

א ביסל תורה!

April 4, 2025

THE PARSHA NEWSLETTER
OF MAIMONIDES SCHOOL

ו' ניסן תשפ"ה · ויקרא

The Importance of a Letter

By Sarit Novich '25

ויקרא describes the laws of a few Jewish rituals, including קרבנות, purity, and the services done in the בית המקדש. The פרשה begins with the words: "וַיִּקְרָא" (ויקרא א:א). In the scroll itself, the word "ויקרא" is written with a small Aleph. Why would that be?

The word "ויקרא" is often used in the תורה to describe an interaction with an angel. In ישעיהו, the angels call out to one another, proclaiming Hashem's holiness: "וַיִּקְרָא זֶה אֶל־זֶה וְאָמַר" (ישעיהו ו:ג). In contrast, the word "ויקר", literally meaning "and he happened", implies a causal, not holy interaction, that happened by chance. It is used when describing an interaction with a human, as with בלעם: "וַיִּקֶּר ה' אֶל־בִּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו" (במדבר כ"ג:ד). In בלעם's story, Hashem "happened" upon him. בלעם wasn't special, anyone could have been chosen for what he did. He didn't display any noble traits, didn't have a special connection with Hashem, and didn't act with humility. However, in משה's case, Hashem didn't "happen" upon him. משה was selected for his role due to his character and his qualities.

The בעל הטורים explains that the small Aleph in our פרשה is a display of one of משה's most admirable qualities: his humility, his ענווה. When Hashem dictated the תורה to משה, He told משה to write "ויקרא", not "ויקר", because He specifically chose משה. However, משה didn't want people to think that he was arrogant, or that he thought of himself as equal to the angels. Therefore, משה wrote a smaller Aleph, which

allowed him to keep the word of Hashem as well as ensure that people would understand that he didn't see himself as the same level of importance as the angels. Despite Hashem Himself defining His relationship with משה as intimate and purposeful, משה still went out of his way to ensure that we knew that he saw himself as unworthy by writing the Aleph smaller than the surrounding letter.

Through this small edit, משה רבינו, the greatest prophet of all time, teaches us that real greatness is found in humility. Unlike leaders who seek honor and recognition, משה downplays his own significance, recognizing that everything he achieves is because of Hashem. Today, we live in a world that often glorifies self-importance and materialism. ויקרא teaches us the value of humility, both within leadership and within each of our individual connections with Hashem. The small Aleph of ויקרא teaches us that even when we achieve greatness, we must remember that our strength comes from Hashem.

תשובה The Ability to do

By Nessa Jaffe '27

In this week's פרשה we learn about many קרבנות. One of these קרבנות is the קרבן עולה ויורד. This קרבן is very strange. One would bring it if either you swore that you did not have any testimony to give in a court case when you really did, you were impure but did not know (or forgot), and you did something you couldn't do while impure, like eating קרבנות, or if you swore that you would not do something, forgot about it, and then did the thing you swore not to. But the strangest part of this קרבן is not the strange circumstances in which you bring it, it is the animal, or animals, it can be.

Most קרבנות (especially קרבנות אשם) are specific animals, usually a cow, sheep, or goat. There are different types of קרבנות חטאת (for the גדול, the king, or any person who sins), and each of them require different types of animals, but there is no קרבן חטאת that can be a bird or flour offering, and definitely no other type of חטאת that could be either a cow, or a bird, or flour, depending on the person. However, that is exactly how it works with a קרבן עולה ויורד - and that is why it is called that ("a fluctuation קרבן"). Someone who can afford it brings an animal (sheep or goat), whereas, someone who cannot, brings two birds (one as $\frac{3}{4}$ of a חטאת and one as $\frac{1}{4}$ as a חטאת), and someone who cannot even bring that brings flour as a חטאת offering. So what makes these three sins, mentioned above, special that they require such a strange קרבן?

One thing that makes these three sins special is that there is something wrong with them, not with the action, but with the result. When you forget that you made a swear and then eat something that you were

not supposed to, there is nothing wrong with the action. You did not remember that you made a swear, so you were not mindfully doing anything wrong. But the result is that Hashem's name, in which you swore in, is being desecrated, which is definitely not a good thing. So, the sins that require a קרבן עולה ויורד are definitely still sins, but maybe they are not as bad as the sins that require a normal חטאת. Therefore, in a sin like this, if you can afford it, you bring a קרבן that is very expensive, but if you cannot, then bringing something cheaper is okay too. No matter what each individual can give there is always an option for doing תשובה.



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A BISL TORAH

is published weekly
at Maimonides School,
Brookline, Massachusetts

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