia, a despotic decree was issued against the Jewish population. In their blatant attempt to destroy Judaism, the government decreed that all Jewish youths from the young age of twelve should be conscripted into the Czar's army for a minimum of twenty-five years! During this time, the army made every effort to convert these children to the "religion of love": Christianity. While this was the decree, the crazed Russians went so far as to kidnap children as young as seven years old, sending them off to the Arctic wasteland. They allowed them no contact with *Yiddishkeit*, gave them very little food and subjected them to cruel back-breaking labor. Many of these children died from malnourishment, the cold, the labor and beatings. They were forcibly baptized. For most, the alternative was death. Many caved in and accepted the way out provided by the "loving" Christians. Some survived the unspeakable tortures. Of these, very few survived to adulthood. Emotionally broken and physically crippled, some of them eventually established their own communities and *shuls*. The Cantonists, as they were called, became the symbol of the Czarist treachery and the Jew's ability to triumph over adversity.

The episode took place when a group of Torah leaders came to St. Petersburg to intercede with the Czar on behalf of Russian Jewry. Apparently, the cruel Czar found it necessary to extract some more blood from his Jewish citizens. Because of the timing of their trip, they were forced to remain in St. Petersburg for the *Yamim Noraim*, High Holy days. The *shul* nearest to their place of lodging was one founded and attended primarily by these Cantonist survivors. It was *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day of the year, and the rabbis decided to *daven* in this *shul*. The last service of the day is *Neilah*, the Closing Prayer of *Yom Kippur*. The rabbis suggested that one of their own ascend to the *amud*, lectern, to lead this most important *tefillah*. The conscripts, however, disagreed: "We accept that your *chazan*, cantor, must be a distinguished spiritual leader, whose knowledge of Torah matches his piety. We have with us such an individual, who is unique. Despite suffering unspeakable torture at the hands of the Russians, he remained dedicated to Hashem. He never succumbed to their cruelty, maintaining his unstinting fidelity to Hashem. We would like to honor him with leading the *Neilah* service."

The rabbis readily agreed, as they anxiously waited to see who this spiritual giant was. They turned towards the rear of the *shul*, and noticed a broken man, an invalid, emaciated and scarred all over, who appeared to be an old man, but was actually quite young. He hobbled on crutches up to the *amud*. Prior to commencing his prayer, he turned to the *kahal*, congregation, and said, "Usually one prays for *bani, chayei, u'mezonei*, children, life and sustenance. *Ribbono Shel Olam*, we do not need to pray for these; we need no food. The Czarist army provides us with rations. We are either too old or too sick to marry and have children. As for life, considering what type of existence we lead, we would probably be better off dead. Therefore," he said, as he began to slowly turn towards the *Aron Kodesh*, "All we pray for is: *Yisgadal v'yiskadash Shmei Rabba* – May Hashem's Name be glorified and sanctified! May *Yiddishkeit* survive its enemies! May the Torah triumph over the forces of darkness! May *Klal Yisrael* prosper!"

This is the meaning of the words, *kaasher tzivah Hashem es Moshe*. This man, just as so many others like him, prayed for one purpose: to serve Hashem. Not himself – not his family – only Hashem. No one should ever be placed in such a

situation, but that should not prevent us from *davening* with the same purpose, crying out with the same intense emotion.

ויקרא אל משה

And He (Hashem) called to Moshe. (1:1)

The *Yalkut Shimoni* teaches us that Moshe *Rabbeinu* waited obediently outside the *Mishkan*, waiting for Hashem's call before entering the *Ohel Moed*. He waited due to his *derech erez*, refinement and proper etiquette. One does not enter a meeting place without first being invited in. The *Midrash* concludes: "From here we derive that any scholar who lacks understanding is worse than a *neveilah*, animal carcass, for Moshe, the father of wisdom, greatest of all prophets, performed miracles and received the Torah; yet, he did not enter the *Ohel Moed* until he was called by Hashem."

