

Parent-Child Learning

Motzoai Shabbat Parashat VaYikra 5774

NEXT WEEK'S PARASHAT HASHAVUA: Parashat Tzav

1. Have you ever had someone ask you to do something that you didn't necessary want to do? How did they try to get you to eventually agree to their request?
2. Let's say you wanted someone else to do something that they weren't particularly interested in. What would you do to try to get them to change their mind?
3. What happens when you not only want them to do something that they don't seem too interested in, but you also want them to be happy about making the choice to do it. Would you then do anything differently when you try to convince them of what you are asking them?
4. RaShi, the medieval biblical commentator,¹ in a comment on the upcoming Parashat HaShavua, suggests that Moshe had to try to convince Aharon and his family to accept the role of being the Kohen Gadol and the regular Kohanim, implying that initially they weren't so enthusiastic about doing so:

ויקרא פרק ח

(ב) קַח אֶת־אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶת־בְּנָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֶת הַבְּגָדִים וְאֶת שְׂמֹן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְאֶת פֶּר הַחֹטֵאת וְאֶת שְׂנֵי הָאֵילִים וְאֶת סֵל הַמִּצּוֹת:

'Take² Aharon and his sons with him, and the special clothes, and the anointing oil, and the bull of the sin-offering, and the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread...'

רש"י ויקרא פרק ח פסוק ב

קַח את אהרן - קחנו בדברים ומשכהו:

"Take Aharon"—take him with words and draw him (towards your way of thinking).

¹ Shlomo Yitzchaki (Hebrew: שלמה יצחקי), or in Latin Salomon Isaacides, and today generally known by the acronym Rashi (Hebrew: רש"י, RAbbi SHlomo Itzhaki; February 22, 1040 – July 13, 1105), was a medieval French rabbi and author of a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the *Tanakh*. Acclaimed for his ability to present the basic meaning of the text in a concise, lucid fashion, Rashi appeals to both learned scholars and beginning students, and his works remain a centerpiece of contemporary Jewish study. His commentary on the Talmud, which covers nearly all of the Babylonian Talmud (a total of 30 tractates), has been included in every edition of the Talmud since its first printing by Daniel Bomberg in the 1520s. His commentary on Tanach — especially his commentary on the Chumash ("Five Books of Moses") — is an indispensable aid to students of all levels. The later commentary alone serves as the basis for more than 300 "supercommentaries" which analyze Rashi's choice of language and citations, penned by some of the greatest names in rabbinic literature...

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashi>

² Apparently the word that catches RaShI's attention is "Take". While you can take an object and do to it whatever you wish, short of tying him up, you can't just "take" a person. He has his own opinions and willpower. If you want to have him do the things that you are interested in, the way that you have to "take" him, is by convincing him, winning him over to your way of thinking.

5. Originally, HaShem's Plan was that someone other than Aharon and his family would be the Kohanim. HaShem's Intention Seems to have been that the first-born of every family would serve in the role of HaShem's Representatives, performing the holy service of the sacrifices:

(א) שמות יב:כג

וְעָבַר יְקֹנֵק לְנֹגֵף אֶת־מִצְרַיִם וְרָאָה אֶת־הַדָּם עַל־הַמַּשְׁקֹוֹף וְעַל שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת וּפָסַח יְקֹנֵק עַל־הַפֶּתַח וְלֹא יִתֵּן הַמַּשְׁחִית לְבֹא אֶל־בְּתֵיכֶם לְנֹגֵף:

For the Lord will Pass through to Kill the Egyptians; and when He See the blood upon the top of the doorposts, and on the two side-posts, the Lord will Pass over the door, and will not Allow the destroying Angel to come in unto your houses to smite you → *The Jewish first-born children will not be affected by the Plague of the Firstborn if blood was placed on the doorposts of their homes.*

(ב) שמות יב:כט

וַיְהִי בַחֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיְקַוֶּה הָפָה כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פְּרָעָה הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּאוֹ עַד בְּכוֹר הַשָּׂבִי אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית הַבּוֹר וְכָל בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה:

And it came to pass at midnight, that the Lord Killed all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the prisoner that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle → *with the exception of the Jewish first-born in the houses where blood had been placed on the doorposts.*

(ג) שמות יג: ב

קִדְּשֵׁלִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר כָּל־רֶחֶם בְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה לִי הוּא:

'Sanctify unto Me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast, he/it is Mine.' → *As a result of HaShem having Saved the first-born male children during the Plague of the First-Born, He Considered them particularly obligated to him, Expecting them to serve as "Kohanim".*

(ד) שמות לב:כו

וַיַּעֲמֵד מֹשֶׁה בַשַּׁעַר הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מִי לִיקְוֶה אֵלַי וַיֵּאָסְפוּ אֵלָיו כָּל־בְּנֵי לֵוִי:

Then Moshe stood in the gate of the camp, and said: 'Whoso is on the Lord's Side, let him come unto me.' And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him → *Even though the first-born should have felt a special obligation to be loyal to HaShem, during the series of sins that occurred immediately after the Exodus from Egypt (see Shemot 15-7), the first-born did not stand out as people who refused to sin. This all came to a head during the sin of the Golden Calf. The only ones who did not sin was the tribe of Levi. At that point, HaShem Decided to Make a change, and substitute Levi'im for the first-born.*

(ה) במדבר ג:מה

קַח אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת בְּהֵמַתם וְהִיוּ־לִי הַלְוִיִּם אֲנִי יְקֹנֵק: Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be Mine, even the Lord's → *Whereas the first-born should have felt obligated to HaShem for Having Saved them during the plague of the First-Born, while the Levi'im did not sin with the Golden Calf, they also did not feel that they especially owed HaShem more than anyone else. Therefore it was up to Moshe to convince them to become the Kohanim.*

6. Let's try to understand a) why Aharon and his family were reluctant to become Kohanim and b) what might Moshe's arguments have included in order to cause them to change their minds.

a) What parts of being a Kohen may not be so attractive to a person, assuming he has a choice whether or not to be one?³

i) There are all sorts of extra rules that apply to Kohanim that don't apply to other Jews, including: 1. *Remaining ritually pure in order to do the service in the Mishkan;*

2. *Not being drunk in order to have a clear mind while doing the service and making decisions;*

3. *Restrictions upon whom one was able to marry;*

4. *Having to be careful about wearing certain clothes during the Divine Service;*

5. *Having everyone watch you as you did the Divine Service;*

6. *Blessing the people at different points;*

7. ?

ii) The Kohanim were not given land of their own, but were assigned cities throughout the land of Israel;

iii) They were supported by the gifts that the people would give them from the tithes of Teruma as well as portions of the sacrifices, instead of supporting themselves.

iv) ?

b) What might Moshe have said to convince them to accept this role?

i) How can you turn down a request directly from HaShem?

ii) It is a privilege to serve HaShem and the Jewish people.

iii) If you are always around holy things, you will feel and think holy things.

iv) You will inspire the people to live holy lives.

v) ?

7) If you were a member of Aharon's family at the time when Moshe was trying to convince them to become Kohanim, what would you have said? Why? (Remember, if you wouldn't want to do it, would you have a recommendation who would be a better choice?)

³ While today, whether or not someone is a Kohen is dependent upon whether his father is one, apparently in the time of the setting up of the Mishkan, it was not so clear that Aharon and his family had to be the Kohanim. HaShem Left it up to Moshe to convince them to accept the job.