

# אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה  
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר  
רבינוביץ זצ"ל

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*Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe  
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

פרשת ויקרא  
זכור - פורים

*Volume 6 Issue # 24*

Wishing all of  
כלל ישראל  
א פריילוכען פורים!

## פרשת ויקרא

ויקרא אל משה (ויקרא א' א')

### Talmid Chacham She'ein Bo De'ah

#### What is the Meaning of דעה?

The Midrash in this week's Parsha discusses the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu would wait until he was summoned to speak with Hashem. The Midrash is bothered by this; doesn't the Torah tell us "בכל ביתי נאמן הוא" - that Moshe's presence was trusted and readily accepted in Hashem's 'home'? Surely, he could enter the Mishkan and speak to Hashem whenever he felt it was necessary? The Midrash responds to this: "מיכן אמרו כל ת"ח שאין בו דעת, נבלה טובה הימנו" - One who does not have דעה, a dead animal is better than him. The Tanna Devei Eliyahu has a stronger *lashon*: "נבלה סרוחה טובה הימנו". A dead animal which has begun to rot - like that roadkill you see on the side of the street, infested with flies, that you have to hold your nose as you pass it - is better than him. To understand what Chazal were trying to teach us with these words, we must understand: what exactly is דעה?

The Midrash previously teaches us the following saying: "אם דעה קניית, מה חסרת - אם דעה חסרת, מה קניית" "If you acquired דעה, then what do you lack? And if you are lacking in דעה, what did you acquire?" Let's get to the bottom of this statement; what does the word דעה mean in this context?

There are a number of ways to translate the word דעה, but I would like to focus on two of them, which I believe are most fitting for this Midrash.

#### 1. Derech Eretz

*Let's say you're out of town for Shabbos for a Sheva Brachos.  
You are unsure of how long the meals and the speeches will*

*take, so you can't even give your host an approximate time that you will be back. So they tell you that they will lock the door to the house, and they provide you with the combination.*

*Now, when you return after the lengthy meal, what is the right thing to do? Just punch in the combination and walk right in? After all, they gave you the code for a reason, right? Wrong. You knock on the door. Not once, but several times. (And not too loudly either, obviously. You don't want to wake them up in the event that they have already gone to bed.) Once you are certain that nobody is coming to answer the door, then you enter the code, and walk in quietly. Why? Because that's what Derech Eretz dictates. What if they are sitting together as a family in the living room? Is it appropriate to just barge in, as if it's your own home? Of course not; I don't care that they gave you the combination. You still have to be courteous when you are using somebody else's facilities.*

This may be the perfect *mashal* for what the Midrash was teaching us. Moshe Rabbeinu understood that although he was always welcome, the Mishkan was Hashem's sacred home; he waited to be summoned before entering. This is unbelievable *mussar* for all of us: even if you are an acclaimed Talmid Chacham, a hotshot business owner, or any other well-respected public figure - if you don't have Derech Eretz towards others, then you are worse than a disfigured, fly-infested rodent. The Midrash was discussing no less than Moshe Rabbeinu, and it still chose to use this harsh comparison; this teaches us the severity of not being super considerate of others and their property.

## 2. Hakaras Hatov

The Steipler Gaon זצ"ל (כ"ט) (ברכת פרץ עמ' כ"ט) taught that דעה means Hakaras Hatov. He used to say that if you are about to do a favor for somebody, but you deduce from his behavior that he doesn't consider it to be a favor - then don't do it. Of course, we don't do favors just for the thank you at the end; but it is wrong to go out of your way for somebody when he does not appreciate it. This will only cause their bad *middos* to fester. This is no place for pity, as Chazal tell us:

“המרחם על האכזרים, סופו להתאכזר על הרחמנים” - one who has mercy for cruel people will wind up being cruel to merciful people. In fact, this was the mistake that Shaul Hamelech made when he took pity on Agag.

