

Parashat Vayikra

Picking Up Hashem's Calls even in the Taxi

Heading Hashem's Calling in Our Lives

We are called to enter the *Book of Vayikra*, which opens with Hashem's calling out to Moshe. At this time, we need to become aware that we, too, are being called by Hashem, Who desires to communicate with all of His children. G-d's call to us is not on the same level as the direct call that Moshe received. However, we need to open ourselves to listen to the more subtle calls in our lives, such as hearing certain lyrics from a song on the radio, reminding us to be more forgiving, or perhaps we just 'happen' to bump into the person to whom we had thought to apologize. Certain problems or ailments that people experience could be a wake-up call from Hashem. Rashi contrasts the word in Hebrew that describes how Hashem called Moshe וַיִּקְרָא/*Vayikra*, with the word describing how Hashem addressed Bilam, the non-Jewish prophet, with the word, וַיִּקְרָא/*vayikar*. Hashem called Moshe intentionally, with the letter א/*alef* that represents the oneness of Hashem. However, when G-d spoke to Bilam, the א/*alef* was missing which indicates a less intentional communication, similar to the Hebrew word מִקְרָה/*mikrah*, which means 'chance.' We are fortunate that Hashem always relates to us – the descendants of Ya'acov, through Divine Supervision. It is our call to heighten the awareness of Hashem's supervision in our lives, by allowing ourselves to see and hear His messages. Rebbetzin Jungreis calls to our attention that we recite the *bracha*, "...*Hamechin mitzadei gever...* –Who prepares the footsteps of man," every morning. Most people have difficulty discerning Hashem's call to us, since His communications are hidden behind many veils. Yet, if we allow ourselves to see and hear the Divine messages to us, we will be able to detect the Divine design guiding the happenings of our daily lives.

Happenstance or Divine Supervision in the Purim Story?

The story of Purim teaches us that all the instances that could seem like coincidences are in reality intentional events, called into being by no other than the Almighty. For example, the fact that Esther was chosen by Achasverush to become his new queen was not by accident, but Hashem's way of preparing the healing before the wound of Haman's decree. Mordechai heard Hashem's calling and said, "It can't be that this righteous woman would be taken to sleep with an uncircumcised person, except that in the future, she will arise to save Israel" (Rashi, *Megillat Esther* 2:11). Other seeming coincidences in the Purim story include when Mordechai just 'happened' to be around to hear the king's bodyguards plan to assassinate Achasverus, and that Esther just 'happened' to report this in Mordechai's name, even though Mordechai had not commanded her to do so. When later, the king had a hard time falling asleep and asked for his Chronicles, he just 'happened' to read about how Mordechai saved his life, which was at that very same moment that Haman knocked on the door to request to hang Mordechai.

Divine Providence of Finding the Perfect Divine Providence Story

It is not coincidental that we read *Parashat Vayikra* that teaches us about Divine Providence right before Purim.

ספר ויקרא פרק א (א) וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֵת הַתְּנֹךְ לֵאמֹר:

"Hashem called out to Moshe and spoke to him at from the Tent of Meeting saying" (*Vayikra* 1:1).

All oral communications of Hashem to Moshe were preceded by a call. It is the way of expressing affection, and the mode used by the ministering angels when addressing each other, as it states, "One called to the other and said, 'Holy, holy holy is Hashem of hosts.'" In contrast, to the prophets of the nations of the world, Hashem revealed Himself in a manner which Scripture describes by an expression ordinarily used for denoting events of casual character and uncleanliness, as it states, "G-d happened to meet Bilam" (*Bamidbar* 23:4). The term וַיִּקְרַח/vayikrah from the root קרה is connected with מִקְרָה/mikrah, which denotes chance occurrence and has also the meaning of uncleanliness (*Devarim* 22:11)... (Rashi, *Vayikra* 1:1).

Inspired by Rashi's commentary on the first verse of the *Book of Vayikra*, I was planning to write about *hashgacha pratit* (Divine Supervision) in my personal life. Although my entire life is bursting with Divine Providence, at the moment, I wasn't able to recall even one good example, being under pressure planning my annual North America tour. What do writers do when they have nothing to write? We google! So I googled '*hashgacha pratit* stories,' and by amazing Divine Supervision, I came across an article by Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, about an extraordinary Divinely ordained story that just 'happened' to also relate to one of the lectures I am giving on my current tour about the importance of your Hebrew name. Not only did Hashem, via google, provide me with a phenomenal story to share with you here, it is, moreover, a story that brings home the point of my lecture: 'Your Name Calls Out the Essence of Your Soul' in a most poignant way.

Three Taxi Divinely Ordained Stories

A mother was taking her eight-year-old son, Yedidya, to his first visit at the orthodontist and had to fill out a form. Yedidya usually carries his name proudly – Yedid-Ya, which literally translated, means 'friend of G-d.' However, this time, to avoid all the fuss his Jewish name evoked, Yedidya whispered, "Mommy, just write down my English name, 'Jed'" On the way home in the taxi, his mother just 'happened' to look at the taxi driver's name-card, and couldn't believe her eyes when she read the name: 'Yedidya' in big and bold letters! At first, she thought she must have read wrong, but after she looked again, and again, it was clear that there was no mistake. "How did you get the name, Yedidya?" she asked the driver. "My parents gave it to me," he explained, "but in Russia, we were not permitted to use our Jewish names, so when I immigrated to America, I promised myself that in this country of religious freedom, I would proudly proclaim that my name is Yedidya and that I am Jewish." What amazing Divine Providence. What are the chances of finding a Jewish taxi driver in Manhattan called Yedidya? Could any parent, rabbi or teacher give a better lesson to her son, who just an hour ago was uncomfortable with his Jewish name, Yedidya? From that moment on, he never again used his English name, Jed. Isn't this awesome *hashgacha pratit*? On top of that, the very next time Yedidya's twin-brother Ya'acov was in a taxi with his mom, the driver 'happened' to be called Ya'acov, not Jacob, but the Hebrew version Ya'acov! Surely, Hashem was orchestrating this from Above. What gave this family the merit to have two consecutive taxi-driver Divine Providence stories happen?

Rebbetzin Jungreis related that several years earlier, when the father of the twins had just begun to keep the Torah, during a special Jewish heritage trip to Eastern Europe; he was wearing his very first kippah. On the way back to the hotel, the father forgot his kippah in the taxi. Although, he also

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forgot his very expensive international phone there, it was his kippah that he ran after. He chased after the taxi like a marathon runner, while calling out to the driver to stop. When the father opened the door of the cab, he recovered his dear yarmulke. This story is a remarkable example of how Hashem rewarded the father's Jewish pride, which was expressed through a taxi, by strengthening his sons in their Jewish pride through extraordinary Divine Supervision in two taxis!

Moreover, isn't it amazing *hasgacha pratit*, how Hashem sent this story to my hands in perfect time to be able to share it in Seattle, Baltimore and on our Emunahealing Retreat in the Berkshires? Hope to see you there!