

“He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him.” (1:1)

The text is ambiguous. Who “called” to Moshe? Ostensibly, Hashem called to Moshe. Why does the Torah not simply write, “Hashem called to Moshe”? – Furthermore, what is the meaning of this “kriah,” calling? Throughout the parsha, the term which is regularly used is “va’yidaber Hashem el Moshe,” “and Hashem spoke to Moshe.” Why is this pasuk different? Horav Moshe Sternbuch, Shlita, explains that whenever Hashem spoke to Moshe, prior to the actual “dialogue” Moshe become spiritually elevated, totally devoid of his own physical essence and limitations. This enabled him to hear Hashem’s word. The “calling” with which our parsha begins represents the phenomenon of divesting oneself of his physical dimension in order to prepare himself for communication with the Almighty.

Every person experiences that unique moment in life when Hashem calls out to him, when he is privy to a spiritual arousal from Above. At times, it takes place during tefillah. As the individual supplicates Hashem, he feels an overwhelming thirst to get closer and to cling to Him. Other times, he suddenly realizes the folly of this world, the insignificance of his mundane activities and his material lifestyle. He yearns for change. He hungers for a new beginning. This is Hashem’s calling! We do not know on the basis of what merit we warranted this unique communication. It could be zechus avos, the merit of our ancestors, who have implored Hashem on our behalf. It could be our soul, that in accordance with its shoresh, source, is at this moment deserving of this Divine calling. In any event, when the “call” comes, we should be ready to take action and not ignore its personal message. It might be a once-in-a-lifetime summons. We surely cannot afford to lose this opportunity.

Horav Sternbuch cites the Arizal who conveys a similar idea. He says that if one suddenly feels an urge to weep on Rosh Hashanah, he should know that it is a sign that at that moment the Heavenly Tribunal is judging him. For some reason, he is being made aware of an unprecedented opportunity to save himself. He should immediately do teshuvah, repent, so that this favorable moment not be wasted.

Rashi comments that the “voice” that called out to Moshe was, indeed, a loud one. Nevertheless, only Moshe heard it. This prompts the Baalei Mussar to posit that it was no miracle that only Moshe heard and no one else. He heard because he was prepared – he was attuned – he was ready and waiting to hear. The others were not. During the Revelation at Har Sinai, the entire world trembled as Hashem said, “I am your G-d.” Only Klal Yisrael heard His voice, because they were prepared and ready to listen. Others heard the noise, we heard the Voice.