



TableTalk: VaYikrah

Moshe gives us a quick lesson in humility.

Open a Chumash to first pasuk of this week's parsha, VaYikra. Do you see the letter alef at the end of the first word?

What's different about it? It's small, and in the actual Sefer Torah in shul that's written on parchment, it's small too! Why?

The midrash says that Moshe wanted to write ויקר, instead of ויקרא. If you look ahead in B'Midbar chapter 23, verse 4, you'll see that when God talked to the non-Jewish sorcerer/prophet, Bilaam, the Torah says ויקר אלוקים אל בלעם – which means that God "happened upon him" – not as much respect and attention as God calling out to him directly.

When Moshe went to write this word in the Torah, VaYikra, he became a little embarrassed that God actually called out to him, wanted him. Moshe's humility kicked in. (see B'Midbar 12:3 which tells us Moshe was the most humble person!) He wanted to downplay the nature of his and God's relationship and wanted to "just" say ויקר. According to the midrash, God conceded somewhat and allowed him to shrink the letter alef.

What do you learn from this Midrash? What lesson are the Rabbis telling us about Moshe? And what can we learn from him?

Here was Moshe, the one with the deepest, closest, and most intimate relationship with God – but he didn't want to "make a big deal about it"! He knew he was an important figure in the nation, and he knew he had a close relationship with God, but when it came to going public about it in the Torah, Moshe wanted to downplay it.

What does that teach you about humility? Where can you apply this lesson in your life? Is there something you can be more quiet, modest and humble about? How did you feel once when someone else was being very "in your face" about his/her accomplishment or status?

When you see this little letter alef, think about how you might be able to work on your humility.