



The Path To Follow

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ALL THAT HASHEM DOES IS FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

At the beginning of this week's parsha we read, "He called to Moses, and the L-RD spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting" (Leviticus 1:1). What does "He called" mean? Rashi states that it is an expression of affection.

From where did the Divine word to Moses originate? From the Tent of Meeting, meaning that it came from the Holy of Holies, arrived in the Tent of Meeting, and stopped. What was Moses told? Rashi cites the Sages in stating that Hashem told him, "Go and say captivating words to them [the Children of Israel]: 'It is for your sake that G-d communicates with me.'" Rashi goes on to say that during the 38 years in which the Children of Israel were in the desert, they were placed under a ban and Hashem's word did not come to Moses. These things are difficult to understand, for why did the Divine word to Moses have to emanate from the Holy of Holies? Could Hashem not have made it arrive directly into Moses' tent, without having to go through the Holy of Holies?

Furthermore, in the Torah commentaries of Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum (the Satmar Rebbe), Rashi's aforementioned statements are examined in detail: The Gemara explains that Moses' words to the Children of Israel captivated their hearts in order to lead them to repentance. Yet here it seems that Moses emboldened them when he said, "It is for your sake that G-d communicates with me." Finally, the Yalkut Shimoni views this expression in a different light: Is it possible that Hashem spoke to Moses for his own personal needs? He spoke to him for the needs of Israel, not for his own needs. Another explanation: Is it possible that Hashem only spoke to him for the needs of the people? He spoke to him for his own personal needs. We need to understand what is meant by Moses' own needs and the needs of the people.

Moses was a man of G-d. He taught us that the Torah can only be acquired by one who humbles himself for it, as the Sages have said in Taanith 7a. This is the meaning of the small aleph in the word vayikra (Leviticus 1:1). It teaches humility and self-effacement, telling us that it is only when a person makes himself small and effaces himself before others that the Torah will be infused in him. Who was greater than Moses, who was completely humble and self-effacing, as it is written: "The man Moses was exceedingly humble, more than any man on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3)? This is also stated at the beginning of this week's parsha: "When a man among you brings an offering" (Leviticus 1:2), meaning that he considers himself as an offering and submits himself like an animal that stretches out its neck to be slaughtered. The goal of his Torah learning should be to acquire wisdom and know the Creator's will, not to acquire wisdom for himself. His study of Torah must be characterized by humility.

Due to the humility of His servant Moses, Hashem showed him affection by declaring that all He would tell him was uniquely for the sake of His people Israel. True, from Moses' point of view this would seem that Hashem was speaking to him because of the Children of Israel's importance. Yet Hashem was really speaking to him due to his own importance.

In order for this to happen, Hashem's word to Moses had to pass through the Tent of Meeting. It was the place of the Chil-

dren of Israel, for the Sanctuary and the Tent of Meeting allude to the Jewish people. Hence Hashem's word was considered to have passed through there. Moses thought that Hashem's word came to him for the sake and greatness of the Children of Israel, even if it actually came because Moses considered himself to be a beginner in Hashem's Torah. In fact Moses elevated himself to such a degree that Hashem spoke to him so he could teach the Torah to them.

Moses felt that the Divine word was for the Children of Israel, and that Hashem only spoke to him when they were worthy of it. Hence Hashem advised him, "Go and say captivating words to them." That is: Tell them that they must always be engaged in prayer and repentance, so that by this merit and for their sake My word will continue to come to you. In fact during the 38 years that they were distant from Hashem, His word did not come to Moses. It was only when they were worthy that Hashem spoke to him. Thus everything was for the sake of the Children of Israel.

Hence these were the persuasive words used by Moses. The faithful shepherd beseeched them, "It was only for your sake that Hashem spoke with me; it was not on my account. Therefore continue to follow the path of Hashem and be ready to serve Him. By this merit Hashem will speak to me regarding your needs." This is because everything Hashem does is for Israel, that they may elevate themselves on the royal path.

By expanding upon this idea, we may also explain what the Tent of Meeting represents. Heavenly assistance and the perception of Hashem's reality are only possible when a person strives to learn Torah, meaning that he does not move from the tent and never ceases to put an effort into learning Torah and performing mitzvot, as it is written: "When a man dies in a tent" (Numbers 19:14). That is, if he "kills" himself in the tent of Torah learning, a sense of the Creator's reality will come upon him, for He protects His faithful ones in such a way that the Torah will accompany them wherever they go. For a person who lives in the tent of Torah his entire life, the blessing of Hashem will accompany him in all places, his prayers will be accepted, and he will be answered when he calls on Hashem. This is what constitutes, "He called to Moses... from the Tent of Meeting." It means that if the Tent of Meeting is with him in all his journeys and undertakings, the Holy One, blessed be He, will hear his call and answer him. He will protect him from all harm.

