



## SEEING THE YAD HASHEM IN EVERYTHING

### THE STORY OF THE SMALL ALEPH

The *passuk* opens by saying that Hashem called to Moshe - ויקרא אל משה (Vayikra 1:1). The *Ba'al Haturim* discusses why the last letter *alef* in the word ויקרא is written small. In a sefer Torah most letters are written uniformly, the same size. The *alef* in ויקרא is written smaller than the other letters. The *Ba'al Haturim* says that the reason for that is because Moshe Rabeinu was exceedingly humble. He was the ענו מכל אדם, the most humble of people. In spite of his immense *brachos*, in spite of all the greatness that Hashem bestowed upon him, Moshe was the humblest of all people.

When Moshe Rabeinu wrote the Torah, Hashem told him how to spell each word. When it came to ויקרא, Hashem said *vav yud kuf reish alef*, and Moshe Rabeinu didn't want to write the *alef*. It's amazing to consider that Hashem is dictating to him how to write the Torah and, yet, Moshe Rabeinu doesn't want to write the *alef*. He balks. Now, without the *alef* what it says is: ויקר (happenstance).

There was another great prophet that was considered in some ways equivalent to Moshe Rabeinu, but he was from the nations of the world and in the Torah when Hashem spoke to this fellow named Bilam, Hashem wrote it ויקר, without the *alef*, implying that Hashem wasn't looking to speak to him directly. It was almost a matter of fact. It was coincidental. It was in the form of "by the way." *Mikreh* means coincidence. Bilaam was a noted *rasha*. He was a *ba'al ga'avah* par excellence. He was a *ba'al ta'avah* par excellence. When Hashem spoke to him, it was ויקר. The way that Hashem addressed Bilaam wasn't considered honorable.

Moshe Rabeinu, who was a great *anav*, wanted to write the word ויקר about himself, that Hashem happened to coincidentally "bump into" Moshe. Moshe didn't want to write that Hakadosh Baruch Hu *pashut bechvodo uveatzmo* called to him, as if he was a player in Hashem's game, in Hashem's world. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him to write *alef*, "You've got to write the *alef*." So he wrote a small *alef*, not a big *alef*.

### RAV SHACH'S INSIGHT

Now Rav Shach, z"l, posed an interesting question. He said that in everything you see in Torah, you have to ask, *vas shtait dah*, what is the message? What is being said here? Nothing should be taken for granted or at face value. Rav Shach said every single squiggle in the Torah teaches us, in the *gemara's* language, תילי תילין של הלכות, *mountains of halachos*. If you know the code of the Torah and you understand the code of *lashon hakodesh*, you know that there is so much within one letter, within one little *kotz*, a little thorn sticking up from the letter. It has tremendous meaning and depth.

Rav Shach asks a question. Certainly, if you have a small *alef*, it's definitely going to minimize the lesson, and what can be learned out through that *alef*. It will be less than if it would have been a big *alef*, a regular *alef*. So how was Moshe Rabeinu willing to forgo writing a big *alef*, which would have imparted to me more teachings from Hashem, and, instead, write a small *alef* just because he was humble?

So how would we *teitch* it? How would you answer this question? You know what we would say? He was a *tzaddik*. You know how *tzaddikim* are. They try to minimize themselves. But can we really say that? Moshe Rabeinu was the *moser haTorah*. He was the transmitter of the Torah. The Torah is called *Toras Moshe!* Moshe Rabeinu was the teacher par excellence, the greatest teacher of history. How could he minimize the teachings of the Torah?!

Rav Shach answered that the word ויקרא is teaching us is that Moshe Rabeinu weighed the situation in his mind and said as follows: "I could write a regular *alef* here and teach many *halachos* or I could write a smaller *alef* and teach less *halachos*. But when Klal Yisrael will read this word with a smaller *alef*, it will impart on them the great lesson on the importance of being humble. It will teach them the importance of being minimized." Now, if Moshe omitted the *alef* totally, yes - there would have been something tremendous lacking there, and the *Chazal* would have said, "Really, it should have said ויקרא, but Moshe Rabeinu didn't write the *alef* because he wanted to impart a lesson that he was humble." And we would have said, "Wow, Moshe Rabeinu taught us such a tremendous lesson in humility," meaning that the aspiration to be humble was so important to him that Moshe decided to omit that *alef*, which would have taught me numerous *halachos*, since he would rather teach us this lesson of being humble."

