

## VAYIKRA

# MOSHE—SOUL OF SHABBOS, SOUL OF THE MISHKAN

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### A

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## The Calling

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The *parsha* begins (Vayikra 1:1), “*Vayikra el Moshe, vay’dabeir Hashem eilav mei’ohel mo’eid*. [God] called to Moshe, and God spoke to him from the Mishkan.” The Midrash comments on the double expression in this *pasuk*, “called” and “spoke.” Specifically, it contrasts the way different prophets were summoned to receive their prophecies. Hashem himself called Moshe, *vayikra el Moshe*. This stands in contrast to Avraham, who at the Akeidah, was addressed by an angel.

On many occasions in Tanach, there is a reference to an angel at the beginning of a communication from God. In this respect, Moshe was different from all other prophets. Hashem Himself called to Moshe, and Hashem Himself spoke to him. “*Ani dibarti af k’rasiv haviosiv v’hitzliach darko*. I myself have called to him and spoken to him; I brought him close and made him successful” (Yeshaya 48:15). There is also another Midrash that depicts how Hashem would call, “Moshe, Moshe,” endearingly repeating his name.

What is the significance of who calls to the prophet? The

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*” (Bamidbar 23:4). What is the difference between meeting and calling? Rashi says that *vayikar* is not an expression of love, unlike *vayikra*. The Avnei Neizer explains that *vayikar* means that Hashem just met Bilam. He met him and talked to him. After this encounter, Bilam was not changed at all. He continued on his previous evil path.

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## B

### Junk Mail

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We all receive lots of mail and messages. Most communications we receive do not change us at all. 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.

But 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 phone call that 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 can 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 the call that told him to let his son live. He would never forget the message that affirmed that “Yitzchak will be your son forever.”

By contrast, when Bilam finished receiving his communication from God, he continued living as wickedly 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, a *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. Torah should also create an everlasting impact upon us.

This is the difference between Moshe and Bilam. Moshe and other prophets changed incredibly from their communication 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 runs by them. We must avoid the Bilam syndrome.

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## C

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### Lifestyle Choices

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Why didn’t the word of Hashem impact Bilam? How could someone who hears the words of his Creator remain unchanged by the experience? How could Bilam remain the wicked lowlife that he was before?

The Shem Mishmuel provides an answer that is 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 methods to make this happen. He built altars, uttered prayers, and performed rituals to find the Divine. He wanted the Divine experience—but he wanted it together with his personal, lust-filled lifestyle.

Bilam was unwilling to give up his vulgar pleasures and

personal gratifications, as he should have in order to attain the Divine experience. But he wanted to have both. Our Sages describe his personal life as including atrocious personal behavior, including deriving pleasure from the most terrible kinds of illicit relationships with animals. 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 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 Bilam did not change through his encounter with Hashem. He did not want to change. He wanted the Divine experience because it, too, was pleasurable.

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, and so he remained the same.

This stands in contrast to Moshe Rabbeinu, who gave up everything for the Divine. According to Kabbala, Moshe is "*min hamayim meshisihu*" (Shemos 2:10), removed from the physical pleasures of the world. Water represents the pleasures of this world. Drinking cool water on a hot day, enjoying a hot shower, and taking a refreshing dip in a pool have become veritable symbols of pleasurable activities. When the daughter of Pharaoh removed Moshe from the water, 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 forty days and forty nights while he spoke to Hashem. The Rambam writes that Moshe felt close to death, with intense pangs of hunger and thirst. But he knew that this was necessary in order to receive 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 in order to be dedicated to God.

Moshe did not do this for himself, but rather to fulfill the

purpose for which God had created him, to be dedicated to Hashem with every fiber of his being.

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### The Prophetic Love Affair

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

Hashem met with Bilam. There was no relationship or love affair between them. The prophets of Israel, though, are not like Bilam. The prophets of Israel have a calling, a *kria*. 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.

Yet, 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 eats, drinks, has a wife, and goes about his business. When a prophet like this experiences prophecy, he falls to the ground in a prophetic trance. After the prophecy is communicated and the trance ends, the prophet returns to his daily life. The Sages mention several prophets who only prophesied once in their lifetime. During the rest of their lives, they lived like other people.

The prophet is a righteous person. He works to improve his character. Still, he is a plain human being. He doesn't walk around all the time in a prophetic state. In order to break him out of his

regular pattern, he needs an intermediary to raise him. The angel pulls him out of his regular routine and places him in the prophetic trance, ready to hear God's voice.

One prophet, however, was different. 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" (Bamidbar 12:6-8). 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 angelic intermediary. Hashem could lift him up because he was already elevated.

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### Moshe Shares His Gift

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The Shem Mishmuel explains an amazing secret that was revealed to us by the Arizal, the founder of modern Kabbala. The Arizal explained a puzzling phrase that we say in the Shabbos prayers: "*Yismach Moshe b'matnas chelko ki eved ne'eman karasa lo*. Moshe is happy with his gift, for You have called him a trustworthy servant." What does this have to do with Shabbos?

The Arizal said that Moshe seemed to be in this world even

though he wasn't. He had prophecy twenty-four seven, 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 God while still conscious, walking, talking, eating, and studying and shared it with Am Yisrael on Shabbos.

