



ויקרא
Vaykira
פרשת החדש

Ashreinu אשרינו

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

Know your Aleph-Bet

Rabbi Moshe Nachbar

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Adina Hirsch ('19)

Adin Blumofe ('21)

Yitzy Lanner ('19)

In this week's parsha, Vayikra, one need not look further than the first word to notice a glaring issue: the aleph in the word ויקרא, vayikra, is smaller than all of the other letters. Many commentaries discuss at length the significance of the small letter, as it is a rare occurrence in all of Tanach. One question, raised by the Beit Avraham of the Slonim Chassidic dynasty, is why was

The letter aleph represents more than just a letter. Since it is the first in the aleph-bet order, it stands as the chief and leader of all the letters in the Hebrew language ("aleph" is related to the word אלוף, which means leader or chief). The Beit Avraham says that our specific talents are usually what we want people to see first. We make our talents and gifts most accessible by making them the "aleph" of our personalities, the first thing that other people can see and notice about us. We turn our strong points into the "aluf," leader of our persona.

The reason why there is a smaller aleph in the word vayikra is to stress humility. Although Moshe was called to by Hashem, the small aleph teaches us that it was indeed a humbling experience for Moshe Rabbeinu, instead of one to boast of later.

Humility is something that is emphasized at a great level in our parsha. The Beit Avraham explains that humility must be applied not only on an overall dispositional level, but we must apply this trait to the realm of our personality that needs it the most, our talents and strengths. When we excel in a certain area, we need to be extra careful to be humble because we must remember that whatever talent we have been given is from Hashem. The leader must be the most

the aleph specifically chosen to be smaller? Why not any other letter? The Beit Avraham, while answering this question related to our parsha, also gives us a wonderful insight into our Hebrew alphabet.



humble; the great aluf must simultaneously be, the small aleph. We are taught this lesson of humility not only from a letter from our beautiful language, but also from our great leader, Moshe Rabbeinu.

Coerced Korbanot

Yitzy Lanner ('19)

This week's parsha, Parshat Vayikra, focuses on the topic of *korbanot*, ritual sacrifices. If a man designates an animal to be brought as a *korban*, but then decides for whatever reason that he doesn't want to bring the *korban*, the man is coerced into sacrificing the animal he had already designated (Rashi, Vayikra 1:3).

The problem with this is that the Torah specifically states

לְרָצוֹנוֹ, לְפָנָי ה'

that one has to bring his *korban* willingly and not under protest (Vayikra 1:3). This would imply that he can not be forced into bringing his animal as a *korban*. So how can there be a law allowing this man to be forced into bringing a sacrifice if in fact he is unwilling to do so?

Deep down, in every Jewish person's heart, we want to accomplish the will of Hashem. Due to circumstances or other desires, our yearning to complete Hashem's will gets diluted and sometimes negated completely. Therefore, when this man reneges on the *korban*, he is doing so for some external reason. Deep down in this man's heart he still wants to sacrifice the animal to Hashem. So, although it might not seem this way, the man really does want to give the *korban*, even if it takes a little bit of coercion.

This teaches a very important lesson. Although sometimes it may feel like we do not care about fulfilling the will of Hashem, we should know that deep down, our desire is to do so. So, even if there might be other issues overshadowing our will to serve Hashem, in our hearts we really want to keep the mitzvot and connect with Him.

Aveira K'Neged Teshuva

Adin Blumofe ('21)

While the Torah is not always bound by chronological order, until this point in the Torah, there was always a natural progression forward. Avraham to Yitzchak to Yaakov and so on. In this parsha, this trend is abruptly

The Torah takes a "commercial break" from the journeys of the Jewish desert caravan, in order to inform the readers of the mitzvot that relate to *korbanot*. This change, like everything else in the Torah, is not accidental. Hashem had to deliberately backtrack as a result of the previous week's Torah reading.

Just a few weeks ago the Jewish people committed the most heinous and atrocious act of spiritual regression in human history: the grotesque crime of praying to a golden calf while standing at the door of God. The sin was so abominable, that Hashem had no choice but to pause the entire story, the natural flow, in order to adjudicate the consequences of sin. Hashem, by necessity of the situation, had to conceive of a form of penance for the Jewish people. What He laid out was a system of rectification for those who committed certain crimes, a system of *korbanot* with specific requirements which were dependant on the reasons for which they were brought.

