

Dear Chavraya,

One of the great torah of life books has always been for me, Dr. Seuss's "Horton Hears a Who." Horton is a most unusual elephant, deeply sensitive and concerned for all of God's creatures, no matter how small. That in fact is Horton's refrain and the message of the tale, "A person's a person, no matter how small." You may remember the story; Horton is walking in the jungle one day when he hears a voice crying out from a speck of dust. An entire town of "Whos" lives on that speck. Promising to protect his new little friends, Horton is then tormented by the other animals of the jungle. Cruel in their response to the one who is different, the other animals mock the hearing of voices and they vow to destroy the speck. Only when the very last voice is raised, that of a Who-child, smallest of the small, do the others hear and the speck is spared. "For every voice counts!" explained the mayor of Who-ville.

There is a time when every person, no matter how small, is called upon to raise her or his voice and to act in response to the need of the hour. At the outset of this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Vayikra*, God calls to Moshe, *Vayikra el Moshe*. The name of God doesn't even appear, simply the information that God called to Moshe. The last letter of the word *vayikra* is *aleph*. In the printed *chumash* and in the Torah scroll itself, that *aleph* is written very small. From that small *aleph*, the rabbis teach of Moshe's humility. Embarrassed while writing down God's word, because no one else is called so directly by God, Moshe refuses to give written expression to a special relationship with God. God tells Moshe to write, but still uncomfortable, Moshe insists on writing a small *aleph*. In a beautiful midrash, God says to Moshe, " 'How long are you going to humble yourself? For the times need you.' As it is written, 'and God called to Moshe.' "

In that little *aleph*, smallest of the small among the other letters in the way of its being written here, there is a message that Moshe wants to be sure is heard by all. Catching our attention, Moshe allows each of us to hear the voice that is directed to him. Through Moshe, God speaks to each one of us. Through that which is small, be it an *aleph* or a *Who*, God says to each of us, "The times need you." As a fragile speck of dust in the infinite universe, our world is in danger, and each of us is needed. And every voice counts!

Shabbat shalom,  
Rabbi Victor