

The Bloody Lodge-Encounter (שמות ד:כד-כו)

Unraveling the Mystery of Mosheh's Encounter With Death (Ex. 4:24-26)

(1 שמות פרק ד, יח-לא

(יח) וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיָּשָׁב אֶל-יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֱלֹכֵה נָא וְאִשׁוּבָה אֶל-אֶחָי אֲשֶׁר-בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאַרְאֶה הַעֲוֹנֹת חַיִּים וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה לֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם: (יט) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְיָן לֵךְ שָׁב מִצְרַיִם כִּי-יָמְתוּ כָּל-הָאֲנָשִׁים הַמְּבַקְשִׁים אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ: (כ) וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת-בְּנָיו וַיִּרְכָּבֵם עַל-הַחֲמֹר וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-מִטָּה הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ: (כא) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּלִכְתְּךָ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִם רְאֵה כָּל-הַמִּפְתִּיחַ אֲשֶׁר-שָׂמְתִי בְּיָדְךָ וְעִשִּׂיתָם לְפָנַי פְּרֹעָה וְאִנִּי אֲחַזֵּק אֶת-לְבָבוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת-הָעָם: (כב) וְאַמְרַתְּ אֶל-פְּרֹעָה כֹּה אָמַר ה' בְּנִי בְכֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (כג) וַאֲמַר אֵלָיִךְ שְׁלַח אֶת-בְּנִי וְעַבְדִּנִּי וְתִמְאַן לְשַׁלְּחוֹ הַגֵּה אֲנִכִּי הֲרֹג אֶת-בְּנִי בְּכֹרְךָ: (כד) וַיְהִי בְּדַרְךָ בְּמִלּוֹן וַיִּפְגְּשֻׁהוּ ה' וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמִּיתוֹ: (כה) וַתִּקַּח צִפּוֹרָה צֹר וַתְּכַרֵּת אֶת-עֶרְלַת בְּנָהּ וַתַּגֵּעַ לְרַגְלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי חֲתָן דְּמַיִם אַתָּה לִּי: (כו) וַיִּרְף מִמֶּנּוּ אִזְ אֲמָרָה חֲתָן דְּמַיִם לְמוֹלַת:

18 And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him: 'Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren that are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive.' And Jethro said to Moses: 'Go in peace.' 19 And Hashem said unto Moses in Midian: 'Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead that sought thy life.' 20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God in his hand. 21 And Hashem said unto Moses: 'When thou goest back into Egypt, see that thou do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in thy hand; but I will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go. 22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh: Thus saith Hashem: Israel is My son, My first-born. 23 And I have said unto thee: Let My son go, that he may serve Me; and thou hast refused to let him go. Behold, I will slay thy son, thy first-born.'— 24 And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that Hashem met him, and sought to kill him. 25 Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said: 'Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou to me.' 26 So He let him alone. Then she said: 'A bridegroom of blood in regard of the circumcision.'

(2 נדרים לא-לב.

תניא ר' יהושע בן קרחה אומר גדולה מילה שכל זכויות שעשה משה רבינו לא עמדו לו כשנתרשל מן המילה שנאמר ויפגשוהו ה' ויבקש המיתו אמר רבי ח"ו שמשה רבינו נתרשל מן המילה אלא כך אמר אמו וואצא סכנה היא שנאמר ויהי ביום השלישי בהיותם כואבים וגו' אמול ואשהא שלשה ימים הקב"ה אמר לי לך שוב מצרים אלא מפני מה נענש משה מפני שנתעסק במלון תחלה שנאמר ויהי בדרך במלון רשב"ג אומר לא למשה רבינו בקש שטן להרוג אלא לאותו תינוק שנאמר כי חתן דמים אתה לי צא וראה מי קרוי חתן הוי אומר זה התינוק דרש רבי יהודה בר ביזנא בשעה שנתרשל משה רבינו מן המילה באו אף וחימה ובלעוהו ולא שיירו ממנו אלא רגליו מיד ותקח צפורה צור ותכרת את ערלת בנה מיד וירף ממנו

It was taught: R. Joshua b. Karha said, Great is circumcision, for all the meritorious deeds performed by Moses our teacher did not stand him instead when he displayed apathy towards circumcision, as it is written, and the Lord met him, and sought to kill him. R. Jose sand, God forbid that Moses should have been apathetic towards circumcision, but he reasoned thus: 'If I circumcise [my son] and [straightway] go forth [on my mission to Pharaoh], I will endanger his life, as it is written, and it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore. If I circumcise him, and tarry three days, — but the Holy One, blessed be He, has commanded: Go, return unto Egypt. Why then was Moses punished? Because he busied himself first with the inn,¹ as it is written, And it came to pass by the way, in the inn. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel sand: Satan³ did not seek to slay Moses but the child, for it is written Surely a bloody hathan art thou to me. Go forth and see: who is called a hathan? Surely the infant [to be circumcised]. R. Judah b. Bizna lectured: When Moses was lax in the performance of circumcision, Af and Hemah came and swallowed him up, leaving nought but his legs. Thereupon immediately Zipporah 'took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son'; straightway he let him alone. In that moment Moses desired to slay them, as it is written, Cease from Af and forsake Hemah. Some say that he did slay Hemah, as it is written, I have not Hemah. But is it not written, for I was afraid of Af and Hemah? — There were two [angels named] Hemah. An alternative answer is this: [he slew] the troop commanded by Hemah, [but not Hemah himself]

- 1) Why did משה take his wife and sons to Egypt – a place of danger and enslavement?
- 2) Who are his "sons"? We only learned of one son being born until now (גרשם)
- 3) Why does ה' want to kill him?
- 4) What does this scenario have to do with ה' command to משה re: his words to פרעה?
- 5) Why does this happen at a "מלון"?
- 6) Who is the "חתן דמים" here?
- 7) Who does צפורה circumcise?
- 8) What is the meaning of this entire episode?

