

A SPECIAL COMMUNICATION

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

The third book of the Chumash, often known as Leviticus, begins with the Hebrew word "VaYikra", meaning [G-d] "called" to Moses. HaShem called to Moshe, says the Midrash, with the same Voice that the entire Nation of Israel was unable to withstand at Mt. Sinai. Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses our Teacher) was able to listen and respond.

Only Moshe was able to withstand the call of "VaYikra". Concerning the wicked Bila'am, on the other hand (who attempts to curse the Jewish People in Sefer BaMidbar, Numbers), the Torah uses "VaYikar", which indicates a chance meeting. G-d called lovingly to Moshe, but "chanced" upon Bila'am.

Moshe was reluctant to record for posterity the fact that he, and he alone, was called by G-d in this way. Because of Moshe's great modesty, G-d permitted him to write the word VaYikra with its last letter, Aleph, written very small (removal of the Aleph would leave "VaYikar").

Our Rabbis tell us that Moshe's modesty was the essence of his greatness. With his great humility, he was able to see the virtues of every other individual, and thus to be considerate and kind to everyone.

By writing a small Aleph, Moshe "left over" a tiny extra amount of ink which otherwise would have been required to complete the Sefer Torah. In Kabbalistic works, the Rabbis tell us that this extra ink was used by G-d, as it were, to create the emanating Divine radiance that shone from Moshe's face. The Torah records that Moshe had a shining countenance -- and his own modesty, say the Rabbis, was its cause. Moshe set aside his own honor, and, measure for measure, G-d caused him to be honored by others.

We must strive to be like Moshe. Just as Moshe recognized his capabilities, so must we, and we must work to fulfill them. But instead of demonstrating pride and showing off those accomplishments, we should work to recognize the virtues of others.

By honoring others, we will not lose. It is not "Good Guys Finish Last." On the contrary, "He who runs away from honor, honor chases after him." It is by honoring others that we ultimately prove ourselves worthy of respect.

Good Shabbos,

Text Copyright © 2002 Project Genesis, Inc.
The author is the Director of Project Genesis.