



# TORAT HAR SHIMUEL



## PARSHA

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### HOW BIG IS THE SMALL “ALEPH”?

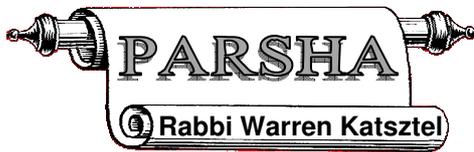
At the beginning of Parashat Vayikra, we find an aleph at the end of the word that is smaller than the rest of the letters. The Ba'al HaTurim's classic reason for this is that Moshe did not want to stand out, a manifestation of his classic modesty, anivus. Since Bilaam was called by Hashem using the word Vayikar, without the aleph, Moshe felt the same word should be used for him. Hashem insisted that Moshe use the aleph, a sign of His love for Moshe, so as a compromise a smaller aleph was written conveying the message of anivus while fulfilling Hashem's demand that the aleph be used.

Dovid Gewurtz asked me a very good question on this Pshat. The reality is that once the size of the letter is changed, whether larger or smaller, attention is drawn to it, which is exactly what Moshe does not want. So what's the point behind the small aleph, if it compromises the message of anivus Moshe is trying to convey? Furthermore, in light of this, we find in Bamidbar (12:3) when Miriam speaks about Moshe's relationship with his wife, the Torah clearly expresses, “And the man Moshe was very humble, more so than any man on the face of the earth”. We do not hear Moshe complaining about writing this in Hashem's Torah. So what's the point? Moshe protests the small aleph in Vayikra, but writes this entire pasuk without protest. How are we to understand this??

The reality is that there is a huge difference between these 2 parshiyot. Hashem was fully aware that Moshe would not defend himself against the misunderstanding that Miriam was expressing. Hashem therefore comes to Moshe's defense and provides the reason why He must do so in the pasuk quoted above – because of his anivus. Why here?? Shtika k'hodoah dami. By remaining silent, Moshe would be admitting that Miriam was right. In Moshe's eyes, being right in this instance was not as important as remaining humble. Moshe would give his life to defend Hashem, His Torah and His people. To defend himself though, this, in Moshe's eyes was a violation of the anivus he thoroughly dedicated himself to. Why does Moshe permit himself to remain silent, humble? Because he knew he was right in having a celibate relationship with his wife. Whether anyone else agreed with him was irrelevant in Moshe's eyes. He was not doing anything public that would convey the wrong message. There was no moras ayin going on here.

For the sake of justice, Hashem could not remain silent here. His involvement maintained Moshe's posture of humility, while conveying the message to Miriam regarding who she was criticizing. Rov Soloveichik brings down that what Miriam failed to realize was the “segulah relationship” – the treasured nature of the relationship that Hashem enjoyed with Moshe. It was distinct and at a more profound level than with any other prophet before or after him. Therefore, the reason Moshe does not complain about writing the verse in Bamidbar is because although the dialog discusses an issue that relates to the manner Moshe conducts his marital life, the interaction does not involve him. The conversation is between Miriam and Aharon, and Hashem intercedes. When the three of them are called to the Ohel Moed, Moshe remains silent. The first words he utters is his short prayer that Miriam should be cured from the Tzora'as that resulted from her loшон hara. Can you imagine the shock Moshe went through when he found out why they were called to the Ohel Moed. Being the focus of attention, especially regarding something this private, must have really taken him by surprise. Nonetheless, he was out of it. Despite his presence, this was between Hashem & Miriam.

The issue regarding the aleph in Vayikra is radically different. Here it is all about Moshe, as no one else, other than Hashem & Moshe are involved. The beauty of Moshe's anivus is clearly demonstrated here in the reality that it is tru-



ly L'Shaim Shamayim. This matter is totally private, between Hashem & Moshe in a realm and at a level that no other human being has ever achieved. Even while in Hashem's Presence, Moshe is not looking for any additional attention, a reason to be singled out or seen as special. His anivus is so authentic, so pure, that he fights against the aleph while in this private environment, alone with Hashem. It's one thing to act in a L'Shaim Shamyim manner when everyone is watching. It's at a much higher level to behave in this manner when only Hashem sees what's going on. What's interesting about Moshe is that if he could hide the anivus from Hashem, he would, recognizing that this is what the personality trait is all about. Moshe knows he cannot, for Hashem knows everything. So he does the next best thing. He fights to exemplify this as much as he can. Moshe cannot get away without the aleph, so he settles for a diminished one. One way or another, the midda is going to win.

