WHO WE MIGHT BE!

by Rabbi Label Lam

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto writes in his Etz Chaim, "A person should ask himself what our forefathers did that caused Hashem to choose them." What did Moshe and David do? He should answer and then say, "It would be well for every person to do the same."

Moshe's actions immediately prior to the burning bush are described as follows, "And Moshe was shepherding the sheep of Yisro, his father in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the sheep after the dessert and he came to the mountain of G-d, Choreb." (Shemos 3:1) Then, suddenly, the burning bush appears, and the task to save a nation.

Why did he lead his sheep to the dessert? Moshe, Rashi, tells was distancing himself from theft by avoiding fields that might potentially belong to others.

As King David tells us, "Who will ascend the mountain of G-d, and who can stand in that holy place, someone who has clean hands and a pure heart..."

What else was Moshe doing at that time? The Netziv asks why Moshe led the sheep "after the dessert" and not simply to the dessert which would have been sufficient. He answers that Moshe went deep into the dessert to isolate himself and search for G-d. How does isolating oneself lead to discovering Hashem?

The Chazon Ish writes, "When a person with a sensitive soul finds some quiet time to meditate on existence, away from the pulls of desire, astonishment over takes him. The sight of the heavens above and the earth below fills him with emotion and wonder. The world suddenly strikes him as a mystery, a marvelous enigma... and the desire to fathom this mystery consumes his soul. He is willing to brave fire and water to gain understanding. He wonders: 'What is the point of this life, however pleasant it may be, if its purpose eludes him?'"

Vaclov Havel, the former Czechoslovakian president and poet wrote, "We may know immeasurably more about the universe than our ancestors did, and yet it increasingly seems that they knew something more essential about it than we do, something that escapes us."

Psychologist Eric Schumacher stated, "It is a grave error to accuse a man who pursues self-knowledge of "turning his back on society". The opposite would be more nearly true: that a man that fails to pursue self-knowledge is and remains a danger to society, for he will tend to misunderstand everything that other people say or do, and remain blissfully unaware of many of the significance of

the things he does himself."

I remember many decades ago watching an episode on "Candid Camera" where high school students were being given in private consultations the results of their aptitude tests. Each one sat uneasily as the news that would determine the direction of their whole life was read to him with total sobriety, "We have been studying your test results and we find that you have the qualifications to be a shepherd!" The existential nausea, anxiety, despair and forlornness that danced across their vulnerable little faces were tragic and comical. They whispered with looks of disbelief, "A Shepherd!? A Shepherd?!" You could see worlds of hopeful imaginations crashing down around them.

What's so wrong with being a shepherd? Some of our greatest people toiled in this field and they were able to produce themselves by working dutifully and diligently inwardly and out!

Surely, every job has its occupational hazards and it matters probably less which exact career one toils at. More importantly, we espy Moshe at work with great personal honestly, uncluttered by little lies, conscience free. Simultaneously, he fulfills his truest ambition; to quiet the noise of the world around him sufficiently to allow his spirit to soar to the heights it did.

In a world that is dumping new mountains of information on us daily and our little brain sensors are being bombarded constantly with varying stimulation, I wonder seriously if there might be a better way to make real personal progress. Rather than following frantically the beat on the street, what if, by answering the inner talent search, we were to lead a life that allows pauses long and deep enough to hear the bleat of the sheep. (As King Solomon said, "The righteous knows the soul of his beast"- Mishle') You never know where we might end up or who we might be!

Tapes of Rabbi Lam are available at Foundations. For a free tape on the topic of parenting and relationships please call 1-800-700-9577.

This Dvar Torah is Dedicated in memory of Kalman Ben Gedalia, of blessed memory.

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