*Let's say you drive to New York every day for work with your partner. One day, your neighbor from down the block, who you are unfamiliar with, calls you and asks: "I heard you travel to New York every day. Can I hop along for the ride?" You decide that this is an opportunity for a mitzvah, so you happily agree.*

*Eventually, this becomes a daily thing. The three of you chip in for the gas and tolls, and you are the driver. You don't love the fact that this stranger intrudes on your privacy every single day; after all, you are traveling with your partner, and there's loads of work-related topics to discuss. But you are doing a mitzvah, so you allow it to continue.*

*One night, you overhear your neighbor talking on the phone outside. "What, the guy that drives? He's not doing me a favor - he's doing himself a favor! Every time he goes through the toll booth, he's saving money, because I chip in. Besides, he gets a lower rate, because he says "carpool!"*

If the person does not appreciate the favor, just stop doing it. It's bad for you, because you feel used and stepped on; but more importantly, it's bad for him. You are allowing his poor *middos* to become more habitual. Just save everybody the pain and flatly tell him, "I'm sorry, but it won't work out for me in the end. Have a nice day!"

Now we understand better the words of the Midrash: “כל מי שאין בו דעה, נבלה טובה הימנו”. May we be *zoche* to work on these important *Middos Tovos*, and together bring the Geulah, speedily in our days.

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## פרשת זכור

זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָּךְ עַמְלֵק (דברים כ"ה י"ז)

### Why we Hate Amalek

#### Amalek's Roots

To get a deep understanding of what Amalek is all about and what they stand for, it's best to go back to the roots. Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov were the forefathers of our nation. Each and every one of us come from them. However, our greatest enemies of all time come from them as well: Yishmael and Esav. Rav Yitzchok Feigelstock taught that oftentimes, the strongest opposing forces and most formidable foes of an entity originate from directly within.

#### Esav's Trait #1: Preferring the Physical

From the house of Yitzchok, we got Esav. One of our first encounters with Esav was when he demanded of Yaakov, "ה'לעיטני נא", pour that lentil soup into me! He was a person that was willing to sell everything just in exchange for a little bit of pleasure. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz used to call Esav a big "fresser" - someone who gobbles up food in an unrefined manner. In that moment, Esav behaved in the most unholy manner possible; he traded the right of serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the Bais Hamikdash for a futile, sensual pleasure.

A person could be on top of the world; he could be the most cherished and respected governor in the entire country, headed for the presidency; wherever he goes, he is surrounded by an obsequious crowd of reporters and followers, all admiring him enviously; and then for a fleeting *ta'avah*, he gives it all away. He falls so low to the point that the entire society ejects him from their midst; they wouldn't even hire him as a garbage collector after they discover what he has

done. That is the mentality that Esav gave over to his descendents: the preparedness to throw away all eternal honor and reward for bodily pleasures.

### **Esav's Trait #2: Mockery**

The *pasuk* says: "ויבז עשו את הבכורה" - Esav embarrassed the firstborn status. This is the second trait that Esav possessed: ליצנות - mockery of things that are holy. Not only did he shame the *avodah* in the Bais Hamikdash by trading it for nonsense, but he also mocked it, by rebranding himself and his family as "Edom", the one who traded it all for the "red" soup. Esav was not ashamed of his insane decision; he was proud of it. He was sending a message to the world that living a lustful life is superior to living a spiritual one.

### **Amalek During the Purim Story and Today**

Let's think about Achashveirosh's party for a moment. It went on for 180 days; how much partying can one possibly do? Here in Lakewood, we all appreciate Bais Faiga hall's wedding rules, which require it to end at 11:00 pm. But here, they went on for six months! And of course, there was so much physical pleasure going on at that party. We all know the nature of Achashveirosh's request to Vashti on that fateful day; it should make us vomit in utter disgust. They were following in the footsteps of Esav with regard to pleasure. And they also followed him with regard to יבז - they shamed and defiled the holy vessels of the Bais Hamikdash by serving their *treifeh* foods inside them.

Amalek inherited these traits from their ancestor, Esav. And it was these traits of *ta'avah* and mockery that they intended to infuse into Klal Yisroel when they attacked them in Refidim. Until this day, we suffer from their effects. In fact, we live in a world that is saturated with these two *nekudos*; the Western World's obsession with living for pleasure and scorning religiosity are constantly infiltrating our homes and pushing us away from Hashem.

