

He called to Moshe. (1:1)

The **Baal HaTurim** notes that, in this verse, the summons to Moshe, *Vayikra* is spelled with a diminutive *aleph*. From afar, it appears as *vayikar*, not *Vayikra*. In his great humility, Moshe *Rabbeinu* wanted to describe the way in which Hashem appeared to him in much the same manner as He appeared to Bilaam. G-d's prophecy to Bilaam is introduced as *vayikar*, without the *aleph*. This word connotes chance and spiritual contamination. Hashem, however, instructed Moshe not to ignore the *aleph*. Our quintessential leader had great difficulty accepting this. He acquiesced, of course, and wrote the *aleph* – but in miniature. The **Kli Yakar** adds, “The *aleph* of *Vayikra* is written in miniature. The word *aleph* is related to Torah study as we find *V'aalfa chochmah*, ‘And I will teach you wisdom’” (*Iyov* 33:33). This alludes to the notion that, in order for one's Torah study to endure, he must belittle himself. Humility is the key to “growth” in Torah. Arrogance is antithetical to Torah study.

In a *drashah*, homiletic rendering, of the prayer *V'eineinu meiros ka'shemesh v'cha'yareich*, “And our eyes are as brilliant as the sun and the moon” (*Tefillas Shabbos, Nishmas*), the **Bobover Rebbe, zl**, the *Kedushas Tzion*, asks a practical question. If we are blessed to have our eyes illuminated by the sun, whose brilliance is the actual source of the moon's light, why would we need the light of the moon? He explains that *eineinu*, our eyes, is not a reference to our personal ability to see, but rather to the *einei ha'eidah*, the “eyes of the congregation,” the *gedolei Yisrael*, Torah leaders. These visionaries of our People have penetrating insight and vision which extend beyond the normal capabilities of the average person. We express that although these illuminaries shine like the sun, they nonetheless personally consider themselves to be like the moon. They downplay and even negate their own brilliance, so great is their humility. Just as the moon receives its ability to illuminate from the sun, so, too, do the Torah leaders of each generation feel that their ability to shine is the direct result of the merit and virtue of their generation.

Indeed, the **Brisker Rav, zl**, found support for the humble demeanor manifest by Torah giants from a verse at the end of *Megillas Esther*. The *Megillah* cites Mordechai's acceptance by all Jews, his distinction in the eyes of all people, *Ki Mordechai haYehudi mishneh lamelech*... “For Mordechai *HaYehudi* was (appointed as) second to the king...” *v'doveir shalom l'chol zaro*, “And he would speak peacefully to all of (Hashem's) offspring” (*Megillas Esther*). The *Brisker Rav* added a new “flavor” to the interpretation of this *pasuk*, “Despite the fact that Mordechai had quickly risen to the exalted and available position of *mishneh lamelech*, this did not deter him from acknowledging his brethren.” He did not become aloof, ignoring the “guy on the street,” the *amcha*, simple Jew, who could not aspire to such distinction.

Yes, it does happen. An individual achieves a position of power. He either rises through the ranks or is simply in the right place at the right time. He is catapulted over his friends and colleagues to a position of significance. Suddenly, he no longer “remembers” who his friends “were.” Not so Mordechai. He always remembered his roots; he never ignored his brethren. Perhaps this is why he is called *HaYehudi*. He never considered himself special. He was just “another Jew.”

Horav Sholom, zl, m'Sassov was once questioned concerning why the position of the *baal gaavah*, arrogant person, is denigrated more so than any other *baal aveirah*, sinner. Indeed, it is only concerning the *baal gaavah* that Hashem declares, *Ein Ani v'hu yecholim la'dur b'kefifah achas*, "I and he are unable to live together in one domain." Hashem distances Himself from he who is arrogant. We do not find this concerning any other type of sinner.

The *Rebbe* explained that, wherever there is purity and righteousness, no semblance of spiritual contamination or evil can be found; they just do not mix together. Evil and impurity are aware of their places. They are just too "uncomfortable" in the proximity of holiness. *Gaavah*, arrogance, does not have this "restriction." It attaches itself to anyone, under any condition. The only way to prevent this vile character trait from infesting a person, from worming itself into the most sublime, the most virtuous, is by decree that it is a *persona non grata*. Arrogance has no place in the proximity of G-dliness.

