

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

PARSHAT VAYIKRA

Haftora: To Love Every Jew

The Haftora for Parshas Vayikra is a prophecy from the book of Yishayahu. It opens with praise of the Jewish people, followed by rebuke for not bringing their sacrifices to Hashem but to false idols. Then an assurance that Moshiach is coming and that Hashem is the only G-d. The Haftora now mocks the fallacy of idol worship and the silliness of those who make them. Finally, it closes with another prophecy of the future redemption.

The connection to the Parsha is that the Parsha speaks of sacrifices to Hashem, which the Torah calls a Korban, from the word *Krav*, to come closer. Meaning that we serve Hashem to become closer to Him. The Haftora stresses that Hashem is the only one worth serving. The Parsha mentions several kinds of sin offerings as part of returning and repairing our relationship with Hashem. The Haftora has several verses that say that it is Hashem that wipes away our sins, and He wants us to return to Him. These verses are part of the Yom Kippur liturgy.

What is special about this Haftora is that you get the feeling that Hashem loves us and wants us. He uses terms of endearment, how He chose us, formed us, we are His praise, His servants, His

witnesses, we have nothing to fear, He will wipe away our sins, He wants us to return to Him, and more. In other words, We are His, and we are precious to Him.

The Haftora begins, "This nation I formed

for myself (*Li*), they will tell My praise." This verse brings up so many questions. First, it obviously is talking about us, the Jewish people; normally, we

are called the Children of Israel or the House of Yaakov. Why does Hashem call us "This nation?" Then He says that He formed us, not created or made us. What does "formed" connote? Why does He add the word "*Li*," "for Myself?" He could have simply said, "I formed this nation." Then He says that "They will tell My praise," with such certainty. Didn't Hashem grant us freedom of choice, whether or not to praise Him? Why is it so certain? Another question, why does He say that we will "tell" His praise as if it was a story, as opposed to speak, say or sing His praise? And finally, where do we see this idea in the Parsha?

This verse is teaching us how precious every Jew is to Hashem.

First, He says that we are a "nation." A nation is made up of people at all levels and all classes of society. Whether you are a minister or a garbage collector, you are part of the makeup of the nation.

A nation has an intrinsic bond with their king. They are a nation because they are united under their king, and he is the king because he has a nation; they are what make him the king. He isn't only king over the ministers but over every person in his kingdom; from the highest to the lowest, he is bound to every single one.

The same is true about the Jewish people and Hashem. We are His nation, and He is our King. We are united under Him, and in some way, we are what make Him King. This bond between Hashem and the Jewish people is with every single Jewish person, irrespective of his or her religious level. As our great sages tell us, "Even though he sinned, he is still a Jew."

A human king rules over subjects that are similar

**LOVE YOUR
FELLOW JEW AS
G-D DOES, AND
VALUE THE PIECE
OF G-D WITHIN
HIM.**



to him; he is a king over humans. Ruling over animals or plants doesn't make one a king.

Being Hashem's subjects means that we are similar to Him, meaning that we are a G-dly people.

Now that we understand the implications of the word nation, we can ask, what does he mean by "this nation?" When you say "this," it means that you can point at it and recognize it. We, as the Jewish people, stand out as such. The world recognizes every Jew as Hashem's person and the Jewish people as Hashem's nation. Whether you were born this way or you are a true convert, you are recognized as "this nation."

Then He says that He "formed" us. This implies the physical. Meaning that Hashem didn't only choose our spiritual makeup, our neshama, but our bodies as well. Not only did He choose us, but he specifically designed each and every one of us to be the way we are. In other words, the way we are, that is how Hashem wants us.

Then Hashem says, "Li," for myself. We have a rule that whenever Hashem says *Li*, it means that it will never change. Hashem made us into his own nation forever, and nothing can change that.

Then He says with certainty that "they will tell My praise." This is certain because it is not what we do that praises Hashem, rather, it is our existence. The mere fact that we are here, our tiny nation, one sheep surrounded by seventy wolves, persecuted in every generation. We are still here, while the great empires that sought to destroy us can only be found in relics and in history books.

The existence of each and every one of us is a miracle and, therefore, a praise to Hashem. This is true for every Jewish person, irrespective of his or her religious level. Especially after the Holocaust, just our mere existence is a praise to Hashem. And this is true in every generation because every generation serves as the link of the past generations to the future generations. And every Jewish person, in every generation, is a link that causes Hashem to be praised.

This is why He uses the word "tell," because it is our existence and story that praises Hashem.

Just as the first verse of the Haftora shows the love of Hashem to the Jewish people and sets the

tone of the Haftora, the first verse of the Parsha, "Vayikra el Moshe, And He called to Moshe," does the same. *Vayikra* is the first word of the Parsha. It's the name of the Parsha and, for that matter, of the whole book of Vayikra. The name of a Parsha holds in it the central message of the Parsha. Rashi explains that the word *Vayikra* (and He called) is a term of affection. The Parsha is about the love of Hashem to the Jewish people and that He wants us to get closer to Him.

What we must take away from all this is the great love Hashem has for every Jewish person, irrespective of his level of observance. That we should never speak disparagingly about our fellow Jews, who are Hashem's beloved. Rather, we, too, should love every Jew as He does and recognize the significance and intrinsic value of every Jew, as we are not Hashem's nation without all our parts. We should seek to draw our brothers and sisters closer to Hashem through love.

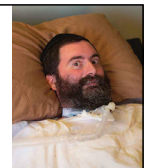
It is through this love that we will merit the prophecies in the Haftora of the final redemption, the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon.

Thank you for posting Rabbi Yitzi's journey for us to get a glimpse into his life. I wish I understood what his relationship with Hashem was like. It must be incredibly special.

- Benjamin R, Philadelphia

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:
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Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



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