My fellow Jews, a feeling of joy and closeness to the Creator should infuse us when we reflect upon these things. In fact everything that the Holy One, blessed be He, does is for us! Conversely, we should realize that we are responsible for making an opening for the Torah, an opening for holiness and good deeds. How can we do this?

It is true that the evil inclination stands at the door and constantly tries to make us transgress and not overcome our trials. Yet this Shabbat is Shabbat Zachor, the time when we were commanded to wipe out the memory of Amalek, thereby enabling us to conquer the evil inclination. Therefore let us wipe out Amalek from within ourselves, and in this way we will grow closer to Hashem with even greater strength.

GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Misplaced Praise

You should not praise someone if he will ultimately suffer from your praise. An example of this would be praising someone's generosity under circumstances that would cause unscrupulous people to pester him for money.

For the holidays, Mr. Goldberg received an extra-large bonus from his boss. Since the other employees did not receive as large a bonus, Mr. Goldberg shouldn't tell his co-workers, "The boss is really nice. He gave me double my usual salary." Saying this may cause the other employees to ask for a similar bonus, or they may bear a grudge against their boss.

— Adapted from Guard Your Tongue, p.111

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Only From Hashem

We find ourselves approaching a great and holy day, one that even Yom Kippur is compared to, for our Sages have said: “Yom Kippurim: A day like Purim.” This is a day concerning which the Sages have said that all our heart’s desires are granted. This accords with the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch, which states that whoever stretches out his hand on Purim is in turn given without verification. Heaven deals with us in the same way that we deal with others, and whoever extends his hand in prayer is answered, whether he is worthy or not.

Nevertheless, we should be surprised that this day merited such greatness. After all, on Purim our deliverance came about through natural means. The laws of nature were not changed, as they were during the exodus from Egypt, and there were no obvious miracles, as there was with the oil on Chanukah. Since the deliverance that occurred on Purim resulted from a chain of logically connected events, why is it so great? We may possibly explain this by the fact that Purim corresponds to the entire year. That is, throughout the year we are faced with all kinds of situations that call for Divine aid, and just when that happens we suddenly find the right people to help us. For example, have you ever run out of gas near a service station? What about the “chance” discovery of certain vaccines? Isn’t our entire existence filled with “chance” occurrences that come to save the day? We need to realize that there are no coincidences in this world. In fact within the word mikreh (“coincidence”) we can find the expression rak mei Hashem (“only from Hashem”). Everything is planned from above with great exactitude, but it is hidden behind a mask. It is hidden much in the same way that we disguise ourselves on Purim, even to the point of being unrecognizable. The Holy One, blessed be He, is looking through the lattice, seeing all our needs, and dealing with us through the mask of coincidence.

This is what the holy day of Purim teaches us. Although every event on Purim occurred “by chance,” when we look at the big picture we see that a guiding hand from above was directing everything. This is why Purim is greater than Yom Kippur, greater than Chanukah, and greater than the exodus from Egypt. It does not require much wisdom to serve Hashem when we can perceive His power, and no intelligence at all is needed to realize that G-d is behind miracles. Yet we need to see the Creator’s hand in daily occurrences and realize that in all cases everything comes “only from Hashem.”

A Pearl From the Rav

It is written, “He called to Moses, and the L-RD spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting” (Leviticus 1:1).

In his book Pahad David, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita notes that the Tent of Meeting alludes to the Torah, just as it is written that Jacob dwelled “in tents” (Genesis 25:27). This teaches that a man should kill himself for the words of Torah in the tent of Torah study. Indeed, he must invest all his energy into studying Torah, and we know that this should be done standing (which many people do). The word moed (“meeting”) is composed of the same letters as omed (“standing”), which also alludes to studying by the shtender (otherwise known as an amud – same letters as omed).

The Pure for the Pure

It is written, “Vayikra [And He called] to Moses” (Leviticus 1:1).

Why do we start teaching the Torah to children beginning with Parsha Vayikra? It is because this parsha speaks of pure offerings, and children

are pure of sin. Therefore let those who are pure come and study the parsha of the pure (Yalkut Shimoni).