In describing the requirements for the *Parah Adumah*, Red Heifer, the Torah (*Bamidbar* 19:2) writes: *Asher ein bah mum, asher lo alah alehah ol*, "Which is without blemish, and upon which a yoke has not come." The **Koznitzer Maggid, zl**, interprets this homiletically as a reference to the moral and spiritual deficiency associated with *gaavah*. For a man who arrogates himself, saying that "he has no blemish," he is perfect, it is a clear sign that "Upon (him) a yoke has not come." The yoke of Torah does not prevail upon this individual. Otherwise, he would never claim to be unblemished. This idea is consistent with a statement made by the **Chovas Halevavos**: "A person who is free of all sin is at risk of the greatest character defect: to consider himself a *tzaddik*, righteous person."

Actually, this is not the first instance in the Torah in which we find Hashem calling Moshe. In *Parashas Yisro* (*Shemos* 19:3,20), the Torah writes *Vayikra eilav Hashem min ha'har*, "Hashem called to him (Moshe) from the mountain"; *Vayikra Hashem l'Moshe el rosh ha'har*, "Hashem summoned Moshe to the top of the mountain." Why does the Torah not write the miniature *aleph* in these earlier places? **Horav Yitzchak, zl, m'Vorka** explains that, in order to be humble, one must act with modesty in private. Public humility is subtle arrogance. When Moshe was summoned to the mountain, it was in the presence of the entire Jewish nation. It was no secret. It would then be no *kuntz*, trick, to be humble. The true test of Moshe's humility is in our *parsha*, at the point when he was called to the *Ohel Moed*. *Rashi* writes, "The sound of Hashem's voice was powerful. Yet no one other than Moshe heard it." For Moshe to conceal this awesome summons was a test of true humility.

The blood of the *Korban Olas Nedavah*, Free-Will-offering from an animal is sprinkled on the lower half of the *Mizbayach*, Altar. The blood of a *Korban Chatas*, Sin-offering, is sprinkled on the top of the *Mizbayach*. The process changes obversely when the offering is a fowl offered by a poor man. The blood of the *Olas Nedavah* is sprinkled on top of the *Mizbayach*, while the *Chatas* is on the bottom. Why?

Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, offers a practical explanation. A wealthy person who brings a *Korban* feels good about himself. He can afford the best, and he demonstrates his fiscal ability. The Torah has a problem with such deep-rooted arrogance/ pride being part of a *korban*. Therefore, the blood of this animal is sprinkled on the bottom of the *Mizbayach*. This curbs some of the man's haughtiness. When this man brings a Sin-offering, however, he is already depressed. The sin has knocked him down a tad, as he is now filled with humility and remorse. In order not to add insult to injury, the Torah has him sprinkle blood on top of the *Mizbayach*.

A poor man cannot afford to bring an animal as a *korban*. If he could afford a cow, he would have it for dinner. Instead, he scrapes together his meager earnings, the leftovers of his begging, and he purchases a small bird as a *korban*. He wants to thank Hashem for His benevolence. Regrettably, this is all he can afford. The Almighty accepts his offering with love, and, as a caveat, has him sprinkle the blood on top of the *Mizbayach*. When the poor man comes to the Altar with a Sin-offering, it is an entirely different story. Since this offering is obligatory, he sprinkles the blood on the bottom of the *Mizbayach*. It is all about humility and one's emotions. Hashem exalts he who denigrates himself. One need not be brilliant to complete the other half of the hypothesis.

In his later years, the *Steipler Gaon*, **Horav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, zl**, would give his annual *shiur*, lecture, in memory of his brother-in-law, the *Chazon Ish*, to an assembly of thousands of Jews. To observe this scene was to experience an incredible *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctification of Hashem's Name. One evening, following a *shiur* that had seen an unusually large crowd, the *Steipler*, in his great humility, said, "It is only because the *shiur* is given only once a year that I have such a large crowd. If I were to give this lecture on a weekly basis, I would be lucky to have a *minyan* to say *Kaddish D'Rabbanan*," the Rabbinical *Kaddish* recited following public Torah study.

One *Purim*, an especially large contingent of young children were brought by their parents to the *Steipler* to receive his *brachah*. The *Steipler* commented, "The large crowd is the result of their day off from *cheder*. Children are home, and the mothers have to occupy them with something to do. The easiest avenue is to bring them to an old man for a blessing." This reflected the humility of the *gadol hador*.