

DO NOT GLORIFY YOURSELF

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Vayikra

Do not Glorify Yourself

Sponsored by
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on the yahrzeit of her father
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Today's Learning:
Keilim 11:1-2
O.C. 301:7-9
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Kamma 90
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Kamma 6

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (25:6-7), "Do not glorify yourself in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of the great, for it is better that it should be said to you, 'Come up here,' than that you be demoted before the prince, as your eyes have seen [happen to others]." Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z"l (Spain; died 1263) explains: King Shlomo has already said many times in this book (Mishlei) that haughtiness is an abomination and humility is desirable (see, for example, 6:16-17, 15:33, 16:5, 16:18, 22:4). Here, King Shlomo conveys a more subtle message. Many people rationalize, "I am not haughty; I seek only the honor that I actually deserve." Therefore King Shlomo advises: Do not be

so quick to glorify yourself. Are you so sure that you are worthy of praise that you would praise yourself in front of a king? Would you stand in the place of great people? R' Yonah notes: These verses are not speaking to fools, but to intelligent people who are nevertheless blinded by the desire for honor. Such people need to reflect on their places vis-a-vis those they consider great.

Humility is so important that Moshe Rabbeinu, the most accomplished of all men, is praised specifically as "the most humble of all men." How was Moshe able to be so humble? Conversely, why does man desire honor? R' Yonah explains: The soul comes from a lofty place, and it feels a void when its host (man) does not achieve perfection. Some people fill this void by attempting to perfect themselves, while other people try to fool their souls by fantasizing that they are perfect. The latter individuals need to chase honor. In contrast, Moshe Rabbeinu was as perfect as a human can be. His soul felt no void; therefore he was the most humble of all men. He fulfilled the verse, "Do not glorify yourself in the presence of the king (in this case, the 'King'), and do not stand in the place of the great," by hiding his face at the burning bush. Therefore, he was called to enter the Mishkan, as the first verse of our parashah relates. (Derashot Rabbeinu Yonah Al Ha'Torah)

"Vayikra / He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying." (1:1)

Commenting on the opening verse of our parashah, Rashi asks: Why is the Torah broken by hafsakot / breaks, i.e., why is it broken into subsections? He answers: To give Moshe an interval for reflection between one section and another and between one subject and another--something which is all the more necessary for an ordinary man receiving instruction from an ordinary man.

R' Menachem Mendel Taub shlita (the Kaliver Rebbe in Rishon Le'tzion, Israel) observes that in a typical year [i.e., a non-leap year] Parashat Vayikra is read the week that most yeshivot begin their Pesach breaks. What purpose do these hafsakot / breaks serve? he asks. These are the times to review, reflect upon, and digest what one has learned in the preceding five or six months. If Moshe needed such opportunities to reflect, surely we do. (Kol Menachem)

"When a man / adam among you brings an offering . . ." (1:2)

Commenting on this verse, Midrash Rabbah states: "'Adam' is an expression of love, an expression of brotherhood, an expression of friendship." What is this midrash teaching?

R' Aharon Lewin z"l hy"d (the "Reisha Rav"; killed in the Holocaust in 1941) explains: There is a dispute among the Rishonim / early commentaries as to the purpose of animal sacrifices. Rambam z"l writes that when Hashem gave the Torah, He did not attempt to wean His people entirely from the idolatrous ways with which they were familiar. Rather, He instructed Bnei Yisrael to direct to Him the service that they otherwise would have performed to idols. Many other commentaries disagree vociferously and offer other interpretations.

In particular, R' Yitzchak Arama z"l (the "Ba'al Ha'akeidah") explains that Hashem recognized man's emotional need to repay his debts. Therefore, Hashem instructed us regarding an order of sacrifices, and He acts as if man is thereby giving Him a gift.

There is a wide gulf between the explanations of Rambam and the Ba'al Ha'akeidah. According to the former, the inclusion in the Torah of a sacrificial service indicates the lowliness of man; according to the latter, it indicates G-d's love for man.