### Amalek's Plan to Ruin Klal Yisroel

The *pasuk* says of Amalek, "אשר קרך בדרך". Rashi provides us with three explanations for what this means:

1. One translation is from the root word of "מקרה", which means 'chance' or 'happenstance'. In other words, Amalek **chanced** upon us in the desert, quite coincidentally.
2. The second translation comes from the root word "קרי", meaning 'impurity'. According to this, the *pasuk* is saying that Amalek ambushed us and infused us with *tumah*.
3. The third *pshat* comes from the word "קר" - cold. Rashi gives the *meshal* of a boiling bath; when one person jumps in, he may get burnt, but he made the bath colder for all future bathers. So too, the nations of the world had a tremendous amount of fear of Klal Yisroel; but the moment Amalek attacked us, they paved the way for our other foes to do the same in the future.

I was thinking that perhaps this Rashi is teaching us the tactical plan that Amalek utilizes when he is trying to bring Klal Yisroel down. These three methods are listed in the order of Amalek's preference.

### The First Method: "מקרה"

Amalek's most preferred line of attack starts with the belief that everything we see in this world is happenstance. Our arch-nemesis wants us to believe that the entire world as we know it is a result of random events; life on our planet popped into existence by total chance. This belief leads to the obvious next step: if there was no purpose in creation, then there is no real definition of good or bad. We all just 'happened' to have been born, so there is no purpose in caring about our conscience. So too, there is no rhyme or reason for the fall and rise of specific nations - it is all a matter of 'survival of the fittest'. This mindset sounds absolutely ridiculous - but unfortunately, it is one of the most prevalent belief systems in modern times.

Why is it that all the scientists and politicians of the West forced the schools to teach about evolution? Because if there's evolution, then life is a free-for-all. If there's no higher power that we will have to answer to after 120, then why bother with living a refined life with spiritual values?

*Imagine you're getting on to a busy highway, and you see signs indicating that the speed limit is 65 mph, and that violators will be prosecuted. You know what a headache it can be to get a ticket, and the repercussions can sometimes be severe, so you choose to travel at 65. But your friend in the passenger seat has an interesting piece of information to share:*

*"Don't you know that the speed limit over here is a complete hoax? The state couldn't afford to hire enough policemen to enforce the rules, so they just neglected this highway. They just put up signs as a deterrent. Nobody has gotten pulled over on this highway for years."*

*Of course, in a few moments, you're hitting 100 mph, and you notice that numerous other cars are doing the same. There are surely multiple accidents a day on this highway, but still - why would anybody resist speeding, knowing that there's no authority that they will have to answer to?*

The same goes for Amalek's mentality, which the גוים have accepted wholeheartedly in recent years. There's a reason sin has lost its shame in modern society: because, after all, who said there's really something called sin? Everything happened by chance anyway! We're a bunch of highly evolved apes! If you're able to swallow up your friend and destroy him for your own benefit, then go ahead - he doesn't deserve anything more than you do. That's how you run a business in today's world. The same goes for enjoyment; do whatever it takes to have fun, however, whenever, and wherever you want, because nothing is 'unbecoming' or 'improper' - those are just silly words that were invented by people who believe! And, of course, their shameless obsession with inappropriate conduct is also a result of this mentality - because if no one is watching from above, despising your behavior, then why not follow your desires?

It's sick, but it's all over the place, *Rachmana Litzlan*. This mentality is also so repulsive because it is based on such כפיית טובה -

Hashem has created such a rich and beautiful world, yet so many of his creations deny his existence or relevance. Our grandparents and great-grandparents grew up in an entirely different world - a world where even the nations had some sort of moral compass. But today, Amalek is on attack mode, and he is spreading his “מקרה” tentacles all over society.

