



Vayikra / וִיקְרָא

“But I Didn’t Know!”



By: Aharon Spetner

Illustrations by: M. Weinreb

Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller zt”l

“The court calls the case of the City of Jerusalem vs Tzadok Ben Ami,” announced the courtroom clerk. “Judge Berkowitz presiding.”

Tzadok “Hatzadik”, dressed in an orange prison jumpsuit and missing half of his beard, approached the defendant's table. He looked hopeful at the fact that the judge was wearing a yarmulke and had peyos.

“Tzadok,” said the judge, reviewing the documents. “It says here that you are accused of digging a hole under the Jerusalem train station. How do you plead?”

“Not guilty, your honor,” Tzadok said proudly. “It wasn’t my fault.”

“What does that mean?” asked the judge sternly. “Did you or did you not do it?”

“Your honor,” explained Tzadok. “Bilaam’s donkey came to me in a dream and then I found a map of the city in the morning that had the train station on it. So I knew if I dug a hole under the train station I would find the hairs of Bilaam’s donkey.”

“What on earth are you talking about?” the judge asked, thoroughly confused.

“Oh you don’t know about Bilaam?” Tzadok said. “It’s in the Torah. I think it’s in Parshas Noach or something, because that’s where all the animals are. He had a donkey which could talk. I’ve spent my entire life looking for the donkey’s hairs.”

The judge pinched himself to make sure he wasn’t dreaming.

“Tzadok, first of all, Bilaam is in Parshas Balak, not Noach. Secondly, why on earth would you want to find the hairs of his donkey?”



“Because I had a dream about the donkey,” Tzadok repeated.

“So Tzadok, am I correct in understanding that you are admitting to digging a hole under the train station?”

“Yes, but like I said, it wasn’t my fault.”

“Tzadok, destroying city property is a serious crime, are you aware of that?”

“It is?” Tzadok asked. “But I didn’t know that, so I’m innocent, right?”

“Um no,” said the judge. “Actually that makes it worse.”

“But your honor,” Tzadok said. “I would never commit a crime if I knew it was wrong. I’m a good man. I’m a tzaddik! I even have the letter tzaddik on my hat!”

The judge looked down at the paper in front of him. “You have quite the rap sheet, Tzadok,” he said. “You don’t seem to learn your lesson. It says here that last year you released a gorilla from the zoo and he hijacked a bus?”

“But your honor!” Tzadok exclaimed, close to tears. “I never would have done any of those things if I knew they were wrong.”

“Tzadok, do you know what this week’s Parsha is?” asked the judge.

“Um... Balak!” Tzadok guessed hopefully.

“No, no,” said the judge. “It’s Parshas Vayikra. And do you know what Parshas Vayikra is about?”

“Krias Megillah?”

“No, no. It’s about korbanos. Have you heard of korbanos before?”

“Oh yes! I once started building a mizbeiach in the park in Ramat Eshkol! And another time I tried building a Beis Hamikdash on Rechov Shmuel Hanavi. I would love to bring a korban to Hashem.”

“Yes, I see,” murmured the judge, consulting Tzadok’s rap sheet again. “So you know about korbanos. Do you know that if someone isn’t sure whether he did an aveirah he needs to bring a much more expensive Asham Talui than the Chatas he would bring if he knew for sure that he did an aveirah?”

“Really?” asked Tzadok. “But it’s not his fault.”

“Yes it is,” said the judge. “A person is responsible for his actions. And that includes knowing what he is and is not allowed to do. Tzadok, you are constantly committing crimes and appearing in this courtroom. Other judges have been more lenient, but you do not seem to learn your lesson. I think you need to spend some time in prison.”

“But you honor!” exclaimed Tzadok. “I’ve already been in jail awaiting trial for almost nine months! It’s not fair! All I did was dig a hole! What’s so terrible about that?”

“Not fair?” asked the judge. “The Torah gives a more severe punishment to someone who isn’t clear about whether he did something wrong because that person doesn’t have the proper remorse. “You clearly don’t see what was wrong with this crime and the previous crimes you committed. I hereby sentence you to twelve months in the Jerusalem Prison, and you must attend the Mesillas Yescharim shiur given by Rav Volender, the prison rov, every morning. Case closed.”

And with a bang of his gavel, the bailiff led Tzadok out of the courtroom and back to the prison.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

let’s review:

- Why is an Asham Talui more expensive than a Chattas?
- What could Tzadok have said differently that might have resulted in a more lenient sentence?



To listen on the phone, Dial:

USA: 718-289-0899 | UK: 0333-015-0752 | Israel: 079-704-0089 | Canada: 438-771-0452