The difference between the 2 parshiyos are clear. In Bamidbar, Moshe is on the outside looking in, and therefore has no say in how an event that may revolve around him but does not include him is conveyed. In Vayikra, the small aleph is all about Moshe, and here, although he has a say as to how the message is going to be conveyed, it will not be at the expense of what Hashem wants. Hashem conveys the message He wants without compromising the anivus that Moshe dedicates his personality to.

One needs to understand the nature of the anivus that Moshe exemplifies. Moshe had the distinct advantage of being the only human being to experience direct communication with Hashem. In doing so, they not only exchanged messages, information, but Moshe Rabbeinu "experienced" Hashem on a level that no other human being ever achieved. This reality reached its pinnacle when Moshe was called to Heaven to receive the Torah, (Shabbos 88b – 89a). The angles questioned why Moshe is even there and argued with Hashem that the Israelites should not receive the Torah. Hashem called upon Moshe to defend his right on behalf of Klal Yisroel to bring Hashem's Heavenly Sefer down to the physical world in which we live. Moshe asked the angels if they have parents, if they eat, if they can fulfill any of the physically oriented Mitzvos found in the Torah. This was Moshe's proof that Torah was meant for mankind, not for the angels.

This event is not to be taken lightly, as another nice story brought down by the Midrash. Moshe ascends to heaven and experiences a "world" that no other living human being has ever seen. He comes back to our world totally transformed, as there is a Divine glow emanating from him. What he took away from this experience explains Moshe's humility. The foundation of Moshe's anivus is the reality, experienced, perceived and understood, that Hashem is Everything, (note the capital E), and we are nothing. The consequence of Moshe's dedication to this philosophy is nothing short of grand. In the process of looking at himself as "nothing", Hashem transforms him into "everything" – the greatest Prophet to have ever lived, past, present and future. The Gemara is Shabbos cited above (89a) continues with the Satan questioning Hashem as to the whereabouts of the Torah. After searching everywhere, the Satan returns to Hashem claiming he cannot find it. Hashem instructs him to ask "Ben Amram" –Moshe. Upon doing so, Moshe responds, "Who am I that HKB'H should have given me the Torah". Hashem accused him of being a "ba'do'ee"- delusional. How could he tell the Satan he didn't receive the Torah?? Moshe responded, "Hashem, You have this coveted and hidden treasure that you delight in every day, and I'm going to flatter myself that You gave it to me"!!?? Hashem responds, "Since you diminished yourself in receiving the Torah, it shall be called by your name", which is why we refer to the Torah as "Toras Moshe". (Shabbos 89a)

Moshe was humble, not naïve!! He knew he was a great man having achieved more than any other human being in the history of mankind. Nonetheless, he realized that one's barometer of excellence is not measured in what other people think or expect of us, but is measured in living up to Hashem's expectations of us exclusively. Although we may deny it at times, we all know what those expectations are. Moshe knew first hand he could not achieve perfection, but he did experience interacting with perfection through his communication with Hashem. Through this, he realized and taught us who we have to answer to, the standards by which to evaluate our personal success in this world, and the reality that when it's all said and done, Hashem is everything and we are nothing. Simple acknowledgement of this reality and a personality that reflects it is what transforms the inner sense of nothingness into an expressed image of profound sophistication and concrete value.

If we view ourselves as nothing, how are we to relate to other people? The answer comes from the fourth chapter of Pirke Avos, the first Mishna. "Ayzehu m'chubad, ha'm'chabed es habriyos". We treat others as "grand somethings". In celebrating the life of another, we simultaneously celebrate Hashem's creation of their unique Neshama. What's interesting about this is that there are times that serious hishtadlus, effort, is required to get from one station in life to the next. There are those select situations, though, that sitting back and doing nothing for your self will achieve greater results than all the effort in the world. Anivus is the classic example, application of this philosophy. May we all be zoche to exemplify our Middos as Hashem wants us to.

