



Answering the Call

Sefer Vayikra begins with G-d calling to Moshe and speaking to him about the laws of the קרבנות.

ויקרא

As we all know, the alef in the word "ויקרא" is smaller than the rest of the letters. Rashi, in the first commentary he writes on each book of Torah, always tries to teach us about G-d's love for the Jewish people. Sefer Vayikra is no different. Rashi explains that ויקרא is a word which connotes love. In fact, before speaking with all of the Jewish prophets, the language of קריאה is always used first. This, states Rashi, is in contrast with the way in which Hashem appears to the non-Jewish prophets. With them, the word ויקר (without the א at the end), meaning G-d "happened upon" speaking to the prophets. Rashi explains that this was Hashem's way of speaking to non-Jewish prophets such as Bilaam, a לשון of impurity.

Rabbi Binyamin Lau explains the difference between ויקרא and ויקר and writes that when G-d calls to mankind, as he did to Adam HaRishon, he asks him to identify himself.

ויקרא ה' אֵלֶיךָ אָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵיכָּה:

"And G-d called to Adam and He said: Where are you?"

בראשית ג:ט

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־קֹלְךָ שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּגֹן וַאֲרֵא כִּי־עֵרִים אָנֹכִי וַאֲחַבֵּא

And he [Adam] said: "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." (בראשית ג:ט)

Man is not accustomed to having G-d speak to him, and instead of coming closer to G-d, upon hearing G-d's call, mankind frequently tries to hide from Him. The purpose of Sefer Vayikra is G-d explaining to human beings how to draw close to Him. That is why the word קרבן, "sacrifice", comes from the shorsh of קרב- to draw close. Rather than the human reflex to create distance from G-d, out of pure trepidation, in Sefer Vayikra, G-d tells man that within that trepidation, a closeness with Hashem can be created.

Perhaps prophets are not the only ones that are meant to learn from this idea of ויקרא- of drawing close to G-d's call. When reading these words, perhaps we too are meant to reflect about G-d's personal callings to us. Sometimes, G-d calls to us, asking us to rise and respond to an opportunity. Sometimes, He "calls" to us in the form of blessings. "What will you do with your blessings?" Will we be filled with pride and egotism? Will we forget Hashem and begin to believe "my power and strength of my hand" led me to this blessing? Sometimes He calls to us in the form of what seems to be the harsh blow of a shepherd's staff, a wakeup call, a difficulty we face. Will we distance ourselves from G-d at such moments, or will we rise to His call and draw closer despite the pain? As Jews, we are meant to look at world events in light of such "callings"- reaffirming that

Hashem runs the world and speaks to us at every juncture in history.

As opposed to ויקרא, the word ויקר, mentioned by Rashi, connotes a completely different relationship with G-d and the world. The word ויקר is similar to the word קרה, “happen”. This word describes a world in which such closeness with G-d is not possible- a world with no direction and purpose, but rather a stream of random occurrences. The world view is then a world which lacks order. The Jewish way, the way of the Torah, the world of ויקרא is one which focuses on כוונה, intention, while the world of ויקר is one which is filled with a lack of control.

This Shabbat, we read פרשת זכור. The Torah tells us in כה-זי-יח:

זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֶק בְּדַרְךָ בְּצֵאתְךָ מִמִּצְרָיִם: (יח) אֲשֶׁר קָרָה בְּדַרְךָ וַיִּזְנֶב בְּךָ כָּל-הַנְּחָשִׁים אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאֶתְהָ עָרַף וַיִּגַע וְלֹא יָרָא אֱלֹקִים

“Remember what Amalek did to you on your way when you left from Egypt- how he happened upon you on the way, and struck the rear part of you, all who were feeble behind you, when you were faint and weary; and he didn’t fear God.”

The word to describe Amalek’s attack on the Jewish people is קָרָה- “he happened upon” the Jewish people. Rav Binyamin Lau explains that Amalek fought against the Jewish people, simply “because”. There was no specific reason to fight the Jewish people other than because they simply could. As we say in Hebrew סתם- “because”. Amalek would simply sneak up on weaker enemies, attack and leave.

In Megillat Esther, Haman is identified as a descendant of Agag, the king of Amalek. He too, attacked the Jewish people, simply because he could. He wanted them to be

weak. It wasn’t for a strategic reason. After all, we know much of the Jewish people were assimilated in the times of the Megillah. Instead, Haman wanted to kill the Jewish nation simply because.

