



Parashat Vayikra



English version

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## THE ART OF GIVING G-D THE KEYS

The Gentiles know that the Jew is indestructible. When Haman fumed over Mordechai not bowing to him, he turned to his 365 advisors for help. He needed a plan to rid this Jew. No one had the solution. Except Zeresh, Haman's wife. She said to him, If Mordechai is of Jewish descent, there is nothing you can do to rid him. If you will try throwing him into a furnace, Hananyah, Mishael and Azarya already survived Fire. If you will throw him into a lion's den, Daniel survived the lions unscratched. If you will lock him up in jail, Yosef came out of jail and became second to King. You might think to exile him to the desert, but this Nation thrives in the desert. You might want to blind his eyes, but that wont work either. Shimshon killed so many Pilishtim, after they took his eyes!

The only thing you might want to try, my dear husband, Haman, is to hang your enemy Mordechai on a high tree. No Jew survived that one yet! (Midrash Rabah)

The hardest question on Judaism, is why do bad things happen to the Tzaddik, and why do good things happen to the Rasha. The answer is, we need to define our terms. We don't know what is good, and what is bad. Also, we don't know what defines one a Tzaddik, and what defines one as a Rasha. There are only two Jewish heroes that merited the title Tzaddik. Yosef Hatzadik and Mordechai Hatzadik. Mordechai was referred to as Mordechai Hatzaddik, in the Talmud. (Megillah 10b) What did Mordechai do, that deserved him such a title?

Well, we know what Yosef did, that deserved him the title Yosef Tzaddik. The only place it refers to Yosef, as Yosef Hatzaddik, is regarding the following words of Avot DR' Natan.

*Potiphar's wicked wife tried abusing Yosef her slave, threatening him with her words. She threatened that if he would not sin with her, "I will lock you up in jail!" He answered, G-d is מַחַיֵּה מֵתִים, He frees those who are imprisoned. She then said, "I will pull out your eyes!" He said, G-d is פּוֹקֵחַ עֵינֵי עִוְרִים, He opens the eyes of the blind! She then threatened, "I will break your back!" He said, G-d is זוֹקֵף כּפּוּפִים, He erects those who are fallen. She threatened, "I will make your name into a Rasha" He answered, G-d is אוֹהֵב צְדִיקִים, He loves the righteous. She threatened, I will make you into a Gentile. He said, G-d is אוֹהֵב גֵּרִים, He loves the converts! (Avot DR' Natan 1 16) This is the only time, Yosef is called Tzaddik, in the words of our Sages! And it is not because he passed the test of adultery. It is because he had faith in his test. It is because, he relied on G-d, during the test, and gave G-d the keys. The same is true with Mordechai. He was called Mordechai Hatzaddik, because he was not afraid of Haman. He relied on G-d, and G-d alone. He gave G-d the keys.*

The question of life, your biggest underlying test, is, can you give G-d the keys? Can you let go of the steering wheel, when you are going at 100 miles an hour, when G-d asks you to let go and trust in Him? That is what makes you into a Tzaddik! Yosef and Mordechai, had one thing in



common, that they both won the Tzaddik trophy! They relied on G-d, and on no one or nothing else! When you say to yourself, to the world, and to G-d, אין עוד מלבדו, there is nothing else in the world, except for G-d, you become that indestructible Jew! (Nefesh Hachaim 3 12)

This is the meaning of the passuk, each time we bless G-d after our meal, and thank Him for giving us our sustenance. בְּרוּךְ הַגֹּבֵר אֲשֶׁר יְבַטַח בְּיַמֵּינוּ וְהִנֵּה יִקְנֶה. *Blessed is the man, that he will trust in YKVK. And G-d will be his trust.* (Yirmiyahu 17;7)

What is the double talk? What is the purpose of this redundancy? If this man is trusting G-d, of course G-d is his trust?!

No! It is not enough to trust in G-d, to be a blessed man. YOU NEED TO TRUST IN NO ONE ELSE, EXCEPT G-D, to be that blessed man! (See Malbim) G-d is his ONLY trust, only support system, only means for Parnasah, only Shadcan, only doctor, and only writer! Yep. I keep running out of ideas to write, and I wonder each week what I should even get in front of the computer to type for. Of course, I look for ideas all week long, but then I procrastinate until the last minute. And then, I just say, *G-d, You and I know, that I have nothing to write. Please write for me!!!* He literally types through my fingers. All I need to do, is play music in my ears while I type, so as not to let myself get in the way.

