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Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

It was never my ambition or aspiration to be a rabbi. I went to university to study economics. I then switched to philosophy. I also had a fascination with the great British courtroom lawyers, legendary figures like Marshall Hall, Rufus Isaacs and F. E. Smith. To be sure, relatively late, I had studied for the rabbinate, but that was to become literate in my own Jewish heritage, not to pursue a career.

What changed me, professionally and existentially, was my second major yechidut -- face-to-face conversation, -- with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, in January 1978. To my surprise, he vetoed all my career options: economist, lawyer, academic, even becoming a rabbi in the United States. My task, he said, was to train rabbis. There were too few people in Britain going into the rabbinate and it was my mission to change that.

What is more, he said, I had to become a congregational rabbi, not as an end in itself but so that my students could come and see how I gave sermons (I can still hear in my mind's ear how he said that word with a marked Russian accent: sirmons). He was also highly specific as to where I was to work: in Jews' College (today, the London School of Jewish Studies), the oldest extant rabbinical seminary in the English-speaking world.

So I did. I became a teacher at the College, and later its Principal. Eventually I became -- again after consulting with the Rebbe -- Chief Rabbi. For all this I have to thank not only the Rebbe, but also my wife Elaine. She did not sign up for this when we married. It was not even on our horizon. But without her constant support I could not have done any of it.

I tell this story for a reason: to illustrate the difference between a gift and a vocation, between what we are good at and what we are called on to do. These are two very different things. I have known great judges who were also brilliant pianists. Wittgenstein trained as an aeronautical engineer but eventually dedicated his life to philosophy. Ronald Heifetz qualified as a doctor and a musician but instead became the founder of the School of Public Leadership at the John F Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. We can be good at many things, but what gives a life direction and meaning is a sense of mission, of something we are called on to do.

That is the significance of the opening word of today's parsha, that gives its name to the entire book: Vayikra, "He called." Look carefully at the verse and you will see that its construction is odd. Literally translated it reads: "He called to Moses, and God spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..." The first phrase seems to be redundant. If we are told that God spoke to Moses, why say in addition, "He called"?

The answer is that God's call to Moses was something prior to and different from what God went on to say. The latter were the details. The former was the summons, the mission -- not unlike God's first call to Moses at the burning bush where He invited him to undertake the task that would define his life: leading the people out of exile and slavery to freedom in the Promised Land.

Why this second call? Probably because the book of Vayikra has, on the face of it, nothing to do with Moses. The original name given to it by the sages was Torat Cohanim, "the Law of the Priests" -- and Moses was not a priest. That role belonged to his brother Aaron. So it was as if God were saying to Moses: this too is part of your vocation. You are not a priest but you are the vehicle through which I reveal all My laws, including those of the priests.

We tend to take the concept of a vocation -- the word itself comes from the Latin for a "call" -- for granted as if every culture has such an idea. However, it is not so. The great German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) pointed out that the idea of vocation, so central to the social ethic of Western culture, is essentially "a religious conception, that of a task set by God."

It was born in the Hebrew Bible. Elsewhere there was little communication between the gods and human beings. The idea that God might invite human beings to become His partners and emissaries was revolutionary. Yet that is what Judaism is about.

Jewish history began with God's call to Abraham, to leave his land and family. God called to Moses and the prophets. There is a particularly vivid

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account in Isaiah's mystical vision in which he saw God enthroned and surrounded by singing angels:

"Then I heard the Voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8)

The most touching account is the story of the young Samuel, dedicated by his mother Hannah to serve God in the sanctuary at Shiloh where he acted as an assistant to Eli the priest. In bed at night he heard a voice calling his name. He assumed it was Eli. He ran to see what he wanted but Eli told him he had not called. This happened a second time and then a third, and by then Eli realised that it was God calling the child. He told Samuel that the next time the Voice called his name, he should reply, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' It did not occur to the child that it might be God summoning him to a mission, but it was. Thus began his career as a prophet, judge and anointer of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David (1 Samuel 3).

These were all prophetic calls, and prophecy ended during the Second Temple period. Nonetheless the idea of vocation remains for all those who believe in Divine providence. Each of us is different, therefore we each have unique talents and skills to bring to the world. The fact that I am here, in this place, at this time, with these abilities, is not accidental. There is a task to perform, and God is calling us to it.

