

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

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❖ PARSHAT VAYIKRA

Throughout history, G-d has revealed Himself to both Jewish and non-Jewish prophets. The manner of revelation, however, is different in each case, as underscored in this week's Torah portion, Vayikra. Moses, the greatest Jewish prophet who ever lived, merited the highest level of prophecy, as our Sages learned from the verse: "Vayikra -- And G-d called to Moses." The prophecy of Bilaam, on the other hand, the greatest of the gentile prophets, was of an inferior nature: "And G-d met Bilaam (Vayikar)."

At first glance the difference between the two Hebrew words appears nominal: one word has the Hebrew letter "alef," the other does not. Yet this tiny alef, in fact, contains a world of difference. According to Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator, the word "vayikra" implies affection, love and holiness; "vayikar" comes from the root word meaning uncleanness and pollution. Moreover, the alef alludes to "Aluf shel olam" -- "the Master of the world" -- a fact which is further emphasized by its numerical equivalent of one, representative of G-d's absolute unity. "Vayikra," with an alef, is symbolic of the Jew's connection with G-d, a permanent uniting of two halves; "vayikar," without the alef, implies a temporary, impure connection between two entities that do not share an intrinsic bond.

In a broader sense, G-d's call to Moses is directed to every single Jew, for all Jews are said to contain a spark of Moses within. In truth, G-d reveals Himself to each individual Jew, in every generation -- and precisely with love and affection. Rashi adds that "vayikra" alludes to the affectionate manner in which the heavenly angels call to each other. Just as there is no competition or jealousy among angels, so too does G-d's revelation to every individual Jew have only positive consequences, fostering love and unity between His children. Moreover, G-d's overwhelming love for each and every Jew should inspire us to emulate Him and thus strengthen our own sense of Jewish unity. If G-d loves and reveals Himself in such a positive manner to every Jew, surely we must follow His ways and relate to each of our brethren accordingly. Thus, completely united as one, the Jewish people will march toward the Final Redemption with Moshiach, when we will merit to see the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy: "G-d will be King over the entire earth; on that day G-d will be one and His name one." (From: L'Chaim 5756, Adapted from Hitva'aduyot 5749 of the Rebbe, Vol. 2)

"And He called to Moshe." (1:1) QUESTION: Why is it customary for children who begin learning Chumash to start Vayikra before Bereishit? **ANSWER:** Little children are innocent and pure (tavor) and Chumash Vayikra discusses korbanot - sacrifices - which are pure and which restore spiritual purity (taharah) to a person. Therefore, it is fitting that pure little children should begin their education with the topic of purity.

Jewish children must also know from the onset that sacrifice and dedication are a prerequisite for success in Torah studies. One cannot just sit back and expect to learn through osmosis. A Torah student must always bear in mind the words of our Sages (Megillah 6b): "If a person says 'I have tried hard and succeeded,' believe him" - only through diligent and assiduous study will one succeed. (From: Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky)

❖ PARSHAS ZACHOR / PURIM

The Rebbe writes (Rosh Chodesh Adar II, 5738 (1978)):

As you surely know, the special additional Torah portion, Parshat Zachor, which is read on the Shabbat before Purim, contains the commandments to remember what Amalek, the arch enemy of our Jewish people, did to our people when they were on their way to receive the Torah

at Sinai. Amalek's unprovoked and stealthy attack was calculated to shake their belief in G-d and dampen their enthusiasm for His Torah and mitzvot. Haman, a direct descendant of Amalek, was driven by hatred of the Jews, because "their laws were different from those of any other people," as the Megilla states. Likewise did all subsequent Amalekites and Hamans of all ages hate the Jews.