This is how, the best speakers speak. They ask G-d to speak for them. This is how, the best fundraisers fundraise. They tell G-d, I can't do this. I need a miracle. It works every time. This is what the best public speakers and fundraisers told me. This is a new meaning to the words, לְבַיְתָא דְּמֶלֶךְ בְּיַד־יְקֻנָּה, *The heart of the king, is in the hand of YKVK* (Mishlei 21;1) When you want to be a king in any area of life, give G-d your heart. Give Him the keys.

The problem is, the animal inside us gets in the way. The animal inside us, is the part of our brain that is in charge of fear, of fight or flight. The animal that is inside us, causes us to be passionate about materialistic desires, and causes us to get

angry when our ego is hurt. This is why, when we want to get close to G-d, when we want to ask forgiveness for sin, we bring a Korban, we sacrifice an animal. Even though that animal did not do anything wrong, but that sacrifice is representing the animal inside us, that did something wrong, that we are willing to sacrifice, for our relationship with G-d.

So, ask yourself these three questions. Are you willing to stop being afraid, for G-d? Are you willing to stop being passionate about pizza, poppers, and playing with your phone? Are you willing to be as low as a worm, וְאֶנְכִי תוֹלַעַת וְלֹא־אִישׁ, and not let your ego get in the way? These are the three animals inside you, that you need to give up, for your relationship with G-d.

When a couple gets divorced, the Mizbeach sheds tears. (Gittin 90b) Why? Because the Mizbeach is the Jewish Icon of sacrificing that animal inside of you for a relationship. When a couple gets divorced, it is because one of those three animals, could not be sacrificed, in the personalities of this divorcing couple!

On Taanit Esther and Purim, there is a SUPER PRAYER, where anything you pray for, you will be answered! Psalm 22. Say it seven times, each time asking for something else. But, a word of caution. The super power of that prayer, that you say in the merit of Mordechai and Esther, needs to be read, with understanding and meaning. Concentrate on the words. I gave a half hour class on the depth of this Psalm this week, and I did not have enough time to say everything I prepared. Psalm 22 is about Esther, אֵילַת הַשַּׁחַר, The Doe (female deer) of Dawn, before she walked into Achashverosh's room to invite him to her party. It was at the part of the Purim story, where it was the darkest moment, before the light. It was recited, where there was nothing left for Esther to rely on, except for G-d. Esther was telling G-d, I am protected and not because I protected myself. After all, You protected me, when I could not protect myself. When I was in my mother's womb, you fed me. When a child comes out of the

mother's womb, You supply them with mother's milk, immediately, the best food on Earth for the child. *עֲלֵיךָ כִּי־אַתָּה גִּתִּי מִבֶּטֶן מִבְּטִיחִי עַל־שְׁדֵי אִמִּי* and *הַשְּׁלַכְתִּי מִרְחֹם מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי אֵלֶי אֲתָה*

This Psalm is not only a prophesy by David about Esther, 400+ years prior. It is about every Jew in Exile, who is in his darkest time, before the light at the end of the tunnel. The Psalm ends, talking about Mashiach's time. *כִּי לִיקְנוֹק הַמְּלִיכָה וְיִשְׁלַל בְּגוֹיִם* as this dark moment for Esther and the Nation, was right before the bright light of Redemption, and the building of the Second Temple.

This year, we had two Adars. The Rabbis ruled that we celebrate Purim, and read about the eradication of Amalek, in the second Adar, and not in the first.

### JUST A THOUGHT

This week we discuss the Mitzvah of bringing offerings in the *Beit HaMikdash* to atone for sin. Why are we commanded to bring a sin-offering – *קרבן חטאת* – for (certain types of) sins committed unintentionally, but not for sins committed intentionally? Why can't intentional sins also be atoned for by sacrificing an animal?

The *Sefer Hachinuch* (Mitzvah 95) explains why the sin-offering is appropriate only for the unintentional sinner. He notes that the body of a person is similar to the body of an animal in many ways. The main difference between humans and animals is that humans have intellect and a superior level of consciousness. When a person sins against G-d unintentionally, he is essentially abandoning his intellect, and acting like an animal. When he brings an animal sacrifice for atonement, he realizes that he deserves to be put on the altar – if not for G-d's mercy – for failing to use his intellect, and, essentially, acting like an animal. In this way, he internalizes the importance of rectifying his unintentional behavior. He resolves to act in a more self-aware and self-critical way in the future. This is part of the *teshuvah* process which cleanses one from sin. The intentional sinner (*מזיד*), in contrast, cannot receive atonement in this way, for he sinned with his intellect. The

Why? The Shem Mishmuel writes, that in the days of Mashiach, Gog Umagog, and the eradication of Amalek will be thirty days, beginning on Purim, and ending on Erev Pesach. He had this legend from his Rabbis. Therefore, we need to have Purim in the Second Adar, to be exactly 30 days from Pesach, for the year when Mashiach will come. This makes sense, now, why Psalm 22 which is the Psalm of Purim and Taanit Esther, ends with the Final Redemption.