The man who did more than anyone to bring this idea back in recent times was Viktor Frankl, the psychotherapist who survived Auschwitz. There in the camp he dedicated himself to giving people the will to live. He did so by getting them to see that their lives were not finished, that they still had a task to perform, and that therefore they had a reason to survive until the war was over.

Frankl insisted that the call came from outside the self. He used to say that the right question was not "What do I want from life?" but "What does life want from me?" He quotes the testimony of one of his students who earlier in life had been hospitalised because of mental illness. He wrote a letter to Frankl containing these words:

"But in the darkness, I had acquired a sense of my own unique mission in the world. I knew then, as I know now, that I must have been preserved for some reason, however small; it is something that only I can do, and it is vitally important that I do it... In the solitary darkness of the 'pit' where men had abandoned me, He was there. When I did not know His name, He was there; God was there."

Reading Psalms in the prison to which the KGB had sent him, Natan Sharansky had a similar experience.

Frankl believed that "Every human person constitutes something unique; each situation in life occurs only once. The concrete task of any person is relative to this uniqueness and singularity." The essence of the task, he argued, is that it is self-transcending. It comes from outside the self and challenges us to live beyond mere self-interest. To discover such a task is to find that life -- my life -- has meaning and purpose.

How do you discover your vocation? The late Michael Novak argued that a calling has four characteristics. First, it is unique to you. Second, you have the talent for it. Third, it is something which, when you do it, gives you a sense of enjoyment and renewed energy. Fourth, do not expect it to reveal itself immediately. You may have to follow many paths that turn out to be false before you find the true one.

Novak quotes Logan Pearsall Smith who said, "The test of a vocation is the love of the drudgery it involves." All real achievement requires backbreaking preparation. The most common estimate is 10,000 hours of deep practice. Are you willing to pay this price? It is no accident that Vayikra begins with a call -- because it is a book about sacrifices, and vocation involves sacrifice. We are willing to make sacrifices when we sense that a specific role or task is what we are called on to do.

This is a life-changing idea. For each of us God has a task: work to perform, a kindness to show, a gift to give, love to share, loneliness to ease, pain to heal, or broken lives to help mend. Discerning that task, hearing God's call, is what gives a life meaning and purpose. Where what we want to do meets what needs to be done, that is where God wants us to be. *Covenant and Conversation 5778 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"And (God) called to Moses, and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying, 'Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them, anyone who brings a sacrifice to the Lord, from the animals, from the cattle and from the sheep you shall offer your sacrifices'" [Lev. 1:1,2]. The opening words of this third book of the Torah, Leviticus (Vayikra), tells us that God first called to Moses and

then communicated to him a specific message concerning the sacrificial offerings of the Sanctuary. Why this double language of "calling" first and then "speaking" afterwards? Why not cut to the chase: "And the Lord spoke to Moses from the Tent of Meeting"?

The Talmudic sage Rabbi Musia Rabbah explains that the Bible is giving us a lesson in good manners: before someone commands another to do something, he must first ask permission to give the order. He even suggests that before someone begins speaking to another, one must ascertain that the person wishes to hear what he has to say. With great beauty, the rabbis suggest that even God Himself follows these laws of etiquette when addressing Moses; asking his permission before speaking to or commanding him [BT, Yoma 4b].

Ramban (Nahmanides) takes a completely opposite view, limiting this double language of addressing to the Sanctuary specifically: "this (seemingly superfluous language of first calling and then speaking) is not used elsewhere (where God is addressing Moses); it is only used here because Moses would not otherwise have been permitted to enter the Tent of Meeting, would not otherwise have been permitted to be in such close proximity to the place where the Almighty was to be found" [ad loc]. From this second perspective, it is Moses who must first be summoned by God and receive Divine permission before he dare enter the Sacred Tent of Meeting of the exalted Holy of Holies.

