

UNUSUAL SPELLING

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Ki Seitzei

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 427, Trying on Suits that May Have Shatnes.
Good Shabbos!*

Unusual Spelling Calls Out For Our Attention

This week's parsha contains the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird prior to taking her chicks or eggs [22:6-7] (Shiluach HaKen). According to the commentaries, one of the reasons for this Commandment is to teach us the attribute of compassion. The Ramba"n is careful to explain that this is not an "animal rights" type of mitzvah. Rather, the Torah is trying to teach compassion to mankind. If we must have compassion for animals, certainly we must have compassion for human beings. That is the ultimate 'purpose' of this mitzvah.

The pasuk [verse] begins with the words "Ki Yikareh Kan Tzipor" [when you happen upon a bird's nest]. We would assume that the word Yikareh [happen upon] should be spelled with the letter 'Hay' at the end of the word (from the root Kuf-Reish-Hay [meaning to happen]). However, that is not the way the word is spelled. The word is spelled with an Aleph at the end -- from the root Kuf-Reish-Aleph (meaning to call out). There is no doubt that the intent of the pasuk is that the person happens upon a bird's nest. But, literally translated, this pasuk reads "If a bird's nest is called out to you". What is the meaning of this? Why did the Torah use this strange spelling?

The sefer Kol Dodi offers a beautiful insight regarding this spelling. It is not every day that one encounters a bird's nest. This is a unique event. In fact, it is suggested that this Commandment has mystical benefits (segulah), such that one who is childless should seek to fulfill it and thereby receive the Heavenly blessing of parenthood. It is certainly not an everyday event. Who of us can

say that we have ever had the opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah?

A person is walking along and all of a sudden a bird's nest happens to appear in front of him. This is not just a "happenstance". The mitzvah of Shiluach HaKen is calling out to him! Perhaps this unusual occurrence is G-d's way of calling out to the person that he needs personal correction in his attribute of compassion. If it HAPPENS (yikareh with a Hay) that this person, of all people, runs into this singular event, then what has really occurred is a Yikareh with an Aleph -- the teaching of the law of the mother bird's nest is CALLING OUT to him that he should take note: perhaps his practice of the attribute of compassion needs improvement.

Many times we miss our messages. They are addressed directly to us, but they somehow go beyond us. Several decades ago, Reb Dovid Dryen wanted to start a Kollel in Gateshead, England, a sleepy coal-mining town across the river from New Castle. He sent out 23 letters to different Rabbis in England inviting them to come start a Kollel in Gateshead. Out of the 23 letters, 20 Rabbis ignored the invitation and did not respond. Two sent back polite letters telling him "no". One person said, "I am interested". That person was Rav Eliyahu Dessler. Rav Dessler met Reb Dovid Dryen, decided to begin a Kollel in Gateshead and turned it into the premier place of Torah study in all of Europe. Rav Dessler might have remained a little Rav in a small shteible in East London for the rest of his life, had he not answered the letter and gone on to become the "famous Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler". Rav Dessler later became the spiritual leader (mashgiach ruchani) in the Ponevitch Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. Rav Dessler authored the Michtav Eliyahu, which has become a modern day classic. One must wonder -- if he had responded like the other 22 Rabbis, would he have in fact become the spiritual leader of the Ponevitch Yeshiva and to author the Michtav Eliyahu? He received a message. He heard the message and he responded.

How many times does opportunity call out to us, but get treated like happenstance? We just go on with our lives. Many times G-d is telling us "This is what you need. Here, I am sending you a message. Just listen to it!"

If You've Got It, Don't Flaunt It

The pasuk says [Devorim 22:10] "Do not plow together with an ox and a donkey". This is one of several forms of the prohibition of Kilayim - mixing of species. There is a form of this prohibition that relates to grains and seeds (Kilaei Zeraim). There is a form of this prohibition relating to garments (Kilaei Begadim or Shatnez). Finally, this pasuk prohibits the yoking together of different species of animals.

The Daas Zekeinim meBa'alay Tosfos provide an interesting reason for this prohibition. A donkey does not chew its cud. An ox, on the other hand, does chew its cud. The donkey and the ox would be walking along, yoked together, and the donkey would see the ox chewing and think that it was eating something. The donkey would become upset: "I missed lunch. When did it happen?" He would become jealous of the ox, because he would think the ox was fed and he was not.

In fact, of course, they both had the same lunch. But the ox chews its cud so it appears to be continuously eating, thus giving the donkey the misimpression that he has been cheated. According to the Daas Zekeinim, the Torah is trying to avoid this psychological pain that the donkey would experience.

Rav Chaim Shmeulivtz says that if the Torah is so worried that we might cause donkeys to be jealous of their yoke-mates, then how must the Torah feel about making another human being jealous? However, it can happen very inadvertently. We might tell our friend about how great things are going, what a wonderful vacation we had, how wonderful our spouse is, how great our children are, etc., etc. This other person may, perhaps, not be in the same situation. He is human. He may experience jealousy and pain. If the Torah is concerned that we should not stir up the jealousy of a donkey over a wrong impression, then how much more so must we be sensitive and careful not to flaunt the goodness with which G-d has perhaps graced us.

Contrary to the American ideal of "If you've got it, flaunt it", the Torah ideal is "If you've got it, DON'T flaunt it!".

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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