



Parshas Vayikra 2022, a calling, not a job

Our Parsha begins the third book of the Torah, Sefer Vayikra. The book of Vayikra primarily speaks about the work that Kohanim and Leviim would do in the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash. We start off with the first time G-d speaks to Moshe Rabbienu from within the Mishkan. He relates to Moshe the various types of sacrifices brought on the altar.

The **Olah**, an elective sacrifice, burnt entirely and solely for G-d. The **Chatas**, an offering that would atone for sins that were done unintentionally. The **Shelamim**, a voluntary sacrifice brought to thank G-d and eaten by the donor, Kohanim, and Leviim. The **Asham**, an offering brought by a person unsure if they violated a prohibition.

However, a question comes to mind: The Parsha begins "וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים מִתְּשֻׁבָה וַיִּזְכֹּר ה' אֵלָיו" - "And He (G-d) **called** to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him from the tent of meeting saying." But why did G-d first **call** Moshe and then speak to him? Usually, the Torah just writes (Shemos 40:1) "וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לְאָמְרוֹ" - "And G-d spoke to Moshe saying."

Why did G-d call Moshe first?!

The Rabbeinu Bachya (*Rav Bachya Ben Asher, a Spanish commentary*) gives several explanations. He quotes the Talmud in Yoma (4:b) that learns from this Pasuk that students must wait until they are called upon to speak. They must heed and respect their teacher and only give their opinions if asked.

The Rabbeinu Bachya explains that we ended last week's Torah portion with the presence of G-d finally resting upon the Mishkan.

Therefore, out of respect and honor of G-d's physical presence in the Mishkan, Moshe waited until he was summoned. He held off and remained silent till G-d's divine presence called out his name.

However, the Ramban (*Rav Moshe Ben Nachman, a leading scholar, philosopher, and Kabbalist*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that G-d first called out to Moshe to give him a sense of belonging. Since G-d's holiness graced the Mishkan and services began, Moshe remained outside and did not enter because he was not a Kohen.

Only his brother, Aaron and his four sons were permitted to serve and offer sacrifices. The rest of the tribe of Levi were Leviim, that carried, prepared, and arranged all that was necessary for the sacrifices. They also had their own service; they sang daily and stood guard around the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash.

The Ramban explains that since he was not a Kohen, Moshe thought his position no longer served a purpose. Therefore, G-d first called out to Moshe before speaking to show him he was responsible for teaching the nation. He must educate and inform the Jewish people about the rituals of the Mishkan. What animal can they offer, and when must they bring a sacrifice?

G-d called out to Moshe to prove to him that his job was not only necessary but essential and fundamental to Jewish life. Furthermore, his duties and role grew with the creation of the Mishkan, for his calling was the pursuit of G-d Himself. A permanent, limitless, and ever-evolving line of work like G-d's connection to us.

In our daily life, as we continue to grow and progress, we should search for a calling that can develop with us. Not a job that pays our bills but a calling that imparts purpose and the understanding that we are vital to G-d's intention for the world.

"Life is never made unbearable by circumstance, but only by lack of meaning and purpose." -Victor Frankel

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*