This latter interpretation seems closest to the Biblical text; since the very last verses in the Book of Exodus specifically tell us that whenever a cloud covered the Sanctuary, Moses was prevented from entering the Tent of Meeting and communicating with the Divine [Ex. 40:34,35]. Hence, the Book of Leviticus opens with God summoning Moses into the Tent of Meeting, apparently signaling the departure of the cloud and the Divine permission for Moses to hear God's words.

This scenario helps us understand God's relationship – and lack thereof – with the Israelites in general and with Moses in particular. You may recall that the initial commandment to erect a Sanctuary was in order for the Divine Presence to dwell in the midst of the Israelites [Ex. 25:8]; such a close identity between the Divine and the Israelites on earth would signal the period of redemption. This would have been a fitting conclusion to the exodus from Egypt.

Tragically, Israel then sins with the Golden Calf and God immediately informs them that "I cannot go up in your midst because you are a stiff-necked nation, lest I destroy you on the way" [Ex. 33:3]. Only if the Israelites are worthy can God dwell in their midst. If they forego their true vocation as a "sacred nation and a Kingdom of priest-teachers" while God is in such close proximity to them, then this God of truth will have to punish and even destroy them. He will therefore now keep His distance from them, retaining His "place", as it were, in the supernal, transcendent realms, and sending His "angel-messenger" to lead them in their battles to conquer the Promised Land [ibid., 33:2,3].

As a physical symbol of the concealment – or partial absence – of the Divine ("hester panim"), Moses takes the Tent of Meeting and removes its central position in the Israelite encampment, to a distance of 2000 cubits away [ibid., v. 7]. He then remonstrates with God arguing that the Almighty had promised to show His love by means of His Divine Name, to reveal to him His Divine attributes; and to accept Israel as His special nation [ibid., v. 11,12]. In other words, Moses argues that He, God – and not an angel-messenger – must reveal His Divine ways and lead Israel [Rashbam to Ex. 33:13].

God then responds that indeed "My face will lead, I, Myself and not an angel-messenger, and "I shall bring you (you, Moses, but not the nation) to your ultimate resting place" [Ex. 33:14]. Moses is not satisfied, and argues that God Himself – His "face" and not His angel-messenger must lead not only Moses but also the nation! Otherwise, he says, "do not take us (the entire nation) out of this desert". And finally, God agrees that although He cannot be in the midst of the nation, He can and will lead them, stepping in whenever necessary to make certain that Israel will never disappear and will eventually return to their homeland.

God may not be completely manifest as the God of love in every historical experience of our people, and will not yet teach the world ethical monotheism. Israel remains a "work-in-progress" with God behind a cloud and "incommunicado". Our nation, albeit imperfect, still serves as witnesses that the God of love and compassion exists, and orchestrates historical redemption through Israel. God is "incorporated," incorporealized, in Israel, the people and the land.

What God leaves behind even when He is in a cloud are the two newly chiseled tablets of stone – His Divine Torah with the human input of the Oral Law – as well as His thirteen "ways" or attributes, God's spiritual and emotional characteristics of love, compassion, freely – given grace, patience, kindness, etc. [Lev. 34:1-7]. And when individuals internalize these attributes – imbuing their hearts, minds and souls with love, compassion, kindness, grace and peace – they cause God to become manifest enabling them to communicate with God "face to face" like Moses. Then the cloud between Moses' Active Intellect and God's Active Intellect disappears, and Moses is enabled to teach and understand God's Torah.

And so the Book of Leviticus opens when God perceives that Moses has reached the highest spiritual level achievable by mortals, the cloud is removed from the Tent of the Meeting and God invites Moses to enter

it and receive more of those Divine Emanations which comprise our Torah.

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The opening words of this the third book of the Torah highlights for us an important idea. It is that God so to speak calls upon the people for service, position and action. Moshe is called on by God to order the services in the Temple. He used to see this task as being his personal responsibility.

This idea that God calls upon people regularly to accomplish the will of Heaven is expressed in many examples in the Bible and in traditional rabbinic literature. It even resonates in the non-Jewish world where for a long time entering the clergy as a profession was described as being a calling.

All of this is based on the idea that God communicates with his creatures on a regular and multifaceted basis. The rabbis have taught us that the Lord has many messengers and many means of delivering these messages. One should not think that this is random or haphazard.

