

March 16, 2018

Dear BQLI Region Friend,

Many years ago, I was taken aback when I heard my then pre-teen daughter, Barrie, saying good-bye to a group of camp friends. She called out, "Love you" to each of them as she jumped into my car. I thought, "She *loves* these girls???" I soon came to realize that "love you" is commonly used as a way to express gratitude or even affection among friends. But, people ought to exercise caution when using what some may perceive as a flippant version of the powerfully important, "I love you."

In this week's parashah, Vayikra, the distinction between a planned meeting with Moses that God prepares for (characterized as a loving relationship) versus a chance meeting with Balaam (portrayed as tainted) is most interesting. Rashi suggests that a loving relationship demands preparation, care, and planning. Such a relationship is pure. The opposite, a casual, accidental relationship is impure. God does not speak to whomever will listen, but specifically to Moses, whom he singles out. This speaks to the central themes of Leviticus of distinctions and separations of what is kosher and what is forbidden, permitted as opposed to prohibited, the holy versus the profane.

Intriguingly, the difference between God's loving, pure relationship with Moses and the casual, accidental one with Balaam is merely the juxtaposition of two letters...*Vayikar*, "and He happened upon" turns into *Vayikra*, "and He called." This simple letter swap belies how critically divergent these two meanings are.

When we are children, we long to hear our parents express how much they love us. And in return, we exclaim our love for them. We may say, "I love you" to our siblings, grandparents, pets and yes, very dear friends. Eventually, romantic love may blossom bringing declarations of "I love you," said in order to start an even deeper and more meaningful relationship between two people. In these cases, uttering, "I love you" is appropriate and pure. And, when we live a life of purity, we create a holiness in which we can lovingly connect with God.

Someone once told me that removing the "I" from typically personal statements results in impersonal communication, which leads to a false sense of connection. So, you might want to save the "love you" for your acquaintance or casual friend so it doesn't dilute the weight of the real "I love you" for when you really mean it!

B'Shalom,  
Grace