Moshe Rabeinu held that it would be a much greater lesson to omit the *alef* completely. That would have outweighed all the other lessons. So what did Hashem do? Hashem said, "We'll make a compromise. We'll make the *alef* smaller so then it will still be a complete *alef*, but it will still impart your lesson."

## THE DANGER OF ARROGANCE

The question is why didn't Hashem want to let Moshe leave out the *alef* and impart the message of humility in a much greater fashion? Imagine if we would have been told that Hashem wanted to write an *alef* and Moshe told Him, "Hashem, I would like to have it written ויקר to minimize Your meeting with me, to diminish Your meeting." But Hashem said no. The question is, why? Was it because Hashem wanted to give the *kavod* to Moshe? What was Hashem's motivation that He did not want it written without the aleph?

To learn about *anavah* is tremendous. Who knows the famous song from the letter of the Ramban? *Anavah* is שהיא מידה טובה מכל - *anavah is the greatest of all the middos in the world*. Can you imagine that? The Ramban says that humility is the greatest *middah* of all the *middos tovos shebeolam*. That's something to ponder in and of itself, because you have to know that what leads a person to be *nichshal* - to stumble, to make mistakes, to sin and to go against Hashem - is never from humility. What makes a person challenge Hashem is the opposite, it is arrogance. The greatest impediment for *yiras shamayim*, for awareness of Hashem, is arrogance. The greatest *middah* that leads a person to awareness of Hashem is humility. If a person is humble, he doesn't have an inflated ego, he doesn't have an imagination that he's bigger than he is, then that person is capable of seeing Hashem, capable of grasping Hashem, capable of doing amazing things. We have to know that's something to think about.

## TWO TYPE OF BA'ALEI GA'AVAH

We've said this many times. There are two types of *ba'alei ga'avah*. There's a real *ba'al ga'avah* and then there's an imaginary *ba'al ga'avah*. I once had a fellow here. He became *frum*. He became a *rebbe*. He used to ask me a question, more than once. He said, "Rebbitz, I don't understand. You're always saying that I'm a *ba'al ga'avah*, but aren't I the smartest guy here?" I said, "I don't think so." He said, "Who is smarter than me? Every time you have a math question, I get it like this (snap of fingers). I'm smarter than most people here. Why shouldn't I be proud of myself?"

## A CERTIFIED GENIUS

Once a fellow came into the shul on motzei Shabbos wearing a white suit. When I saw him, I thought of my grandfather's (Rav Avigdor Miller, zt"l) famous joke. In the 1950s, a guy once walked into the Yeshiva Chaim Berlin wearing a white suit. This was cool in the 1950s. When he saw him, my grandfather said, "I'll take an ice cream." He wanted to know if the guy was selling ice cream because the guys selling ice cream in those days used to wear white suits, you know.

This fellow came to *ma'ariv* of Motzei Shabbos because he wanted to say *kaddish*. I came over and said, "*Shalom aleichem*. How are you? What's your name? What brings you here?" He said, "I'm here as part of the convention." There used to be a hotel at the bottom of the road, so I guessed that was where he was staying. I said, "Oh the convention. What kind of convention?" He said, "A Mensa convention." I said, "A who?" "A Mensa," he said. I asked him, "And what is that? What are they celebrating? *Yarchei kallah*? What are they doing over here?" He said, "Mensa is a group of geniuses. It stands for genius. I'm a certified genius," he told me. I said, "Are you really that smart?" He said, "I'm very smart." I said, "I'd like to introduce you to the *rosh yeshivah*, Rabbi Gifter. He's also a genius. Would you like to meet him?" He said, "Okay."

Rav Gifter used a walker at that time. He was in the hall of Telshe Yeshivah. We walked over, and I said, "Uncle, a *gut voch*. I'd like to introduce you to this guest who came for *ma'ariv*. He's from Mensa." The *rosh yeshivah* looked at him and he said, "From where?" He said, "From Mensa." "What's that?" Rav Gifter asked. The fellow said, "That's a group of certified geniuses." Rav Gifter looked and said, "Sir, are you a genius?" He said, "Yes." So Rav Gifter said, "Do you know of G-d?" He said, "I'm not sure." A classic Rav Gifter comment, he said back to him, "Ah! You're no genius. You're far from a genius! By us, every 3-year-old knows there's a G-d. Have a nice week. A *gute voch*." It was like, bam! It was *gevaldig*. The guy was like, "But, but, but, but, but..." No, you're no genius, my friend.