Therefore the word vayikra is employed rather than the word vayikar, which would imply a much more chancy and random situation. So it appears that God calls unto people regularly and with a divine purpose. The question is whether people are tuned to hear the call and act upon it.

One of the great challenges of life is to do the right thing at the right time. This is true in personal life and in commercial enterprises, as well as in national and religious affairs. Being able to hear the voice of heaven challenging us and calling us is key to doing the right thing at the right time.

God calls out to us in a still small voice as the prophet Elijah was told when he expected to hear the voice in the mighty wind or the frightening earthquake or the monstrous thunderstorm. Rather, the voice does not register in our ears but in our inner mind and heart. In describing the call of God to the mighty hero of Israel, Shimshon, the voices are being described as beginning to pound within him with the force of a tongue inside a bell.

When the prophet Isaiah is called to service he hears a voice that proclaims: "Who shall I send and will go for us?" These questions are eternal and repetitive in every generation and under all circumstances. It is the still small voice that is heard that rings in our mind and pricks our conscience. It is how we feel that the Lord is calling us and allowing us to become His chosen partner in the process of creation and the evolution of civilization.

There are times in life when one has to strain mightily to hear that voice. There are other times in both our personal and national lives when that call is self-evident and clearly heard. But the response to the call is always up to human beings, individually and communally. Certainly in our time, with the rebirth of the Jewish people in so many miraculous and unexpected ways, this call is heard pounding within us and guiding us towards the fulfillment of our mission as a people.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Although more esoteric than other parts of the Torah, the portions dealing with Temple sacrifice have much to teach. Consider the opening thought of this week's portion which speaks in an Introductory fashion about an individual offering a sacrifice to the Lord.

The term used for individual is adam (Leviticus 1:2)—a strange word, as the Torah most often in such circumstances uses the term ish or isha (man or woman). Several thoughts come to mind.

Adam, unlike all other people, was fashioned by God Himself. The name therefore evokes the imagery of someone intimately connected to the Lord. Hence the use of adam here—in the prayer that through the sacrificial service the Individual comes close to Hashem.

Rashi suggests another solution. Just as Adam was able to take advantage of all the world had to offer without concern that it belonged to another, as there was no other, so must every person who brings a sacrifice be certain that what is being offered to God has not been stolen. In the process of serving God one must never violate interpersonal ethics.

One other thought comes to mind. Adam evokes the imagery of Adam, pure in Eden. In time, Adam, together with Eve violates God's command. When an individual brings a sacrifice, he/she is attempting to return to Eden, but a fixed Eden, an Eden without sin —an Eden of complete innocence. Thus, when bringing the sacrifice, the individual is called adam as it speaks to the quest to right wrong, to achieve the state of Paradise Regained.

Lest one believe that adam only applies to a man, it ought to be remembered that according to the Midrash, Adam was both male and female. The rib story was ready a bifurcation of Adam into separate male and female entities. Indeed, the term Adam used here sends the message that the korban (sacrifice) applies equally to men and women — both can approach and come close to God.

One word—adam—a seemingly innocent deflection from the more normal use of the word ish and isha. But a deflection that makes all the difference.

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Spinning Wool

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

As a general rule, a person who steals from another must return the equal value of what was taken; in other words the monetary value of the item stolen. The exception to this rule is stated this week in the weekly portion; (Vayikra 5; 21-25) "If a person will sin and commit a treachery against Hashem by lying to his comrade regarding a pledge or a loan or a robbery or by defrauding his comrade… and he swears falsely… He shall repay its principal and add a fifth to it". In other words, he must add an additional twenty percent on the value of the item that was stolen.

To obligate one to do this there must be three prerequisites:

1. He must have stolen
2. He must have sworn in court that he didn't steal
3. Following his swearing he admits he lied

To gain atonement, the robber must also offer an Asham sacrifice and must pay the value of the item stolen plus an additional one fifth.

Is the extra fifth that is paid, atonement for his sin? If this was true, then the one who was robbed could not forgive this fifth owed to him. Thus even if the victim who was robbed from refused to accept this fifth as remuneration, the robber would still have to pay to gain atonement. Nevertheless the Mishna in Tractate Baba Kamma states that one can forgive the extra fifth.

