

Vayikra
Moshe, Soul of Shabbos, Soul of the Mishkan

A. The Calling

The *parsha* begins, *Vayikra Hashem el Moshe*. “God called to Moshe. Hashem spoke to him from the Mishkan, saying.” Chazal comment on the double expression in this verse, “called” and “spoke.” The midrash contrasts the way different prophets were summoned to receive their prophecies. Hashem himself called Moshe, *vayikra el Moshe*. This stands in contrast to Avraham. In Parshas Vayera an angel called to Avraham, when he was at the *akeida*.

Many times in Tanach there is a reference to an angel at the beginning of a communication from God. In this respect, Moshe was different than all other prophets. Hashem himself called to Moshe and Hashem himself spoke to him. *Ani dibarti, af krasiv, havio'siv v'hitzliach darko*. “I myself have called to him and spoken to him, I brought him close and made him successful.” There is also another midrash that graphically depicts how Hashem would call “Moshe, Moshe,” endearingly repeating his name.

Shem Mishmuel explains the emphasis on Hashem being the one to call Moshe himself. What is the significance of who calls to the prophet? Shem Mishmuel explains that in order to understand this concept, we should study the divine communications with Bilam, the evil prophet who was an enemy of Israel and was eventually killed in battle against Israel. With Bilam the Torah uses the phrase *vayikar el Bilam*, “God met Bilam.” What is the difference between meeting and calling? Rashi says *vayikar* is not an expression of love. However, *vayikra* is an expression of love. The Avnei Nezer, father of Shem Mishmuel, offers an explanation, that *vayikar* means that Hashem just met Bilam. He met him and talked to him. However, after this encounter, Bilam was not changed at all. He continued in his previous evil path.

B. Junk Mail

We all receive lots of mail and messages. The communications we receive do not change us. Many conversations we have do not change us. Bilam met with Hashem and Hashem even spoke to him. This should have been an overwhelming experience. Nonetheless, Bilam remained unchanged. The meeting with Hashem did not change him.

However, when Hashem called to Moshe, or even when an angel called to a Jewish prophet, the calling and ensuing encounter effected profound change in the person. It was like a call a person never forgets. For example, most people who are married remember the first phone call with their beloved future spouse. They remember the phone calls they made to their family on the night the couple decided to get engaged. These are calls that we never forget. They profoundly changed our lives. When Hashem calls to a true prophet it is a life-changing call. When the angel called to Avraham, he changed forever. Avraham never forgot that call that told him to let his son live. He would never forget the message that affirmed that “Yitzchak will be your son forever.”

In contrast, when Bilam finished receiving his communication from God, he continued living as the same wicked Bilam as before.

Many of us are fortunate to learn Torah, and to hear Torah messages. How many of these messages affect us as a divine call, *vayikra*? Do they make a profound and everlasting imprint on us? How many are messages that do not affect us? We must appreciate the *divrei Torah* that we learn. It has to impact us and change us forever. It is not junk mail that we throw into the garbage. It is supposed to penetrate our hearts and become part of us forever. *Vayikra el Moshe* created an everlasting impact. This is the difference between Moshe and Bilam. Torah should also create an everlasting impact in us.

Moshe and other prophets changed incredibly from their communications with Hashem. It made an indelible impact on their personality. Every dedicated Jew who studies Torah sincerely knows of its incredible impact. One's very being becomes overwhelmed with God's holy words. Unfortunately, there are some Bilam types who know of the word of Hashem, but it just runs by them. We though, must avoid the Bilam syndrome.

C. Lifestyle Choices

Why didn't the word of Hashem impact Bilam? How could this happen, that someone hears the words of his Creator and stands unchanged by the experience? How could Bilam remain the wicked lowlife that he was before?

Shem Mishmuel explains this idea. The answer is really so profound and yet so simple. Bilam definitely sought to meet Hashem. He repeatedly told Balak, I will find Hashem and He will speak to me. Bilam had all sorts of routines to make this happen. He built *mizbachos*, he uttered prayers, and more to find the divine. He wanted the divine experience – but he wanted it together with his personal lusty lifestyle.