The word vayikra is written with a small aleph to tell parents by allusion that just as the aleph begins the alphabet, so too must we begin teaching our small ones with Parsha Vayikra.

– Kli Yakar

An Offering for Hashem

It is written, “When a man among you brings an offering” (Leviticus 1:2).

What a person offers of his own body, when he humbles and presents himself with a broken heart, constitutes a true offering. If an offering is not accompanied with repentance and humility, then Hashem does not want it.

Thus: “When a man among you,” when he offers from “among you” – from his own self – it becomes an offering for Hashem.

– Sforno

An Offering Brought from the Portions of the Poor

It is written, “When a soul offers a meal-offering to the L-RD” (Leviticus 2:1).

Rashi states, “Who usually donates a meal-offering? A poor man. The Holy One, blessed be He, says: ‘I account it to him as if he has offered his very soul.’”

This seems difficult to understand, for why does the Torah not use the term “soul” when describing a person who offers a bird? It is clear that a meal-offering (consisting of flour, oil, and incense) costs much more than a dove or a turtledove. Therefore one who brings a bird as an offering is poorer than one who brings a meal-offering. To answer this question, the Chatam Sofer states that one who brings a meal-offering thereby proves that he does not even have the few pennies necessary to purchase a turtledove. He therefore takes a little flour and oil, which he was able to gather because of the mitzvot of leket, shikcha, and peah (the portions of the poor), and he brings them as an offering. Hence he is truly taking food from his own mouth and bringing it as an offering to Hashem. It is therefore “as if he has offered his very soul!”

– Torat Moshe

Why a Person Sins Unintentionally

It is written, “When a person will sin unintentionally from among all the commandments of the L-RD that may not be done, and he commits one of them” (Leviticus 4:2).

If someone sins unintentionally, it is because “he commits one of them,” meaning that he has sinned intentionally. For one who has never sinned intentionally, Heaven protects him from sinning unintentionally.

– The Alsheich

The Sin of a Leader

It is written, “When a leader sins” (Leviticus 4:22).

It is not written, “If a leader sins,” but “when a leader sins,” for this a very frequent occurrence. In fact it is almost a certainty that a leader will sin, for the power he holds will lead him to pride, and hence to sin (Zohar).

Reb Nota of Chelm said that this teaching is hidden in the expression asher nassi yecheta (“when a leader sins”), the initials of which form the word ani (“I”). A leader sins when he is led to pride and thinks, “I am the only one who matters.”

– Ma’ayana Shel Torah

A Mitzvah to Speak and a Mitzvah to Not Speak

It is written, "When a person sins in that he hears the voice of adjuration, and he is a witness – either he has seen or known – if he does not say, then he shall bear his iniquity" (Leviticus 5:1).

Why is the word lo ("not") written with a vav? The Gemara states, "Whoever can forbid his household [to commit a sin] but does not, is seized for [the sins of] his household" (Shabbat 54b). This means that if a person does not warn those over whom he exerts an influence, the sins they commit are considered to be his own. At the same time, however, the Gemara states: "Just as one is commanded to say that which will be obeyed, so too is one commanded not to say what will not be obeyed" (Yebamot 65b). On our verse the Gelilei Zahav states, "If a person does not speak up, he will bear his sin. Yet there are some situations in which it is better not to say anything. Hence the Torah alludes to this by writing the word lo with two possible meanings: 'If to him [lo with a vav] he says' and 'If he does not [lo with an aleph] say.'"

The Sinner Must Take His Head Out of the Fat

It is written, "The head and the fat" (Leviticus 1:8).

The prophet Amos said, "Therefore they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles" (Amos 6:7), which is a reference to the Ten Tribes. The Maharsha explains that since they were immersed in the desires and pleasures of this world, having committed sin upon sin, they were sent into exile. This is why Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin Zatzal said, "'Aaron's sons, the priests, shall arrange the pieces, the head and the fat' [Leviticus 1:8]. Once the offering was slaughtered and the head was cut, it was taken by its horns and placed upon the Altar. The head was not pleasant to look at, for it was oozing blood. What did they do? They took some fat and placed it where the head was severed, and in this way everything was placed upon the Altar. This was done so as to tell a person that he sinned because his head was immersed in 'fat' all day long, meaning in the pleasures of this world. He was therefore told to think of other things."