## REAL HUMILITY

There's someone who thinks he's a genius, but he's really *gornisht* - he doesn't know how to do math and he thinks he's still a genius because he knows that one plus one is two. He figured that out. And there's another guy who knows how to do one plus one and two plus two, so he thinks he's a real genius. But having humility means understanding that all the gifts that a person was granted are a present from Hashem, and to see if he'll utilize those gifts to fulfill his mission in the world. Moshe Rabeinu wanted to impart this lesson. It's a *gevaldige* lesson. It's very important.

The *gemara* (Erachin 16b) says גדולה ענוה, *anavah* is greater than all else.<sup>1</sup> So why wasn't Hashem agreeable to Moshe Rabeinu leaving out the *alef*? The answer is that there's a greater lesson to be learned about humility, which is one of the fundamental basics of *emunah*. A Jew cannot begin to live unless he knows this. It's called the *alef beis* of *emunah*. And that is to believe in *hashgachah pratit*. To believe that there's absolutely nothing that happens that's not guided, directed and certified by Hashem and from Hashem. Every step that a person takes, מה' מצעדני גבר פוננו ונדרכו יהפץ - *from Hashem every person's steps are directed and his path Hashem desires* (Tehillim 37:23). Dovid Hamelech is telling us - don't think that a person goes places and his steps are not directed by Hashem.<sup>2</sup> A person doesn't knock his tiny little finger without it being announced in *shamayim*.<sup>3</sup> As the famous Ramban (Shemos 13:16) says, אין שכל דברנו ומקראנו כולם ניסים, עד שיאמין, *until he believes*, לאדם חלק בתורת משה רבינו, *until he understands that all our words and all the things that happen to us are miracles* and עולם של טובע ומנהגו של עולם, *there exists no*

<sup>1</sup> בעא מיניה רבי יהודה בריה דר' שמעון תוכחה לשמה וענוה שלא לשמה הי מיניהו עדיפא אמר ליה ולא מודית דענוה לשמה עדיפא דאמר מר ענוה גדולה מכולם שלא לשמה נמי עדיפא דאמר רב יהודה אמר רב לעולם יעסוק אדם בתורה ובמצוות אע"פ שלא לשמה שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה  
<sup>2</sup> ודרכו יחפץ - השם חפץ בכל דרכיו ואם הוא יחסר ב"ת, על כן לא יצליח (אבן עזרא שם)  
<sup>3</sup> ואמר ר' חנינא אין אדם נוקף אצבעו מלמטה אלא א"כ מכריזין עליו מלמעלה שנאמר (תהלים לז, כג) מה' מצעדני גבר פוננו (משלי כ, כד) ואדם מה יבין דרכו (חולין ז' ב)

There's a statement found in the gemora Pesachim (3a)<sup>5</sup> that hints to the *chashivus* of being aware of *hashgachah pratis*. A *pasuk* (Devarim 23:11)<sup>6</sup> discusses the *tumah* emanating from a man's body, מקרה הוא לא טהורה, so the *chassidische sefarim* say that this is a play on words. If you think it's a *mikrah* - if you think it's accidental, in reality, לא טהורה - it's not a pure thought. Any time you think something is a *mikrah*, accidental, that in itself is not a pure thought. That's a wrong thought. It's an improper thought.

### A FRIGHTENING THOUGHT

Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't want to write ויקר next to Moshe because it would almost appear as if it just happened coincidentally. The Torah tells us that nothing happens by accident. Everything that happens is a decision and a preplanned process from Hashem.

We could say this over and over and over, but few people actually believe it. People say things like, "I bumped into this guy. This happened. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, or I was in the right place at the right time. What a lucky guy! He picked the right letters for the lottery."

But now we have to explain, why did Hashem write the word ויקר in the story of Bilaam, which implies - as we explained earlier - that Hashem simply "bumped" into Bilam? The reason is that the *umos haolam* don't believe in the *hashgachah* of Hashem. According to them, their existence is *al pi teva*. And therefore - to a certain degree - they are subject to *teva* (nature) and they live less by *hashgachah pratis*.

