



# The Collective Conversation

Weekly Torah Essays from the  
Young Israel of Scarsdale Community



Sefer Vayikra

Parshat Vayikra

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## Love in the time of Vayikra

By David Noble

*Vayikra el Moshe*, the first Rashi in *Sefer Vayikra*, states that the word *vayikra* is a term of endearment. Rashi notes that it is the way angels address each other, as we say in *kedusha*,

וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל־זֶה וְאָמַר קְדוֹשׁ | קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:

*And one would call to the other, "Holy, holy, holy! The LORD of Hosts!*

*His presence fills all the earth!"* (Isaiah 6:3)

The holy *Aish Kodesh* (Rav Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, 1889-1943) asks why Rashi chooses this passage to elucidate the love aspect of the call of *vayikra*; after all this is the third time the word is utilized between *Hashem* and *Moshe*. The first is at the burning bush, וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּי, *God called to him out of the bush* (*Shemot* 3:4). And the second time it is used is at Mount Sinai, וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה מִן־הַהָר, *God called him from the mountain* (*Shemot* Exodus 19:3).

Why, asks the *Aish Kodesh*, does Rashi choose this place to define the term as to include loving and closeness.

We must begin our explanation with some historical background on Rav Shapira. As the rabbi of Piaseczno, a town near Warsaw, he was deeply involved in children's education and in efforts to reverse the trend toward secularization. Rav Shapira ran a secret *shul* and a *beit midrash* during WWII when he interned with his *Chasidim* in the Warsaw Ghetto. He wrote his opus, the *Aish Kodesh*, while in the ghetto to record his views on the complex questions of faith that arose in this time of suffering. Rav Shapira transferred his book and other manuscripts to Emanuel Ringelblum's Oneg Shabbos Archive, a large milk canister that was buried in the

The holy *Aish Kodesh* asks why specifically Rashi chooses this passage to elucidate the love aspect of the call of *vayikra* since this is the third time the phrase is utilized between God and Moshe.

Warsaw Ghetto and discovered after in September 1946. Rav Shapira was killed in the Trawniki work camp near Lublin in 1943.

The *Aish Kodesh* finds the reason Rashi made his comment in our *parsha* based on an understanding of the *עֲקִידַת יִצְחָק*, *the binding of Isaac*, which is the hallmark of all *karbanot*, and a prayer that we say on fast days at *mincha*. At the *עֲקִידַת יִצְחָק* a ram appeared and was substituted for Isaac, and we learn that animal sacrifice substitutes for our own suffering and sacrifice. Following *mincha* on fast days we say,

*Master of all worlds, it is revealed that in the time of the temple, atonement would be obtained from the mere burning of fat and blood. Now I have engaged in a fast, and my own fat and blood have diminished. May my diminution be as if I had offered it upon the Altar for favor.* (ArtScroll Siddur, p. 249)

Rashi chose our *parsha* to define the word *vayikra* as a term of endearment to link it to sacrifices — this is the *parsha* in which the laws of sacrifices are given. We learn that *Hashem's* speaking to *Moshe* and the Children of Israel about sacrifices begins with a term of endearment, just as our bringing sacrifices is an expression of love for *Hashem*.

*Rashi chose our parsha to define the word vayikra as a term of endearment to link it to sacrifices, because it is the parsha in which the laws of sacrifices are given.*

There is no *chiddush* — novelty — to using a term of love at the burning bush or at the revelation at Sinai, but here it is appropriate.

May *Hashem* continue to shower us with love even during these difficult times of sacrifice.

**David** and Shoshana Noble are blessed with their jewels Adina Bracha, Zach Shtiv, Sarah, her husband Adam and baby Emil Solomon and Kobi. They moved to Scarsdale in 1998 and have enjoyed being part of the young Israel and SAR community.

*Want to write or dedicate a Parsha essay?*

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**The Collective Conversation** is a project of the Young Israel of Scarsdale and the YIS Living Torah Fund

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