



March 23, 2024



Parshas Vayikra

13th of Adar 2 5784

### The Speed Dial Effect

Moshe had such a close relationship with Hashem that he could be walking in the desert on any given day and hear Hashem call him. Yes, Moshe was on a “speed dial basis” with Hashem. The word Vayikra connotes such love that the entire Sefer is called Vayikra, meaning to say it is one big call of love. The Sifra writes that in truth, every time Hashem spoke to Moshe, He first called out to him; but the Torah writes the word Vayikra in only three places. The first time was when Hashem first introduced Himself to Moshe at the sneh, the Burning Bush. The second time was at the top of Har Sinai before Hashem gave Moshe the Torah. The third time was now, when Hashem spoke to Moshe in his tent.

The question is, if every time Hashem spoke to Moshe it was preempted by a “Vayikra,” why is it written in the Torah in only three instances? If the Torah chooses to write it these times, why is it not written every time? Why is it written only in these instances?

Rav Shmshon Rafael Hirsch offers the following explanation. The Torah specifically writes the word Vayikra at the Burning Bush, the top of Har Sinai, and in front of Moshe’s tent to tell us that at any and every scenario in our lives, Hashem will always be there, lovingly calling to us. At a lonely bush in the middle of a deserted desert. On the top of Har Sinai at the most pivotal spiritual moment in world history. Or on a “run of the mill” day at home, Hashem will be there calling, wanting our relationship. From the low points to the highs. From the middle of Yom Kippur to the middle of camp color war. Hashem is there calling. He wants a relationship with us. He lovingly wants us to love Him. We do not leave Hashem when we walk out of shul to go home. He is there too. We don’t leave Hashem when we leave yeshiva or seminary to go to work. He is there as well.

### The Sad Mistake

Sadly, it is easy to mistakenly think that Hashem is there only when one is actively involved in a Mitzvah or tefillah or other spiritual matter. But He is always there. He is lovingly there. He is lovingly watching to see if we can inject holiness into the mundane, spirituality into the physicality, meaning into the seemingly meaningless.

Sometimes we let out a sigh as we change our child’s fifth diaper, nostalgically remembering those golden days in seminary filled with Torah, tefillah and chesed. Sometimes we let out a sigh as we slide into our desk at the accounting firm, remembering those golden days in yeshiva filled with learning, davening and growth. Sometimes we let out a sigh

as we enter our second-grade classroom to teach, remembering those days in Kollel blissfully swimming in the sea of halacha. We sigh and tell ourselves that those were the days, as we groggily stumble on through life, a small tinge of guilt festering and growing within us.

This parshah tells us that this way of thinking is a mistake. At every stage we have our very own “Vayikra.” At every step of our journey through life, Hashem is calling us. He is there waiting to see if we live for Him on fire. If we serve Him no matter where and no matter when. Whether you’re in the kitchen or the office or in a middle seat on a low budget airline.

Hashem once showed Moshe His Heavenly Throne, and the Torah describes what he saw. The Torah (Mishpatim 24:10) says that the throne was made out of Livnas Hasapir, sapphire bricks. Rav Hirsch comments that Hashem specifically constructed His throne out of bricks to symbolize that His very throne is made of the “brick and mortar” of life. It symbolizes that Hashem does not want us to serve Him in only the absolutely perfect conditions, in our energetic 20’s in the perfect yeshiva with the perfect chavrusa on a perfect sunny spring day after we have had a perfectly brewed cup of coffee. He wants to see us serve Him with passion and joy when the conditions are not perfect. When the baby woke up in the middle of the night and on the way out to shacharis the coffee spilled on your shirt and your first client hung up on you. He wants to see us serve Him when the rest of the family went to Ne’ilah but you stayed home to watch the baby. He wants to see us want to serve Him even then.

It is brought down that one of the reasons why we jump on Simchas Torah when we say the words “*Moshe emes vesoraso emes*” is because we are showing Hashem that we are ready to jump out of our comfort zones to serve Him. Who knows, perhaps it is precisely out of our comfort zones where we will find Hashem the most.

### **The Missing Phone**

I once spent Purim on Yeshiva Lane in Yeshivas Ner Yisrael in Baltimore. I had a wonderful time going from house to house, visiting all my old rebbeim and teachers after my seudah. When I stumbled into the dorm to collapse for the night, I couldn’t locate my phone anywhere. Although I was a tad inebriated, I was still able to do a pretty thorough search of the room, but I came up empty. I decided to retrace my steps, and went to each and every house that I had gone to that day, looking to see if perhaps my phone had fallen out of my pocket. Again, I came up emptyhanded. After two hours of searching, I went back to my room, dejected. When I reached out to turn the doorknob, I looked down at my hand, and lo and behold, what did I see? My phone! My phone had been in my hand the entire time! For over two hours I was searching high and low for a phone that was in my hand the entire time!

Sometimes we feel that our best years of spirituality are behind us, and now that we’ve entered “real life,” we only meet Hashem in shuls and yeshivos. We sometimes look outward for our spirituality when Hashem is very much within. He is at our side. He is forever calling out Vayikra. Or, as the famous Abie Rotenberg song goes, “What you’re looking for, is right there at your door ...”.