

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת ויקרא

ויקרא אל משה וידבר ה' אליו מאהל מועד לאמר

“He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying” (1:1)

The Gemara in Yoma 4b points out that Hashem called Moshe before speaking to him. The Torah is teaching us derech erez, the proper way to act. One should not suddenly speak to a person without calling him first to get his attention. The Torah Temimah explains that this is a common courtesy that one should extend to his listener so that he is paying attention and will hear what is said. If he just begins talking suddenly, it is unfair to the other person because he is not ready and will not hear everything. Similarly, the Gemara in Niddah 16b cautions against entering a house suddenly, without knocking and/or announcing oneself first. This is unfair to the person inside, who may not be expecting someone to come in. This is even true in a person's own home (Pesachim 112a). The example given in the Torah is Hashem calling to Moshe, who was very close to Hashem and spoke to Him all the time. This shows that it does not matter if the other person is a stranger or a best friend. Derech erez applies at all times and in one's interactions with all people.

The Gemara in Yoma learns another ethical lesson from this posuk. A person may not repeat something that was said to him until the person who told him authorizes him to do so. We see this concept in this posuk because Hashem had to expressly tell Moshe to say it over to the people. We live in a time where information is freely available to all and privacy has become restricted. We should still be very guarded about revealing things that others tell us. Even if it is not a derogatory statement, there is still an issue of confidentiality involved. This is not a new issue. A thousand years ago, Rabbeinu Gershom enacted a ban prohibiting a person from reading other people's mail to strengthen the awareness of privacy. Maharam MiRotenberg quotes the original text of the prohibition in his responsa: "A ban was issued not to look at a letter of one's friend that was sent to another friend, without his knowledge."

The Torah goes out of its way to teach us derech erez. People tend to associate the parshiyos in the beginning of Sefer Vayikra with laws of korbanos and impurity which are inapplicable to us. However, there is more to these sections of the Torah than just laws. There are deeper lessons to be learned from these pesukim.

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The Midrash says that Moshe had ten names, yet Hashem only called him by the name “Moshe,” the name that was given to him by the daughter of Pharaoh. What is it about this name that led Hashem to use it exclusively? It does not even describe anything about him?! R' Chaim Shmuelevitz answers that the daughter of Pharaoh ignored her father's decree to kill all Jewish boys in order to save Moshe Rabbeinu when she pulled him out of the water. Moshe thus became a beneficiary of “mesiras nefesh,” a tremendous personal sacrifice on the part of the daughter of Pharaoh. This characteristic became ingrained in him as a result and personal sacrifice became a part of his life. This characteristic is what drove Moshe to kill the Mitzri who was hitting a fellow Jew and to ask Hashem to erase his name from the Torah if He would destroy the Jewish nation. This characteristic was the best description of Moshe Rabbeinu and that is why Hashem used this name over all the others.

**דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה' מן הבהמה מן הבקר
ומן הצאן תקריבו את קרבנכם**

“Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When a person from among you will bring an offering to Hashem: from the animals - from the cattle and from the flocks you shall bring your offering” (1:2)

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch comments that the generally accepted translation of "korban" as "offering" or "sacrifice" is misleading. An offering implies that it is a gift to the receiver, filling a need that the receiver has. This is absolutely untrue of a korban. We know that Hashem needs nothing from us. Rather, the word "korban" has no precise translation in the English (or in Rav Hirsch's case, German) language. It is derived from the root "karov," which means to "bring close." When a person brings a korban, the purpose is for him to become closer to Hashem. It is a positive achievement rather than a destructive act of sacrifice. It fulfills the need of the person bringing the animal, not the one to whom it is brought. The essence of a korban is that a person brings an item that he owns closer to Hashem, through which he himself can draw nearer and establish a closer relationship with Hashem. When a person comes to Hashem's dwelling place to give something of his to Hashem, he comes to realize that the whole objective of his life is to become closer to Hashem through Torah and mitzvos. Korbanos are a vehicle that Hashem provided us with to help us arrive at this realization and to strengthen our connection with Him.

