

Parashat Vayikra: Safety For None

Rabbi Joshua Rabin, Astoria Center of Israel, Astoria, New York¹

Vayikra 1:1	
וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֵלָיו מֵאֵתֵל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר:	[GOD] called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying:

1. Water for One

Shemot Rabbah 51:6	
<p>מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדֻת אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד עַל פִּי מֹשֶׁה, כָּל מֵה שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹשִׂין, עוֹשִׂין עַל פִּי מֹשֶׁה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד עַל פִּי מֹשֶׁה. וְכָל מֵה שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹשִׂין עַל יְדֵי אֲחֵרִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: עֲבַדְתָּ הָלוֹאִים בְּיַד אִיתָמָר בֶּן אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן, לֹא עָשָׂה אֶלָּא מִשְׁנֵגְמָרָה מִלֵּאכֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אָמַר לָהֶם בּוֹאוּ וְאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה לְפָנֵיכֶם חֲשֹׁבֹן. אָמַר לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה: אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן, כֹּךְ וְכָךְ יֵצֵא עַל הַמִּשְׁכָּן, עַד שֶׁהוּא יוֹשֵׁב וּמְחַשֵּׁב שְׂכַח בְּאֵלֶּף וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁבַע עֶשְׂרִים שֶׁקֵּל מֵה שֶׁעָשָׂה וְיוֹם לַעֲמֻדִים, הַתְּחִיל יוֹשֵׁב וּמְתַמִּיָּה, אָמַר עֲכָשָׁו יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹצֵאִין יְדֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר מֹשֶׁה נָטָלָן. מֵה עָשָׂה הָאִיר הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עֵינָיו וְרָאָה אוֹתָם עֲשׂוּיִם וְיוֹם לַעֲמֻדִים, אוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה נִתְפָּסוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל מִלֵּאכֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן, מִי גָרַם לוֹ עַל יְדֵי שְׂנֵי־שֵׁשֶׁב וּפִסָּן, הָיוּ אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן. וְלִמָּה עָשָׂה עֲמָהֶם חֲשֹׁבֹן, הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ מֵאֲמִינוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (במדבר יב, ז): לֹא כֵן עֲבַדִּי מֹשֶׁה בְּכָל בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא, וְלִמָּה אָמַר לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה בּוֹאוּ וְנַעֲסֹק בַּמִּשְׁכָּן וְנִחְשֹׁב לְפָנֵיכֶם, אֶלָּא שֶׁשָּׁמַע מֹשֶׁה לִּיצְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מְדַבְּרִים מֵאַחֲרָיו, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שמות לג, ט): וְהָיָה כְּבֹא מֹשֶׁה הָאֱלֹהִים יֵרֵד עִמּוֹד הָעֵנָן וְעָמַד פֶּתַח הָאֵתֵל וַיְדַבֵּר עִם מֹשֶׁה, (שמות לג, ח): וְהִבִּטּוּ אַחֲרֵי מֹשֶׁה, וּמֵה הָיוּ אוֹמְרִים, רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹלְדָתוֹ שָׁל זֶה, וּמֵה הָיָה רוֹאֶה בּוֹ, כָּל יְמֵיו הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְדַבֵּר עִמּוֹ, כָּל יְמֵיו הוּא מְשַׁלֵּם לַהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, זֶה: וְהִבִּטּוּ אַחֲרֵי מֹשֶׁה. רַבִּי חֲמַא אָמַר הָיוּ אוֹמְרִים חֲמִי קָדַל דְּבָרִיהּ דַּעֲמָרָם, וְחִבְרוּ אוֹמְרִים לוֹ אָדָם שֶׁשָּׁלַט עַל מִלֵּאכֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן אֵין אֵתָהּ מְבַקֵּשׁ שְׂיֹהָא עֲשִׂירָה. כְּשֶׁשָּׁמַע מֹשֶׁה כֹּךְ אָמַר לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה, חֲיִיכֶם, נִגְמַר</p>	<p>“The Tabernacle of the Testimony, as they were reckoned at the directive of Moses” – everything that they were doing, they were doing at the directive of Moses, as it is stated: “As they were reckoned at the directive of Moses.” And everything that Moses would do, he would do by means of others, as it is stated: “The service of the Levites was by means of Itamar, son of Aaron the priest.” He did it only in this way: When the labor of the Sanctuary was completed, he said to them: ‘Come and I will make an accounting before you.’ Moses said to them: “These are the reckonings of the Tabernacle”; such and such was expended on the Tabernacle. While he was sitting and calculating, he forgot the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels from which he crafted the hooks for the pillars. He began sitting and wondering. He said: Now Israel will find justification to say that Moses took them. What did [God] do? The Holy One blessed be He enlightened his eyes, and he saw that they were crafted into hooks for the pillars. At that moment, all of Israel was satisfied regarding the labor of the Tabernacle. What caused this? It was that [Moses] sat and satisfied them. That is, “these are the reckonings of the Tabernacle.” Why did he make an accounting with them [if] the Holy One blessed be He trusted him, as it is stated: “Not so is My servant Moses; in My entire house he is trusted” (Numbers 12:7). Why did Moses say: ‘Come let us engage in the Tabernacle and calculate before you?’ It is because Moses heard the cynics of the generation speaking behind his back, as it is stated: “It would be when Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and would stand at the entrance to the tent, and He would speak with Moses” (Exodus 33:9); “and they would gaze after Moses” (Exodus 33:8). What would they say? Rabbi Yohanan said: Happy is the one who bore this man. What does she</p>

