

THE LIFE OF A "MOSHE" NEVER ENDS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayikra

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape #542, Selling Chametz. Good Shabbos!

The opening pasuk [verse] of Sefer Vayikra says: "He called to Moshe and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting Saying" [Vayikra 1:1]. The Medrash says that Moshe had ten different names (including Yered, Avigdor, Yekusiel, Chaver, Tuvya, and others). The Medrash quotes Hashem as saying, despite the fact that Moshe had many names, He would only address him by the name given to him by Basya, daughter of Pharaoh, as it is written "She called his name Moshe, and she said 'for I drew him from the water.'" [Shemos 1:10]

The Shemen HaTov asks why the Medrash makes this observation now. This is not the first place in the Torah that G-d addresses Moshe. At their first encounter by the Burning Bush, Hashem already used the name: "...and G-d called out to him from amid the bush and said, 'Moshe, Moshe' and he replied 'Here I am.'" [Shemos 3:4]

The Shemen HaTov answers his question by quoting a Seforno. The Seforno points out that technically, Moshe Rabbeinu's name should not have been Moshe. Grammatically speaking, according to what Pharaoh's daughter was trying to commemorate, his name should have been Mashuee [the one who was drawn out]. The meaning of the word Moshe (if we are to interpret it based on its verb origins) is the one who draws OTHERS out!

The Seforno infers that the Torah is sending a message: Since Moshe was saved from the water, he had a moral obligation to draw others out as well -- to be a Moshe! Basya called him Moshe as a mandate to him to save others. This is indeed what he did. He could have lived in the lap of luxury in the house of Pharaoh, but he went out and saved his brethren. Why? "Because my name is Moshe. I am one who has to save others as well."

The Shemen HaTov elaborates: At this point, Moshe might have thought that he already fulfilled his life's mission. He took the Jews out of Egypt. He brought them across the Red Sea. He endured the Sin of the Golden Calf, saving them from G-d's wrath at that time. He completed the erection of the Mishkan. He might have argued, "I have done enough!" One would think that at the beginning of Parshas Vayikra, Moshe Rabbeinu could already rest on his laurels and take a breather.

That is why it is precisely at this point that the Medrash comments: "No. The career of a 'Moshe' never ends." If a person is a "Mashuee" [one saved miraculously from destruction], he must transform himself into a "Moshe" and he must indeed remain a "Moshe" for the rest of his life.

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. The halachic topics covered for the current week's portion in this series are:

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