Bilam was unwilling to give up his vulgar pleasures and personal gratifications. He really should have given those up in order to gain the divine experience. But he wanted to have both. Our sages describe his personal life as including atrocious personal behavior, including the most terrible kinds of illicit relationships with animals and who knows what else. He had pleasure from this. He didn't want to give up his pleasures. He wanted them together with his experience of the divine. Surprisingly, Hashem granted his wish. “You will be able to experience Me, but you still won't have to give up your personal lifestyle. You can pursue your dirty, disgusting, and immoral behavior, and you can still talk to Me.” This is why after Bilam's experience of connection with Hashem, he did not change. Bilam did not want to change. He wanted the divine experience because it was also pleasurable.

The divine experience, the experience of the infinite, while terrifying, is indeed pleasurable. Bilam wanted the pleasure of touching the divine spirit. But he did not want to change. This is why Bilam did not change even after meeting Hashem.

This stands in contrast to Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe gave up everything for the divine. According to kaballa, Moshe is *min hamayim mishisihu*. He was removed from the physical pleasures of the world. People enjoy cold water on a hot day. Drinking cool water, enjoying a hot shower, and taking a refreshing dip in a pool have become veritable symbols of pleasurable activities. Water represents the pleasures of this world. When the daughter of Paro removed Moshe from the water, symbolically Moshe became a person who would give up the physical pleasures of this world so that he could be close to Hashem. Moshe stood on Har Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights, while he spoke to Hashem. The Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim* writes that Moshe felt horrible pangs of hunger. He felt close to death

with intense feelings of hunger and thirst. But he knew that this was necessary in order to receive the ten commandments and the Torah with all of its explanations. Moshe worked on himself for decades to become less physical, even non-physical to a certain extent, as he took care of Yisro's sheep. He gave up physical pleasures to be dedicated to God.

Moshe did not do this for himself, but to fulfill the purpose for which God had created him, to be dedicated to Hashem in every fiber of his being.

D. The Prophetic Love Affair

Our sages compared Moshe to a wife, and Bilam to a concubine in their relationship with Hashem. What is the difference between being married to a woman and having a concubine? When man and women get married they become united. Each spouse gives up everything for the other. Chazal call this form of marriage *kidushin*, a holy state. Bilam however maintained the status of a *pilegish* with Hashem, an aloof relationship. A concubine is a business transaction. There is no holiness in that relationship. It is a practical one.

Vayikar, Hashem met with Bilam. There was no relationship or love affair between them. The prophets of Israel are not like Bilam. The prophets of Israel have a calling, they have a *kriah*. They are called by Hashem and His messengers to rise and meet Him. When the prophets rise to the occasion, they see His message of love.

However, even among these great prophets, Moshe still stands out. All of the other prophets begin with a calling from an angel. The prophet is a regular person. Most of the day he is not connected in a prophetic way with Hashem. He is a regular person. He eats, he drinks, he has a wife and goes about his business. When a prophet like this experiences *nevua* he would fall to the ground in a prophetic trance. After the prophecy is communicated and the trance ends, the prophet would then return to his daily life. The sages mention several prophets who only prophesied once in their life. During the rest of their life, they lived like other people.

The prophet of course is a righteous person. He works to improve his character. Still he is still a plain human being. He doesn't walk around all the time in a prophetic state. Therefore, in order to break him out of his regular pattern he needs an intermediary to raise him. The angel, the *malach*, pulls him out of his regular routine and places him into the prophetic trance, ready to hear God's voice.

However, one prophet was different. Only one prophet was always ready for Hashem. He was always in prophetic consciousness, even while not entranced. He was able to talk to people while listening to the word of Hashem. This was Moshe Rabbeinu.

Even Aharon and Miriam could not attain this level. Hashem told them that the prophets they knew were different. Hashem explained, "I speak to them in a dream and with puzzles. To Moshe, though, I speak mouth to mouth." This is why Moshe could not live with his wife. He was constantly a conscious prophet. Aharon and Miriam could spend a majority of their time with their spouses and children, because they were not in a prophetic trance during those times. Only when they were in a prophetic trance, starting with the call of the angel did they talk to Hashem.

Moshe was different. He was called by Hashem. He did not need to be pulled out of his routine by an

angel. He was always ready to perceive the divine. Hashem could speak to him without an angel intermediary. Hashem could lift him up because he was already high. Hashem lifted him up even higher.

