



PARSHA

ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Vaeira ✍️ Rabbi Shaoul Hamaoui

Dialogue With Hashem ?

In this week's *parshah* we find yet another unbelievable dialogue between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Moshe Rabbeinu. Hashem instructs Moshe, "Come speak to Pharaoh, king of Mitzrayim, that he send Bnei Yisroel out of Mitzrayim." Moshe responds with his famous *kal vachomer*: "If Klal Yisroel have not listened to me, how can I expect Pharaoh to listen, especially when I have a speech impediment?"

This discussion is followed by many such "arguments" between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Moshe Rabbeinu. *How can we understand the notion of a dialogue between the Creator and a human being? What purpose would such a conversation serve when Hashem knows best?*

Let us revisit *Parshas Shemos*, where the first conversations between Hashem and Moshe are recorded. Hashem tries very hard to convince Moshe Rabbeinu to be the one to lead Klal Yisrael out of Mitzrayim, to receive the Torah and eventually enter Eretz Yisrael. Moshe Rabbeinu persists in his refusal, citing a variety of excuses. Finally, Hashem is angered by Moshe, who then acquiesces to Hashem's request.

How can Moshe Rabbeinu refuse a request made by none other than Hakadosh Baruch Hu? Many *Meforshim* attribute Moshe's refusal to his *middah* of humility. After all, the Torah testifies regarding Moshe that "the man Moshe was the most humble person on the face of the earth." Moshe's acceptance of the position of leader of Klal Yisroel might have prevented him from perfecting this attribute of humility.

This answer is less than satisfying, however; how can any human being, especially Moshe Rabbeinu, have the audacity to argue and disagree with Hashem? HaRav Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg zt"l, one of the previous Roshei Yeshiva of Ner Yisroel, shares the following insight:

The gravity of the question ("How could a mortal think he knows better than Hashem, to the extent that he is able to disagree with Him?") forces us to conclude that Hashem initially did not issue this statement as a **command**. Instead, Hashem merely made a **suggestion**.

The *Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 3:20)*, also brought down by Rashi (4:10), actually makes this point quite clearly: For seven days, Hashem was "*mefateh*" or tried to convince Moshe to go, but Moshe did not want to comply. Finally Hashem became angry, "*Vayichar af Hashem.*"

At this point, the suggestion became a command.

Moshe understood that if Hashem is only "suggesting," then Hashem is also granting him permission to refuse. Therefore, Moshe responded in a manner characteristic of his humility, certain that he was undeserving of such an honor or perhaps unfit to carry out this crucial mission.

We may still be puzzled by Hashem's initial "decision" to suggest rather than command. Why would Hashem want to allow for another opinion?

Perhaps we can answer these questions by suggesting that Hashem wanted Moshe to feel different than a robot following a directive. Rather, Hashem desired that Moshe become totally involved, intellectually and emotionally, in the plight of his brothers. *The give and take of these discussions transformed Moshe from a passive follower to an active participant.* Hashem wanted Moshe to love Klal Yisroel like a parent who cares for his child and is deeply involved in his life. *The definition of a true leader of Klal Yisroel is someone who cares deeply about his people.*

Hashem allowed Moshe to engage in these dialogues because they served as a means of preparing Moshe to become a true leader of Klal Yisroel. This powerful message also applies to our *avodas Hashem*. Ultimately, we perform the *mitzvos* because Hashem commanded us to do them. However, we must not merely do the *mitzvos* mindlessly as robots would, but rather we must be extremely involved at all levels when we serve Hashem. Although Moshe was eventually **commanded** to be the leader, his involvement in the discussion caused him to think about what he was doing. We too must be mindful of our actions, even if we perform the *mitzvos* because of the command of Hashem.

Perhaps one of the most significant messages of these *parshios* is that we must all endeavor to become true leaders, each of us in his own capacity, who care deeply about all of Klal Yisroel.

