

PARSHAS VAYIKRA: HEARING - AND ANSWERING - THE CALL

by Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz

Sefer Bereishis contains twelve parshiyos (Torah portions) and 1,534 pesukim (verses).

If your rebbi or morah were to give you and your classmates the task of summarizing the entire Sefer Bereishis in two sentences or less, how would you depict it? How would you describe Sefer Shemos? Or Vayikrah?

It would stand to reason that each sefer in the Torah must have its own distinct theme. After all, there is a blank space of four complete lines in the Sefer Torah separating each of the chumashim from each other. This space would seem to indicate the conclusion of a complete unit and the beginning of the next one.

Taken one step further, as we read the weekly portions throughout the year and âgrow' with the parsha of each week, it is incumbent on us to ask, "What are some of the messages that we ought to internalize as we transition from the weeks of Shemos to Vayikrah?"

While our two sentences would probably differ as to our individual writing styles, I think that we would all agree that Sefer Bereishis is about our roots. In it, we read about the creation of the world and the sins of the first twenty generations of humankind. The Torah describes the lives and times of our forefathers and mothers, our Avos and Imahos, and the events that unfolded during their lifetimes.

Shemos focuses on the development of the B'nei Yisroel into a nation in the crucible of Egypt. We suffered through exile, and once freed, accepted the Torah and built the Mishkan and its utensils.

Vayikrah begins as Moshe and the kohanim are called upon by Hashem to serve Him in the newly inaugurated Mishkan.

THE PARSHIYOS OF OUR LIVES

I often think of a person's lifetime as a microcosm of the Sefer Torah.

We begin with our Bereishis phase, as we are born/created, and are given our family values by our parents and grandparents. We then go through the exile of early adolescence as we slowly disengage from our families and form our own unique identities. During this time, we build our own kelim (utensils); the various skill sets that we will need to lead productive and meaningful lives.

Then, in our late teens and early twenties comes the Vayikrah of our lives - as we answer the call of

Hashem and embark on the path that will hopefully take us to our goal of finding our life's mission.

We all have unique talents that can and should be used to enrich our lives and contribute to our communities. And although these qualities may not be self-evident during our formative years, we need to explore our inner selves and search for them.

WHAT IS YOUR SENTENCE?

A great historian once remarked that thirty years after people retire from public life, their legacy becomes reduced to just one sentence. During their tenure in office, thousands of articles and billions of words may have been written about them in newspapers and magazines around the world. But one generation later, all we remember is a short sound bite. Roosevelt won the War. Truman dropped the Bomb. Nixon resigned, and got embroiled in Vietnam.

So it is with each of us. During our lives, each of the events of our daily lives seem so important at the time. But as we reach the Devarim of our lives, our senior years, we will look back and summarize what we have done in several sentences. 'Devoted mother'. 'Wonderful husband'. 'A real mentch'. 'Helped build the local yeshiva'.

What will your sentence be?

The founder of Chassidus, the great Baal Shem Tov commented on the gemorah (Chagigah 15a) that states that each person hears a Heavenly voice each day that encourages him to find spirituality. He asked how this is so, when none of us seem to hear this Bas Kol? He explained that quite often, at some point each day, we get an impulse to better our lives and devote ourselves to the greater good. This, he explained, is that gift from Hashem, the call to serve Him and enrich our lives.

As you read the parsha of Vayikrah, and pass through your teen years, may I offer each of you, my readers, my sincere bracha: that you hear - and answer - His call and find your mission in life.

May you all lead meaningful and spiritual lives.

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