E. Moshe Shares his Gift

Shem Mishmuel explains an amazing secret, which was revealed to us by the Ari Hakadosh, the founder of modern kaballa. The Ari explained a puzzling phrase that we say in the Shabbos prayers. We say *Yismach Moshe bMatnas chelko ki eved neeman karasa lo*. “Moshe is happy with his gift, the gift of being a true servant of Hashem.” What does this have to do with Shabbos?

The Ari said that Moshe seemed to be in this world, even though he wasn't. He had prophecy 24/7 with his eyes open, while he was looking and even while he wasn't looking. Only Moshe had this gift. Other prophets fell into a prophetic stupor when they had their visions. On Shabbos, though, Moshe Rabbeinu shared some of this experience with every Jew. Moshe is happy with the gift of his portion, which he shares with every Jew on Shabbos.

Moshe took this ability to commune with the great God while still conscious, walking, talking, eating and studying. This gift of Moshe is shared with Am Yisrael on Shabbos.

The experience of Shabbos is incredible. Anyone who keeps the Shabbos knows this. We walk and talk and eat and do the things we do the same as the rest of the week. But internally these actions are totally different. They are part of our experience of communion with Hashem. We feel Hashem with us every moment of the Shabbos day. We talk and walk and eat, as we simultaneously commune with Hashem! His presence is with us in the seeming daily things that we do. The pleasure of Shabbos is an amazing experience, both physical and spiritual at the same time. It is akin to Moshe's experience. He gave us this gift. Therefore, in kaballa and chassidus, Moshe is considered the *tzadik* soul of Shabbos.

F. Saying Goodbye to Angels

There is connection between *makom*, *zman* and *nefesh*; place, time and soul. Chassidus teaches that every energy has a triple expression, in time, in place, and in soul. The soul of Moshe Rabbeinu in time is Shabbos, and in place it is Yerushalayim. The time of course is Shabbos. The experience of Shabbos is what Moshe gave to every Jew, *bchol beisi neeman hu. Peh el peh adaber bo*. When we wear our Shabbos clothing, we eat the Shabbos food and we sing Shabbos songs, even when we talk on Shabbos, we are face to face with God Himself! This is the gift of Shabbos, the *matnas chelko* that we received from Moshe.

Now we will discuss one of the most remarkable comments the Shem Mishmuel makes in his entire *sefer*. On Friday night a Jew comes home and greets the Shabbos angels in the famous song *Shalom Aleichem*. Then the Jew says *tzeischem l'Shalom*, wishing farewell and goodbye to the Shabbos angels. He sends them away before the meal even begins. This seems rude, to welcome the angels and then quickly to dismiss them.

Shem Mishmuel explains that when we come home on Friday night the Shabbos angels are with us. But then we notice that Hashem's presence in the form of the Shabbos queen is also with us. Hashem's *shechina*, the feminine form of God, is with us. We don't need angels anymore. We are then like Moshe

Rabbeinu, interacting directly with Hashem. During the week we were worldly and physical. On Friday night the angels came to help us. They met us in *shul* to help us go from the *chol* week into Shabbos. But once we arrive home, we say thank you to the angels for serving their purpose. But now we are joined by the Shabbos *malka*, the queen herself, and we have a face to face meeting with our beloved Almighty Shabbos queen. Therefore, we say *tzeischem l'Shalom*, goodbye to our dear angels.

G. Giving Until It Hurts

Shem Mishmuel has another wonderful discussion about Moshe Rabbeinu's role in the Jewish people. It is based on the following strange midrash. When Moshe saw all the gifts that Bnei Yisrael had brought for the Mishkan, Moshe felt sad because he didn't donate anything to the cause. But then Hashem called to him and said, "Moshe, Moshe I love you so much. Don't be upset that you didn't donate for the Mishkan, my house, because I am talking to you from the house. This is more special than donating to the house."

What is the meaning of this midrash? Why couldn't Moshe donate for the Mishkan cause? Chazal say that Moshe was fabulously wealthy. Moshe attained his wealth when he chiseled the second *luchos* from a huge pure diamond stone. Hashem told him *psal l'cha*, "Carve the *luchos* from the diamond, and all of the leftovers will belong to you." Moshe became incredibly rich from these diamond chips. Moshe thus had plenty of money, which he didn't really need. He wasn't involved in the physical world. He gave up everything physical for Hashem. Why couldn't he give some diamonds for the Mishkan, or gold and silver like all the other Jews gave? It would have been easy for him. And if he was upset, why did God have to console him, saying my talking to you is greater than your donations? If Moshe did have the money why couldn't he donate?