The Torah lists a litany of different kinds of *korbanot*. The two kinds of *korbanot* that get the lengthiest descriptions in the Torah are the *korbanot* for sins and for spoken oaths. Not coincidentally, these were the two kinds of *korbanot* that would be required in the aftermath of the Golden Calf. The Jewish people sinned in two ways during the episode of the Golden Calf. One was that they prayed to a false god. The other is that they broke an oath. The Jewish people had promised Hashem that no matter what the Torah said, they would follow it, נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע we "will do and we will listen" (Shmot 24:7). Not even two months later, they broke the first eternal promise made to God. The two lengthiest sections are focused on curative *korbanot* which directly target the acts that the Jewish people had just committed.

When the Jewish people sin in speech and deed, Hashem offers a spiritual cure that represents speech and deed. How we create our own spiritual black hole is mirrored in what is needed to climb back out of it. Parshat Vayikra serves as the template, the first step for Jews who are beginning the journey of climbing out of their own self-made spiritual oblivions, and should give us hope that no matter how deep the hole, there is always a way to climb back out.

Awareness

Adina Hirsch ('19)

Parshat Vayikra mentions the sacrifices given for different sins. There are some *korbanot* given for major sins whose punishment is *kareit* and for unintentional sins. Unin-

tentional sins are just mistakes, so why would an unintentional sin require a *korban* at all? Moreover, the Torah clearly distinguishes between sins *b'shogeg* -- unintentional, and sins *b'meizid* -- intentional. Why should an unintentional sin require more repentance -- the offering of a *korban* -- than a blatant sin?

The Ramban points out that although the sin was committed inadvertently, the mere action of a sin taints one's soul regardless of their intentions. We tend to believe that morals live entirely in our minds and in our intentions. But, regardless of our intent, sinful actions still have negative outcomes on the world and on the sinner. This requirement to bring a *korban* emphasizes that, even unintentionally, our actions can still cause damage and it is our responsibility to own up to our sin and amend the damage.

According to Rav Hirsch, if the sinner made an effort to be more cautious and knowledgeable about their actions then they would not have sinned in the first place. People are stringent and more careful when it comes to things that matter to them and tend to be more relaxed and more lenient when it comes to things they do not value as much. If the "unintentional sinner" held Shabbat in a high regard, he would have never simply just forgotten what day of the week it was. Unintentional sins, while seemingly just mistakes, are the result of ignorance or carelessness, both of which are bad. Bringing a *korban* allows the unintentional sinner to purify themselves from their sin and serves as a deterrent so that the sinner will be more aware of their actions in the future.

However there still is a substantial difference between an inadvertent sin and an intentional sin. Rabbi Yitzchak Arama says that the difference between an intentional and an unintentional sin is that in the unintentional sins only the body is at fault, and in the intentional sin both the body and the soul are at fault. A physical sacrifice is not sufficient to atone for sins that were committed blatantly as it cannot rectify a wrong in the soul. Only through self reflection and true internal change can one truly rid oneself of the guilt of a deliberate sin.



Torah Teasers (aish.com)

Questions:

1. The first pasuk of the parsha states that Hashem called to Moshe before speaking to him. Where else in the Torah does Hashem call out to Moshe before speaking to him? (4 answers)
2. Aside from Moshe, who else in the Torah does Hashem call out to first with the word "Vayikra"?
3. Where is honey mentioned in this parsha?
4. Where is salt mentioned in this parsha? What two other places is salt mentioned in the book of Bereishit?

Answers:

1. In Parshat Shmot, Hashem calls out to Moshe at the Burning Bush, before speaking to him for the first time (Shmot 3:4). Hashem calls out to Moshe twice in Parshat Yitro (Shmot 19:3, 20), and once in Parshat Mishpatim with regards to the giving of the Torah (Shmot 24:16).
2. In Parshat Bereishit, Hashem calls out to Adam before reprimanding him for eating from the Tree of Knowledge (Bereishit 3:9).
3. Honey cannot be offered on the mizbe'ach (Vayikra 2:11).
4. This parsha teaches that every offering needs to be brought with salt (Vayikra 2:13). In Parshat Lech Lecha, during the war between the kings, the armies gathered by the Sea of Salt (Bereishit 14:3). In Parshat Vayeira, Lot's wife transformed into a "pillar of salt" when she looked back at the destruction of Sodom (Bereishit 19:26).