Overview of the Parsha

The book of Genesis describes events from Creation until the appearance of the Patriarchs, from whom the Jewish people would emerge. The book of Exodus describes the formation of Hashem's people as they left Egypt, the giving of the Torah, and the construction of the Sanctuary. The book of Leviticus begins with Israel coming closer to the sanctity of Hashem by means of the offerings, followed by warnings against impurity and how all that lives belongs to Hashem. Parsha Vayikra begins with a description of the offerings made in the Sanctuary, wherein life is connected to Hashem by means of burnt-offerings (which are entirely dedicated to Hashem), meal-offerings (which come from the food of the offerer), and peace-offerings (which enables a person to, as it were, participate with Hashem). Some offerings rectify a lack of closeness to Hashem, sin-offerings atone for grave sins, and offerings of a higher or lower value atone for lighter sins. Guilt-offerings atone for acts that simply result in sin.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

How He Cooled You

It is written, "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way...how he cooled you" (Deuteronomy 25:17-18).

"Warning: Boiling Water." The sign was clearly marked, and any responsible person who read it would never try to touch it, especially when he saw steam rising from the vat. Anyone who saw the boiling water would realize that it would be best to stay away, since nobody wants to get burned. Suddenly, a man comes forth and claims that he isn't afraid. He says that the water isn't as hot as people imagine, and that somebody simply made a mistake by putting up this sign. Everyone who hears this man realizes that he is simply not normal.

Without saying another word, the man jumps into the vat of boiling water, and quickly emerges in great pain, his whole body seriously burned. In an instant his skin is covered with blisters of all sizes. In fact his condition is serious, even life-threatening, and he is rushed to the hospital. However it is utterly amazing to hear people saying that maybe the water isn't that hot after all, and that maybe the warning on the sign can be ignored. Although such a view is based on falsehood, those who hold it are in doubt as to whether the water is really that hot.

After the giving of the Torah, when the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself on Mount Sinai amid thunder and lightning, He silenced all of Creation in order to give His treasure to His chosen people. All the Children of Israel saw this grandiose sight and together they said, "We will do and we will hear." They understood that one cannot compromise when it comes to the Torah's mitzvot, either positive or negative. They are like boiling water, and no Jew would dare transgress them for anything in the world. They saw the smoke rising from the mountain, and they understood the gravity of every mitzvah of Hashem. Yet suddenly with the arrival of Amalek, whose name has the same numerical value as the word safek ("doubt"), the enthusiasm of their hearts began to cool as various kinds of doubt began to arise. This doubt even entered the boiling waters of their soul and was burned. Although Israel overcame this doubt, it nevertheless achieved its goal, for it managed to cool their enthusiasm in learning Torah and performing mitzvot, and they were already beginning to contemplate compromises. This is what Hashem said that we must always remember: "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way...how he cooled you." We must always remember how he cooled our enthusiasm in the service of Hashem, so as never to be fooled by it. We must realize that if we put our whole heart into this war, it will be a "war for Hashem," in which case we will merit the Creator's help and be assured of victory.

EISHET CHAYIL

Giving Wisely

Among the many virtues of Mrs. Sarah Schenirer was the fact that she loved to do good for others and give tzedakah. At the same time, she was always careful to give in secret so that the poor never realized or were upset by her giving.

One day she heard people speaking about a man who was experiencing tremendous hardship. Passover was approaching, and he simply didn't know what to do because he had very little money. Mrs. Schenirer gave herself no rest until she could help him, for his distress touched her heart. She wanted to give him 50 gold coins, but wondered how to do this without his knowledge. She went to find someone who dealt with community matters, gave him the money, and asked that he secretly place it in the man's coat while it was hanging on the wall.

When the man put on his coat, he found the treasure in his pocket. Raising his eyes to Heaven, he thanked Hashem and blessed the anonymous giver.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

The gaon Rabbi Shemuel Strashun Zatzal was born in 5554 in the town of Sakowitz. His father was the gaon Reb Yosef, a friend of the gaon Rabbi Avraham Danzig Zatzal (the author of Chayei Adam on the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim).

From his youth, Rabbi Shemuel was known for his prodigious intellect. He was able to study Torah in comfort, for he was extremely wealthy, and he studied using the same method as the Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna. Rabbi Shemuel would clarify difficult issues to the smallest degree, issues from which he derived the most refined teachings. He possessed great understanding and was extremely well-versed in all fields of Torah. With his clear intellect and ability to get to the heart of the matter, he could always smooth out any difficulties in the sea of the Talmud.

