

Are Self Esteem and Humility Mutually Exclusive?

Levit., Chapter 1

1. And He called to Moses, and the L-rd spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying,
2. Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When a man from [among] you brings a sacrifice to the L-rd; from animals, from cattle or from the flock you shall bring your sacrifice....

And He called to Moses

Rashi

Every time G-d communicated with Moses, whether it was represented by the expression וַיְדַבֵּר, "And He spoke," or וַיֹּאמֶר, "and He said," or וַיִּצַו, "and He commanded," it was always preceded by G-d calling to Moses by name. קריאה, calling, is an expression of affection, the same expression employed by the ministering angels when addressing each other, as it says, "And one called (וַיִּקְרָא) to the other..." (Isa. 6:3)

to him

Rashi

[That is, G-d spoke only to Moses. This phrase comes] to exclude Aaron. Rabbi Judah says: "Thirteen times in the Torah, God spoke to both Moses and Aaron together, and, corresponding to them were thirteen other occasions when God spoke only to Moses precluding Aaron, to teach you that they were not said [directly] to Aaron, but to Moses, that he should say them to Aaron. Now, [even though it was Moses who exclusively heard the prophecies,] one might think that they, the rest of Israel, nevertheless heard the sound of G-d "calling" to Moses preceding the prophecy. Scripture therefore, says: not "He heard the voice speaking to him (לו)," but "he heard the voice speaking right up to him (אֵלָיו)" This teaches us that only Moses heard the Divine voice calling him, while all the rest of Israel did not hear it.

And He called to Moses

Midrash Rabbah

Said Rabbi Tanchum ben Chanilai: Normally, a burden which is heavy for one is light for two, or one heavy for two is light for four; but can a burden too heavy for 600,000 be bearable for one? Now all Israel were standing before Mount Sinai, and saying: "If we hear the voice of G-d... any more, we shall die" (Deuteronomy 5:22), whilst Moses heard the voice by himself and remained alive.

Vayikra

Pane'ach Raza

Why is Vayikra written with a small alef? Even though Moses spoke directly with G-d regularly, he remained humble in his own eyes.

Kli Yakar

The small alef is an allusion to the custom that small children traditionally begin their studies with this Book. As the midrash states, "Why do we initiate young children with the section of the sacrifices? Just as sacrifices are pure, so too the children are pure."

Likkutei Sichot

If a Jew sins and compromises his relationship with G-d how does a sacrifice reconstruct the relationship? Even if a Jew sins and rids himself of any merits whatsoever, G-d's unconditional love



פרק א

א. וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר

ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

לֵאמֹר: ב. דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי

יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֹרְבָן לַה' מִן

הַבְּהֵמָה מִן הַבֶּקָר וּמִן הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ אֶת קֹרְבַנְכֶם:

for that person remains. A sacrifice has the ability to reveal that love. This sheds light on why children begin their studies with the sacrifices. For G-d's unconditional love comes to light in both the child and the sacrifice: a) G-d loves a child who has not yet observed any of the mitzvot so the relationship can be rebuilt. b) G-d continues to love an adult even when he chooses not to observe or study Torah. "Just like the sacrifices are pure, so too the children," for both express the intrinsic bond between a Jew and G-d which can never become soiled or impure.

From the talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (who later became the third Rebbe of Chabad) entered cheder on the day after Yom Kippur of the year 1792, eleven days after his third birthday. The child's grandfather, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, instructed Reb Avraham, the melamed, to begin the first lesson with the opening verses of Vayikra.

Following the lesson, the child asked: "Why is the word vayikra written with a little aleph?"

For a long while Rabbi Schneur Zalman sat in a deep meditative trance. Then he explained:

"The first man, Adam, was 'the handiwork of G-d,' and G-d attested that his wisdom was greater than that of the angels. Adam was aware of his own greatness, and this awareness caused him to overestimate himself and led to his downfall in the sin of the Tree of Knowledge.

"Moses, who possessed a soul deriving from the highest manifestation of the divine wisdom, was also aware of his own greatness. But this did not lead him toward self-aggrandizement. On the contrary, it evoked in him a broken and anguished heart, and made him extremely humble in his own eyes, thinking that if someone else had been blessed with the gifts with which he, Moses, had been blessed, that other person would surely have achieved far more than himself. Thus G-d testifies in the Torah that 'Moses was the most humble man upon the face of the earth.'"

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Being the first of the 22 letters of the hebrew alphabet, alef is the head or leader. As well, alef is related to the word aluf, which means leader or chief. So a small alef is a contradiction--why is a letter that represents leadership and greatness written small? Couldn't another letter have been used to allude to Moses's humility? A person's greatness and humility should not be two distinct entities. A person's humility, represented by smallness, should be in the very same areas as his greatness, represented by the alef. His unique talents should lead him to feel humble, when he contemplates the fact that if another person had been given the same qualities that person would surely have surpassed his achievements.

SUMMARY

- True humility and a productive self-image do not come from denying one's talents, but rather from acknowledging that they are merely a bequest from Above, providing a channel through which to exert the greatest effort in accomplishing His will.
- Experience your largeness, but at the same time feel your smallness. Talents are gifts endowed to you by G-d, who desires that you utilize your unique abilities to better our world—in a way that only **you** can. Realizing your responsibility and the significance of your personal attainments can be a motivation to continually strive to reach ever higher.
- G-d who is the source of all goodness created you and therefore at the core of your being is a goodness that is independent of your abilities, talents and choices. This connection and bond between G-d and you cannot be broken.