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

הַמִּשְׁכָּן אֶתֵּן לָכֶם חֲשׁוֹבִין. אָמַר לָהֶם בּוֹאוּ וְנַעֲשֶׂה חֲשׁוֹבִין, הֵינּוּ: וְאֵלֶּה פְקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן.	see in him? That all his days, the Holy One blessed be He speaks with him; all his days he is faultless with the Holy One blessed be He. That is, “they gazed after Moses.” Rabbi Hama said: They would say: Look at the nape of the son of Amram. Another says to him: ‘The person who controlled the labor of the Tabernacle, would you not expect him to be wealthy?’ When Moses heard this, Moses said to them: ‘As you live, when the Tabernacle is completed, I will make an accounting for you.’ He said to them: ‘Come, let us make an accounting.’ That is, “these are the reckonings of the Tabernacle.”
---	--

Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Efraim of Sudylkov, <i>Sefer Degel Mahaneh Ephraim</i> , Parashat Vayikra ²	
<p>וַיִּרְשֵׁ רָשִׁי"י (עַל אֶתֶר), אֵלָיו הָיָה מְגִיעַ הַקּוֹל, שֶׁהוּא לְבַד שָׁמַע וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁמְעוּ. וַיֵּשׁ לֹמֵר בְּזֶה בְּדֶרֶךְ רָמַז עַל פִּי שְׁשִׁמְעֵתִי מִן אֲדוֹנִי אֲבִי זְקֵנִי...עַל הַגְמָרָא "בְּכָל יוֹם בֵּית קוֹל יוֹצֵאת מִהֵר חוֹרֵב וְכוּ' (וְכָלִי)" (מִשְׁנָה אָבוֹת ו:ב), וְהַקִּשָּׁה מִמָּה נִפְשָׁה, וְכִבֵּר נִדְפָס הוּא בִּסְפָר הַקְדוּשָׁה תוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף (פְּרָשַׁת אֶמֶר, אוֹת יָא). וַיֵּבֶר הוּא זְכוּרֹנוּ לְבִרְכָּה כִּי הַבֵּית קוֹל הוּא הַרְהוּרִי תְּשׁוּבָה הַבָּאִים לְאֶדָם בְּכָל יוֹם. וּמִי שֵׁשׁ לוֹ דַּעַת, תִּקְףָּה כְּשֶׁבָּא לוֹ הַרְהוּרִי תְּשׁוּבָה, אֲזִי מִבֵּין הוּא שָׂזָהוּ מִן הַכְרוֹז שְׁמִכְרִיזִין "שׁוּבוּ בְּנִים שׁוֹבְבִים" (יִרְמְיָהוּ ג:כב), וּמִיָּד מִפְּשָׁפֶשׂ בְּמַעֲשָׁיו וְנִשְׁבַּ בְּתְּשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה. אֲבָל מִי שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ דַּעַת אֵינוֹ מִרְגִּישׁ כָּלֵל בְּהַרְהוּרִי תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁבָּא לוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ פּוֹנֶה אֵלָיו כָּלֵל.</p>	<p>And Rashi (ad loc.) explained that the call only reached Moses. Only he heard it, but the rest of Israel didn't. We can interpret this in a manner that points to our experience in light of the teaching I received from my grandfather on the dictum, "Each and every day a heavenly Voice (bat kol) issues from Mount Horev, [Return, you wayward children]" (Jer. 3:22)] (Mish. Avot 6:2). My grandfather questioned this teaching using a mah nafshakh argument, which you can