

Vayikra

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In honour of our beloved and dearest father/ grandfather, יצחק דוד בן משה, ז"ל (Ya'akov Dovid *ben Moshe, z"l*), whose loving memory continues to be a guiding force in our lives. May his righteous *Neshamah* rest eternally in *Gan Eiden*, and may his memory continue to be a blessing.

Parashas Zachor, in a non-leap year, usually falls on *Shabbos Parashas Tetzaveh*. But in a leap year, as this year is, it falls on *Shabbos Parashas Vayikra*, and that is such amazing *Hashgochah Pratis*. It's gotta mean something.

Why? The first *Rashi* of the *parsha* explains why the last letter of *Vayikra*, an *Aleph*, is written smaller in a *Sefer Torah* than the rest of the letters. It is to distinguish between the word *vayikra* with the *Aleph*, which means “and he called,” and the word *vayikar* without the *Aleph*, which refers to something that happens by chance.

What's the difference? *Vayikra* intimates closeness to God; *vayikar* denotes distance from Him. *Vayikra* indicates God's desire to reveal Himself to someone, like Moshe *Rabbeinu*. *Vayikar* indicates God's desire to avoid a person, like Bilaam.

One little *Aleph*, that's it. It's what makes all the difference in the world to God, and not just to God, but between the Jewish people and God's “personal” enemy, Amalek. But had Moshe *Rabbeinu* not been instructed to make it smaller, we'd never have drawn such a conclusion, or made such a connection to the war between the forces of light and the forces of darkness.

Well, actually . . . it is only because of another *Aleph* elsewhere in the Torah, or rather the absence of one, that makes this *Aleph*, the one at the end of “*vayikra*” so powerfully meaningful. In fact, it came first and cleared the trail to the *Aleph* in this

week's *parsha*, at the end of the first battle against Amalek and *Parashas Besballach*
“*The band is on God's Throne. . .*” (*Shemos* 17:16)

“The hand of God is raised to swear by His Throne to have eternal war and hatred against Amalek. Why is it (Throne) written *Chof-Samech* and not *Chof-Samech-Aleph* (*kisay*)? And why is the name [of God in the verse] divided in two? God swore that His. . .Throne will not be whole until the name of Amalek is completely obliterated.” (*Rasbi*)

According to *Rasbi*, two things about this verse tell us God is at war against Amalek until Amalek's end. One is that God's Name is not complete, since the *Vav-Heb* was not included here, only the *Yud-Heb*. But the truth is, *Yud-Heb* is a valid Name of God that is used in many places without anything to do with Amalek.

But *kisay* without an *Aleph* is a non-word. For it to be missing definitely indicates that something is wrong, something is missing. Once we know that then we can assume that the *Vav-Heb* of God's Name should also be here, but isn't because of the existence of Amalek. And once we know that the letter *Aleph* is an Amalek-thermometer, we can appreciate the difference *Aleph* makes to a work like *vayikra*.

Shabbos Day

IT HAS TO be one of the great ironies of life that the letter *Aleph* only equals one and yet alludes to so much. Until that is, we break down the letter into its basic components, of which there are three: *Yud*, *Vav*, and *Yud*—10, 6, and 10.

If you add up the three numbers they total 26, the exact *gematria* of God's four-letter Name. The top *Yud* points upwards to indicate that the “One” it is talking about, the *Aluph*, the “Chief” of Creation, is God.

Uncannily, the *Aleph* and all it represents is enough proof that the Torah is Divine, if a non-believer is not afraid to admit the truth. What we know is thousands of years old, and no other culture has so much meaning built into its language that is in sync with its main source of ideas—the Torah.

The key element in the *Aleph* is the *Vav* connecting the two *Yuds*. The upper *Yud* represents Heaven above and the lower *Yud*, our world down below. The *Vav* connects them like Ya'akov's ladder in his dream. Obviously, it is not a physical connection but a conceptual one, representing the idea of *Da'as*—the letter *Vav* corresponds to *Da'as*—one of the most important assets in life.

On its simplest level, *Da'as* is knowledge. But we know that it is not a simple concept evident by the fact that mankind has struggled since the beginning of

history to get a handle on it. This is because it is not a simple case of just learning things in life, but of *what* to learn, *how* to learn it, and what to do once you have.

Every problem that has ever existed in history has had to do with *Da'as*, the lack of or the misconstruing of it. Yet so many people do not know this or pay much attention to it. This is precisely what evil preys on especially Amalek. In one way or another, Amalek senses the holes in people's understanding of truth and then exploits them to do his bidding against God, ultimately destroying the person along the way.