**ושסע אתו בכנפיו לא יבדיל והקטיר אתו הכהן המזבחה על העצים אשר על האש עלה
הוא אשה ריח ניחח לה'**

“He shall split it - with its feathers - he need not sever it; the Kohen shall cause it to go up in smoke on the Altar, on the wood that is on the fire - it is a burnt-offering, a fire-offering, a satisfying aroma to Hashem” (1:17)

Rashi comments that the bird brought by the poor man and the bull brought by the rich man are both equally described as "a satisfying aroma to Hashem." This teaches us that whether one gives a lot or a little, as long as he has the right intentions and in his heart he wants to serve Hashem, it is pleasing to Him. This is true for a person who gives what he can based on his financial abilities and it also holds true for one who does what he can in his Torah study and mitzvah performance. If a person does whatever he can do and honestly tries to do what Hashem wants of him, it is pleasing in the eyes of Hashem. Nobody should ever say that he cannot reach a great level because he has certain shortcomings. Just as the poor person seems to be unable to afford a korban, yet he does what he can with what he has and thus finds favor in the eyes of Hashem, we are only expected to make the most of our abilities and not worry that others do more than us. A person has to make a good faith attempt to give it his all and trust in Hashem, who knows the thoughts and abilities of every single human being, that He will know what is in his heart.

**אם הכהן המשיח יחטא לאשמת העם והקריב על חטאתו אשר חטא פר בן בקר תמים
לה' לחטאת**

“If the anointed Kohen will sin, bringing guilt upon the people; for his sin that he committed he shall offer a young bull, unblemished, to Hashem as a sin-offering” (4:3)

R' Yaakov MiLisa, the author of Nesivos HaMishpat (a famous commentary on Choshen Mishpat), writes that when the Kohen Gadol sins, even unintentionally, it brings guilt upon all the people because he is a leader who is looked up to. When the people see what he does, they assume that they can do the same and this leads them to sin intentionally and sink to a lower level. Such a person has to be doubly careful not to stumble in sin and to be extra mindful even of sinning accidentally. This applies to all those who bear the name of Hashem. Anyone who is

looked at as a religious person has to realize that others are constantly looking at him and learning from his behavior. We have to be aware of the influence that we have on others and go out of our way to be sure not to adversely influence others through our actions and our manner of speech. As much power as we have to be a good influence on others, we can also easily cause people to become even worse with just one misstep. It is a tremendous responsibility that we have to be aware of at all times.

ואם נפש אחת תחטא בשגגה מעם הארץ בעשתה אחת ממצות ה' אשר לא תעשינה ואשם

“If one person from among the people of the land shall sin unintentionally, by committing it - one of the commandments of Hashem that may not be done - and he becomes guilty” (4:27)

In his sefer Tiferes Shmuel, R' Shmuel Tzvi of Alexander writes that an item that grows from the ground is not susceptible to impurity. Only once it is detached from the ground can it become impure. The same applies to people. If a person is rooted in a community, a group of friends, or a family, he is less likely to deviate from the correct path. A person only becomes susceptible to sin if he becomes detached from the group and seeks to become independent. Only when he becomes "one person" and separates himself from his roots does he become prone to stumbling and sinning.

Learning Torah is also better when done as part of a group. If a person learns on his own, he is more likely to misinterpret what he is studying and he lacks the benefit of the counterpoint that a learning partner provides. When learning is done in a group, the different participants sharpen each other and together they arrive at the truth, which they might not have attained on their own. Therefore, while studying Torah alone is certainly also a mitzvah, it is best to find a study partner or to go to classes to learn Torah.

Parshas Zachor

R' Moshe Feinstein says that despite the fact that today we cannot actually fulfill the mitzvah to destroy Amalek, we can still learn a lesson from this parsha. Amalek is compared to a person who jumped into a boiling hot bathtub, knowingly harming himself but cooling it off for others in the process. Similarly, before Amalek attacked the Bnei Yisrael, they seemed untouchable and everyone was scared of them. It was obvious to Amalek that they would not overcome the Jewish people. Nevertheless, they went ahead and jumped in and even though they lost, the Bnei Yisrael did not seem so invincible anymore to the rest of the world. Similarly, we should be careful never to fall into sins that are obvious and clear-cut, even those which we easily understand are inappropriate. The weakness of human beings is that the evil inclination can grab a hold of us and convince us to do things that we think are so farfetched and that we would never do. We have to worry about more than just the small things. We still have to watch out for the things that we think are obvious to us because we are not perfect and are always in danger of making a mistake, just like Amalek, who were willing to do something that they knew was not sensible.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

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