

This Week In Torah *VaYatze*

Have you ever had an experience that completely reshapes how you look at the world? Sure trauma is such a catalyst. But sometimes it can be a simple encounter that when you try to explain it to another, the response is stagnant—they just don't get it. That encounter spoke to you—and only you. That is the essence of Martin Buber's existential theology embodied by his "I-Thou" philosophy; a moment that is so personal yet oh so spiritual that it cannot be translated.

Enter this line of Torah from this week's *parashah*: "Once, at the mating time of the flocks, I had a dream in which I saw that the he-goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled, and mottled..." At first glance, such wording seems a bit materialistic, not spiritual. But the mystical master known as the AR" I [Isaac Luria], sees something far deeper than just sheep—these are reflections of different parts of our being that need to come together for us to have a real, effective and transformative faith. The *Netivot Shalom* [Rabbi Shalom Noach] writes: "Streaked(*akudim*)" suggests that we are "bound (*akud*) to the One God", for faith is that which connects all as one (cf.ZoharIII288a). From the faith of *akudim*, we come to that of "speckled (*nekudim*)": this signifies the inner point (*nekudah*) of the heart. In this manner faith resides in the heart, such that even in the inner most point of the heart we sense our faith. This is a more elevated form of faith. But, even so, we then come to "mottled (*verudim*)" which signifies the limbs or the body."

To summarize—we are attached to God through an intellectual and conscious practice, we forge a deep personal connection that can easily be transmitted to our entire existence and all our interactions. Amazing the hidden treasure in a simple line of Torah that so easily would be passed over in our reading of the text!

This verse of Torah leads to another dimension, RaMBaN [Spanish Rabbi from the 12th - 13th century, Nachmonides] wrote that no matter all the turmoil and tribulations, faith can emerge stronger after an ordeal. What seems like inferior make up of the flock, can lead to an internal presence of hope and optimism. Everything can emerge for the best if one's mindset makes it so!

Our experiences can be framed by us for a blessing if we define it as so. Our intellect can help shape our heart's perception. And when we frame it for the positive then we carry ourselves in that manner. The Psalmist asks in Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel."

Nachmonides, Rabbi Shalom Noach and the AR" I would comfort the Psalmist by saying that what he is feeling is a gift—a gift that will uplift and transform and thus create a blessing!