

The Vayikra-Eureka Moment

You may recall last week's post about the Shechinah resting in the Mishkan. It was intriguing how the Shechinah filled this holy space, not leaving any room for Moshe, the leader of the Jewish people. This scenario is particularly puzzling considering Moshe's profound connection with Hashem. He had spent extensive time on Har Sinai, receiving the Torah directly from Hashem and had even been shown a model of the Mishkan.

Moshe was destined to communicate with Hashem in the Ohel Moed. Logic would dictate that if anyone were to enter the Ohel Moed, it would certainly be Moshe. Yet, when the long-awaited moment arrived, with the cloud descending, Moshe found himself unable to enter. Why was this so?

This leads us to ponder: Did the cloud represent a barrier, signifying a distance between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem, or was it a symbol of close, intimate connection? The Shechinah's presence in our midst seems to suggest intimacy. However, the fact that it created a noticeable distance, even from Moshe, adds layers of complexity to our understanding of this divine interaction.

To understand Moshe's relationship with the Anan, the cloud, we might look back to his first encounter with the Anan on Har Sinai for clues.

In Parshas Mishpatim, Moshe's entry into the cloud on Har Sinai wasn't immediate; it required a period of waiting. For six days, he waited for an invitation. It was only on the seventh day that the 'magical entry code' was revealed:

ויקרא אל-משה ביום השביעי מתוך הענן... ויבא משה בתוך הענן

'On the seventh day He called to Moshe from the midst of the cloud... Moshe went inside the cloud and ascended the mountain.'

A similar pattern unfolds in the Mishkan. Moshe approached as far as he was permitted, and then he awaited a call. This call came as we completed Chazak on Parashas Shemos, and then, in our Parsha, it resounded:

ויקרא אל-משה

'Hashem called to Moshe.'

'Vayikra' is a term of affection, often used among the Malachim on high. This term was reserved for Moshe.

Rashi contrasts this with Bilaam, who is considered Moshe's parallel among the nations. Bilaam didn't receive a 'Vayikra' but a 'Vayikar' - an indication of a more casual, chance encounter with Hashem.

This illuminates a fundamental principle. Entry into the cloud, which is the realm of the Shechinah, is granted only to those who are called. This precedent was set on Sinai and echoed at the Mishkan.

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Whereas last week we delved into the relationship between Bnei Yisrael and the Shechinah, focusing on how we must actively invite the Shechinah in, this week we'll explore a different dynamic. Moshe Rabbeinu's interaction with the Shechinah was on a distinctly higher level. In his case, it was not he who needed to extend the invitation, but rather he had to be invited by the Shechinah into its midst. This reversal of roles highlights a unique aspect of Moshe's spiritual stature and his profound connection with Hashem.

One might wonder what occupied Moshe during his wait to be called into the cloud?

I envision him in a state of deep meditation. A moment where he embraced his role as a servant of Hashem, dedicated to fulfilling Hashem's bidding. Yet, it might have been more than that. Perhaps it was an inner calling, like a profound realization from the depths of his soul that he could put aside personal ambitions and step into a sphere of holiness. This would be a realm where no other human had ventured into before. Moshe now would be the first to do so, along with the intention of improving the world.

The gap between Shemos and Vayikra isn't just a suspenseful pause. It represents a space for deep reflection. It's a period to internalize 'Chazak Chazak VeNischazek,' to gather our courage and listen to the inner voice guiding us towards our unique mission.

When faced with the unexpected in life, it's crucial to find a moment for reflection. This reflection helps us understand why these events are happening. In this space of understanding, instead of dwelling on feelings of unworthiness, we should consider how we might become deserving or how we can adapt to the situation. It is in this space of contemplation that we might find Hashem calling out to us.

Being fully immersed in this reflective state can lead to a realization that Hashem is inviting us into His sphere to accomplish our destined task.

Rav Moshe Dovid Vali elucidates this concept through the practice of the tzaddikim, who would spend an hour in contemplation before davening. They entered this reflective space, awaiting the feeling of Hashem's call to prayer.

The contrast is clear: an abrupt entrance, almost by chance, resembles 'Vayikar'. However, when the approach is gradual, emerging from deep contemplation and meditation, it transforms into 'Vayikra'.

It's noteworthy that the Pasuk begins with ויקרא אל משה and then follows with וידבר ה' אליו, instead of the more straightforward ויקרא ה' אל משה וידבר אליו. This sequence suggests that before Hashem could speak to Moshe, Moshe needed to engage in deep introspection, thereby shedding any sense of self-interest to serve purely for Hashem. This idea is symbolized in the Torah by the small Alef in 'Vayikra.' Once Moshe achieved this state of selflessness and heard the 'Vayikra,' he was ready to enter the Ohel Moed and converse with Hashem.

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In a similar vein, the name of Hashem is notably absent in the Megillah. On Purim, we are all invited to emulate Moshe Rabbeinu. When reading the Megillah, we are not just recounting a story, rather we are listening for our own 'Vayikra.' It's a journey of going deeper, of internal exploration. As we enter our personal space of self-awareness, the silent voice within us can burst forth with Kedusha, revealing the hidden presence of Hashem in the Purim story.

As we read Parashas Zachor this week, we are reminded to recall Amalek's attempt to annihilate the Jewish people, a dark ambition echoed repeatedly throughout history. Notably, the commandment to remember and never forget Amalek is presented in the first person - 'Remember what Amalek did to you.'

Rav Pini Dunner offers a fascinating interpretation. He points out that in the construction of the Mishkan, commands were also given in the singular, emphasizing individual contribution - 'and you shall make.' Similarly, in the context of the oil for the menorah, Hashem tells Moshe, 'You shall further instruct the Israelites to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, to kindle lamps regularly.'

Rav Dunner elucidates that in building the Mishkan, each individual had to discover and contribute their unique strength. This personal offering was something only they could provide. In a parallel manner, when it comes to eradicating Amalek, the approach must be personal, for its impact resonates with everyone. The task of obliterating Amalek is not just about destroying an enemy - it's about delving deep within ourselves to find what we uniquely can contribute towards the flourishing of the people whom Amalek sought to annihilate. We are the chosen people, dedicated to fulfilling God's will. It's in this personal commitment and introspection that we open ourselves to hearing the 'Vayikra.'

This requires following Moshe's ways in stepping aside from our egos and on focusing what we uniquely can offer. In such moments, we can experience our own 'Vayikra' moment. It brings to mind the concept of 'Eureka,' which is often defined as the human experience of suddenly understanding a previously incomprehensible problem or concept. This moment of revelation, this 'Eureka moment,' may very well stem from the 'Vayikra effect' - by reflecting on our unique role and effectively filling our space, we can uncover wonders.