I want you to know that a Jew who removes his *bitachon* from Hashem, someone who feels that he is not being guided by Hashem, Hashem also removes from him His *hashgachah*. That's what the Vilna Gaon says in *masechta Brachos* (Ch 9).<sup>7</sup> It's a very frightening thought. So if somebody tells me he has no *hashgachah* from Hashem, so it may be. The *Seforno* says it also.<sup>8</sup> If a person removes his mind from Hakadosh Baruch Hu, he won't feel and won't be aware that Hashem is guiding and directing him.

### HASHEM IS YOUR SHADOW

Now, you have to know that if a person would be aware and contemplate and concentrate and think about the fact that he's being guided by Hashem on every single step of the way, he would become overwhelmed.

I knew a person who needed a place to live. He was kicked out of his house and he had to move into another house, but the other house was not ready. He, meanwhile, needed a place, a bridge, for a number of months. The problem is that rental prices were very high. If you needed a temporary rental for a few months, you paid a lot of money. I told the person, "You don't have to think you're paying money." At first the person thought that maybe he could stay with a family member, but that family member disappointed him and said, "Absolutely not. You can't stay by me." Very disappointing. I said, "That's what Hashem wanted. But it doesn't mean you have to pay a fortune now, *lav davka*."

And then Hashem found him a house to live in with his family for absolutely free. What happened? It was amazing. I met a person and the person said, "I need a favor. If you can get somebody to do me this favor - I have a house for you, for free." The person called me up, "Could you do the guy a favor?" I said, "Why not? I do favors for Jews." So I did the guy a favor and this fellow got the house for free. It saved him thousands of dollars. It was unbelievable!

That's how a person has to live. We live in such a *teva* world that we don't think. A person has to know that Hashem is your shadow. Hashem is literally your shadow.<sup>9</sup> Nothing less than that. If a person goes around and he sees he's on his own, then, he has to find places, he has to look for places, he has to do this, and he has to do that. The Torah (Vayikra 26: 23-24) says והלכתם עמי בקרי, if you're going to walk with me coincidentally, והלכתי אף אני עמכם בקרי, Hashem says, *I will walk with you coincidentally*. But if you're going to put your mind in *hashgachas haBorei*, you're going to be *zocheh* to *hashgachas pratis*.

There's a famous *medrash*, a *moradige medrash* (Bereishis Rabbah 13:9).<sup>10</sup> It's a *ma'aseh* of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua. They were traveling in the sea, the *yam hagadol*. They came to a spot in the ocean where the water wasn't letting the boat go. Whether it was for some scientific reason, or whether there was a whirlpool, or there was a different kind of current, the water wasn't allowing the boat to sail and continue. אמר לו רבי אליעזר לרבי יהושע, so Rabbi Eliezer turns to Rabbi Yehoshua and what does he say to him? It's amazing: Why did we come here? How did we get into this? We always find these challenges! I think that we came here for a test. There has to be a purpose. He said, "Hashem wants to show us something. Let's lower the barrel and fill it up with water from this place." They filled up the barrel and then in whatever way, they managed to continue on their trip.

<sup>4</sup> וכוונת כל המצות שנאמרו באלהינו ונודה אליו שהוא ברבנו, והיא כוונת היצירה, שאין לנו טעם אחר ביצירה הראשונה, ואין אל עליון חפץ בתחנתו מלבד שידע האדם וידה לאלהיו שבראו, וכו' ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים אדם מודה בנסים הנסתרים שהם יסוד התורה כלה, שאין לאדם חלק בתורת משה רבינו עד שנאמרו בכל דבריו ומקרינו שכלם נסים אין בהם טבע ומנהגו של עולם, בין ברבים בין ביחוד, אלא אם יעשה המצות יצליחו שכרו, ואם יעבור עליהם יכריזו ענשו, הכל בזמנת עליון, וכו'.

<sup>5</sup> וכו' לעולם אל יוציא אדם דבר מגונה מפיו, שהרי עקם הכתוב שמונה אותיות, ולא הוציא דבר מגונה מפיו. שנאמר: "מן הבהמה הטהורה ומן הבהמה אשר איננה טהרה" וכו', רב פפא אמר: תשע, שנאמר: "כי יהיה בך איש אשר לא יהיה טהור מקרה לילה". רבינא אמר: עשה, ויו ד'טהור". רב אחא בר יעקב אמר: שש עשרה, שנאמר: "כי אמר מקרה הוא בלתי טהור הוא כי לא טהור".