find in Toledot Ya'akov Yosef (Emor #11). In response, he explained that the heavenly call arises in us each day as our impulse to teshuvah. If we are mindful, when that impulse arises, we immediately understand that it issues from the call, "Return, you wayward children," and we immediately investigate our deeds and return to God wholeheartedly. But when we are not mindful, we don't sense that impulse, we do not turn toward it.</p>
<p>וְזֶה יֵשׁ לֹמֵר שְׂרוּמַז רָשִׁי"י בְּפִרוּשׁ הַפְּסוּק "וַיִּקְרָא, הֵינּוּ מֶה שְׁקוֹרְאִין וּמִכְרִיזִין בְּכָל יוֹם שֶׁהוּא הַרְהוּרִי תְּשׁוּבָה, "אֵל מִשָּׁה," רַק אֵלָיו מְגִיעַ הַקּוֹל. הֵינּוּ, מִי שֶׁהוּא בְּבַחֲיִנַת מִשָּׁה סוּד הַדַּעַת. אֲבָל כָּל שֶׁאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁאֵינֶם בְּבַחֲיִנַת דַּעַת לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ כָּלֵל אֶת קוֹל הַכְרוֹז, כִּי אֵינוֹ מַשִּׁים עַל לֵב כָּלֵל הַהַרְהוּרִי תְּשׁוּבָה הַבָּא לוֹ. וְקָל לְהִבִּין.</p>	<p>And we might suggest that this is what Rashi was hinting at in his interpretation of the verse, "[YHVH] called"—namely, the daily call, which is our impulse to teshuvah—"to Moses," the call only reaches him. Namely, the call reaches us when we are like Moses who embodies the mystical secret of da'at. But when we are like the rest of Israel, who are mindless, we do not hear the call because we don't pay attention to the impulse to teshuvah that arises in us. And this is easy to understand [if we practice].</p>

2. Safety for None

Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, <i>The Hidden Order of Intimacy</i> , Parashat Vayikra
<p>This twilight period suggests that the impact of the Golden Calf still haunts the people. Moses daily paces the distance between the people and his private tent, which he himself names the Tent of Meeting. There, he has meetings of great intimacy with God. The eyes of all the people follow him on this trajectory; at the imagined moment of meeting, the people rise up and prostrate themselves. At the entrance to their own tents, between inside and outside, they gaze at the Cloud- covered entrance to his tent and bow low...After the Tabernacle is completed, the site of meeting is moved inward, into the Israelite camp, at its center. From this new position...new laws about the functioning of the Tabernacle are given, and the rituals of sacrifice begin. It is only at this point...that the people can fully atone for, and in a sense resolve, the trauma of the Golden Calf.</p>

² Translation is courtesy of my colleague, Rabbi Samuel Feinsmith.