



“And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Moed saying...”. The Me’or Aynaim points out that it is odd to start the Book of Vayikra with a pronoun without identifying who it was that ‘called out’ as it does not explicitly write that it was Hashem that called out to Moshe. Only afterwards does it say that Hashem spoke to Moshe. He suggests that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim and split the Yam Suf for us and supplies all of our needs in the Midbar and gave us the Torah. Then he asks us to build a Mishkan so that He can dwell among the people. As the Pasuk says, “And you shall make for me a Mikdash and I will dwell amongst them” (Shemos 25:8). It does not say that Hashem will dwell ‘within it’ – i.e. the Mishkan – but rather ‘within them’ – i.e. the people.

He illuminates this with a parable of a person who lives in darkness for an extended period of time. If one were to suddenly be brought outside into the sunshine, he would not be able to tolerate the light. The remedy is to introduce a very small amount of light at a time. As the person adjusts to the light you can slightly increase the intensity of the light. Little by little his eyes will adjust until he will be able to tolerate the light of the daytime sun just like anyone else on earth. So too, Bnei Yisroel sunk up to the 50th level of Tumah and if they were instantly exposed to the Shechina of Hashem they would not be able to tolerate it. Therefore, Hashem needed to introduce himself little by little to allow Bnei Yisroel to adjust to having the Shechinah dwell amongst them.

Perhaps this is why the word ויקרא Vayikra is written with a small ‘Alef’ in the Sefer Torah. Hashem is the ‘Alufo Shel Olam’, the Leader of the World. Hashem, as if it were possible, humbles himself and call out to others to return to Him by offering Korbanos. The root of the word Korban is Karov or ‘to come close’. We find the same root in the word Kiruv or Jewish outreach. Today without Korbanos it is through Tefillah, Teshuva and the performance of Mitzvos both between Man and Hashem as well as between Man and his Fellow Man.

The person or נפש represented by the letter נ does not always realize that Hashem is calling out to him. It is the soul within each person that is attune to Hashem’s calling frequency. When a person gets the sudden impulse to seek out spirituality, to introspect and improve his deeds and refine his attributes – this is the result of the soul hearing Hashem’s calling.

Perhaps this is also the reason why the Book of Vayikra is read between Pesach and Shavuos, as opposed to reading the sections from the Book of Shemos that talk about the Exodus from Egypt and the Receiving of the Torah. Vayikra has less than 15% of all the words and Pesukim of the Torah, the smallest by far, and yet it contains over 40% of all the Mitzvos, significantly more than any other Sefer. It is through the Mitzvos of Vayikra that Hashem is calling out to each and every one of us in between Pesach and Sukkos. Similarly, it is the custom to learn Pirkei Avos between Pesach and Shavuos, as Hashem calls out to us, to work on our character development during this time as we prepare for Matan Torah.

As the Brisker Rav explained, the difference between the Mitzvah of Zecher Yetziyas Mitzrayim all year round and the Mitzvah of Sippur Yetziyas Mitzrayim on the night of Pesach are the three additional requirements of (1) The format of asking questions and answering them; (2) Describing the transition from a ‘repugnant’ people to a ‘praiseworthy’ people; and (3) the need to mention Pesach, Matzah and Marror. These represent the three components of our Mitzvos: Thought, Speech and Action. Questions are asked and answered through ‘speech’. Contemplating the rise of Bnei Yisroel from their humble beginnings requires ‘thought’. Eating the Korban Pesach, Matza and Marror fulfill the component of ‘action’.

One final thought comes from the Baal Shem Tov, who explains why the Halacha is that we do not eat anything after the Afikomen. He explains that when Yitzchak wanted to give the blessings to Eisav, it was Pesach, and when Yitzchak asked Eisav to, “make me delicacies such as I love and bring it to me and I will eat, so that my soul may bless you...” (Beraishis 27:4) it was connected to the Mitzvah of Korban Pesach and Korban Chagigah. This is why Rivka says to Yaakov, “Go now to the flock and fetch me from there two choice young goats and I will make of them delicacies for your father” (Beraishis 27:9). Once Yitzchak found out that Yaakov had supplanted Eisav to receive the blessings, he did not eat anything from what Eisav had brought him, in order that Yitzchak should not have to give Eisav from this world which he had already bestowed to Yaakov. This is why we also do not eat anything after the Afikomen, to resemble Yitzchak, to demonstrate that all the Brachos from Yitzchok went to Yaakov and not to Eisav.

May it be His will that we should yet this year eat from the Korban Pesach together as one Klal Yisroel.