

HE LOVES US!

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Vayikra

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BS"D

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**Today's Learning:
Nach: Yechezkel 47-48
Mishnah: Keilim 30:4-Ohalot 1:1
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Ketubot 47
Halachah: Mishnah Berurah 554:9-11**

With our parashah, the Torah begins the laws of the korbanot/ sacrificial offerings, opening with the verse (1:2), "When a person/ adam among you brings an offering to Hashem . . ." 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 (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"; Spain, Italy; died 1494) explains that Hashem acknowledged man's emotional need to repay his debts. Therefore, Hashem instructed us regarding an order of sacrifices, 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, R' Lewin notes. 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)

"He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Mo'ed, saying." (1:1)

R' Gershon Ashkenazi z"l (Central Europe; 1618-1693) asks: Why is Hashem's Name omitted in one clause of this verse and mentioned in the other? If it is not obvious who is calling and speaking, Hashem's Name should have been mentioned in both clauses; if it is obvious, in neither. He explains:

Midrash Rabbah teaches that Hashem does not associate His Name with bad tidings, as we learn from the verse (Bereishit 1:5), "Elokim called the light 'Day,' and the darkness He called 'Night'." [Hashem's Name is mentioned in connection with the light, but not in connection with the darkness.] Our verse alludes to bad tidings, for the Zohar teaches that Hashem informed Moshe Rabbeinu at this time that Bnei Yisrael were destined to sin and that the Temple would be taken as collateral to pay the Jewish People's debt, i.e., it would be destroyed so that they could be spared.

Therefore, writes R' Ashkenazi, our verse omits Hashem's Name because of the bad tidings that were delivered, i.e., that the Temple would be destroyed. But, our verse also includes Hashem's Name because it contains good tidings, i.e., that Bnei Yisrael will not be annihilated.

This raises another question, however: why should this bad news be mentioned at this time? R'

Ashkenazi answers: Midrash Rabbah [quoted by Rashi to Bemidbar 8:2] relates that the tribe of Levi, and its leader, Aharon Hakohen, were upset that all of the other tribes were given the opportunity to bring gifts to the dedication of the Mishkan [see Bemidbar ch.7], while Levi was not. To assuage their distress, Hashem informed them that the Ohel Mo'ed / Temple was only temporary, while the tribe of Levi would make a permanent contribution by lighting the menorah [i.e., they would originate the holiday of Chanukah]. (Tiferet Ha'Gershuni)

R' Chaim Vital z"l (Tzefat and Damascus; 1542-1620) writes: This verse illustrates our Sages' teaching that Hashem elevates a person who humbles himself. We read at the end of last week's parashah, "Moshe could not enter the Ohel Mo'ed, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan." This does not mean that Moshe Rabbeinu was physically unable to enter the Ohel Mo'ed; after all, he had stood on Har Sinai in the presence of Hashem's Glory. Rather, he humbled himself and did not enter "Hashem's house" until he was invited, as our verse says, "He called to Moshe." And what does our verse say next? "Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Mo'ed, saying." Hashem told him: the purpose of this structure is to be an Ohel Mo'ed / Tent of Meeting in which to speak to you. (Etz Ha'da'at Tov)

"If his offering is an olah / burnt-offering min ha'bakar / from the cattle . . ." (1:3)

From the phrase, "min ha'bakar / from the cattle," implying "not all cattle," the Gemara (Temurah 28b) derives that cattle that was worshipped ("ha'ne'evad") is excluded from being brought as an offering.

On Shabbat Parashat Vayikra in 5734 (1974), R' Moshe Yehoshua Hager z"l (1916-2012; Vizhnitzer Rebbe in Bnei Brak) overheard his attendant telling young chassidim that there was no room for them at the rebbe's table because all of the spaces were reserved for older chassidim. Hearing this, he told his attendant that, to the contrary, he would rather speak to those who are still young enough to be influenced. On that occasion, he interpreted the Gemara's teaching above allegorically, as follows: "Min ha'bakar" can be read "min ha'boker" / "from morning." "Ha'ne'evad" has the same gematria as "sama'el," one of the names for the yetzer ha'ra. Thus, our Sages' words may be interpreted: From morning, i.e., from youth, one must work on excluding the yetzer ha'ra.

He continued: Parents often come to me for blessings that they have "yiddishe nachas" from their children. However, many of these parents have sent their children to schools that teach values inimical to the Torah. Such parents may be compared to one who wants to travel from Bnei Brak to Yerushalayim, but consciously gets on the bus to Haifa instead [i.e., going in the opposite direction].

The Vizhnitzer Rebbe added: In my youth, someone said to me, "It's not necessary to be single-faceted [i.e., studying Torah alone]; there is nothing wrong with being an expert in secular subjects as well." I heard him out, and then I asked him, "Since you are in favor of being multi-faceted, why do you always read a novel in bed before going to sleep? Why don't you alternate between reading novels and works of mussar / character development such as Chovot Ha'levavot?" (Sichot U'ma'amarei Kodesh 5732-5734 p. 319)

"If a person will sin and commit a treachery against Hashem by lying to his comrade regarding a pledge or a loan or a robbery; or by defrauding his comrade." (5:21)

R' Dr. Leo Adler z"l (1915-1978; rabbi of Basel, Switzerland) writes: The Tosefta [a work from the same period as the Gemara] relates:

Rabbi Reuven met a philosopher in Teveryah, who asked him, "Who makes himself hateful in this world?"

Rabbi Reuven answered, "He who denies his Creator."

"How does that make him hateful to men?" the philosopher wondered.

Rabbi Reuven replied, "Honor your father and mother; do not murder; do not steal; do not bear false witness--No man breaks these laws without first denying G-d."

What is the basis for Rabbi Reuven's assertion? R' Adler explains that it is our verse. If one man lies to another about a financial matter, it is a treachery against Hashem. Why? Because emunah means not only faith, but faithfulness to G-d's command. Thus, the level of one's emunah and his fear of G-d are as much tests of a person's character as are his sense of justice and charity; conversely, one who lacks emunah will be hateful to men. (The Biblical View of Man p.59)

Thirty Days Before Pesach . . .

"Afilu kulanu chachamim . . . / Even if we all were wise, understanding, experienced, and knowledgeable in Torah, we still would be obligated to tell about the Exodus from Egypt." (Haggadah Shel Pesach)

R' Eran Moshe Margalioth shlita (Israel) writes, based on the writings of R' Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter z"l

(1847-1905; the Gerrer Rebbe; known as the "Sefat Emet"):

Why, indeed, must a wise person who knows the story of yetziat Mitzrayim retell it year-after-year? He explains: We learn in Pirkei Avot (ch.3), "If one's yir'ah / fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom will endure." Even if one is wise, he needs yir'ah, because yir'ah is the foundation which allows a person to stand before Hashem and accept the yoke of Heaven. That, in turn, is a prerequisite for attaining true wisdom.

He continues: Through retelling the story of the Exodus on the Seder night, a person can experience a revelation of G-d, which leads, in turn, to increasing one's yir'ah and re-accepting the yoke of Heaven. This comes from the realization that Hashem did not simply free us from serving Pharaoh; He did so in order that we would serve Him.

Also, a wise person must retell the story of the Exodus until he understands that all of his wisdom is not his own accomplishment, but from Hashem. This is why we conclude the Seder with the poem, "Echad mi yodea?" / "Who knows one?" We declare: "Mi yodea" / "The fact that anyone knows anything" is the result of the abilities he has been given by the "Echad Elokeinu" / "Our One Elokim who is in the heavens and the earth." (Petach Ha'haggadah p.26)

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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