The Bnei Avraham Yitzchok V'Yaakov are the only ones left who actually make their choices in life based on *Yiras Shomayim*. We believe that the Ribono Shel Olam created the world for us to follow exactly what he says; the very thought of going against his will should send a shudder down our spines. Our *emunah* in Hashem, our firm belief that this world is nothing but a hallway leading to the Next World, our complete dedication to divine morals and qualities are the complete antithesis of Amalek. We are the last holdouts, and we will fight this destructive and ungrateful mentality until Moshiach comes and purges them from the world.

### **The Second Method: “קרי” - Impurity**

When Amalek encounters a person that isn't quite holding by denying the existence of a Creator, he accesses the second weapon in his arsenal: the desire for immoral behavior.

After all, as we've discussed in the past, most sane people recognize the obvious fact that there is a Ribono Shel Olam. All they have to do is open their eyes and see the intricately designed world surrounding them, and they realize that there is someone behind it all. And Amalek knows that convincing them otherwise is a battle he is very likely to lose. So, what does he do? He tempts them to engage in immoral behavior. Every single person has temptations, regardless of whether he believes in a Creator or not. So the *koach* of Amalek in the world sends them the message that even if they believe, they are still allowed to have some fun.

Amalek knows his enemy. Yidden are constantly engaged in learning Torah and growing in *Avodas Hashem*. So how can Amalek bring them down? By filling the world with extremely low levels of *ta'avah*, and making sinful conduct so commonplace that Yidden can *chalilah* begin to think that it's normal. The current climate in the

world is one where *tumah* can be displayed and discussed on large billboards, on unassuming street corners - and even on handheld devices, to the point where *ehrlliche Yidden* can easily fall into the trap of thinking that it is part of life, *Rachmana Litzlan*. This tactic is slightly less preferable to Amalek, because it doesn't accomplish his complete goal of eradicating *Avodas Hashem* from the Yidden. But still, he will do anything to get Yidden to do *aveiros*, even if they don't fully forsake their dedication to their faith.

### **The Third Method: "קרירות" - Coldness**

There are people, however, that Amalek cannot succeed in swaying from their *emunah* or even slipping into pitfalls of *tumah* either. We're talking about people who are firm believers, and have very strong *gedarim* separating them from impurity; all they do is *Avodas Hashem*. For these people, Amalek unsheathes his third and final sword from its scabbard: "קרירות".

*There are many ways a person can complete a task. Suppose a bachur is asked to clean up the seforim in Bais Medrash after a long week in Yeshiva. He knows that there is a rotation and everybody is obligated to collect the seforim on their designated week, so he goes ahead with it. He has a million other things that he wants to be doing, but what choice does he have? So he begrudgingly gathers all the seforim and places them where they belong, dragging his feet while he does it.*

*However, there's another attitude he can adopt while completing this task. He can be overjoyed at having the opportunity of cleaning up a Makom Torah and making it presentable for those who learn in it. Many great Tzaddikim would spend their precious time cleaning up Batei Medrash. It is a great privilege! He should be dancing as he puts each sefer on its assigned shelf!*

*Let's say a person has been waiting for a while to be given the opportunity to oversee a construction site. He desperately needs to prove his capabilities to his higher ups in the field in order to get promoted. Now, a job like this can be taxing, physically and emotionally. He can show up to the site of the*

*project every day, looking exhausted and worn down; or, he can show up bright and early, with a spring in his step, exuding excitement and confidence to all those present. Of course, he is far more likely to get the promotion if he does the latter!*

The same goes for all areas of *avodas Hashem*. We can do it with eagerness and excitement; with the understanding that every *mitzvah* is the greatest privilege in the world. Or, we can schlep along, doing the *mitzvos* and learning our *sedarim* by rote.

The Ba'al HaTanya points out a famous contradiction: in one Gemara, it says: "הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים" - everything is in the hands of *shomayim*, except for fear of *shomayim*. However, in other places the Gemara says: "הכל בידי שמים חוץ מצנינים ופחים" - everything is in the hands of *shomayim* except for 'hot and cold'. This second statement is generally translated to mean that although everything is in Hashem's hand, we are supposed to protect ourselves from excessive heat and extreme cold, because exposing ourselves to these elements is bound to cause us harm. But the Ba'al HaTanya asks the obvious - aren't these two statements a contradiction?

