

MOSHE DID NOT INTEND TO DROP A LETTER FROM THE TORAH

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayikra

Moshe Did Not Intend To Drop A Letter From The Torah

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape #410, The Obligation to Testify. Good Shabbos!

The last letter of the opening word in the book of Vayikra is a small-sized Aleph. Rashi cites the Medrash that Moshe Rabbeinu really desired to write the word "VaYikar" rather than the word "VaYikra." The two words have vastly different connotations. G-d's conversations with Bilaam are described using the verb "VaYikar," indicating a nonchalant, "by the way," type of approach. "Vayikra" introduces a conversation based on endearment, calling a person directly by their name.

In his modesty, Moshe did not want to make himself look better than Bilaam and wanted the pasuk [verse] to give the impression of "VaYikar." Consequently, the word "Vayikra" appears with a small Aleph.

The Chasam Sofer is troubled by this Medrash. Moshe Rabbeinu was not the General Editor of the Torah, with literary license to change words or change spellings of the text dictated to him by G-d. G-d alone was the Author and Editor of the Chumash. The Chasam Sofer interprets the Medrash based on the Ramban's introduction to his commentary on Chumash. The Ramban writes that the pristine Torah in its original form had no spaces between the words -- it was just a string of letters which could be broken up and interpreted in an infinite variety of ways.

Therefore, Moshe did not wish to remove the letter Aleph. He just wanted to separate it from the rest of the word (so that the opening pasuk would read "Vayikar 'Aleph." There is in fact a precedent in the Torah for a one letter word. In Parshas Ha'Azinu, the prefix "Hay" is separated from the rest of the word in the question "Ha - L'Hashem Tigmilu Zos?" (Is this the way you treat G-d?) [Devorim 32:6].

Therefore, find such a construction already occurs in the Torah. Heaven forbid that Moshe intended to drop a letter from the Torah. He merely had wanted the word Vayikra to be broken up, such that a space appears before the Aleph.

Mincha Offering: Leavening Agents and Honey: No. Salt: Yes

"All meal offerings brought near before Hashem should not be prepared leavened for you shall not cause to go up in smoke from any leavening or any honey as a fire-offering to Hashem" [Vayikra 2:11]. The lesson of this pasuk is that the Mincha offering must be pure flour -- no foreign ingredients can be added to enhance the basic requirement of the meal offering.

Nevertheless, two pasukim later, the pasuk says that there needs to be an additive that accompanies the offering: "You shall salt your every meal offering with salt..." [2:13]. Not only CAN salt be added, it MUST be added.

Rav Mordechai Gifter explains the difference between the leavening agent and the sweetening agent on the one hand -- that are forbidden -- and salt, that is required. Rav Gifter explains that extraneous elements are forbidden from offerings. The recipe for a Korban can not be improved upon -- neither by the use of a leavening agent to make it rise nor by the use of a sweetening agent to improve its taste. Salt is different, however, because salt brings out the taste which pre-exists in the flour offering. Salt enhances the natural taste that already exists in the food.

Some people salt watermelon. They claim that it "brings out the sweetness." When we salt our food, we are not adding an extraneous taste; we are enhancing the pre-existing taste.

Rav Gifter says that this is the nature of spirituality. In seeking spirituality, a person should not introduce extraneous additives. A person should not try to be someone that he is not or act in a way that does not really represent his real self. In developing one's spirituality, a person needs to work on bringing the essence of his own real spiritual personality to the fore.

When a person brings sacrifices as a form of Service of G-d, he is trying to develop his spiritual personality by becoming a Servant of G-d (an 'oved'). When engaged in a quest for spirituality, a person should not try to take on foreign practices that do not represent his real soul. The goal should always be to try and bring out the best of your own self within the context of who you really are.

Rav Naftali Amsterdam was a disciple of Rav Yisrael Salanter. He once came to his teacher and said, "Rebbi, if I had the head of the Shagas Aryeh and if I had the soul of the author of the Yesod v'Shores haAvodah and if I had your personality traits (midos) -- then I could truly be a Servant of G-d." Rav Yisrael responded to him, "Naftali -- with your head and with your heart and with your personality traits you can be Naftali Amsterdam. That is all you have to be. You do not need to be

the Shagas Aryeh or Reb Yisroel Salanter or anybody else."

This is the idea of "Salt it with salt": One must be who he is. Adding sweeteners or leavening agents changes the nature of a substance. "That's not you!" But salt, brings out the true flavor. This is what we are supposed to strive for in our Service of G-d.

Nothing To Pray For?

The Book of Vayikra is the book of Korbonos [Sacrifices]. Nowadays, due to our sins, we no longer have the Bais HaMikdash [Temple] and we are no longer able to offer sacrifices. But in lieu of sacrifices we have an alternate form of Service to G-d -- namely, our prayers. This is unfortunately a pale facsimile. But, we are fortunate that G-d granted us the medium of prayer to reach out to Him and serve Him in lieu of sacrifices.

A student told me the following story. There was a Shabbaton sponsored by Camp Simcha Chai Lifeline (a camp for children with cancer). The Shabbaton was for the campers as well as their siblings, parents, and family members. There were sessions with Rabbis and psychologists to help the attendees deal with their, often desperate, situations.

My student was sitting with a man who unfortunately has a daughter with cancer. She was undergoing chemotherapy and had lost all her hair. My student happened to mention that he was looking for a position in Jewish education and the gentleman tried to convince him to move to his community.

He began reciting the praises of his community. "The people are friendly, the rents are reasonable." He went on and on describing a wonderful community. Finally he said, "There is only one problem with our community. It is a one shul town and people talk during davening [prayers]."

My student told him, "Well, unfortunately that's the way it is in many places. In that sense, your community is not unique."

The father looked down at his daughter and then complained to my student, "I guess some people have nothing to daven [pray] for. That is why they can talk during davening."

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics

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