There is only one truth in Creation. It is objective and absolute. It is immutable. But there have been and remain to be countless versions of it, many of which have been custom-tailored to suit the lifestyles of the people promoting them. The body loves bodily comfort and manipulates reality to get it. Amalek not only knows this but promotes it, giving people the blast they want from life as they slide, unknowingly into spiritual oblivion now, and *Gibnom* later.

Seudas Shlishis

IT DOESN'T get more Amalekian than that. If the *Vav* represents the *Da'as* that connects the truth of Heaven above to the world of man below, Amalek chops at it like an axe to a tree, that is, to the Tree of Life. His attack is against the *Vav* that connects a person to God, which is why he also severed the *Bris Milah* of the Jews he attacked in the desert and then threw them Heavenward saying, "Who needs God?"

Vayikra says the opposite. It is about pursuing and getting the *Da'as* that draws a person closer to God, allowing God to connect to them. This is why it is such an amazing *Hashgochah Pratis* that *Parashas Zachor* is also *Parashas Vayikra*. As the *Gemora* says in *Maseches Megillah*, God creates the cure before He sends the ailment. We start with the small *Aleph* of *Vayikra* in this week's reading before finishing with the recounting of Amalek's attack.

This is also why the tablets broke once Moshe *Rabbeinu* saw the Jewish people worshipping the golden calf. It says he threw the tablets down, but, really, they became too heavy to carry and fell to the ground. . .

"[Because the *Vav* flew up from *Vayitzer*] which is the light of the *Da'as Ila'a*, *sod* of the *Aitz HaChaim*, the *Ohr HaGanuz*. . ." (*Drushei Olam HaTobu*, *Chelek 2*, *Drush 4*, *Anaf 22*, *Siman 5*)

The word to which the *Leshem* refers is from this verse:

“God formed—*Vav-Yud-Yud-Tzaddi-Raish*—man of dust from the ground, and He breathed into his nostrils the soul of life, and man became a living soul.” (Bereishis 2:7)

Grammatically, the *Vav* belongs at the beginning of the word *vayitzer*. But *kabbalistically*, it refers to the light of the upper *Da’as* that was spiritually breathed into man to make him a *Tzelem Elokim*—the image of God. The *Erev Rav*, the *gematria* of which is also *da’as*, as in corrupted *Da’as*, used the golden calf to sever the *Da’as* of the Jewish people and their relationship to God.

It was, *conceptually*, as if the *Vav* had been removed from the word *vayitzer*, the *Da’as* from the Jewish people, and the miracle from the tablets. They had been broken even before they had hit the ground.

Melave Malkah

THIS IS WHY the key word in the story of Purim is *v’nabafoch hu* (*Esther* 9:1). Yes, it refers to the dramatic turn of events, how the imminent destruction of the Jewish people turned into a miraculous salvation instead. More deeply, it refers to the upside-down *Nun* that was finally uprighted.

The *Gemora* says:

“*Nun Sha’arei Binah*—Fifty Gates of Understanding were created in the world. . .” (*Rosh Hashbanah* 21b)

They are the basis of *Da’as*, of Godly *Da’as*. They are the axioms of Creation, the knowledge of the Creator as imparted to His prized creation, man. They are the foundation of Torah, so if man goes in the opposite direction, it is as if the *Nun* has been turned upside down:

“When Rav Yosef, the son of Rebi Yehoshua *ben* Levi was sick, his soul left him. It then returned and he recovered. He asked his son, ‘My son, what did you see?’ He answered him, ‘I saw an upside-down world, and what is up here is down there, and what is down here is up there.’ ‘No, my son,’ he said, ‘you saw the world right-side up!’” (*Pesachim* 50a)

This is why the Torah uses upside-down *Nuns* to separate a positive section from one in which sin occurred. It indicates the reason for the sin, because of a distortion of the *Nun Sha’arei Binah*. It’s how *Megillas Esther* begins, with the Jewish people acting in ways contrary to Torah, and what gives rise to Haman who, the *Gemora* says, was a greater cause of national *teshuvah* than all 48 prophets.

That was then. What about now? The *Gemora* has dealt with that too:

“Rebi Eliezer said: ‘If the Jewish people repent, they will be redeemed. If not, they will not be.’ Rebi Yehoshua said to him, ‘If the Jewish people repent, they will be redeemed, and if not, they will not be redeemed?! Rather, The Holy One, Blessed is He, will set a king over them whose decrees will be as difficult as Haman’s, causing the Jewish people to repent.’” (*Sanhedrin* 97b)

We can either wait for that to occur or start the process on our own and mitigate the effect of the prediction. And given the current direction of history, we don’t have much time left to make the better decision.

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Good *Shabbos*,
Pinchas Winston