The Ba'al HaTanya answers that in the second statement, the Gemara is actually hinting at a deeper meaning: everything is in the hands of *shomayim*, except for the 'hot and cold' - meaning, do we inject our *ma'asim tovim* with fervor and warmth, or do we do them coldly and emotionlessly? Do we have passionate and fiery fear of Hashem, or do we just follow his commandments as a matter of fact? With this explanation, the two statements made by the Gemara are essentially one and the same.

R' Shlomke of Zvill used to say: "When I put on my Tefillin in the morning, I have more pleasure than any *baal ta'avah* in the world has while engaging in his favorite physical activity!"

We have to realize that the *nisayon* of doing our *avodah* in a dead, unenthusiastic manner is actually Amalek's plot. This is their last way of pushing Klal Yisroel away from its *tachlis*. We can't let them win! We must prevail! We must wipe out every last speck of Amalek from within ourselves, and realign ourselves with true *avodah* that comes from a place of authentic *simcha*.

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## הפטרה זכור

כִּי לֹא אָדָם הוּא לְהַנָּחֵם (שמואל א ט"ו כ"ט)

### Shaul Hamelech's Mistake

In the *haftorah*, we recount the story of how Shaul had pity on Amalek's cattle, and on their leader, Agag. He reasoned that the cattle could be used for multitudes of *korbanos*; it would be a waste to kill them all.

*A man once saw that his wife was about to throw away some leftover herring from Shabbos. He immediately stopped her, saying it would be ba'al tashchis.*

*"But I think it's spoiled at this point," his wife explained.*

*"What do you mean? I can go outside and feed it to a pauper! Why should you throw away a mitzvah?" he shot back. Indeed, he ran outside with the herring, found a pauper and fed it to him.*

*The next day, he heard that the pauper had been rushed to the hospital because of food poisoning. He promptly made his way over to visit the man, who died shortly thereafter. This Yid attended the Levaya, and later went to be menachem avel the pauper's family.*

*When he got home, he had an important lesson to share with his wife. "Do you see how much has transpired thanks to that little bit of herring?" He paused for emphasis. "I managed to feed a poor man, I was mevaker choleh him in the hospital, I was melaveh his aron, I was menachem avel his family; so many mitzvos came about through this little morsel of herring - and you wanted to throw it away?"*

Anyway, we read that the Ribono Shel Olam was unhappy with Shaul's decision. He sent Shmuel to tell him the famous, powerful statement: "הנה שמוע מזבח טוב" - to obey is better than a grand offering! Shaul tried to argue his case for remaining king, but to no avail; Shmuel made it clear that Hashem no longer wanted Shaul to be Klal

Yisroel's ruler. Shmuel exclaimed, "כי לא אדם הוא להנחם" - for Hashem is not like a human who relents.

### **The Meaning of the Word "נחמה"**

To better understand this concept of נחמה-relenting, we must look no further than the Metzudas Tzion on this *pasuk*. He translates להנחם as 'changing one's mind'. We can understand this when it comes to *nichum aveilim*; people generally have strong feelings of loss and sorrow after losing a loved one, but as the days following the *petirah* progress, this sentiment slowly changes from sorrow to remembrance. The mourners begin to recognize that their loved one is no longer beside them; but, instead of remaining crestfallen, they begin to invest their emotions in remembering the deceased. They give *tzedakah* in their loved one's memory, and they tell anyone who will listen stories of their greatness. This transition from sorrow to remembrance is precisely what we are trying to accomplish by being *menachem avel*; we are trying to foster a נחמה - a changing of mindset. Now we can properly understand how the *pasuk* describes Yaakov Avinu's reaction to Yosef's disappearance: "וימאן להתנחם", he refused to switch from 'sorrow' mode to 'remembrance' mode.