This becomes especially difficult according to the Rambam (Maimonides) who states (laws of Gezela 7;8) that the laws of the fifth (Chomesh) and the sacrifice are offered as atonement.

One might explain according to the Rambam, that the forgiveness will affect the actual value lost (keren) and since there is no keren , then there cannot be any fifth added after. Therefore the robber loses any chance to gain atonement.

Another interpretation one may offer is that since the main objective is to compensate the one who was robbed, then if he offered to pay this, he has achieved this goal and he is also forgiven regardless whether the one who was robbed refused the money (Mechila) (Avnei Nezer).

What would happen in a case where the robber didn't care about atonement? Would there still be an obligation to pay this fifth? If the reason is atonement then the answer would be in the negative. However we know that in a case where the man died before paying the fifth that the surviving heirs must pay this additional fifth. This would lead us to the conclusion that the obligation to compensate is strictly monetary and by fulfilling that requirement he would also gain atonement (as was sited above) *© 2018 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI DAVID S. LEVIN

Perfect Balance

Sefer Vayikra is known in English as Leviticus because it centers on the service of the tribe of Levi (Kohanim and Levi'im) in the Mishkan. The major portion of that service involved the korbanot, the offerings that were brought in the service of Hashem. Although offerings often involved matzah and spices, oil and libations of wine, the central offerings in the Mishkan consisted of animals. The sacrifices consisted of several parts: Shechitah, the slaughtering of the animals, Kabbalah, the collecting of the blood from that slaughtering, Holachah, the carrying of the blood to the altar, and Z'rikah, the sprinkling of that blood onto the sides of the altar. There is also the burning of the appropriate parts of that sacrifice (depending on the type of sacrifice made). Every aspect of that sacrifice had to be done with the appropriate understanding of which type of sacrifice was being brought and for whom that sacrifice was being offered. The Kohein had to maintain his concentration and focus throughout or even his thoughts could invalidate the korban.

There are several other factors which can also affect acceptance of the korban. The Gemarah in Zevachim discusses the idea of chutz liz'mano, after its time. When sacrifices were consumed by either the kohein or the person bringing the sacrifice, they had to be eaten by a set time. The remainder had to be burned instead of eaten. If the kohein had in mind to eat the meat of the sacrifice after the allotted time for that eating, the korban is rendered invalid and the obligation has not been fulfilled. The Gemara also discusses chutz lim'komo, outside of its designated place. The sacrifices had limitations on where the meat could be eaten, whether outside of the kodesh or outside of the boundaries of Yerushalayim. Intention to eat the meat outside of its appropriate designated area would invalidate the korban. If, however, the meat was eaten there is no punishment here of kareit. In both the case of chutz liz'mano and chutz lim'komo it is the intention of the Kohein who is handling the korban or the blood of the korban to eat the meat after its time or in the wrong place which creates this invalidation.

Let us examine the importance of the dam, blood, and the steps which the Kohein must take with that dam during the service to Hashem. The Torah tells us, "And he will slaughter the bullock before Hashem and Aharon's sons, the Kohanim, will bring the blood near and throw the blood around the altar which is by the entrance to the Tent of Meeting." When the shechitah of the animal takes place, the dam spurts out of the neck of the animal and must be collected directly by a Kohein into a kli shareit, a designated bowl which

was assigned to catch that blood. Although shechitah could be performed by any qualified person (even a non-Kohein), every action from the time of the shechitah must be done by a Kohein. Thus only a Kohein may perform the kabbalah, the receiving of the dam into a kli shareit. The Kohein then carries the dam (while stirring it so it does not coagulate) to the altar. The Kohein walked around the altar via a route that followed the pattern S.E., E.N., N.W., W.S. The blood was thrown on the corner of the E.N (mizrachit tzafonit) and then on the corner of the W.S. (ma'aravit daromit). The blood was thrown directly at the corner so that it splattered on both sides, thus accomplishing placing the blood on all four sides of the altar.