Rabbi Shemuel disliked the method of pilpul, and in the book Peulat Sachir he wrote: "Never has my heart followed pilpulim or views that have no basis in the Gemara." This is why he wrote his famous hagaot ("notes") on the Talmud, known by the title HaGaot HaRashash. Thanks to this work, those who study the Gemara can instantly check its various versions because Rabbi Shemuel reconciled them all, explaining the most difficult subjects on every page. In fact people still study these "notes" today wherever the Torah is found among the Jewish people.

Rabbi Shemuel's commentaries and observations on Midrash Rabba and the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim have also been published, as well as on the Rambam's reference work Yad HaChazakah. The Rashash left this world at the age of 78 on 11 Adar Beit, 5632. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Repent Every Day

It is written, "Samuel said to Saul: 'The L-RD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel, so now hear the sound of the L-RD's words' " (I Samuel 15:1).

We must explain this verse as an allusion, according to the words of our Sages: "Rabbi Eliezer said: 'Repent one day before your death.' His disciples asked him, 'Does one know on what day he will die?' He replied, 'Then all the more reason to repent today, lest he die tomorrow, and thus his whole life will be spent in repentance'" (Shabbat 153a).

This is what the verse is telling us here. "Samuel said to Saul: 'The L-RD sent me to anoint you as king'" – since Hashem sent me, a person who is but flesh and blood, here today and gone tomorrow, and I know not the day of my death – "now" listen to the sound of Hashem's words. Now, at this very moment, listen to what Hashem told me. Don't think that if you fail to carry it out today, you will have time to repent tomorrow. You and I are but flesh and blood, not knowing what will happen tomorrow. Therefore it is better to hasten and listen to Hashem's word now.

This is the reason why the tzaddikim reflect upon their ways every night, reviewing what they did during the day. They repent each and every day, for no one knows when he will die.

– From Torat HaParasha

A TRUE STORY

Just as the First Man

It is written, "When a man among you brings an offering to the L-RD" (Leviticus 1:2).

Rashi states, "Just as Adam, the first man, never brought offerings from stolen property, since everything was his, so too must you not bring offerings from stolen property."

Rabbi Israel Salanter arrived with his disciple Rabbi Eliezer Scholwitz in Berlin, where they would be spending Yom Kippur. In the synagogue where they prayed, there were large doors that opened to a garden that surrounded the entire building. These doors were opened on Yom Kippur in order to allow fresh air inside and make the fast a little easier. Before praying, Rabbi Eliezer had to leave, and when he returned the entire congregation was already standing and reciting the Amidah. He therefore stood at the doorway and started to pray. Suddenly he heard his Rav whispering to him, "Thief! In the middle of Yom Kippur you're stealing from the people by taking their fresh air! The only point in opening these doors was to allow fresh air inside, but you're standing here and preventing that from happening!" Rabbi Eliezer understood that he had to move, even though he was in the middle of reciting the Amidah! Such was the great stress that Rabbi Israel Salanter laid on a person's conduct toward his fellowman.

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

A Clever Woman

Rabbi Acha said, "There are women who are clever at borrowing, and there are women who are not clever at borrowing." For example, a clever woman who needs a sieve will go and borrow it from her neighbor. How will she do this?

If the door to her neighbor's house is open, a clever woman will still not enter without permission. She will therefore knock and wait until her neighbor comes to the door. The clever woman will greet her politely and say, "Hello, how are you? How are you feeling today?"

Her neighbor will reply with a smile, "Thank you. Everything is alright, and I'm doing well." The clever woman will inquire as to the health of her neighbor's children, thereby establishing a rapport between them. Her neighbor will invite her in and ask, "What can I do for you?"

The clever woman will enter and say: "I have to make some bread, but my sieve is broken. Perhaps you can lend me yours?" Her neighbor will say, "Well of course! Here, take it." Thus the two women will part ways as friends.

How does a woman who is not clever proceed? She goes to her neighbor, and if the door is closed she will open it without knocking, not even asking for permission to come in. Her neighbor will look at her with hostility and think, "She's got some nerve coming into people's homes and disturbing them like this!" This woman will not even bother to greet her neighbor or ask to be excused for intruding. Instead she will immediately say with a sullen expression, "Can I borrow your sieve?" Her neighbor, who is already upset with this woman, will think, "What a nuisance! Can't she even make due without a sieve?" She will refuse to lend it to her, and she will try to quickly usher her out. The two women will part ways, each being upset at the other.

– Adapted from Vayikra Rabba 5:8