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Vayikra: The Calling

Rav Yitzchok Breiter, Hy'd, was one of the great Breslover *manhigim* of Pre-War Europe. As one of the first Jews in Poland to make the difficult journey to Uman for Rosh Hashanah, he was a trailblazer. His journey opened the way for countless Jews to reach Uman as well, inspiring them to draw close to Hashem and to Rebbe Nachman's path. He is the author of a number of significant essays and sefarim, including *Seder haYom*, a step-by-step guide to applying Rebbe Nachman's teachings to our daily life. A respected elder in the Warsaw ghetto before being murdered in Treblinka, he composed *Shir Yedidus*, a beautiful *piyut* expressing *hiskashrus*, devoted connection to Rebbe Nachman.

Once, Rav Yitzchok and his neighbor were arrested on false charges by the Polish authorities, and led away in handcuffs and heavy iron chains on their legs, in a degrading fashion. A man of intense focus, faith and resilience, Rav Yitzchok maintained his composure and was not fazed. His neighbor, however, was a nervous wreck and crestfallen.

"My friend," called Rav Yitzchok, quietly, "The Ribbono Shel Olam is with us! Why should you allow this to break you? Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and imagine your chains to be made of gold, a heavy,

precious gift Hashem is giving you to carry. Is *that* a reason to be sad?" When the verdict was delivered freeing his friend but sentencing him to five years in prison, Rav Yitzchok stood tall and recited the blessing expressing praise for Hashem in face of difficult news. Then he added the bracha of *Ohev tzedaka u'mishpat* from the *Amidah*, and proclaimed, "Now I will have the opportunity to serve God in a new way." Rav Yitzchok was held in prison for just a couple days and released without explanation.

In 1917, when the political and security situation made the pilgrimage to Uman impossible, Rav Yitzchok organized and led a Rosh Hashanah *kibbutz* at the famed Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. As a preparation, he authored *Chalukei haNachal*, a concise and powerful work divided into seven "pillars" or fundamentals of faith according to the path of Rebbe Nachman. This small sefer was designed to help guide the members of the *kibbutz* to step into deeper *emunah*. Preserved over the precarious generations, it continues to guide us, today.

The second section of *Chalukei haNachal*, called עמוד התגלות אלקות, "The Pillar of Godly Revelation", describes what we experience through the 'Divine call' in the opening of our *sedra* this week: ויקרא אל משה, "And God called to Moshe." Rav Yitzchok notes that Godliness is revealed to a person continuously, day and night. However, on rare occasions, one

experiences a full-fledged revelation: קוראין אותו, ממש והוא שומע “One is actually called and he hears.” At such times, his eyes are illuminated and he yearns for closeness with Hashem.

Most often however, Hashem reveals Himself to us in a more concealed fashion, by means of spiritual struggle, thoughts and feelings of despair, heaviness, laziness or lack of motivation. There are even revelations in moments of heresy, confusion, lust and delusion.

והעיקר לידע, כי מה ששומע ורואה, מאזין ומקשיב, או מרגיש מיד איש ומיד אשה, מקרוב ומרחוק, בפרט מאשתו ומבני ביתו, הכל הוא דברי ה' ית' אשר קורא אותו אליו בזה, זה הוא התקווין שנותנין לו מלמעלה

“The main thing is to know is that *all* we hear, see, intuit and feel in every interaction we have — with those who are close to us and those who are far from us, with family and with strangers, but in particular with our spouses and children — all of it, everything, is ***an invitation and calling from Hashem.***

This is the *tikun*, the rectification that has been given to us from On High.”

As Rebbe Nachman expounds on the *Alef Zeira*, the small letter Alef in the word *Vayikra* as written in a Torah scroll, he tells us the following. Sometimes Hashem ‘calls’ us through a mode of דקה דקת, a quiet, subtle ‘voice’, perhaps concealed within the workings of nature, embedded in everyday experience, hidden in plain sight. This is

because Hashem’s Presence fills the entire world and all experiences:

וְצִדִּיק לְדַעַת, שְׁמַלְא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, וְלִית אֲתֵר פְּנוּי מִנְהָ, וְאִיהוּ מִמְלֵא כָּל עֲלָמִין וְסוּבָב כָּל עֲלָמִין.

Now, one must also know that “God’s Glory fills the whole world” (*Isaiah*, 6:3),

and there is no place empty of Him;

He fills all worlds and surrounds all worlds (*Zohar* III, 225a)

And we can therefore call to Hashem — and Hashem calls to us — even in a place of darkness, as Rebbe Nachman continues (*Likutei Moharan* 33):

וְזֶה שְׁמַבְיֵא בִירוּשָׁלַיִם (תענית פא): אִם יֵאמֶר לָךְ אָדָם הֵיכָן אֵלֶיךָ, תֹּאמֶר לוֹ: בְּכֶךָ גְדוֹל שְׁבָרוֹמִי, שְׁנֶאֱמַר: אֵלֵי קִרְא מִשְׁעִיר.

And this is what is brought in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Taanis*, 1:1): If anyone should ask you, “Where is your God?” answer him, “In the great city of Rome.” As it is said, “*One calls to Me* from Seir” (*Isaiah*, 21:11).

May we be blessed to know with complete certainty that wherever we are and whatever we are busy with, if we open our hearts and believe, we can hear Hashem calling us to draw close. And even if we are in the depths of exile or despair, if we listen carefully, perhaps we will hear the voice of the *Ribbono Shel Olam* encouraging us, “My friend, why should you allow this to break you?” ■

רפואה שלמה...

- Miriam Tovah Chaya bat Chanah Elisheva Rivka
- Yosef Ezriel ben Chaya Michal
- יהונתן בן מחלה
- שלמה בן אסתר
- אברהם מנשה בן חנה ברכה
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