Shem Mishmuel explains a tremendous idea. What was the point of giving all of these donations? You may have heard the expression, 'Give – until it hurts.' As observant Jews we know what it means to give until it hurts. Why does a parent give so much love to his child until it hurts? Because the parent really loves his or her child. When you give out of love, you give everything, even until it hurts. Parents will give everything for their children: all of their time, love, money, and energy, because of the unbounded love that they feel for them. All of these resources are valuable to us, and when we give so much of them, it can be painful, but we do it.

Can we imagine how much the Jewish slaves appreciated and cherished the wealth that they had when they left Egypt? As a rabbi, I have come across many people who have had the rags to riches experience. The rags to riches people often find it extremely hard to part with their wealth. They experienced such deprivation in their youth, and then in their adulthood the wealth finally came to them. They feel connected and bound to it, so much that they cannot part with it. This is a phenomenon, the miserliness of the newly rich. They may spend lots of money on themselves, but it is hard for them to give it to the poor. This is a deep psychological complex. "Somehow," the person thinks, "spending money on myself will make up for the deprivation of my youth, but I still need the rest of it for myself, just in case. Maybe the stock market will fall, and I'll have nothing left. I need to keep my money handy for emergencies."

Imagine the Jewish nation, after years of subjugation and poverty suddenly receiving great wealth. Then they are told give it to Hashem and to the Mishkan. They actually did give and they gave more than expected, because of their love for Hashem. They gave away everything that was precious to them.

This rags to riches person will share his wealth with his fiancée or his wife, because he really loves her. He will give to his children too. The Bnei Yisrael gave to Hashem as a parent gives to his children, because they loved Him. They may have been dreaming of the mansions that they would build in Eretz Yisrael. But then Moshe told them to give to the Mishkan. Without hesitation, they gave away their money for Hashem. They loved him so much!

H. Moshe's Wealth – and His Poverty

There was one Jew, however, who couldn't give everything away. Moshe had no dreams for his diamonds, he had given them up long ago, together with all of his dreams other than Hashem. He even gave up his own family for Hashem. When Moshe came down from the mountain he went straight to the people. He didn't go home first. The *pasuk* says *vayered Moshe min hahar el ha'am*. When Moshe came down from Har Sinai, he went straight to Am Yisrael. Chazal comment on that *pasuk*, *pana mikal asakav, el ha'am*. Chazal say he wasn't interested even in his own personal spiritual advancement. Moshe knew that he had to be the guardian of Israel. He knew his mission. Therefore, he never went anywhere for himself. He did not care about his money, possessions, personal development, or reaching spiritual heights. He was not even involved with his family. Hashem wanted Moshe to care for Am Yisrael, so that is what he did.

Why couldn't Moshe give the diamonds for the Mishkan? Because long ago he had already given them up for Hashem. The point of this collection for the Mishkan was to have the people share their wealth, dedicate their wealth to the Mishkan. For Moshe though, wealth was meaningless. For Moshe, all his money was already gone.

So Moshe was upset. He wanted to have something to give away. He knew that when a leader of Israel gives up something precious for Israel and for Hashem, he creates an amazing energy within the people to give up things for Hashem, knowing that Hashem will take care of Am Yisrael. When Am Yisrael is ready to give up its life for Hashem, and is *moser nefesh* for Hashem, then He takes care of them. But Moshe did not have anything new to dedicate to the Mishkan, since he had already dedicated all that he had to Hashem.

Moshe's greatest wish was to be close to Hashem. He said to Hashem, *Im ein panecha holchim al taaleinu mizeh*. "If I don't have You taking care of the Jewish people, what is our life worth? Don't send us by ourselves to Eretz Yisrael," Moshe said to God. "You personally must lead us there." His greatest dream was that his feelings for Hashem be shared by every single Jew. He gave us the gift of Shabbos as a taste of what it means of being close to Hashem.

Therefore, Moshe wanted to donate to the Mishkan, but there was nothing to give. Hashem told him don't be upset because I will speak to you from the Mishkan. There Hashem told Moshe about the gift of Shabbos. This would be Moshe's contribution – the soul of Shabbos.

