

## He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him. (1:1)

The third *Sefer* of the five *Chumashim* opens with a summons to Moshe. Interestingly, the word *trehu* -- *Vayikra* -- "He called" is spelled with a small *aleph* at the end of the word. The commentators all express their insights into this deviation from the norm. We suggest the following reason for the small *aleph*, especially in light of its position at the beginning of *Sefer Vayikra*, which deals with sacrifices.

The *Midrash* in the beginning of *Vayikra* minimizes our obligations as Jews. *Chazal* relate: Hashem says to *Klal Yisrael*, "I have given you ten pure animals which you may enjoy. Three of these are within your reach: the ox, the sheep and the goat. Did I ask you to go out to the mountains and valleys to find a sacrifice for Me from all ten species? No! It is sufficient if you bring your sacrifice from those three that are readily accessible, those that you tend and feed." The words of this *Midrash*, although simple, carry a profound message. Hashem does not ask a lot of us. He does not demand that we give everything up to serve Him. Indeed, He asks only a little. He does not ask for all ten species of kosher animals to be used as a *korban*. He does not demand that we scourge the forest looking for that hard-to-find animal. He does not demand that we give up every day of the week for Him--only *Shabbos*. We are to set aside time during the day for prayer--set aside--not devote the entire day. We have to pay the extra price for kosher food, but is that excessive? *Pesach* might be an inconvenience, but is it a reason to complain? Hashem asks very little of us, because that is all it takes to indicate commitment. Regrettably, the all too popular idiom, "*es is shver tzu zein a Yid*," "it is difficult to be a Jew," has been exaggerated by those who attempt either to magnify their commitment or to conceal their lack of dedication. One should not view the observance of *mitzvos* as a major sacrifice. First, as we have just explained, it really is not that demanding. Second, a Jew should view his Jewishness as a privilege, as an opportunity to come closer to Hashem. He should serve Him with excitement, enthusiasm and joy. He should celebrate every moment and opportunity that he is granted to serve Hashem.

Indeed, **Horav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz, zl**, was once asked why the children of the first Jewish immigrants to arrive on these shores went off the *derech*, alienating themselves from their heritage. He responded, "Because their parents kept *Shabbos* and *mitzvos* with *mesiras nefesh*, self sacrifice." What did he mean? One would think that the only way to serve Hashem is with *mesiras nefesh*! The answer, however, is that while one should serve Hashem with *mesiras nefesh*, he should not view it as such, and, surely, should not walk around complaining about what he must give up in order to keep *Shabbos* and be an observant Jew. Children growing up in a home in which the parents are despondent about their lot in life, where they constantly express their dissatisfaction regarding what they have to give up in order to be observant, will not have a strong inclination to follow in their parents' traditions. A Jew must take pride in his heritage, so that he can bequeath to his children a legacy of love, joy, and enthusiasm.