<sup>6</sup> כי יהיה בך איש אשר לא יהיה טהור מקרה לילה ויצא אל מחוץ למחנה לא יבא אל תוך המחנה

<sup>7</sup> ו"ל" כשהאדם מסיר בטחונו בה, השי"ת גם כן מסיר ממנו השגחתו.

<sup>8</sup> ו"ל" (סוף פרשת תזריע): "כל בני הנכר ורוב האומה הישראלית וזולתי יחידי סגולה, הם בלי ספק תחת הנהגת הטבע והגרמים השמימיים - הכוכבים והמזלות הנכבדים מאותם בני אדם, כשאר מיני חיים, אשר לא תפול השגחה אלוקית - השגחה פרטית באישיהם, אבל במיניהם בלבד כי בהם תשלם כוונת הממציא ית'".

<sup>9</sup> וכתב בספר "שומר אמונים" (מאמר השגחה פרטית פ"ג): ותדע אחי אחובי אם היה ידוע לך גודל מעלת זה העבודה של האמונה בהשגחה פרטית, היה נתלה לנכר עד מאוד כי כתיב "ה' צלך" שהקב"ה צלו של האדם כביכול, וכל מה שהאדם עושה גורם כך למעלה בשמים, ואם האדם הולך ח"ו במקרה ואינו שם אל לבו אמונת השגחה פרטית עליו הכתוב אומר "והלכתם עמי בקרי והלכתי אף אני עמכם בקרי" (ויקרא כו), אבל אם משים אל ליבו גודל השגחת הבורא בכל דבר אז מושגח משמים בהשגחה פרטית יותר מכל אדם, עכ"ל.

<sup>10</sup> כל הנחלים הלכים אל הים וגו' (קהלת א, ז), מעשה ברבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע שהיו מפרשין לים הגדול, ונכנסה ספינתו לים למקום שאין המים מהלכין, אמר לו רבי אליעזר לרבי יהושע לא באנו לכאן אלא לנסיון, מלאו משם חבית מלא מים, כיון שעלו לרומי אמר להם אדריגוס שחוק עצמות, מי אוקיגוס מה הנון, אמרו לו מים בולעין מים. אמר להן הו' לי מנהון, יהוון ליה מלאו לקניאתה, והוון יהבונו בגוה מים והוון בלעה להון. על דעתיה דרבי אליעזר משם הם שואבים. על דעתיה דרבי יהושע (קהלת א, ז): לשם הם שבים ללכת, וכו'.

When they came to Rome, Adrianus, the Caesar, invited them to see him in his palace. He asked them a question about the ocean, some kind of scientific question. They said that there is a certain part of the ocean, with an undercurrent, that prevents the ocean from overflowing. So Caesar said, "I don't believe you. You have to show me some of that water. So they said we happen to have a barrel of that water with us. We were in that place. We saw where the undercurrent was pulling down the water." So they showed it to him and it answered his question. Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua didn't know what it was at that time, but they knew that if Hashem brought them there, it was for some purpose. Hashem was preparing them because Hashem knew that this person was going to ask them about this question.

### A HEROIC MOVE AND A FREE APARTMENT

A person has to know that there's absolutely nothing at all without *hashgacha pratis*. Years ago I was *mekarev* a young married couple to Yiddishkeit. I told the husband that he has to go to learn in Eretz Yisrael. He had a very good and prestigious job. He told me that had no money to go to Eretz Yisrael. I told him to "go with Hashem." I remember we called my grandfather (Rav Avigdor Miller, *zt"l*) to ask him for advice. I told my grandfather, "I'm sending him to Eretz Yisrael to learn. He gave up his job. He has no background and I'd like him to get some experience in Torah and build a base for his life. I have a place for him to stay for a while, with a friend of mine, but he can't afford a place of his own." My grandfather said, "What he's doing is heroics. Heroes don't ask *shaylos*. You can't go to a *rav* and say, 'Should I be a hero?' Heroes do, and Hashem helps them. So I told the guy, "Go. Don't worry about it. Go."

He went to Eretz Yisrael. He stayed by my friend. My friend called me a few weeks later to ask how long they were planning on staying by him. I said, "I'm not sure. Until they find a place." He said, "How much could they pay?" I said, "Zero." He said, "Oh no. I'm going to be stuck with this guy forever now." Then he thought and said, "You think Hashem is going to give them a free apartment in Yerushalayim? There are no free apartments in Yerushalayim. There is a shortage of apartments in Yerushalayim." I told him, "Hashem could give them a free apartment in Yerushalayim. I believe it without a doubt. Why wouldn't Hashem help this young couple?"