This difference between ויקרא and ויקר is hinted to in the Megillah.

וַיִּגְדֹּלוּ מִרְדְּכָי אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרָה וְאֵת פְּרִשַׁת הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הַמֶּן לְשִׁקוֹל עַל-גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּיְהוּדִים לְאַבְדָּם: (מגילת אסתר ד:ז)

“And Mordechai told him [Hatach] about all that had **happened to him**, and the account of the silver that Haman had said to weigh to the king’s treasuries for the annihilation of the Jews.”

The language used by the Megillah to describe Haman’s evil plan hints at the approach of Haman the Amaleki. To Haman, all was happenstance: Power was up. Power was down. He lacked the relationship with Hashem to give him a proper sense to view world events.

At the end of the Megilla, however, we read:

‘לִיהוּדִים הִיטָה אֹרֵחַ וּשְׂמֵחָה וּשְׂשׂוֹן וַיִּקְר’

“For the Jews there was light and happiness, and rejoicing and honor”

The word ויקר - is a double entendre. Although it means “honor”, it’s the Megillah’s way of nodding to the fact that we overcame Haman’s ויקר- random- view of the world. As a nation, when we heard about the terrible decree against us, we knew it was not random. Rather, we did teshuva, fasted, and drew closer to G-d’s wakeup call.

The Purim story is meant to negate the Amaleki view of the world. As a nation, we are meant to recognize G-d’s purposeful Hand throughout history. Furthermore, as individual Jews, G-d calls to us every day. Our life is designed with an infinite

amount of כוונה - intention. Everything has a purpose. The tests we face, the people we meet, the national events which happen to us as a people, are all meant to be callings from G-d. May we always have the wisdom to hear G-d's directed call, and the courage and strength, like Mordechai and Esther, to use those callings as opportunities to grow closer to Him. ■

Dr. Ariella Agatstein has been involved in Jewish educational leadership for over 20 years. She received her Doctorate in Jewish Educational Leadership from Azrieli Graduate School, focusing her thesis on the religious development of Modern Orthodox high school students. Dr. Agatstein has taught Limudei Kodesh in various schools throughout the Unites States and was the Assistant Principal of Girls Judaic Studies in Yeshivat Yavneh of Los Angeles. She subsequently moved with her family and children to Jerusalem where she became an Eshkolot Fellow at the Matan-Sadie Rennert Women's Institute for Torah Studies. Dr. Agatstein continues to lecture all over Israel on topics related to Torah and pedagogy and she remains very passionate about bringing her knowledge and experience to the field of Jewish education in Israel. She is currently the Director of the Bellows Eshkolot Professional Development Fellowship in Matan.

Real Life Rescues



Flight Physician Saves Patient's Life In The Sky

On a recent Tuesday, an elderly woman traveling on an El-Al flight from Russia to Israel began to feel ill. Passengers sitting nearby notified the flight attendants, who requested medical assistance.

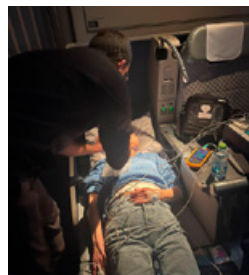
Dr. Nathan Ungar, an aviation physician and long-time United Hatzalah volunteer, was sleeping peacefully in his seat on his return to Israel after having transported a patient to Russia. As a physician who frequently accompanies ill patients, Ungar had developed a prior rapport with the crew, who immediately approached his seat and informed him of the emergency.

Ungar quickly located the distressed passenger and found her slumped in her seat, barely conscious. Using his medical equipment, Ungar began a thorough examination of the patient and realized that her condition was critical as she had dangerously low blood pressure and oxygen levels.

Ungar requested the onboard doctor's kit from the flight crew. This kit, equipped with essential medical tools, an oxygen tank, and medications for various in-flight emergencies, is standard on every flight. Ungar connected the patient to oxygen, opened an IV line, and administered fluids to the patient, whose condition slowly began to stabilize.

After monitoring the patient for a while and being satisfied that her condition was stable, Ungar recommended to the flight crew that they continue on to Tel Aviv. Ungar stayed near the patient until they landed, continually monitoring her condition to ensure that she didn't regress. After landing at Ben Gurion Airport, an Advanced Life Support Ambulance met the plane on the tarmac and transported the patient to the hospital for further care.

"The story would have ended very differently if I hadn't acted on time," said Ungar. "I'm just blessed to have been at the right place at the right time."



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