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HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

BASIC LAWS OF BORER

Rabbi Shlomo Francis

One of the thirty-nine melachos that are forbidden on Shabbos is the melacha of Borer, selecting. The melachos that are forbidden on Shabbos are derived from the melachos that were performed for the Mishkan. In the mishkan, during the process of making the blue and purple dyes, it was necessary to remove undesired elements from the dyes as part of the dye making process. In this case, the dyes were significantly changed by the act of removing the impurities. For an action to be considered an act of borer, it must, in certain ways, resemble the act of borer that was performed in the mishkan. The poskim therefore state that in order for an act to be considered a forbidden form of borer the following conditions must be present:

1. The items present must comprise a mixture of two distinct types, or minim; an assortment of different sized pieces of a single item are not considered different minim. Fruits of the same variety that vary slightly in their shape or degree of ripeness are not considered different in regard to the laws of borer. Even a fruit that is slightly damaged is not considered a different min in regard to borer, provided that it is still fit for consumption in the present state.

2. The items that comprise the mixture must be arranged in a way that the various entities appear as a mixture. Labeled Seforim placed neatly on a shelf are not considered mixed together. However a pile of seforim is considered a mixture according to many poskim. The poskim discuss a case where portions of two foods, e.g. two types of fish, are arranged together on a platter. The portions are not arranged in an orderly fashion, and the pieces are only distinguishable from each other due to their large size. In this case the poskim do not offer a clear ruling. One must therefore refrain from separating such a mixture, to avoid the possibility of transgressing a melacha deoraisa.

Even an act of actual borer is only prohibited if it is perceived, according to halachic guidelines, as an industrial act of "selecting." An act of borer that is performed in the course of food preparation may be considered an act of "eating." It is therefore permitted, provided that it conforms to *all* of the following guidelines:

1) The act of borer must be performed for immediate use. If the item is being used immediately following the act of selecting, the act is perceived as an act of "eating" and not "selecting." The poskim explain that what constitutes "immediate use" depends on the individual need and circumstance. For example, one preparing

for a meal that will begin immediately following the preparation, may select the silverware and perform other acts of borer even if he expects the meal preparations to extend for a significant amount of time. However one separating two foods from each other to eat them as a snack, must do so immediately before he actually eats the snack, to fulfill the requirement of "immediate use." One who performs borer for immediate use must also conform to other conditions outlined below.

2) One must separate the good from the bad. Selecting the item that one desires from the items that he does not desire, adds to the perception that the selection is an act of "eating" not "selecting."

3) The selection may not be done with a utensil designed to aid in selecting, a kli borer. Kli borer include sifters and, according to some poskim, peelers as well. Certain utensils, such as forks and spoons, are used to keep one's fingers clean. They are therefore not considered kli borer, unless they significantly aid the process of separating. For example one may use a fork to separate a piece of meat from a stew. In this case the potato could have been removed by hand; the fork is being used only to protect the hand. However, one may not use the slots in a fork to strain the gravy out of the stew. In this case the fork allows one to separate the gravy in a way that would have otherwise not been possible. Therefore, in this case, the fork is considered a kli borer.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Often guests attending a simcha in a private home will place their coats in a disorderly pile. In this case the coats are considered different minim. Even identical coats that differ only in size are considered different minim, because clothing of one size is useless for someone who requires a different size. (This is different than the previously mentioned case of fruits, where the size is not so critical.) Even if the coats are all the same size, the fact that they are owned by different individuals may render them different minim. If one is planning to leave the simcha and use the coat immediately, he may remove it from the "mixture." In this case one is removing "good," i.e. his coat, from the "bad," i.e. the other coats, for immediate use. It is therefore permitted. If one must remove other coats from the pile in order to uncover his coat, the Mishna Berura suggests that since his intention when removing the other coats is not to separate them from the mixture but to uncover his coat, it is not considered an act of borer and is therefore permitted. The Mishna Berura, however, is not certain about this ruling, so one should ideally avoid this situation if possible. If one plans to stay at the simcha and would like to remove his coat for fear that it may become hopelessly lost in the growing pile, this would not be considered immediate use and is therefore forbidden.

Rabbi Francis is a full-time member of the kollel.