

Parshas Vayikra

This week, we begin the third book with Parshas Vayikra. The first Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Alter Rebbe, was asked by his grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek when he started learning at three years old Parshas Vayikra why there was a small Aleph. The Alter Rebbe explained that there are three sized letters in the Torah: large, medium (the typical size) and small, like this week. The comparison is that the Aleph of Adam was large because he overestimated his greatness and sinned, whereas Moshe remained humble despite knowing his greatness (i.e., a small Aleph).

Adam is referenced here because the Rashi on “any Man who wishes to bring a Korban...” explains that just as Adam didn’t bring a Korban with anything stolen, so too can the sacrifices brought by the Jews not be of stolen goods. Vayikra Rabba further explains that if one exercised restraint by not bringing a sacrifice of a stolen source, that is greater than the Ox brought because Adam didn’t have a choice, whereas we do.

Therefore, this explanation adds further support to Alter Rebbe’s explanation, drawing a reference to Adam versus our behaviour. Adam was the first human who couldn’t have brought a sacrifice from something stolen, as he owned everything and, therefore, in lieu of choice, wasn’t tested for his service to Hashem. We have a choice and must learn from Moshe, be humble, and work on ourselves because that work is something pleasurable to Hashem. Restraint, one of the highest forms of showing the greatness of humans, is also desired by Hashem.

Tanya Chapter 36, which coincides with this week’s Parsha, the Alter Rebbe, explains that the purpose of Creation was to have an abode in the lower realms. Furthermore, the purpose of the chain-link connection between the source of all sources and the lower worlds is to give life and support it, but more so, the greatest pleasure for Hashem is when the darkness of the lower worlds is transformed into light. The purpose of all the hard work is to ultimately bring Mashiach through the revelation of lightness in darkness, i.e. our purpose as humans and, more, the purpose of Jews.

This fits with the Purim holiday, which we will celebrate on Motzai Shabbos and Sunday. The holiday of Purim is knowing and recognizing that even if Hashem is concealed, he controls and gives life to everything. Even though Hashem’s name is not written explicitly in the megillah, we know that the entire outcome was divine intervention. We must take the lessons of Vayikra and the holiday of Purim and continue the journey of shedding darkness with light by serving Hashem and making this world an abode for His residence. Furthermore, through those actions, we will be redeemed in our times.

We are witness to the cycle of the hate of the nation’s knowing no bounds, and it is a scary time, but we know we will persist; we know we have Hashem on our side, and we have the mission to overturn the darkness. Through this, we will be blessed speedily in our days.