R' Lewin continues: In light of this dispute, we can understand the above midrash. Do not think, says the midrash, that the inclusion in the Torah of a sacrificial service indicates the lowliness of man. No! "It is an expression of love, an expression of brotherhood, an expression of friendship." (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun: Vaykira, No. 1)

From the Pesach Haggadah

"Who has chosen us from every people . . ." (Kiddush)

We read in Yirmiyah (9:11-12) that Eretz Yisrael was destroyed because the Jewish People had "abandoned the Torah." The Gemara (Nedarim 81a) explains that the Torah was being actively studied; however, Birchot Ha'Torah / the blessings before Torah study were not being recited.

R' Zvi Yehuda Kook z"l (rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; died 1982) would regularly comment: One of the Birchot Ha'Torah is "Asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim" / "He has chosen us from among all the nations and given us His Torah." Even if one studies Torah, if he does not recognize his chosenness, he is bringing about destruction. Such Torah study is referred to as "abandoning the Torah."

In order to avoid this result, R' Kook recommended, traditional Talmud study must be combined, or even preceded, by the study of works of emunah, in particular, the Kuzari, which the Vilna Gaon said is "holy and pure, and upon which the foundations of emunah and Torah hang." (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Ayelet Ha'shachar p.24)

"Go and learn what Lavan the Aramean attempted to do to our father Yaakov! For Pharaoh decreed only against the males, while Lavan attempted to uproot everything."

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (1910-1995) comments: Although the Torah never mentions explicitly that Lavan wanted to kill Yaakov, our Sages testify that such was his intention. And, just as the details of Lavan's plot against Yaakov remain hidden, so it has been throughout history. We read in Hallel: "Praise Hashem, all nations . . . For His kindness has overwhelmed us . . ." Commentaries ask: Should the nations praise Hashem because His kindness has overwhelmed us? The answer that is commonly given is that only the nations can truly appreciate Hashem's kindness to us, because only

they know how many times they have plotted against us and failed. (Haggadah Shel Pesach R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach)

"This is what stood by our fathers and us."

What is "This"? R' Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss z"l (1902-1989; Av Bet Din in Manchester, England and of the Eidah Ha'chareidis of Yerushalayim) explains that this statement refers to Hashem's words to Avraham quoted in the previous paragraph of the Haggadah: "Know that your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own . . ." It is the fact that we have always been aliens, keeping some distance from our host nations, that has maintained us in all of our exiles. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Minchat Yitzchak)

This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

2 Nissan: This day is a propitious time to pray for success in Torah study because: (1) on this date, the prince of the tribe of Yissachar, the most scholarly among the tribes, brought his offering to the dedication of the Mishkan; (2) Shavuot, the holiday of the giving of the Torah always falls on the same day of the week as this date; and (3) the birthday and yahrzeit of Yissachar, 10 Av, always fall on the same day of the week as this date. (Luach Davar B'ito p.684)

On this date in 2450 (1311 B.C.E.), the first parah adumah / red heifer was prepared. (Seder Olam Rabbah ch.7)

5 Nissan 5252 (March 31, 1492): King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella signed the decree expelling the Jews from Spain.

6 Nissan 2489 (1272 B.C.E.): Yehoshua sent spies to Yericho, as described in Yehoshua chapter 2. On the following day, the thirty days of mourning for Moshe Rabbeinu ended. (Luach Davar B'ito p.696)

8 Nissan: On this day, the Sages (late in the Second Temple era) overcame the arguments of the Tzeddukim (Sadducees) who claimed that the Omer offering should always be brought, and Shavuot should always be observed, on Sunday. The dispute revolved around the Torah's statement (Vayikra 23:15) that the Counting of the Omer should begin "on the day after Shabbat." According to Rabbinic tradition, "Shabbat" in that context refers to the first day of Pesach, regardless of the day of the week. (Megillat Ta'anit)

On this date in 4950 (1190), the Jewish community of York, England was massacred, including R' Eliyahu, who was a student of Rabbeinu Tam and one of the Ba'alei Ha'tosafot. (Luach Davar B'ito p.699)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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