

A Daily Bread

Date: 18 Elul 5782 (September 11, 2025)

Torah Portion: Ki Tavo

Topic: Called to the Torah

In Deuteronomy 29:2, the Torah describes how Hashem called to Moshe, and then Moshe called to the people of Israel before transmitting the Torah. Some commentators understand this "calling" as more than a simple announcement—it was a spiritual elevation. When Hashem called Moshe before teaching him, it raised Moshe to a higher level of consciousness, making him worthy of receiving prophecy. The call was also filled with affection, serving as an invitation for Moshe to draw closer to Hashem. This closeness enhanced their communication.

Moshe later called to the Israelites for the same purpose. Before teaching them what he had learned from Hashem, he sought to form a loving bond with them. By doing so, he raised their spiritual level and prepared them to fully receive the divine message.

Rabbi Mordechai Rogo draws a practical lesson from this. He explains that anyone who teaches Torah or offers moral guidance must first build an emotional connection with their audience. Without establishing this bond, the listeners' hearts may remain closed, and the message will not be effective.

The **Minchas Ani** offers a different interpretation. He views the calling as similar to a teacher announcing that a lesson is about to begin. This type of introduction gives listeners time to prepare mentally and emotionally. When people hear something suddenly, they are less likely to understand or remember it deeply.

The Torah emphasizes this point by mentioning, at two key moments, that Moshe called to the Israelites before teaching them Hashem's word—once at the beginning of their journey (during the Revelation at Sinai), and once near the end. In both cases, Moshe was preparing the people to enter into a covenant with Hashem, one that would bind them and their descendants to the Torah. These moments required a special state of readiness and focus.

The verse under discussion marks the beginning of a **second national acceptance of the Torah**, which would be described in the next Torah portion. The Midrash starts by asking: How many verses must be read at a time in the synagogue? The answer: three—corresponding to Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam, through whom the Torah was given. This raises two questions: What connection does this halachic discussion have to the verse? And in what way was the Torah given through Miriam?

After calling the people together, Moshe reminded them of the unique conditions they had experienced in the wilderness: "Your garments did not wear out... You did not eat bread, and you did not drink wine" (Deut. 29:4–5).

Why did Moshe mention these details at this moment? Because he was preparing them to reaffirm their commitment to the Torah—on behalf of themselves and future generations. The Sages teach that the Torah was given only to those who ate the manna. In other words, it was only possible for a generation free from material worries—unburdened by the need to earn a living—to fully absorb and commit to the Torah. This special generation could focus completely on spiritual growth.

Moshe cited the miracles that made this possible:

- "Your garments did not wear out" – because of the **Clouds of Glory**, which cleaned and preserved their clothes (in Aharon's merit).
- "Bread you did not eat" – because they were sustained by the **manna** (in Moshe's merit).
- "Wine you did not drink" – because they were nourished by **Miriam's well** (in Miriam's merit).

Since these three miracles enabled the people to receive the Torah, and each came through the merit of one of the three siblings—Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam—it can be said that the Torah was given through all three. This idea supports the Midrash's ruling that **three verses** must be read during synagogue Torah readings: one for each of these leaders.

Therefore, the halachic discussion about reading three verses is not random—it fits perfectly into this context. It reflects the deep connection between the nation's ability to receive the Torah and the unique spiritual leadership of Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. Shalom