The experience of Shabbos is incredible, as anyone who keeps Shabbos knows. We walk, talk, eat, and do the things we do the same way 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 Shabbos. We talk, walk, and simultaneously commune with Hashem! His presence is with us in the seemingly mundane 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 Kabbala and Chassidus, Moshe is considered the *tzaddik*-soul of Shabbos.

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### Saying Goodbye to Angels

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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 experience of Shabbos is what Moshe gave to every Jew. "*B'chol beisi ne'eman hu; peh el peh adabeir bo*" (Bamidbar 12:7) applies to every Jew on Shabbos. When we wear our Shabbos clothing, eat the Shabbos food, sing Shabbos songs, and 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 with the famous song, Shalom Aleichem. Then the Jew says “*tzeischem l’shalom*,” bidding farewell to the Shabbos angels. He sends them away before the meal even begins. It seems rude to welcome the angels and then to quickly dismiss them. What is the meaning of this abrupt transition from welcome to dismissal?

The 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 Shechinah is with us, so 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. 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*, wishing our dear angels goodbye.

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### Giving Until It Hurts

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The Shem Mishmuel has another wonderful discussion about Moshe Rabbeinu’s role in the Jewish People, based on a strange Midrash. When Moshe saw all the gifts that Bnei Yisrael had brought for the Mishkan, he felt sad that he hadn’t donated 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 towards My house. 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 towards the Mishkan? Chazal say that Moshe was fabulously wealthy, having attained great wealth when he chiseled the second *luchos* from a huge, pure gemstone. Hashem told him "*Psal lecha, Carve the luchos from the stone, and all of the leftovers will belong to you.*" Moshe became incredibly wealthy from these gem 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 gems for the Mishkan, or perhaps some 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 by saying, "My talking to you is greater than your donations?" If Moshe did have the money, why couldn't he donate?

The 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 that 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 boundless 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 they had when they left Egypt? As a rabbi, I have come across people who have had the rags-to-riches experience. Such people often find it extremely hard to part with their wealth. They experienced such deprivation in their youth and then, in their adulthood, wealth finally came to them. They feel connected and bound to it to such an extent that they cannot part with it. This is the miserliness of the newly rich. They may spend lots of money on themselves, but it is hard for them to give to the poor. This is a deep psychological principle. "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 to give it to the Mishkan. They actually did give, and they gave much more than expected, because of their love for Hashem. They gave away everything that was precious to them.

The rags-to-riches person will share his wealth with his fiancée or wife, because he really loves her. He will give to his children, too. 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 and, without hesitation, they gave away their money for Hashem. They loved Him so much!

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### Moshe’s Wealth—and His Poverty

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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 to live for 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, “*Vayeired Moshe min hahar el ha’am*” (Shemos 19:14). When Moshe came down from Har Sinai, he went straight to Am Yisrael. Chazal comment on that *pasuk*, “*Pana mikol asakav, el ha’am*. He turned from all endeavors in order to go straight to the people.” Chazal say he wasn’t interested in even 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 jewels 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, to dedicate it to Hashem. For Moshe, though, wealth was meaningless. For Moshe, all of his money was already long 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 them. When people are ready to give up their lives for Hashem and are *moser nefesh* for Him, 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 ta'aleinu mizeh*, If I don't have You taking care of the Jewish People, what is our life worth? Don't send us without You to Eretz Yisrael" (Shemos 33:15). 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 to be close to Hashem.

Hence, Moshe wanted to donate to the Mishkan, but there was nothing to give. But Hashem told him not to be upset because He would speak to Moshe from the Mishkan. Then Hashem told Moshe about the gift of Shabbos. This would be Moshe's contribution—the soul of Shabbos.

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## The Soul of Shabbos

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We explained earlier that Moshe is the soul of Shabbos. Shabbos follows the six work days of the week. During those six days, people struggle through challenges and mundane physical and spiritual battles. We struggle against evil urges, whether inside or outside of us. We have to work and struggle mightily for six days to develop a connection to Hashem, for the *yeitzer tov* to conquer the *yeitzer hara*. If we do this—*sheishes yamim ta'avod v'asisa kol melachtecha*—then, *yom hashvi'i Shabbos la'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 wanted 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 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, for he is Shabbos and 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, the place of My *hashra'as 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 twenty-four seven. 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 the Mishkan, he knew that all of this was because of the Jewish People.

Moshe was a special person, though he remained a person. We don't believe that Moshe was divine; 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*" (Shemos 33:8). What did they see? They saw a Shabbos person every day of the week. Their struggles and difficulties with the *yeitzer hara* were to get to the level of Shabbos. Seeing Moshe gave them inspiration, encouragement, and direction to continue their struggle towards holiness.

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### How to Achieve Moshe's Holiness

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We don't have a real-live Moshe today. There was only one Moshe Rabbeinu, and there will never be another one. *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, and the more we struggle to achieve spirituality during the week, the more we will have it.

The Gemara sometimes calls Torah scholars "Moshe." They have his spark and aura. Torah scholars experience a communion, a *deveikus* with Hashem. Some even feel this twenty-four seven, 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 Shabbos (Avoda Zara 3a). Let us all have the merit to meet the Moshes, the great *tzaddikim* 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 could 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 every Shabbos in everything, and even to bring the Shabbos experience of the Divine into all we do during the week.

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## REVIEW QUESTIONS

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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?

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## EXERCISE

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