This *Yalkut* has been addressed by many commentators. In the famous Slabodka *Yeshivah*, it was used to demonstrate the primacy of *derech erez* in the life of a Jew. Many of us view *derech erez* as sort of a supplement to the Torah personality. It is nothing more than a bit of polish on the exterior of an individual who is already a Torah scholar. *Chazal* teach us differently. Had Moshe transgressed this "insignificant" etiquette, had he entered before being invited in, he would have been categorized among those who are worse than a dead carcass. Can you imagine? Moshe *Rabbeinu*, the greatest Torah leader of all time, would have been denigrated to the lowest of the low! Why? He would not have demonstrated *derech erez*. This tiny infraction would have beclouded his every spiritual achievement, because it would have indicated a character flaw that eclipsed his lofty spiritual distinction. A scholar who does not understand the basics of proper behavior is missing more than extreme polish; he is lacking in the most basic of Torah character, thus nullifying all of his previous achievements.

I would like to take this idea a bit further. The Lithuanian *yeshivos* focused on different aspects of the student's spiritual development. The direction and focus of each institution was set by its *Rosh Yeshivah*. Two *yeshivos* that stand out were Kelm and Slabodka. While Kelm was much smaller in size than Slabodka, its impact on the Torah world vis-à-vis its *talmidim* was powerful. Kelm stressed *sheleimus ha'adam*, perfection of man. Although the *Alter* of Slabodka, *Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl*, was a student of *Horav Simchah Zissel Ziv, zl*, the *Alter* of Kelm, he emphasized *gadlus ha'adam*, the greatness of man.

The standard of perfection in Kelm was not limited to time or space. Thus, the *Alter* taught that one must be a Jew and a "man" in one's house and abroad. This was contrary to the opinion of the early *Maskilim*, followers of the Enlightenment, who opined that one should be a Jew at home and "a man" abroad. Perfection meant wholeness, with spirituality permeating every aspect of one's essence, physical/mundane, as well as spiritual.

While the two *yeshivos* differed in their approaches to the development of man and his relationship towards *avodas Hashem*, serving the Almighty, they agreed that *derech erez* was a critical component in the makeup of a *ben Torah*. Without it, he was either "imperfect" or missing "greatness."

To have a better understanding of the variegated approaches of the two *yeshivos*, we quote from contrasting remarks of two of their greatest exponents. **Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl**, venerable *Mashgiach* of Pre-World War II Mir, was the quintessential Kelm *talmid*, student. He offered a defining comment concerning a statement made by *Chazal* on the

Mishnah in *Eiruv* 80a. *Chazal* teach that a loaf of bread, regardless of its diminutive size, is suitable for *eiruvei chatzeiros*, merging of the courtyards. (This is done by collecting a whole loaf of bread from each dwelling and placing it in one of the homes for the entire *Shabbos*.) On the other hand, a piece of bread, its size notwithstanding, may not be used for an *eiruv*. *Rav Yeruchem* explained, "One sees from here that *shleimus*, wholeness/perfection is preferable to *gadlus*, greatness/size."

Horav Meir Chodosh, zl, *Mashgiach* of Chevron and an exponent of the Slabodker *Mussar* approach, countered, "A person can have every limb perfectly formed and whole, yet he can still remain a midget." In short, we observe two approaches to understanding the role played by *derech erez*. No matter the size – or otherwise perfection – of the individual, without *derech ertz*, a person is missing a crucial component in his essential character. He is lacking a fundamental quality of a human being.

ויקרא אל משה

And He (Hashem) called to Moshe. (1:1)

The commentators question why the Torah does not identify Hashem as the One Who called to Moshe. In his *Nesivos Shalom*, the *Slonimer Rebbe*, **Horav Shalom Noach Barzovsky, zl**, explains that the Torah conceals the source of the calling by design. *Vayikra el Moshe*, "And He called to Moshe," may be viewed allegorically as a portent for all of the times in which Hashem calls to each and every one of us via the messages we are to derive from life's occurrences. It is not a direct sound, but rather, an implied message that can be heard by each individual. There is one stipulation: he must be listening. Hashem talks to us every time something happens in our life. Regardless whether the occurrence has a negative or positive connotation, it is nonetheless a message.

