

is the will of Hashem. Only one who doesn't kill because it is the will of Hashem will understand the deeper meaning of this law.

The midwives jeopardized their lives by saving the babies. Because they understood the logic of “whose blood is redder,” they understood the law of murder in the deepest manner long before the Torah was given. That is what the verse means, “and they feared G-d.” They understood the depth of the command. One who doesn't possess this fear and doesn't kill will not be able to understand and do as they did.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

You See?

”וַתִּירֶאן הַמִּיִּלְדֹת אֶת־הָאֱלֹקִים וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵן מִלְּךְ מִצְרָיִם:”
“The midwives feared Hashem and did not do as the Egyptian king had told them.” (Shemot 1:17)

The *pasuk* praises the *yirat Shamaim* of the Jewish midwives rather than their desire to do *hesed*. The *Hafess Hayim* remarks that *hesed* alone could never have brought them this far. Kindness might have caused them to resign from their jobs, but their intention was to keep their posts so that no one else would perform the heinous job of killing Jewish babies. It was specifically their fear of Heaven that spurred them on to perform the will of Hashem.

When a person finds himself in the midst of a *nisayon* (test) of character) it is the fear of Heaven translated into the desire to do the will of Hashem, that will allow him to pass the test. The next time you find yourself in a precarious situation, just ask yourself: “What does Hashem want me to do now?” If one follows his heart and his mind, he will undoubtedly pass the test. As we say in *Tehillim*: “*Yirat Hashem tehorah omedet la'ad* – a pure *yirat Hashem* will stand by him forever!” How different is the gentile's fear of Heaven, who is so afraid to get caught that he'll try to “outsmart” G-d!

The *Netivot Shalom* explains that *yirat Hashem* is the true *avodah* of a Jew, like the *pasuk* says: “What does Hashem your G-d ask of you? Only that you fear Hashem.” The word for “fear” is the same word that means “to see.” Because true *yirat Hashem* is seeing the Almighty in every situation! Bringing Hashem into every aspect of our lives! The more one notices Hashem, appreciates Hashem, and connects to Him, the more he will emulate His ways, thereby performing His will. This is true *yirat Hashem* in practice! (Torah Tavlin 2)

Burning Interests

The Torah tells us that Moshe was shepherding the sheep of Yitro, his father-in-law, when, “an angel of G-d appeared to him in a blaze of fire from amidst the bush. Moshe saw the event and behold, the bush was burning in fire and yet the bush was not consumed. Moshe said, ‘I will turn from my course and see the marvelous sight — why does the bush not burn?’ Hashem saw that Moshe turned from his path to see the sight and He called out to him from amidst the bush and said, ‘Moshe Moshe...’” The conversation ultimately leads to our exodus from Egypt.

However, the entire narrative seems overstated. The Torah, which never uses needless words, could have simply stated, “Moshe saw that the bush was burning and yet the bush was not consumed. Moshe turned to marvelous sight, and Hashem called out to him from amidst the bush and said, ‘Moshe Moshe...’”

The *Midrash Tanhuma* expounds upon the verse, “Moshe turned from his path to see the sight.” There is an argument whether he took three steps or just craned his neck. The *Midrash* continues. Hashem said, “You pained yourself to look, I swear you are worthy that I reveal myself to you.”

The *Midrash* was definitely bothered by the extra wording regarding Moshe's decision to look and Hashem's open commendation of that decision. But it is still very difficult to understand. Moshe sees a spectacle of miraculous proportions and looks. Why is that such a meritorious act? Doesn't everyone run to a fire? Aren't there hoards that gather to witness amazing events?

In the early 1920's, Silas Hardoon, a Sephardic Jewish millionaire, made his fortune living in China. Childless, he began to give his money away to Chinese charities. One night his father appeared in a dream and implored him to do something for his own people. Silas shrugged it off. After all, there were hardly any of his people in China. But the dreams persisted, and Silas decided to act. The next day he spoke to *Hacham* Ibrahim, a Sephardic Rabbi who led the tiny Chinese Jewish community. The *Hacham's* advice sounded stranger than the dreams. He told Silas to build a beautiful synagogue in the center of Shanghai. It should contain more than 400 seats, a kitchen, and a dining room. Mr. Hardoon followed the charge to the letter. He named the shul “*Bet Aharon*” in memory of his father. A few years later Mr. Hardoon died leaving barely a minyan to enjoy a magnificent edifice, leaving a community to question the necessity of the tremendous undertaking.

In 1940, Japanese counsel to Lithuania Sempo Sugihara issued thousands of visas for Kovno Jews to take refuge in Curaçao via Japan. Included in that group was the *Mirrer Yeshiva*. They arrived in Kobe but were transported to Shanghai where they remained for the entire war. The *Mirrer Yeshiva* had a perfect home with a kitchen, study hall and dining room — *Bet Aharon!* The building had exactly enough seats to house all the students for five solid years of Torah study during the ravages of World War II. The dream of decades earlier combined with action, became a thriving reality.

Moshe knew from the moment he spotted that bush that something very extraordinary was occurring. He had two choices: approach the spectacle or walk on. If he nears the bush, he knew he would face an experience that would alter his life forever. Hashem knew that Moshe had this very difficult conflict. His approach would require commitment and self-sacrifice. He took three steps that changed the course of history. Hashem understood the very difficult decision Moshe had made and declared that such fortitude is worthy of the redeemer of My children.

In many aspects of our lives we encounter situations that may commit us to change. It may be a new charity we decide to let through our doors, or a new patient we decide to see, or even a new worthy cause we decide to entertain. They all require us to take three steps and look. If we walk away, we may not just be ignoring a burning issue. We may be ignoring another burning bush (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)

Businesslike Approach

Many people find it difficult to come across a good investment. Others can't seem to finish the fiscal year with a profit. “How does my friend Joe do it?” they ask themselves in frustration.

The answer: Most successful businesspeople figure out the profit-or-loss for any proposal, and do not accept the deal or order unless it will yield a bottom-line profit at the end of the day.

The *Talmud* tells us that the business of the soul is no different than the financial dealings of this world; both require calculating gain versus loss. The *Mesillat Yesharim* (chapter one) also teaches that we must make calculations about gain and loss before acting. “What do I gain or lose by performing this commandment?” and “What do I profit if I perform this transgression?” are questions we must ask regarding every deal that comes to the table of spiritual life. We should make an accounting of our behavior