3 במדבר פרק יב, ו-ח

(1) וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמֹעֵינָא דְבָרֵי אֱסִיְהִיָה נְבִיאֲכֶם ה' בְּמִרְאָה אֱלִיּוֹ אֲתוֹדֵעַ בְּחִלּוֹם אֲדַבֵּר-בּוֹ: (ז) לֹא-כֵן עֲבָדִי מֹשֶׁה בְּכָל-בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא: (ח) פְּהָ אֶל-פִּי אֲדַבֵּר-בּוֹ וּמִרְאָה וְלֹא בְחַיִּיּוֹת וּתְמִנַת ה' יֵבִיט וּמְדוּעַ לֹא יֵרְאֶתֶם לְדַבֵּר בְּעַבְדֵי בְּמֹשֶׁה:

4 פירוש המשניות לרמב"ם – הקדמה לפ' חלק

Principle VII. The prophetic capacity of Moses our Teacher, peace be upon him

And this is that we accept that he was the father of all prophets that were before him and that will be after him. He was on a qualitatively different level than any other... the prophecy of Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, was different from all others in 4 ways:

- 1) Regarding all other prophets, God spoke to them through intermediaries. Regarding Moses, it was without one, as it says, "face to face I spoke to him".
- 2) Regarding all other prophets, prophecy came to them at night while they were asleep in a dream as it says, "in a dream of the night" and other such references; or in the day but only after a deep sleep-like state came over them, and all their senses were shut off except their thoughts. Not so by Moses...
- 3) When a prophet would receive prophecy he would not be able to stand the intense effect and he would shake and not be able to stand, as it relates regarding Daniel in his encounter with the angel Gabriel. Regarding Moses, he did not suffer from this...
- 4) All other prophets could not receive prophecy at their will, [but] only when God desired to tell them...

5 מ"ג חלק ב' פרק מ"ב

We have already shown that the appearance or speech of an angel mentioned in Scripture took place in a vision or dream; it makes no difference whether this is expressly stated or not, as we have explained above. This is a point of considerable importance. In some cases the account begins by stating that the prophet saw an angel; in others, the account apparently introduces a human being, who ultimately is shown to be an angel; but it makes no difference, for if the fact that an angel has been heard is only mentioned at the end, you may rest satisfied that the whole account from the beginning describes a prophetic vision. In such visions, a prophet either sees God who speaks to him, as will be explained by us, or he sees an angel who speaks to him, or he hears someone speaking to him without seeing the speaker, or he sees a man who speaks to him, and learns afterwards that the speaker was an angel. In this latter kind of prophecies, the prophet relates that he saw a man who was doing or saying something, and that he learnt afterwards that it was an angel... "And the Lord appeared unto him in the plain of Mamre" (Gen. xviii.). The general statement that the Lord appeared to Abraham is followed by the description in what manner that appearance of the Lord took place; namely, Abraham saw first three men; he ran and spoke to them...The same, I hold, is the case when it is said in reference to Jacob, "And a man wrestled with him" (Gen. xxxii. 25); this took place in a prophetic vision, since it is expressly stated in the end (ver. 31) that it was an angel... That which happened to Balaam on the way, and the speaking of the ass, took place in a prophetic vision, since further on, in the same account, an angel of God is introduced as speaking to Balaam. I also think that what Joshua perceived, when "he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold a man stood before him" (Josh. v. 13) was a prophetic vision, since it is stated afterwards (ver. 14) that it was "the prince of the host of the Lord."

6 בראשית פרק יח פסוק א

וַיֵּרָא אֱלִיּוֹ ה' בְּאַלְנֵי מִמְרָא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פְּתַח-הָאֵהָל בְּהֶם הַיּוֹם:

7 בראשית לב, כה

וַיֹּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבָדוֹ וַיֵּאבֶק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר:

8 יהושע פרק ה, יג-טו

(יג) וַיְהִי בַּהַיּוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בִּירְיָחוֹ וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה-אִישׁ עֹמֵד לְגִגְדוֹ וְחָרָב שְׁלוֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ וּגְלָךְ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֱלִיּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הֲלֵנוּ אֶתְּהָ אֲסִי-לְעֵרִינוּ: (יד) וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִי אֲנִי שֶׁר-צִבְאָה-ה' עִתָּהּ בְּאַתִּי וַיִּפֹּל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל-פָּנָיו אֲרִצָּה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ מַה אֲדָנִי מְדַבֵּר אֶל-עַבְדּוֹ: (טו) וַיֹּאמֶר שֶׁר-צִבְאָה ה' אֶל-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ שֶׁלֹּא-נִעְלַךְ מֵעַל רִגְלֶךָ כִּי הַמַּלְאָךְ אֲשֶׁר אֶתְּהָ עֹמֵד עֲלֶיךָ קֹדֶשׁ הוּא וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כֵּן:

9 שמות רבה (וילנא) פרשת שמות פרשה ג

אמר רבי יהושע הכהן בר נחמיה בשעה שנגלה הקב"ה על משה טירון היה משה לנבואה

10 שמות יב, ז, יב

וּלְקַחְו מִן-הַדָּם וְנָתַנוּ עַל-שִׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת וְעַל-הַמִּשְׁקוֹף עַל הַבְּתִיִּם אֲשֶׁר-יֵאָכְלוּ אֹתוֹ בְּהַם...וְעַבְדֵי בְּאֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם בְּלִילָה הַזֶּה וְהַכִּיתִי כָל-בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מֵאֲדָם וְעַד-בְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֲעַשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים אֲנִי ה':