At times, this message is uplifting, elevating our spirits to incredible heights. There are instances in which the episode that serves as the medium for the message is heartrending and mind-shattering. It is a message, however, that we should take to heart, regardless of its numbing effect. Those who claim that they do not hear the message are simply not listening. Furthermore, since no two people are alike, the lesson that two different people may derive from the exact same incident varies. Each is created to meet a different goal in life. The message speaks to the individual in relation to achieving his specific goal. My neighbor's message is not identical to mine, because we have been sent down to this world for different purposes.

Thus, the *Vayikra el Moshe*, "He called to Moshe," is a calling out to each individual Jew. The call to one Jew is not the same as the call to another Jew. At times, the two messages are diametrically opposed. Each person sees what he is supposed to see and understands what he is supposed to understand – if he is listening.

This calling actually goes by another name: *Hashgacha Pratis*, Divine Providence. Hashem watches over each one of us individually, making us aware of the various times in which we stray from the goals that He has set for us. There are times when the occurrences that take place totally seem to be without rhyme or reason. Alternatively, they may be cataclysmic events that defy scientific rationale. Hashem also sends punishments that are bizarre. How are we to understand these messages? Are they to be understood from a negative perspective? Has Hashem lost all "patience" with us? Are we doomed to infamy? Is there some way to view these occurrences

from a positive perspective?

Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Shlita, cites *Horav Yehonassan Eibeshutz, zl*, in his *Yaaros Devash*, who takes a positive approach to these "misunderstood" events. In the *Talmud Berachos 7b*, the question is raised concerning David *Hamelech's* use of the word *mizmor*, a song, regarding the circumstances while he was running from his son, Avshalom: "A Psalm/song by David, as he fled from Avshalom, his son" (*Tehillim* 3:1). A son pursuing his father with intent to kill is reason for an elegy – not a song. The *Talmud* explains that this may be compared to one who owes a large amount of money to a debtor. Prior to paying the debt, he is depressed. After he has paid the debt, however, he has reason to be filled with joy. He has paid off his note; he is no longer encumbered; he is free. Likewise, when Hashem informed David that He would challenge him with something bad from his own house, David was depressed. He did not know the extent of this challenge. Perhaps a slave would arise against him, or some other base person, who would show no compassion, who would be relentless in his battle against the king. Once David discovered that his challenger would be none other than his own son, Avshalom, he was calmed. A son does not kill his father. This gave David reason to sing. *Rav* Yonasan Eibeshutz questions *Chazal's* statement. Avshalom did want to kill David, so why was he happy? His worst fears were realized, and his enemy was his own offspring! This was all the more reason to be depressed.

Rav Elyashiv explains the answer given by the *Yaaros Devash* in the following manner: there are two forms of punishment meted out by Hashem. One is punishment for man's sins. These *yissurim*, pain/troubles, are dispatched to cleanse and purify the individual and atone for his transgressions. These punishments are dispensed with compassion, because Hashem still cares about the person. Therefore, He still maintains him under His Fatherly Providence.

There is a threshold, however, at which point a person has gone too far. He has sinned against Hashem with impunity and has angered Him greatly. At this point, Hashem releases him from His supervision, sort of flings him away. He no longer wants anything to do with him, leaving him, so to speak, subject to the forces of nature. Whatever happens – happens. This is like the son who has finally gone too far and angered his father, so that he throws him out of the house: "Do what you want. I want nothing more to do with you!" This constitutes the second form of punishment.

How does one distinguish between the two punishments? How does he discern to which one he is being subjected? Is there any way of determining if Hashem still cares about us? *Rav* Yonasan suggests that we look carefully at the particular disasters/misery/troubles that have befallen a person. If they are natural and not especially unique, it is an indication that Hashem has allowed us to fall under the purview of nature. We no longer experience a sense of Divine intervention. It is almost as if Hashem was not "concerned" about us. When the troubles are of an uncommon – almost super-natural – composition, a tsunami, earthquake, major tornado, phenomena that rarely, if ever, occur, it is emblematic of the Divine Hand, which demonstrates to us that Hashem still cares.

I must interject at this point and emphasize that everything – every occurrence – originates from Hashem. It is just that most phenomena are cloaked in a dressing called "nature." There are some that are so unusual that they are clear signs from Heaven Above that Hashem is "talking" to us.