*A Kollel yungerman was once very pressed for time. He chose to remain in the Kollel for his Rebbe's shmuz, but he ran out before Maariv. "I can make up for the missed tefillah b'tzibbur with Hashem," he figured, "but I can't mess with my Rebbe. He's going to be upset, and he won't appreciate my excuses. I don't want to lose my Kollel check."*

This mindset is dead-wrong! We tend to view Hashem as a nice old man, who is standing in the back of the Shul, handing out peppermint sticks and candies. Of course, this couldn't be further from the truth. "כי לא אדם הוא להנחם" - Hashem doesn't play games! He doesn't accept whatever excuse you pull out of the hat. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is all about Din and Mishpat. If you do the proper *teshuva*, that's a different story. But don't think Hashem is just always forgiving, forgetting, and constantly changing His mind. That's the mistake that Shaul made. There are some opportunities that we get in life that will never come back; now is the moment to seize them. Don't think Hashem will just be nice and grant you the opportunity again.

## פורים

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִי בְחָצֵר וְהֵמָּן בָּא לְחָצֵר בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחֵיצוֹנָה  
לֵאמֹר לְמֶלֶךְ לְתִלּוֹת אֶת מְרֻדְכַי עַל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר הֵכִין לוֹ (אסתר ו' ד')

וַיֹּאמֶר הֵמָּן בְּלִבּוֹ לְמִי נִחְפָּץ הַמֶּלֶךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת יָקָר יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי (ו' ה')

After Achashveirosh had the *Divrei Hayamim* read to him, and he wished to repay Mordechai, the *passuk* relates how Haman had just been coming to the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordechai.

At that very moment, Achashveirosh called out, "Who is in the courtyard?" Haman was then called in, whereupon Achashveirosh asked him what should be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor. Haman described what he would like for his own glory, and as the *pessukim* tell us, he was forced to carry out his own words on Mordechai.

The question which we may ask is, why was it necessary for the *passuk* to relate the purpose for which Haman was coming to Achashveirosh? Sure, it makes the story more dramatic. He was coming to try to have Mordechai hanged, and on that very visit to the king, he ended up being forced to honor Mordechai with his own hands. But is that the only reason? The Megillah is trying to make things dramatic? Or is there perhaps a deeper message here?

### Haman Lived in a Completely Selfish State

It would seem to me that we can understand this bs" d as follows:

When Achashveirosh inquired of Haman what should be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor, Haman launched into a complete fantasy world. The robes which the king himself had already worn...the horse which the king had already ridden upon... Even the crown on the king's head – which he quickly retracted when he perceived the look of anger in Achashveirosh's eyes at the mention of the crown. It is evidently clear that Haman had no one other than himself in mind. As the Gemara (מגילה דף ז') tells us, it did not require

ויאמר המן בלבו למי יחפץ המלך לעשות *ruach hakodesh* to write the *passuk* /And Haman said in his heart, "Whom would the king desire to glorify more than me?" What was going on inside Haman's heart at that moment was entirely transparent.

The question is, how could Haman have been so completely sure that he was the one whom Achashveirosh had in mind? True, Achashveirosh had honored him until then, but out of all the millions of people who lived in Achashveirosh's dominion, it was so definitely him, without even any doubt?

Perhaps we can explain that the Megillah is answering this question by telling us Haman's purpose in coming to the palace.

Mordechai had not bowed down to Haman, and Haman was filled with fury over the terrible affront to his honor. It made no difference that everyone else bowed to him; Mordechai must do so! Haman cannot rest until that insolent Jew is hanged on the gallows. He built the gallows that very day, and he could not even wait until daybreak to obtain permission from the king. At the unearthly pre-dawn hours, he is already racing impatiently to the palace to speak to Achashveirosh.

In effect, during those hours, Haman was 100% completely focused on himself. In that selfish frame of mind, no one else in the world existed other than himself. Based on this, it is no surprise that he immediately assumed himself to be the one whom Achashveirosh wished to honor. No one else in the world existed at that time, and all honor in the world was reserved for Haman alone!

This is why the *passuk* tells the reason for Haman's coming to the palace. The *passuk* is pointing out what allowed for Haman to give Achashveirosh the response that he did. Haman was coming to the palace for himself, and he therefore had only himself in mind when he responded to Achashveirosh.

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