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### BOTH GREAT AND SMALL

**T**HERE ARE MANY PARADOXES IN LIFE, MANY CONTRARY DEMANDS. One issue concerns the way we view ourselves, our self-image. Are we great or small? Do we have a sense of our own power and potential, our significance – or do we feel humble, behaving in a modest and self-effacing way? Of course, the answer is *both*, we should be both confident and powerful *and* also modest and unassuming. We get a clue to this “both/and” approach from a comment by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on this week’s Sedra<sup>1</sup>.

The Sedra begins the third Book of the Torah, and the first word is *Vayikra*, - “And He called”. The beautiful Sanctuary had been built and now G-d called to Moses, that he should enter its holy inner chamber where G-d would teach him the laws of the offerings.

This moment of G-d “calling” to Moses is clearly significant, and it is expressed in the first word of this Book of the Torah: *Vayikra*. It is an important word expressing G-d’s loving relationship with Moses and, through him, with the entire Jewish people.

However, when you look at the parchment Torah Scroll you discover something strange about this first word, *Vayikra*. In English transliteration the last letter is an “A”, and similarly in Hebrew: the last letter is an Alef. But there is something strange about this Alef. Following a tradition of more than three millennia the letter Alef is written in a strange and unexpected way: the Alef is *small*. It is a little letter, as if written in a superscript font, like the little number showing a footnote.

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Why? What is the little Alef telling us? The Sages explain that it signifies the *humility* of Moses. The Alef is small because Moses was humble. In fact, the Torah later tells us about him that he “was more humble than any person on the face of the earth”<sup>2</sup>. The Sages add, that he not only had a greater measure of humility in relation to G-d than anyone else, he also felt humble in relation to every other person. He felt that if anyone else had been given his own special opportunities – they would have utilised them to better effect. So rather than sensing his own power, he felt the significance of everyone around him.

So the small Alef in our Sedra means humility. By contrast, elsewhere in the Bible, we find a *large* Alef. This is the first word of the Book of Chronicles, the word Adam. Again, the first letter is an Alef. Yet here the Alef is exceptionally *big*. Adam, the first man, created by G-d, placed in the Garden of Eden with the whole fresh world before him – Adam felt a wonderful sense of power and opportunity. Hence the large Alef.

Now the Sages do point out that this sense of his own significance may have contributed to Adam’s tragic error in eating from the Tree of Knowledge. A sense of one’s own importance can be dangerous. Nonetheless, says the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the teaching for each of us today is that we need *both* qualities. We need the small Alef of Moses, and at the same time the large Alef of Adam.

We need humility in relation to G-d and other people, and also a confident sense of our own significance, power and potential. If we lack confidence, a sense of our own worth, we may be afraid to undertake important responsibilities and projects. At the same time, we need the humility which enables us to see the good qualities of all around us.

Balancing these two contrasting qualities, the large and the small Alef, we will be able to help complete the task given to Adam, Moses and the entire Jewish people: to reveal the Divine Presence in the world, to disclose the world of good for all humanity<sup>3</sup>.

1. Leviticus chs. 1-5. 2. Num. 12:3. 3. Based freely on *Likkutei Sichot*, vol.17, 1-8.

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SEDRA VAYIKRA

**SACRIFICATION**

The school bell had just rung, school was over. Eli and Daniel, two 13 year olds, jumped up from their seats, grabbing their coats and bags as they dashed for the classroom door. They were in a rush, because tonight they were going to their friend Meir's house to play on his new X-Box.

Last week, Wednesday, Meir, already 15, had excitedly invited them over to play on the new game he'd received for his birthday. 'You've never played anything like this', he said excitedly, 'my Game Cube is *boring* in comparison 'n' I got this game called Street Car Racer II that you're gonna *love!*'

Glee was written all over his face. And indeed, the boys were enthralled by the brilliance of the new games and they spent the whole Wednesday evening playing on the X-Box, until Meir's mother finally said: 'Time to go!'

'Don't worry', said Meir with a broad smile, 'we can play some more tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after too!'

It was now a week later.

'Can you believe we've played this game almost every night of the week!' exclaimed Eli, as they skipped merrily down the road.

'Yes', Daniel said laughing, 'we could start an X-Box Club'.

'We could call it the XBC and get the whole class to join in... and of course we will be the champions!' added Eli, 'we will be at the top of the class'.

'Because we always get good grades anyways' – Daniel said aloud, then he paused – 'Hold on', he said thinking, 'I've just realised something', the smile on his face slowly disappearing.

'What is it?' asked Eli, panicking.

'Nothing really', said Daniel, 'I've just remembered the sacrifices'.

'Sacrifices?!' exclaimed Eli, 'are you trying to wind me up?'

'The sacrifices in the Temple,' explained Daniel finally, 'Chassidic teachings explain that nowadays we can't offer up physical sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem since it was destroyed two thousands years ago. But instead each of us is like a miniature Temple and we need to offer up spiritual sacrifices from our animal soul and animal inclination.'

'Man, Daniel, that sounds *deep!*' exclaimed Eli. 'I mean, how exactly do you offer up the animal inclination? Should we go let some blood?' He laughed at his own sense of humour.

'Very funny!' Daniel responded, shrugging.

After a moment of silence he explained, 'But really, it is much simpler than letting blood. We don't need to hurt ourselves to offer a sacrifice. It could even be for the better. Like right now our animal inclination says that we should just go and have a good time and play the X-Box – the sacrifice we could make is doing what is right instead, for example to study for our Jewish Studies test, which personally I'm a little worried about. Tomorrow my friend...'

'Ok, are you officially a Rabbi?' asked Eli sarcastically. Daniel's righteousness was a bit boring, but he knew he was only trying to do what was right....

'Okay, philosophy aside', said Eli, 'in your books it is not so difficult to offer sacrifices nowadays, and you are right we *do* have a test tomorrow – let's go to your place and *study!*'

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