One day the young wife was on a bus. A person standing on the side, looks at her, she looks at him. They recognize each other and they begin to talk. He knows her father. She knows who he is. He says to her, "Do you perhaps need an apartment?" She says, "As a matter of fact, yes, I do." He said, "I have a free apartment for you." He tells her where it is. She thanks him and tells him that she'll get in touch soon.

She calls me up and I say to her, "What did the guy look like?" "He's wearing a big modern *kippah*, a big modern *yarmulke*." I said, "Then I'm sure that this apartment is not in such a *frum* area. It's probably a more modern neighborhood. I don't want you to be in Eretz Yisrael in a modern neighborhood, but Hashem is showing you that He can give you a free apartment. Call him up and find out exactly where it is," I concluded.

She calls the fellow back and he tells her it's in this place called "Sarei Yisrael." It was an apartment hotel that had just opened up. My wife and I were there a few months before that. We heard this place had opened up in a *frum* neighborhood and we went there for Shabbos. I wanted to check it out. It was one of those little apartment hotels. It wasn't a fancy hotel, but there were fancy apartments. Apparently, this guy, who was involved in the construction project, had a whole issue with the builders, and he became entitled to get one free apartment there. He couldn't find anybody who would want to live in one of those apartments near the *frum* Jews. So this couple moved into that apartment!

At that time, it was at the end of Malchei Yisrael. It wasn't in the middle of the *frum* neighborhood. It was at the edge of the *frum* neighborhood. Today it's already in the center. That couple lived there for as long as they both learned in Eretz Yisrael. At some point the guy called them and told them, "I've got to have the apartment back at such and such a time." They replied, "That is good timing, that is the week we were planning to leave Eretz Yisrael!"

I told him, "You see, Hashem, gave you a free apartment in Eretz Yisrael. It's unbelievable." The only thing they had to pay was \$50 a month for laundry services. The hotel would change the laundry, wash the laundry and give fresh laundry. It's mind boggling to see the *hashgacha* of Hashem.

People have to know that everything is *hashgachah*. If a person believes in *hashgachah* they will notice it. You have to think, why is Hashem doing this to you?

### A STRANGE REQUEST FROM A SECULAR LIBRARIAN

I'll share with you another amazing *ma'aseh*. There was a *yungerman*, a respectable *avrech*, that used to work with *kisvei yad*, or manuscripts. Many times he would go to different libraries and look at old writings. He would copy them and try to compare texts. Often, he would go there and eat lunch there. One day, after he finished eating in the library, he *bentched*. Unbeknownst to him, as he was *bentching* in the proper way, out loud, the librarian was listening to the *bentching*. After he finished, she came over to him and said, "*Selichah*, I noticed when you *bentched* you said, *ועד, ולא נכשל לעולם ועד, ולא נכשל לעולם ועד, ולא נכשל לעולם ועד* - so that we will not feel inner shame, nor be humiliated not stumble for ever and ever." He added the words *ועד, ולא נכשל לעולם ועד*, *we shouldn't stumble*. She asked him, "Where did you get that *nusach* from? In all the *siddurim* it says: *ועד, ולא נכשל לעולם ועד*." He was a little surprised. She wasn't *frum* and she was asking about the *nusach* of benching. He said, "That's what my father did. That's my father's *minhag*. That's what I do." She said, "Could you find where it comes from and tell me?" He took her information down and he said, "Okay, I'm going to look into it."

He left the library and went back to his work. But he remembered her strange request, "I'd like to get that message from you." That night, on the way to his house, he was thinking, "*Taka* what's *pshat*, what reason is there to tell this *frieih*, not *frum* girl about a *nusach*

in *birchas hamazon*?" but he said to himself, "Listen, if I gave her my word, I'm going to do it, maybe it's *chillul Hashem* otherwise. I'll find out."

## A WEDDING INVITATION

He started doing a little research and eventually found this *nusach*, this text, in one of the *siddurim*. He made a copy of the page, circled around the words וְלֹא נִכְשַׁל, and mailed it to her. Months went by. One day he got an invitation to his house. He was invited to a wedding. He looked at the invitation. He didn't know the boy. He didn't know the girl. He figured it must be a mistake. He turned to his wife and asked, "Do you know these people?" She looked at it. "I don't recognize any of the names. I don't know her." The husband was a little curious. The hall wasn't far from his house so when the day of the *chasunah* arrived, he decided to go and check it out.

