STOP THIEF

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"He called out to Moshe; and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying" (Vayikra 1:1)

As we enter the month of Nissan we read the opening parashah of the third book of the Torah - Vayikra. Rashi explains that Hashem called out to Moshe by name as a sign of affection for His prophet. In contrast, whenever he communicated with the gentile prophet Bilam -He did so in a transitory manner. In truth, Moshe our prophet was always ready to hear the word of Hashem and so why would his prophecy require an invitation to prepare from Hashem? It seems, therefore, that even in his lofty state there is a qualitative difference between prophecy on the spur of the moment and a communication preceded by invitation.

If this is true of Moshe Rabenu how much more so does it apply to us? As the month progresses we get closer to the very special night of Pesah. Our sages of Kabbalah reveal that on the Seder night wellsprings of knowledge and spiritual emanations are available to the Jew celebrating Pesah. This opportunity for a spiritual bonanza is predicated on preparation for the night. Just as Moshe commanded the Jews to prepare the lamb for the Pesah offering four days before its sacrifice so too we must prepare for our Seder well in advance of the telling of our history to our children.

The Maggid MiDubno explains with a parable. There was once a thief who had his eye on the cash receipts of a very busy store. The store, however, was always full of customers so an open attempt on the premises was not the way to achieve his illegal goal. He watched daily and noticed that near the end of each business day a young man left the store with a fat bag and headed directly to the bank a few doors away. But the streets were also too busy for an attempt at robbery.

Then he devised a plan. He went into the fancy men's shop next door. He told the salesman that he needed a suit for his son but did not know his son's size. The salesman suggested that he point out someone on the street that resembled the "customer's" son and he would guess the proper size. When the young man passed by the thief singled him out. The salesman guessed the size but the "buyer" said that he wanted to be sure and so he yelled out to the young man and proposed a "favor".

"Could you please try on a suit for us? You look like the size of my son and it would really help if you could try on my selection so I can buy it for him."

The reluctant messenger gave in to the pleading man and entered. During the try-on he put the bag under his arm as he slipped the other arm through the jacket's sleeve. The thief grabbed the bag

and started to run. The messenger started in pursuit but was stopped by the shopkeeper who demanded that he take off the suit before he left. In the hustle and bustle the thief escaped.

How bad we feel for the poor messenger boy. But remember that boy is us. The thief is the Evil Inclination. The bag of cash is the spiritual gains we could potentially glean on the Seder night. The "thief" wants to prevent our success in such a holy endeavor and so he distracts us with all the trappings of the material details of the holiday. He keeps us so busy with material concerns in order that we fail to prepare for the job at hand. We should study of the details of our great salvation. We should prepare for the mitzvah of passing on our traditions to our youth on the night designated for that holy task. If he is successful - he has grabbed the bag of wealth and left us forlorn in our failure to maximize the opportunity.

Hashem in His kindness opens our month with an alarm. The call to Moshe is a call to action to us as well. If Moshe in his greatness needed preparation to maximize his prophecy how much more so must we work on getting ready for our great opportunity to get closer to Hashem. Hear the siren. Yell, "Stop thief!" Prepare for your Seder and the key element of it - the retelling of the miraculous salvation from the grips of Egypt and freedom from our own Evil Inclination

Haztlachah. Success!

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