



## VAYIKRA

The first word of this week's portion, Vayikra, "And He called," contains a scribal abnormality that is rarely found in the Bible. The last letter of the word, an aleph, is written smaller than its normal size. Why is this done? What lesson is God trying to teach us?

Since the aleph is small, at first glance you might read the word without the aleph and pronounce it "vayikar." In fact, we find that word used when God appears to the character Bilaam in Numbers 23:4: "And God happened upon Bilaam."

Although the two words have a similar meaning, the Midrash tells us that the word vayikra (with the aleph) implies a loving, close relationship, as in Isaiah 6:3 when the angels are calling to one another. And the word vayikar (without an aleph) implies a "happenstance" or chance meeting.

### ARGUING WITH GOD

Sometimes we find very righteous people (whom you'd think would know better) arguing with God. Moses had several arguments with God, one of them over the use of the aleph in this word. Moses, in his humility, wanted God to use the word vayikar without an aleph to show that he regarded himself no better than Bilaam. Yet God wanted Moses to write it with the aleph as an expression of intimacy and affection. So they compromised, by using a small aleph.

Why would God allow His will to be changed when He wished to express His relationship with Moses a specific way? Possibly to suggest that compromise is the essence of relationships. Every good relationship includes compromise, or else it turns one-sided. If only one side always gives in, resentment builds and unhealthy energy develops.

The mezuzah that's placed on the doorpost emphasizes a similar concept. There arose two different opinions regarding the placement of the mezuzah. One opinion held it should be straight up and down. The other opinion held it should lie horizontal. Our custom has become to put it on an angle. Not vertical, and not horizontal. A harmonious home is built on compromise.

Shabbat Shalom  
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