HaRav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains the significance of the korbanot and specifically of the dam as the primary component of the korban in the service to Hashem. The Torah is in the Aron Kodesh which is in the innermost sanctuary of the Temple. The bringing of the korban to the area immediately next to the opening of the Holy, the closest a non-Kohein may come to the Torah, is an integral part of the bringing of the korban. Man's quest to become closer to Hashem is symbolized by his giving up his life (symbolically represented by the life of his korban) to the study and observance of Torah. Hirsch reminds us that the change that a person makes "is something which must be accomplished not by the Sanctuary on the person, but by the person on himself, if he is to be able to live the positive active life which the Sanctuary has to teach him."

The shechitah is done on an animal that is chosen for the purpose of raising its level of kedushah, holiness. For an olah offering, the animal is a ben bakar, a bullock, but after the shechitah the animal is called an olah, a going up. That change is one of the reasons that the kabbalah, receiving of the dam and any subsequent service must be performed by a Kohein or it is invalidated. Hirsch describes Man's existence as selfish in that his body has needs and Man is driven to fulfill those needs or perish. The dam hanefesh, the blood of the soul, "by being received in the kli shareit, receives the higher calling of belonging to the Sanctuary of the Torah of Hashem." This dam hanefesh is now brought closer to Hashem just as we hope to be brought closer to Hashem by our performance of the sacrifice. The dam is then brought to the altar of Hashem and is sprinkled on it, symbolically representing our rededication to Hashem's Laws.

Though Hashem had indicated to Avraham that the B'nei Yisrael would receive forgiveness for their sins by bringing korbanot, Hirsch showed that this act of bringing a korban was a symbol of Man's teshuvah, return to Hashem, and not the reason alone for which forgiveness was given. It is the act of teshuvah, of wanting to be closer to Hashem, which causes the forgiveness which Man seeks. We understand from our explanation of the altar here that the lesson of coming closer to Hashem and the means by which Man can accomplish that are the same symbolic message of the korban itself.

Man has a difficult task here on earth. Our bodies by their very physical nature require a certain amount of selfishness in order to survive. Yet Man is tasked with going beyond that selfishness and raising himself to a level of spirituality which overcomes our pure selfish behavior and replaces it with giving our lives to the service of Hashem and to the benefit of all Mankind. Man is constantly faced with this balancing act between his needs and the Will of Hashem. We must all strive to accomplish this perfect balance. With our lives devoted to Torah and Torah values we can accomplish this balance.

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN ZT"L

Translated by Kaeren Fish

Last week's parasha, concluding Sefer Shemot, described a situation in which Moshe was unable to enter the Mishkan: "And the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Mishkan. And Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Mishkan." (Shemot 40:34-35)

The first verse in our parasha, introducing Sefer Vayikra, goes on to describe the encounter between Moshe and the Divine Presence: "And He called to Moshe, and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..." (Vayikra 1:1)

The two verses are actually a single unit, representing the continuation of the historical record of Moshe's first encounter with God within the Mishkan. In fact, there is a very similar verse earlier in Sefer Shemot, appearing as part of a longer description:

"And the glory of the Lord rested upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day, He called to Moshe out of the mist of the cloud." (Shemot 24:16)

However, upon closer examination, we discover that there is a different way of understanding the relationship between the two verses. From Shemot 40:34-35, it is clear that Moshe is unable to enter the Tent of Meeting. The Divine Presence is too overwhelming, too intense an experience. The first verse of Sefer Vayikra is a contrast; here, God calls to Moshe to enter, and he enters and hears God's command. What changed in between these two verses? How is it that Moshe is first unable to enter and forced to remain outside, but afterwards is able to enter and to listen to God speaking?

If we look back to the beginning of Sefer

Shemot, we find another occasion when Moshe was hesitant and afraid of an encounter with God. We refer here to the events at the burning bush: "And Moshe hid his face for he feared to gaze at God." (Shemot 3:6)

The gemara (Berakhot 7a) records a difference of opinion among the Amora'im as to whether Moshe's covering of his face is noted by the Torah in a positive or negative light. Either way, why did Moshe hide his face? We might answer this question from two different perspectives:

1. Moshe himself: As Chazal define it, at this early stage, Moshe was still a "novice prophet". His lack of experience and relatively low level of prophecy led him to choose to avoid this direct exposure to God.

