

March 16th, 2018/29 Adar, 5778

Dear chevreh,

Tomorrow is the first day of Nisan, the Hebrew month during which we commemorate the Israelites coming out of Mitzrayim. Chodesh tov!

It is also the Shabbat of Vayikra, beginning the book of Leviticus. The first verse of this parsha opens with God instructing Moses about the nature of the sacrificial system to be used in the recently completed Tabernacle. We read, "The Lord *called* to Moses and *spoke* to him from the tent of Meeting, saying...(Leviticus 1:1)."

Rabbis and commentators through the ages are curious about the redundancy of the verbs "called" (*vayikra*) and "spoke" (*vayidaber*). Why did God have to do both of these things to Moses? What could the extra verb come to teach us? Rashi, a medieval commentator pointed out that *va'yikra*, "calling", is *lashon chiba*, 'language of affection', language that the ministering angels use. Rashi uses as his biblical prooftext, a line from Isaiah 6:3, "One *called* to the other, and said, 'Holy'," which we recite in the *kedusha* of the Amidah. Rabbi Ismar Schorch says, "As God addresses Moses, whether to teach, converse or command, God first lovingly calls him by name." (<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/addressing-our-loved-ones/>)

We can identify that there are people who we always call with *lashon chiba*, language of affection, whenever we are trying to get their attention, whether a universal "sweetie", "honey", "love", "darling", or perhaps a sweet nickname, or a shortening or extending of a name for endearment.

Additionally, Rashi looks at the breaks in the Torah text indicated by blank spaces, which we can see in this portion in the Torah. Rashi explains that these visual breaks are there to give Moses an interval of time for contemplation. As Rabbi Schorch says (from the above source), "Without the benefit of frequent stretches of silence, the Torah turns into a mere torrent of discordant voices. In truth, were our lives punctuated with periods of silence, we would hear God calling us by name more often."

Let us all take the space we need over this Shabbat - and when possible, any day- to listen for our named being called, whether by beloveds, or by the Source who instructs us when we are willing to listen.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Diana