

# PARSHAS VAYIKRA

*by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari*

'And He called to Moshe'; this is not the same as in the case of Avraham. There we read, 'And the angel of the Lord called to Avraham': the angel calls and the word is spoken. Rabbi Avin said, 'Hashem said I am the One who calls and I am the One who speaks' (Bamidbar Rabbah, chapter 1). What advantage or merit is there to the caller, that it should be specified that whether it is be from Hashem? After all, it is what is said that is important, so what difference does it make who is the caller?

The words of the Avnei Nezer can serve as an introduction to understanding this. He explained that there is a qualitative difference between the case of Bilaam where the text is 'vayikar' - [that is, Hashem met, or appeared to or brought it about for Bilaam], and the case of Moshe where it said vayikra. The language vayikar refers to a situation where the word or message comes to the person while he remains in his place so that he is not transformed or elevated through the speech. However, vayikra refers to those cases where the caller wants the listener to draw closer to him so that the person is elevated towards the message or the saying.

A person receives words or messages that are appropriate to his spiritual status. The evil Bilaam despite his requests for HaShem to draw close to him and to reveal himself, had no desire to leave his evil ways. In other words, he wanted to have both the presence of HaShem while remaining immersed in the filth of his evil deeds. Therefore he was judged accordingly, so that even while there was Divine speech to him in honour of Israel and for their benefit, nevertheless he remained evil. So Bilam, the evil one, remained standing outside the Divine presence, despite Hashem's message to him. He has been compared by the Zohar (part 3) to the metzorah who only knocks on the door but doesn't wish to enter. Moshe Rabbeinu, however, devoted his whole essence and being to withdrawal and separation from the material; as conatated by his name 'I drew him from the water', as explained by the Maharal in Gevurot HaShem. He, therefore, was accorded the appropriate spiritual status and was called and elevated towards the message and the speech and became more sanctified thereby. This is referred to in the Midrash in the example of a King who had a wife and a concubine; a wife is with kiddushin whereas the pilegish is without kiddushin, according to most of the poskim. The kiddushin make the wife permitted solely to her husband and forbidden to anyone else, just like those articles and things which belong to hekdesch. These are the prophets of Israel who are devoted solely to do the will of HaShem without any personal interest, benefit or purpose. In contrast, the prophets of the nations, like Bilaam, have other purposes and aims in addition to the words which HaShem speaks to them; they are like the concubine.

'Rabbi Tanchuma said that the gold that was brought to the Mishkan was the free will offering of the Israelites, whereas the jewels which are referred to are the free will offering of the Princes. The soul of Moshe was troubled as he saw everybody bringing an offering while he did not. HaShem said to him 'By your life, your words are more precious to me than the gifts of all of them,' therefore it is only with regard to Moshe that it is written *vayikra*, and He called'.

This is difficult to understand because nobody prevented Moshe from bringing anything to the Mishkan and if he really had a reason not to bring anything, what was the reason for his self-doubt?

The whole basic principle with regard to the donations to the Mishkan was that each person would give a gift appropriate to his spiritual status and his desire to create contact with HaShem, since the significance and viability of every action depends on the will and desire of the person doing the action.. In order to achieve their aim of devotion and cleaving to the Shechinah, each ordinary person brought their wealth with love and elevated spirit; 'The words of your Torah are more precious to me than much gold and silver' (Tehillim, 79). The Nesiim brought the precious stone because these stones contain and reflect the light of the sun and thereby purify and cleanse it, thereby converting it to bodies of light, and this transformation corresponds to the transformation of the yetzer harah into the yetzer hatov. This spiritual avodah is appropriate to the Princes who are the heads of the myriads of Israel (Introduction to Tikkunei Zohar). However Moshe, who was the epitome of refinement and so was always connected and related to the Shechinah, did not need any other desire or motivation. Furthermore, it was unnecessary to relate this merit and trait since Moshe had no need of such explanations or reasons. We know from the Midrash that the very body of Moshe was so refined that it shone and his face reflected the light of the Shechinah so that he was more holy even than the ministering angels. In view of all this, he had no need to bring any material possessions to reflect his desire and connection to HaShem. However Moshe never paid attention to his own perfection as we know that Moshe never attended to his personal needs and did not go to his house to see what his family needed when he came down from Mount Sinai, but turned immediately to the people (Mechiltah, parshat Yitro). Furthermore we know that he had neither a portion of vineyard or fields nor any commerce in the desert and all his strength and desires were channelled into his efforts and devotion to perfect Yisrael and to bring it closer to HaShem. His soul, nevertheless, was troubled because he knew that if a person submits all his yetzer to the worship of HaShem, then all the darkness is transformed into light and the bitterness becomes sweet. This would not be only to the benefit of Moshe but he would elevate thereby each person, according to their ability and level. Therefore Moshe felt that it would be a good thing if he had something tangible and material to the Mishkan.

To this Hashem replied that the Torah that Moshe taught and that was called in his name, would elevate and purify Yisrael more than any gifts to the Mishkan, so that he need not be troubled.

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