I. The Soul of Shabbos

We explained earlier that Moshe is the soul of Shabbos. Shabbos follows six days of the week. The Torah says the six days are for work. During those six days, people struggle through challenges and mundane physical and spiritual battles. We struggle against evil urges, whether inside of us or outside

of us. We have to work and struggle mightily for six days to develop a connection to Hashem, for the *yetzer tov* to conquer the *yetzer ra*. If we do this, *sheshes yamim taavod v'asisa kol melachtecha*, then *yom hashvii Shabbos l'Hashem elokecha*. Then we will be close to Hashem on Shabbos.

Moshe's soul is Shabbos in time, he was the personality of Shabbos. He achieved the goal of a Shabbos type relationship with Hashem. And he wants Am Yisrael to do that too. We have to work every week for six days at our level to develop and maximize our spirituality despite the difficulties of the mundane life. Moshe, though, was beyond that. He was always with Hashem, even when he was awake and walking around. When we move into Shabbos, whom do we meet? We meet Moshe Rabbeinu, he is Shabbos. Shabbos is Moshe. He shares the gift of Shabbos with us.

Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu, “You don't have to build the Mishkan. You are the Mishkan, you are the place of My *hashraas hashechina*. You are the embodiment of my presence in the world. You are in the soul form what Shabbos is in time.”

Since the Beis HaMikdash was built, the Shabbos in place is Yerushalayim, the holy city. That is where God is found 24/7. It is beyond time and the mundane struggles of the six days of the week. While Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, the Mishkan was the place of God's constant presence. Hashem told Moshe, “You are the Mishkan. I speak to you from the Mishkan, from the Shabbos place of the world.”

Even though Moshe had the holiness of Shabbos and that of the Mishkan, he knew that all of this was because of the Jewish people. Moshe was a special person. We don't believe that Moshe was divine. We know that he was only a person. We reject the Christian claim that a human being can become god. But nonetheless, Moshe had a tremendous level of divinity attached to him.

Hashem wanted someone like Moshe to inspire the Jewish people. Hashem wanted them to see the embodiment of Shabbos. The people looked at Moshe, *v'hibitu acharei Moshe*. What did they see? They saw a Shabbos person every day of the week. Their struggles and difficulties with the *yetzer hara* were to get to the level of Shabbos. Seeing Moshe gave them inspiration, encouragement and direction to continue their struggle towards holiness.

J. How to Achieve Moshe's Holiness

We don't have a real live Moshe today. There was only one Moshe Rabbeinu. *Lo kam b'Yisrael k'Moshe od*. However, we can attach ourselves to Moshe by studying the Torah he delivered to us, and by keeping Shabbos. The Torah of Moshe will never leave Am Yisrael. The more Torah we study, the more we live Shabbos, the more we struggle to achieve spirituality during the week, the more we will have it.

Torah scholars are sometimes nicknamed Moshe in the gemara. They have the spark and aura of Moshe. Torah scholars experience a communion, a *deveikus* with Hashem. Some even feel this 24/7 even if not on Moshe's level. The gemara says *talmidei chachamim* are like Shabbos all week long.

May we be *zoche* to do what we have to do during the six days of the week. He who struggles before Shabbos will enjoy the Shabbos. Let us all have the merit to meet the Moshes, the great *tzadikim* of our generation, who study the Torah of Hashem that Moshe Rabbeinu gave us. May we succeed – through our struggles in our mundane daily life – to build the holy Mishkan out of *chol*. Moshe did not do it. But we can take the mundane and infuse it with spirit and holiness. Moshe is happy with his gift of

Shabbos, and we pray that we will be happy with our gift, the gift of building a Mishkan, the gift of taking silver and gold and making them *nidvas Hashem*, a donation to Hashem. May Moshe's gift to us inspire us to feel God all Shabbos long in everything, and even to bring the Shabbos experience of the divine into everything we do during the week.

Questions:

1. How is a prophecy that is preceded by a calling different than a prophecy without a calling?
2. In what way did Moshe Rabbeinu differ from all other prophets?
3. Why wasn't Bilam worthy of a calling?
4. How is our experience of Shabbos related to Moshe's experience of prophecy?
5. What is the gift of Moshe and how is it related to Shabbos?
6. Why wasn't Moshe able to donate anything for the building of the Mishkan?
7. How did Hashem console Him?

Exercises:

1. Track your Shabbos experiences for a month. Are you able to fuse the spiritual with the physical aspects of the day?