But "Amalek" -- in a wider sense -- represents all obstacles and hindrances which a Jew encounters on his, or her, way to receive and observe the Torah and mitzvot with enthusiasm and joy in the everyday life. And so Parshat Zachor comes to remind us, and never forget, that "Amalekites" exist in every generation and in every day and age, and that we must not allow ourselves to be deterred or discouraged by any Amalekite in any shape or form. If the question be asked, "Why has G-d done thus?" Why should a Jew be confronted with such trials and difficulties? The answer is, that every Jew has been given the necessary powers to overcome all such "Amalekites," and he is expected to use them, in order to demonstrate to himself and others that nothing will deter him, nor dampen his fervor, in the observance of the Torah and mitzvot in accordance with G-d's Will. And once he recognizes that whatever difficulty he encounters is really a test of his faith in G-d, and resolves firmly to meet the challenge, he will soon see that no "Amalek" of any kind is a match for the Divine powers of the Jewish soul. Indeed, far from being insurmountable obstructions, they turn out to be helpers and catalysts for ever greater achievements, having been instrumental in mobilizing those inner powers which would have otherwise remained dormant.

This is also forcefully brought out in the Megilla, in the example of Mordechai the Jew, who "would not bend his knee nor bow down" before Haman. As a result of this indomitable stance, not only was Haman's power totally broken, but many enemies became friends, as the Megilla tells us that "many of the peoples of the land were becoming 'Jewish,' for the fear of Mordechai fell upon them!" May G-d grant that each and all of you should go from strength to strength in emulating Mordechai the Jew, advancing in all matters of Judaism, Torah and mitzvot, with joy and gladness of heart, and may you all be blessed with a full measure of "light, joy, gladness, and honor," both in the plain sense as well as in the inner meaning of these terms in accordance with the interpretation of our Sages -- "Light -- this is the Torah... Honor -- this is tefillin" -- since the Torah and mitzvot, though a "must" for their own sake, are the channels and vessels to receive and enjoy G-d's blessings in all needs, materially and spiritually.

Wishing each and all of you a happy Purim, and may its inspiration be with you every day throughout the year. (From: L'Chaim 5757 #460)

"And when her father and mother had died, Mordechai adopted her as his daughter." (2:7) QUESTION: The Gemara (Megillah 13a) says, "read not 'lebat' -- 'a daughter' but 'lebayit' -- 'a wife,' " [lit. "a home"]. Instead of alluding, why doesn't it say "bayit" explicitly? **ANSWER:** The Gemara (Ketubot 59b) says that the purpose and desire of a woman is in three things. 1) "Bonim" -- children. 2) "Yofi" -- beauty. 3) "Tachshitim" -- jewelry. The acronym of these three is the word "Bayit". The Gemara (Megillah 13a) says Esther was of greenish complexion (like a myrtle). However, G-d endowed her with a touch of grace -- kindness. This made her appear beautiful in the eyes of the people and Achashveirosh (Rashi). Consequently, of the three characteristics which make up the uniqueness of the woman she was lacking the "yud" which stands for "yofi" beauty. Hence, in consideration of the two feminine qualities the Megillah refers to her relationship with Mordechai as "Bat" -- "a daughter," but our sages tell us that she was really "Bayit" -- a full fledged wife. (From: Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky)

CHASSIDUS CONTAINS TWO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES:

- (A) UNDERSTANDING EVERY *HALACHA* (TORAH LAW) ON ITS SPIRITUAL PLANE, IN ITS ROOT AND ULTIMATE SOURCE, NAMELY IN THE *SEFIROT* AND PLANES IN EVERY WORLD ACCORDING TO THAT WORLD'S CHARACTER, AS EXPLAINED IN CHASSIDUS.
- (b) COMPREHENDING THE SUBJECT OF EVERY *HALACHA* IN *AVODA*; MEANING, ALTHOUGH THE *HALACHA* IS AN EXPRESSION OF G-DLY WISDOM AND INTELLIGENCE AND IS A LAW IN TORAH, NEVERTHELESS ONE MUST DISCOVER IN IT AN *AVODA*-CONCEPT TO GUIDE MAN'S CONDUCT IN HIS LIFE HERE IN THIS WORLD. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM ADAR II 11)

Before you engage in any intellectual inquiry, do a good deed. Simply do it, and you will see how it enriches your outlook on life, for this is a two-way street - just as the ideology feeds the deed, the deed fortifies the ideology. Indeed, it creates ideology. - The Rebbe