He went to the *chasunah* and he gave the *mazal tov* wishes to the people there. He didn't recognize anybody at the place. He was about to turn around and leave the hall, when somebody came over to him and said, "Excuse me, is your name so and so?" He replied, "Yes, that's my name." The man said, "The *kallah* would like to talk to you." The *kallah* wanted to talk to him?! Okay. Even before he got a chance to look for her, the *kallah* was standing right there. He gave her a warm *mazal tov*, a warm *brachah*. The *kallah* asked, "Do you remember me?" He says, "No, sorry." She said, "I want to tell you something. I'm the lady who was the librarian in that library where you came to look at the *kisvei yad*, the manuscripts. Do you remember?" He still didn't remember. He had forgotten the story. She said, "You don't remember me? I asked you about the *nusach*, the text of *benching*, of וְלֹא נִכְשַׁל." He suddenly remembered, "Ah, yes, sure - I do remember you!" She said, "Well, I'm that librarian. Let me give you a little background. First, I want to thank you very much for what you did. I was born into a *frum* house and I went to *frum* schools, but over the time I turned my back on my home and on my education and I became entirely *chiloni* (irreligious). As a librarian, I met a certain intelligent, intellectual Arab. We became friends, and we became close. I became completely detached from Yiddishkeit and we decided to get married. But I couldn't get married and live in Eretz Yisrael. To live with an Arab in Eretz Yisrael wasn't going to work. He told me, 'Let's go to America. We'll get married and everything will be good.' I said, 'I'll think about it. Give me a couple of days.'

*Bediyuk* during one of those days when I was thinking about it, your copy of the *siddur* came to me, with וְלֹא נִכְשַׁל, 'we should not stumble.' It had a circle around it. You wrote a circle around וְלֹא נִכְשַׁל. I said, 'Hashem, I got Your message.' The fact that it said וְלֹא נִכְשַׁל, we shouldn't stumble, I was definitely about to take a step where I would be נִכְשַׁל. I said, 'Hashem, I hear You loud and clear.' I called the Arab up and told him, 'I'm sorry, but it's not going to work.' I said good-bye to him and hung up. I decided to do *teshuvah* and I began to come back. *Baruch Hashem*, I was introduced to my *chosson*, a *ba'al teshuvah* and this is the happiest day of my life."

## LOOK FOR MESSAGES

Now, the *yungerman* understood why Hashem made her hear his *nusach* of וְלֹא נִכְשַׁל. Hashem orchestrated that those words should bother her and that she should get the message to come back home. That's called *hashgachah pratis*. That's called not וְיִקְרָא. That's called וְיִקְרָא.

Rabosai, this is the basics of *emunah*. The more you think about it, the more you can become spiritually aroused and elevated. You can become excited. You can become *meslahev* in an amazing way. If a person keys into this *hislavus*, he then exists in a much more real way, separated from his mundane, *tevah*- and *mikrei*-driven world and he lives an entirely different existence. Things don't bother him as much. He looks for messages. He's getting messages and he listens carefully to them. If a person looks for messages, he gets those messages. If a person looks for *hashgachas Hashem*, Hashem shows it to him. People always ask me, "What's your secret? How come all these funny things happen to you?" I say, "They can happen to you, too. You know how? Look for Hashem. Every time you see something or you hear something or you're walking somewhere, ask yourself, "How can I notice Hashem?" "Hashem, I'm looking for You." Ask yourself that question and Hashem will reveal Himself to you.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The greatest impediment to *yiras shamayim* is the *middah* of arrogance, while the greatest positive *middah* that leads a person to an awareness of Hashem, is humility. Working on humility means understanding, that not only do all my gifts and talents come from Hashem to fulfill my divine mission in life, but that everything that happens to me on a daily basis - all the events and details that transpire around me - are orchestrated by Hashem to demonstrate His *hashgacha pratis*. This is the lesson of the small aleph in the word וְיִקְרָא that Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to impart on all of us. Drawing on the messages from the "free apartment" and the "librarian" stories, I will look at the events in my coming week - whether it's the people I will come in contact with, or situations that I will experience - to attempt to see the guiding Hand of Hashem and understand the underlying messages.