2. Moshe as representative of the nation: The prophet is the emissary of the people, and his status is in direct proportion to theirs. Am Yisrael at this time was mired in the 49^th level of impurity. Moshe, as representative of the people, could not expose himself to too high a level of prophecy, which would not match their spiritual state.

However, in Parashat Pekudei, the situation has changed from both perspectives. Moshe himself is certainly no longer a novice when it comes to prophecy; he has reached the highest level. And Am Yisrael, spiritually speaking, has come a long way since their slavery in Egypt. They have experienced the plagues, the exodus, the splitting of the Reed Sea, and the culmination of this entire process at Mount Sinai. It can no longer be said of them that they (or their representative) are unworthy of the Divine Presence or of entering the Sanctuary.

Why, then, do we find that Moshe is unable to enter the Mishkan? Let us consider two different answers.

The phenomenon of prophecy itself is not an easy experience. It leaves the prophet weak and exhausted. In his definition of prophecy, the Rambam notes this as one of the differences between all the other prophets and Moshe, who experienced no such weakness. However, even for Moshe, there were limitations on what he could bear. Such massive, dense, intensive presence of God's glory in the Mishkan was daunting even for him. As a result, he was able to enter only after God called upon him to do so: "And He called to Moshe..."

The word "call" (k-r-a, "Vayikra") has two different meanings. It is sometimes used in the sense of a command or normative instruction, while at other times it signifies a type of relationship. As an example, we find that Esther says, "And I have not been called (lo nikreiti) to come to the king for the past thirty days" (Esther 4:11). It is difficult to classify unequivocally God's call to Moshe at the beginning of our parasha. In any event, however, Moshe is unable to enter until he is called upon to do so.

Another way of explaining the gap between Parashat Pekudei and Parashat Vayikra focuses on a different factor, one that looms like a shadow over Am Yisrael of that generation -- the sin of the golden calf. In fact, the shadow looms not only over that generation, but also over Am Yisrael for all time, as the verse teaches: "And on the day when I punish, I will punish their sin upon them." (Shemot 32:34)

Think back to the description of the teshuva (repentance) for that sin. If you have a good memory and know Chumash well, you may be puzzled by the fact that you can't place where exactly we read of the nation's repentance! The explanation is simple: Nowhere is any such description recorded. Moshe performs an act that is meant to bring atonement, leading the tribe of Levi with the call, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come to me!" (Shemot 32:26). But nowhere is there any record of the people's repentance.

Ramban, at the beginning of Parashat Vayakhel, speaks of a complete tikkun (repair) and a return to the previous situation: "He issued another command, and the entire congregation gathered to him -- men and women alike. This might have taken place on the morrow of his descent. And he told them all about the idea of the Mishkan, concerning which he had been commanded previously, before he broke the Tablets. For since God had been appeased towards them and He gave them the second Tablets and forged a covenant with [Moshe] that God would accompany them in their midst, they returned to their previous situation, and the love of them like a bride, knowing that God's Presence would be in their midst, as He had commanded him previously." (Ramban, Shemot 35:1)

However, even as Ramban speaks of a return to the nation's previous status, he must admit that there is no description of a national campaign of repentance.

What does this have to do with Sefer Vayikra? Parashat Vayikra opens with various voluntary sacrifices, and soon moves on to the different sin offerings: the sin offering of the individual and of the collective; the sin offering of the nasi; and the sin offering of the mashiach. One sin offering following the next, all entailing confession. Whether this confession is, as the Rambam maintains, the culmination of the process of teshuva, or whether it is one of its early stages, all opinions agree that the confession is an essential and significant part of that process. This element is integral to all the sin offerings mentioned in Parashat Vayikra.

Moreover, aside from the sin offerings listed in our parasha, Chazal view even the voluntary sacrifices as bringing about atonement and repair. For example, the burnt sacrifices comes to atone for a positive commandment that was neglected or to repair other misdeeds. Seemingly, our parasha illustrates, time and time again, the same principle of repair, atonement, and repentance that was so blatantly lacking in Sefer Shemot.

