


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 18 March 2013 - 4 Nisan 5773
Sedra Vayikra


HUMILITY

IN THE HEBREW TEXT OF THE TORAH SCROLL, THOUSANDS OF years of tradition dictate how each letter is to be written. Certain words, such as the first word of our Sedra¹, are exceptional in some way.

The opening phrase is “And G-d called to Moses”. This is the beginning of the third Book of the Torah, Vayikra (Leviticus). Unlike the preceding Book which is mainly narrative, telling the story of the Exodus, this Book mainly comprises direct instruction from G-d. So it begins “And G-d called to Moses”. G-d called to Moses from the Sanctuary, to teach him the laws which he would transmit to the Jewish people.

The first word in this phrase, Vayikra, ends with a letter Aleph. This Aleph is very small compared with the size of the other letters. The scribe has to write very carefully a small Aleph. This has been a feature of every Torah scroll since the first one, written by Moses. What does the small Aleph signify?

One explanation is that the small Aleph hints at an important

	In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin (Yenta bas Devora) ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb שי'
---	---

105 BAKER STREET , LONDON W1U 6EZ
www.chabadresearch.net - cru@LubavitchUK.com

aspect of the role of Moses as lawgiver: humility. Moses received the Torah from G-d and transmitted it to the Jewish people. However, in order for him to be able to receive Divine teachings, he had to achieve the quality of utter humility and selflessness². The Torah testifies that 'Moses was very humble, more than any man on the face of the earth' (Num. 12:3).

Because he had no interposing self he was able to act as a pure channel for the Divine. Thus the Sages tell us "The presence of G-d spoke from the throat of Moses"³. The small Aleph in the first word of the Sedra expresses this humility and selflessness. The Aleph signifies the nature of Moses and of all great teachers since his time.

We too need something of this humility ourselves, in order for us to *hear* the words of the Torah. We need the ability to stop and listen. Further, we need a very similar quality in order to be able to bring the Torah teachings into effect in our lives: acceptance. The small Aleph is also required in the process of transmitting these teachings to those around us and to the next generation: the humility of the teacher. The small Aleph, humility, is the key...

HUMILITY AND PESACH

The theme of humility, expressed in the small Alef of the word Vayikra, relates closely to the approaching Pesach festival (begins Monday evening 25 March). The key feature of Pesach is eating Matza instead of leavened bread. Chassidic teachings tell us that leaven signifies the puffed up ego; by contrast Matza, unleavened bread, expresses humility and selflessness⁴.

The Exodus from Egypt is the source of every kind of redemption in our history, of every kind of release from slavery. In so many situations in life, if we have a puffed up ego, like a loaf of bread, we are trapped in a metaphorical 'cage'. With humility, like a thin Matza, we slip through the bars of the cage, we go free. The Mitzva of eating Matza on Pesach helps us attain that humility, reach that freedom...

1. Leviticus chs.1-5. 2. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol.17 p.1.
3. See Zohar III 232a, 265a. 4. See *Likkutei Sichot* vol.1, p.129.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

SPONSORED BY DR REUVEN JOEL



53

SEDRA VAYIKRA

HUMBLE DESPITE SUCCESS

A low hum of voices could be heard in the Year 8 classroom. All the girls were getting back their math test they had taken the week before. Students went up to the teacher's desk, one by one to collect their papers. Some girls came back to their desks with delight at the mark they received and some were disappointed.

Cheryl Black heard her name being called and made her way up to the teacher's desk. Cheryl was very popular in the class. She, along with her best friend Leah Fiddler, were very bright girls who always studied together seriously before any exam. Many girls looked up to them. Usually, they were kind and caring to the rest of the class.

Cheryl received her paper and saw the big red 98% on the top. She felt pleased that she had done so well. She walked back to her desk and put the paper away with a smile on her face.

When Leah was called up to get her paper, she hurried over and as soon as she saw her big red 100% on the top she gave a yelp of delight and pranced around the classroom. "Look everyone! I got 100! Whoopee!" Some of the girls in the classroom congratulated her, but others felt jealous. No-one thought it was right that she made such a show of her good mark.

"She's so braggy," Sharon whispered to her friend Lana.
"Yeah, who does she think she is?" Lana whispered back, annoyed. Lana had only got 65%.

Lana didn't notice that Leah was passing by her desk at that moment, and had overheard her comment. Leah sat down at her own desk, suddenly very quiet. Were they right? Did she brag too much about her good results? Her mother always told her "Leah, you must be more humble. It's good that you're clever but it's better to be humble."

Leah suddenly felt she was having a déjà vu feeling. Where had she just heard this somewhere? Oh yes, it was this morning in Sedra class. The teacher was describing how the last letter of the word Vayikra in the Chumash was much smaller compared to the rest of the letters. This was to show that Moses was completely humble. He considered his great qualities a gift from G-d and said that if anyone else had the same qualities, they would probably do a better job than him.

When the lesson was over, Leah was passing near Lana's desk again. She spotted Lana's test paper, with 65% on the top. "Lana, that's amazing," she said sincerely, "Good for you, that you did so well."

"You really think so?" Lana asked sceptically. "65% is nothing! You got 100%!"

"Yes," said Leah, "but you are always saying that you hate maths and can't understand it. So if you get 65% that's good. In my case, my mother's a maths professor and she rammed maths down my throat since I was a baby. So my mark doesn't mean very much. Your 65% shows you worked hard."

"That's true, I spent hours and hours.." said Lana. "See, you did your best and that's the main thing. Give yourself a pat on the back!"

Lana laughed as she stretched her arm over and gave herself a pat on her back.

"Thank you, thank you," she chuckled. Leah smiled, and both girls, feeling more content, went out together to join the rest of their class in the sunny playground.

***Torah teachings are holy –
please treat this page with care***