

HUMBLE PERCEPTIONS

by Rabbi Dovid Green

The very first word in this week's parsha is unusual. The letter "aleph" at the end of the word "VaYikra" is written smaller than the rest of the letters in the word. This is the prescribed way for the Torah to be written, and it has been done so since the very first Torah scroll. What is the reason for this, and how does it apply to us?

When Moshe was writing this word for the first time, he did not want to write the "aleph" at all. He wanted the word to read "VaYikar" and He (G-d) chanced upon Moshe, so as not to imply that G-d specially called Moshe. That would imply that Moshe was very special. Moshe wanted to avoid that. However, G-d told Moshe that he should write the "aleph". Still, instead of writing it the same size, he would write it smaller to imply that he really wasn't worthy of the great honor that G-d should call to him.

In another place the Torah praises Moshe saying: "and the man Moshe is exceedingly humble, more than any (other) man. Didn't Moshe also write this? Didn't Moshe also know that he was the only one with whom G-d had such a relationship? How could Moshe be humble knowing all too well that he was so special?

The answer is as follows. One can be very great comparatively speaking, and still be falling way short of one's potential. One who is humble does not view himself in comparison to others, rather in terms of how he is living up to his own potential. In terms of that, Moshe did not feel that he was more worthy than others.

Humility is considered the most elevated of good character traits. Through humility one can control anger, tolerate pain, and find the good in others.

A story is told of a man who came to his teacher with a question. "Our sages tell us" said the man, "that he who runs away from honor, honor runs after him." "I am constantly running away from honor, and it never runs after me." "I suspect that when you are running away you are looking back to see if honor is truly running after you." "There is no bigger pursuer of honor than that." replied the teacher.

Good Shabbos!

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