

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ויקרא אל משה וידבר ה' אליו מאהל מועד לאמר ... (א-א)

The very first word of the *parsha*, “*Vayikra*,” is written with a small *alef*, an *alef ze’eirah*. *Chazal* tell us that this tiny letter hints to something remarkable: *Hashem’s* voice, powerful enough to shake the heavens, was heard only by *Moshe Rabbeinu*. No one else heard a sound. Not a whisper. Not an echo. Moshe alone was tuned in, able to hear a call that the rest of the world simply could not detect. The small *alef* reflects that quietness, that inwardness, that ability to be so deeply focused that the outside world fades away. It is the *Torah’s* way of showing us that true greatness often operates in silence - not in thunder, not in spectacle, but in a private conversation between *Hashem* and the one who is humble enough, still enough, and pure enough to hear it. Sometimes the holiest moments are the ones no one else notices.

The following story alludes to this idea of Moshe hearing what no one else could. Every *Shabbos* in the home of the *tzaddik*, **R’ Chaim Kanievsky ז”ל**, was an event. People vied for the exclusive opportunity to sit at a *Shabbos seudah* with the *Gadol Hador*. It wasn’t the food they came for. It was to bask in the presence of *gadlus*. The *Rebbetzin a”h*, would cook and host a large *seudah* for those fortunate enough to be invited. Many family members were in attendance and even two *bochurim* per *seudah* were allowed in, usually after waiting months on a list, just to sit at the table with R’ Chaim.

One such *bochur*, who finally received his turn about ten years ago, described the experience with a sense of awe. “After *davening vasikin* in R’ Chaim’s house,” he said, “they spread a tablecloth, set out the food, and the *seudah* began. It felt unreal. R’ Chaim was sitting right there, eating simply, quietly, with that same otherworldly focus you always hear about.”

As the meal went on, each person at the table was given a chance to ask the *Rav* a question. The *bochur* waited, rehearsing his question over and over in his mind, trying to steady his nerves. He had been warned beforehand: “If you want R’ Chaim to hear you, you have to speak loudly. He cannot hear very well so whatever you do, speak loudly.”

Finally, there was a brief pause in the conversation - it was his time to shine! The perfect opening. The *bochur* gathered up his courage and focusing on R’ Chaim shining countenance, he practically shouted his question across the table.

But R’ Chaim didn’t move. Didn’t turn. Didn’t blink. He didn’t react at all. Obviously, he hadn’t heard the question. R’ Chaim was facing the opposite direction, completely absorbed in whatever *sugya* was flowing through his mind at that exact moment. The *bochur* felt his face burning. He tried again - louder. And louder. His voice echoed through the room, but it was as if the *Rav* was in a different world entirely. Later, the *bochur* would say, “It was like shouting into the side of a mountain. My voice was loud, but it couldn’t penetrate the walls of *Torah* surrounding him.”

He kept trying, each attempt more desperate than the last. Still nothing. R’ Chaim remained motionless, his mind clearly elsewhere, his thoughts wrapped in *Torah*. Someone sitting opposite the *bochur* noticed his distress. The man locked eyes on R’ Chaim and pointed directly at the *bochur* sitting there. Loudly, he said, “*Rebbi*, this *bochur* is asking something.”

And in that instant, everything changed. R’ Chaim turned his head. His eyes locked onto the *bochur* with full, total attention, as if the entire world had just snapped into focus. The *bochur*, now mortified by how loudly he had been yelling, lowered his voice to a near whisper and nervously asked his question. R’ Chaim answered immediately, clearly, without hesitation, as though the question had been waiting for him all along. The whole exchange lasted no longer than a few seconds.

The *bochur* later reflected on the moment with amazement. Until someone pointed him out, nothing in the world had been able to interrupt R’ Chaim’s concentration. His immersion in *Torah* was absolute. But the moment he became aware that someone was speaking to him, he turned instantly, fully present, fully attentive. The scene remained etched in his memory: the quiet room, the long table, the simple *Shabbos* food, and R’ Chaim sitting with a calm stillness, his mind soaring in the heights of *Torah* one moment and then, in the next, turning his focus to hear the question of a young student who had waited months for this moment.

ואחלל שרי קדש ואתנה לחרם עיקב
ישראל לגדופים ... (ישעי’ מנ-כח)

Yeshaya HaNavi declared, “*Because of your sins, I will cause Your holy princes to become desecrated by enemies. I will time and again give over Yaakov for destruction and Yisrael for insults by the enemy.*” This reveals *Hashem’s* actions in how he often destroys “holy princes,” including righteous and noble Jews, together with the wicked ones, because of the sins of the generation. We know that *Hashem* is a merciful G-d, thus it is surprising that he would do this.

R’ Dovid Kimchi ז”ל (Metzudas Dovid) explains that according to the *Medrash*, the “holy princes” mentioned here are the angels in heaven. When *Yirmiyahu HaNavi* urged the Jews to do *teshuva* before the enemies would enter *Yerushalayim* and destroy the *Bais Hamikdash*, they replied

haughtily that no enemy would ever set foot in the city. In fact, they argued that they knew the various names of the angels, and they will command them to do various tasks to make *Yerushalayim* impenetrable. When the Almighty saw the arrogance of their talks, He said that he has seen that the angels have become the Jews’ substitute for doing *teshuva* and He will therefore change the angels’ names and hence their tasks. In doing so, the Jews’ plans to thwart the enemies were confounded and *Yerushalayim* fell. This is the meaning of the words “ואחלל שרי קדש” - that *Hashem* “*caused the heavenly hosts to become desecrated.*” Yet, despite their sins and punishment, *Hashem* wants *Klal Yisroel* to not lose heart - the hard and distressful situations will eventually cease.

אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה' מן הבחמה מן
הבקר ומן הצאן תקריבו את קרבנכם ... (א-ב)

Sefer Vayikrah discusses the concept of bringing *korbanos*, sacrifices, to *Hashem*. The following *vort* captures the essence of the sacrificial objectives. *Chazal* note that the word “מכם” seems superfluous. (See **Rashi**) **R’ Moshe Shloime ז”ל**, a *maggid* and *dayan* in Vilna, and a close *talmid* of the **Vilna Gaon ז”ל**, says the following clarification which explains why the word is necessary. In the **Sefer Kuzari**, the king asks the *chover* this question: How do *korbanos* bring the *Yidden* closer to ה'הקב? The *chover* responded: I don’t know, but the same way we don’t begin to understand how the holy *neshama* can reside in the physical body and is not sustained through spiritual fuel, but rather by “*gashmiyusdike*” food, so too, we are able to get close to Him through the sacrifices, without our comprehension. Thus, said R’ Moshe Shloime, you want to understand how is it “יקריב קרבן לה'”? The answer is “מכם” - from our own co-existence of our גוף and נשמה, that’s proof that *kirvas Elokim* can be attained through being *makriv a korban*.

Perhaps we can add two additional *machshavos*. You want to know how *Hashem* allows us to get closer to Him? The answer is “מכם”. When you sacrifice from yourself, when you’re מוסר נפש in some small way. Secondly, when a person is careful in the “מכם” arena, his interpersonal relationships, then the אדם למקום arena will also be enhanced.

As *Pesach* approaches, there’s an age-old *minhag* to give מעות חטים. We help our fellow Jew meet his monetary *Pesach* needs. This is so appropriate at this time of year as we are told, “בניסן עתידין ליגאל”. It would behoove us to embark on a path to becoming better ה'עבדי who care about our fellow *Yidden*. In that *zechus*, may this be our last *Pesach* in *golus*.

Better yet. It should be our first post-*geulah Pesach*! בסעיעתא דשמאי!

משל למה הדבר דומה

ונפש כי תקריב קרבן מנחה לה' ... (ב-א)

משל: Deep in a Soviet gulag, the guards were baffled with a mystery. Disciplined and cruel they knew that “re-education” meant stripping the prisoners of any leisure or humanity. Hence, playing cards was a crime against the state. The guards would storm in, throwing thin mattresses to the floor and ripping open the seams in the prisoners’ tattered jackets. They checked the rafters, the soles of boots, and even the bread rations. Yet the moment the heavy iron door slammed shut and the footsteps faded, the deck of cards would hit the wooden table with a defiant thud.

R’ Mendel Futerfas ז”ל, a well-known *Lubavitch chasid* who was thrown into the freezing landscape of Siberia, eventually asked the leader of the gang how they did it.

Grinning from ear to ear, the chief replied, “That is their

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INSIGHTFUL TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY
SEDRA TO LEARN AND TO ENJOY BY R' MOSHE GELB

Citing the *Medrash*, **Rashi** writes: “קריאה is an expression of affection, the [same] expression employed by the ministering angels [when addressing each other],” One might have thought that not only did *Hashem* precede all His statements (דיבורים) with a קריאה by first calling out to Moshe, but all the pauses between each statement as well (הפסקות). Thus, the *posuk* says “ויקרא... וידבר”, to teach us that only before each statement would He call out first, and not before each pause.

Now, why would one think that *Hashem* would call out before each pause or break? What is the significance of a break? The important part was *Hashem’s* words before and after it, not the break itself!

However, *Rashi* himself subsequently explains that the pauses had a very significant purpose, and that was so Moshe should have time to contemplate between each statement. In other words, the breaks were not simply a lack of speaking, a pause and nothing else. Rather, the breaks themselves were part of the actual teaching that preceded it, to review, to contemplate, and to prepare for the coming statement. Thus, the *dibburim* and *hafsakos* both formed together one uninterrupted session of learning.

The time of *bein hazmanim* fast approaches. It, too, is a time of *hafsaka* between the *dibburim* of *Torah* of the *zman* preceding it and the *zman* that follows. But just as when *Hashem* spoke to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, it was not deemed a *hafsaka* - any sort of pause - at all. It was a *hemshech*, a continuation of the previous *zman*, albeit with a different form and schedule. But it is a *hemshech*, a time to review, to contemplate and consolidate what one learned in the previous *zman* and prepare for the next one.

As the *Ponovezher Rosh Yeshivah*, **R’ Elazar Menachem Mann Shach ז”ל** famously stated, it is not “*bein hazmanim*” - an amorphous in-between period of stagnation, but “*zman habeinayim*” - a *zman* of *shteiging* all its own, a bridge, not a gap, between the *zmanim* before and after it. Indeed, let us all truly embrace the challenge and approach this time as the opportunity it is for real growth, commitment and *avodas Hashem*.

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE
FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPMAN ז”ל

מחשבת הלב

mistake, Rabbi. They look everywhere except at themselves. As they grab us to frisk us, we lean in and slip the cards into their own overcoat pockets. A man can search a thousand rooms, but he never thinks to search his own coat!”

נמשל: The “*korban*” in *Parshas Vayikrah* is designed to serve as a substitute for oneself on the *mizbeach*, forcing a person to witness the animal and realize with a shock, “That could have been me!” Rather than searching our external circumstances, blaming luck, neighbors, or environment for our struggles, the ritual of the *Korban* demands that we “check our own pockets” and recognize that the animal on the altar represents our own untamed ego and animalistic drives. By contemplating our true self-value and the weight of our actions - in that moment of honesty, we stop projecting our problems onto the world and instead accept the responsibility to repent and refine our internal character for the future.

וינפש