We learn from all of this that a significant, intensive presence of God's glory may not allow a person to draw close. As high as the nation's spiritual level might be, and as unique, singular, and advanced as Moshe may be in his level of prophecy, the lack of a general movement of repentance stands in the way. Only with the command concerning the sacrifices of atonement in Sefer Vayikra can Moshe receive and respond to the Divine call and enter the Sanctuary.

The encounter and meeting with God require of Moshe -- and continue to require of each and every one of us -- a profound and far-reaching process of repentance and repair. This alone clears the way for the encounter with the glory of God that fills the Mishkan.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"And He called to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying:" (Vayikra 1:1) Usually, the additional word "saying" is understood to be permission (or a request) to say these words to the nation. However, since the next verse continues with "speak to the Children of Israel and say [the following] to them," this can't be the meaning or purpose of its inclusion here.

Rashi therefore brings two possible explanations as to why the first verse ends with the word "saying," with the gist of the first being that Moshe should tell the nation that G-d speaks to him for their sake. The commentators explain these words as words of encouragement. After all, the nation as a whole contributed the materials and their time and expertise to build the Mishkan. Yet, when it was completed, only Moshe was able to enter, and (as Rashi points out earlier on this verse) only Moshe heard G-d's thunderous voice. To ensure that the nation didn't become discouraged at being seemingly excluded from the inauguration process (and, in their minds, possible after that as well), Moshe was told to make sure they realize that they were an integral part of the Mishkan, as the communication he received from G-d there (or at least the high level of communication) was only in their merit.

The Tzaida Lederech questions the expression used by Rashi (and the Sifra Rashi is based on) for these words of encouragement. Rather than being called "divrei phius" (words of encouragement or appeasement), they are referred to as "divrei khivushin," which usually connotes "musser" (chastisement) or rebuke. Why would our sages classify such words of encouragement as being a reproof?

Answering as if he is unsure this is the full answer, the Tzaida Lederech says that "perhaps one can say that from these words it comes out that the [divine] word will not be with him except for the sake of Israel when they are innocent and loved before G-d but not when they sin; these [words] are therefore words of rebuke and chastisement, [telling them] that they shouldn't sin and [thereby] cause that G-d won't communicate with him." In other words, telling them that they are important also tells them that they have some responsibility, and if they don't live up to their responsibility there will be consequences.

This idea is certainly valid, as rather than relying on Moshe for their spiritual fulfillment, they are being told that things are in their own hands. And, as Rashi points out (as well as the Midrash), we see that after their subsequent sins, G-d didn't communicate with Moshe for 38 years - until that generation died out. The hesitation in using this to explain why it is considered rebuke may stem from the timing of such rebuke. Why warn them now, on such a happy occasion, when words of encouragement seem more needed than words of rebuke? Even if rebuke is inherent in all encouragement, why classify it as such?

When Moshe was on Mt. Sinai for the first period of 40 days, his intimate experience with G-d was interrupted by the sin of the golden calf. Even though he was about to descend with the "luchos" (tablets with the 10 commandments engraved in them), Rashi (Shemos 32:7) tells us that G-d told Moshe to "descend from your great stature, [for] I only gave you such stature on their behalf." This conversation is based on Berachos 32a, but Rashi continues based on the Tanchuma (22) that "at that moment Moshe was banned from the heavenly court." The rebuke was therefore not only about what might happen if they sin, but also about what had already happened. Because Moshe's connection with G-d, on the extremely high level that it was, was only because of the nation he represented, when they were not worthy of having such a connection he lost that extra level.

The Mishkan was designed not only to atone for the sin of the golden calf, but also to reestablish the relationship with G-d that had been so adversely affected by it - to the extent that the communication experienced via the Ark containing the luchos was a recreation of the experience on Mt Sinai. As Moshe was relaying the first message communicated from the Mishkan, he reminded the nation about their special relationship with G-d, including the awesome responsibility that comes along with it. The consequences of sinning were not an abstract "what if," but an allusion to what had actually taken place. By alluding to the repercussions of not maintaining this relationship - and specifically to what had already occurred and was now first being repaired - Moshe's words could more accurately be described as a rebuke that contained within it encouragement, rather than encouragement that (automatically) contained rebuke.