



## DIVREI MENACHEM

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Perhaps the Coronavirus has come to teach us a lesson in modesty. Perhaps, as we close ourselves up in our small spaces, we have time to introspect and to look at our lives' purpose. Perhaps our isolation resembles what Rav Nachman designates as "Hisboydedus," an opportunity to make peace with ourselves and the Master of the Universe.

Our Parsha, Devarim, opens with the message that Hashem calls out to Moshe as if to tell him that despite the awesome glory of Hashem that hovers over the Mishkan, Moshe should not be afraid to enter within. Now, the term "Vayikra" – 'He called out' – is written with a small Aleph. This little letter, our rabbis tell us, is surely indicative of Moshe's modesty.

How so? R. Shimshon of Ostropoli astutely observed that, according to tradition, Moshe himself wrote the word "Vayikra" with a small Aleph. Yet when the text referred to the character of the people as "Fortunate are you O Israel: Who is like you, a people delivered [by Hashem]" (Devarim 23:29), Moshe yet employed a large letter Aleph.

Furthermore, R. Bunim of Pichiska noted that, although it is written that Hashem "Raises those who are lowly," Moshe, nevertheless, did not let his elevated status allow him to be proud: Moshe, in his

modesty, waited to be summoned to enter the Mishkan.

The Ba'al Haturim suggests that, in his humility, Moshe wanted Hashem's revelation to him to be perceived with no more significance than that given to the way Hashem appeared to Bilaam (Bemidbar 23:16). That latter appearance was introduced with the term "Vayakar," which can be translated as '[Hashem] perchanced' upon Bilaam – the same phrase as "Vayikra," but without the Aleph.

Hashem, however, who called to Moshe lovingly (in contrast to Bilaam), instructs Moshe to include the Aleph in the written text. But Moshe, ever the humble person, chose to reduce the size of the Aleph.

So, perhaps, we have been racing after success, aggrandizement, material gain, prowess, or whatever. Maybe we, too, need to reduce the size of our Aleph, which stands for one, for me. And "Corona," perhaps, will transform itself into a "Keren Ohr" that will enlighten us to slow down and to contemplate, to realize that it is Hashem who runs the world – For "There are many thoughts in the heart of Man, but [it is] Hashem's counsel that will endure" (Mishle 19:21). ■

Shabbat Shalom!

*Menachem Persoff*

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