G-d is waiting to Redeem us. But He is waiting first, for us to let go of the steering wheel, and hand Him over the keys. Because He is *עושה נִפְלְאוֹת לְבַדּוֹ* He makes miracles, when He is alone. Without anyone's help.

conceptual framework we have been discussing does not apply to him, for although he may have sinned out of passion or desire, he decided consciously to sin. He put his thought into it.

The Ben Ish Chai takes this a step further. A thought is something that has tremendous power, for good as much as bad. The reason for this is because our thoughts are spiritual, and our actions are only physical. In the upper worlds, spirituality has much more weight than physicality. Our Rabbis teach us *הרהורי עבירה קשים מעבירה* - thoughts of sinning are a more serious violation than the sin itself (*Yoma 29a*). The Shulchan Aruch rules that Mitzvoth need *כוונה*, intent, focus and thought. (*Orach Chaim 4*) Without thought, the mitzvah will not make its mark in the uppermost worlds (*עולם המחשבה*).

There are other places in the Torah that show us about the power of thought. We find a thought-provoking law concerning *עדים זוממים*, plotting witnesses. *ועשיתם לו כאשר זמם לעשות לאחיו (דברים 19:16)*, "And you should do to him as he plotted to do to his brother." The plotting witnesses are to be punished by death, having to make a monetary payment or lashes— depending on what they had plotted to do. The words mentioned are *כאשר זמם* as *he plotted* and not *כאשר עשה* as *he did*. The

Talmud derives from here that when these plotting witnesses are caught *after* the Jewish court carried out the decree, the plotting witnesses will not get punished. This of course is seemingly incomprehensible. How can the witnesses who carried out the plot go free, whereas the one who actually was caught before court carried out the decree be punished?

There is a very deep Maharal on this concept. The Maharal (Be'er Hagolah be'er 2) writes that the explanation for this is that as long as the plot or thought is in existence, it has a certain power. Once the plot has already come to fruition, the power of the *thought* is used up. It is not a thought anymore; rather it is classified as an act. However, as long as the plot was left in the realm of the abstract and not carried out, the Jewish court will use that plot against the plotting witness. The Maharal compares the *thought* to a ball that is thrown against a wall: the ball bounces back at the person who threw it, according to the velocity of the throw. This is true only for the power of a *thought*. However, if the thought was translated into action, this plotting witness who got caught will not be punished by death, because he did not do any *physical* damage. Rather, the damage was the outcome brought about by the court.

One of the first tractates that a Yeshiva student is taught is Massechet Makkot. I always wondered why it is such a common Tractate for young students. The Chida, in his sefer Dvash L'fi, writes that he heard from an ancient *mekubal* (one who studies mystic works) that it is very good to study

the tractate of Makkot, for it stops one from evil thoughts. The mekubal said that the *gematria*, or numerical value of the word מכות, is the same as the Hebrew word for *thoughts*466 – הרהורים. Therefore, writes the Chida, the *minhag* of the Yeshiva system for generations has been to teach this tractate, specifically, first, preferring it over all other tractates.

I once heard the following concept in the name of the Maharal. The reason that Yaakov loved and cherished his son Yosef and gave him more than he gave to the other Tribes( K'tonet Passim, Sh'chem and deserving of two tribes- Menashe and Efraim) was because Yosef had, in a way, the title of firstborn. Although Reuven was the first one that Yaakov fathered, Yaakov thought, on the night of the wedding, that he was marrying Rachel, when it was actually Leah. *Being that this was the thought of Yaakov*, he felt closeness to Yosef, who was, in fact, Rachel's first born, as a father feels towards a firstborn son.

The Ben Ish Chai brings from the Midrash a story of a certain white-skinned king and queen who gave birth to a black-skinned child. When they looked into the reason for this surprising phenomenon, they came to the conclusion that it was because of the paintings of black people in the palace: the queen would look at these paintings, and since her thoughts were absorbed by the paintings and their black images, her offspring was born black.

*Our thoughts do a lot. A lot more than we think!*

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