

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

PARSHAS
BAMIDBAR

בְּשִׁיטְחָא

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The very first *passuk*¹ of *Parshas Bamidbar* states, “And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Sinai Desert...” Though true, it is difficult to understand why the Torah feels it necessary to tell us where Moshe was at the time. For anyone who has been reading the Torah’s narrative, we know that *Klal Yisrael* were currently stationed in the desert — what’s the point in telling me where Moshe was standing?

The *Medrash*² explains that there is a hidden lesson in this simple statement. The Torah is making the following point — where does Hashem ‘speak’ to someone? In the desert. In other words, to whom are the words of Torah drawn? What character trait is essential for Torah study? One must ‘make oneself like a desert’ — just like the desert is open to all visitors, has no qualms about who steps on it, and isn’t exacting regarding anything, so too a person should place his pride and ego aside. The more one is able to humble oneself, the more readily they become capable of understanding and connecting to Hashem’s Torah.

As humility is the essential character trait needed to connect to our all-important Torah, we should pursue humility with all of our might. Perhaps next time someone asks if we can share something, or accidentally breaks something of ours, we can think twice before we react. Maybe, instead of showing our friends the great mark that we received on our test, we can offer a friend help in studying.

We might think that a humble person is consigned to a life of ‘being stepped on.’ The truth is, a humble person has unusual inner strength, one that allows them to see life as it is, and not as they want it to be. One will not lose friends, to the contrary, it’s important to remember, though people may want to *be* the proud person, they’d prefer to be *with* the humble person.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Humility is not an easy trait to acquire, and very easy to lose. It is common to feel that our needs and wants come before anyone else, and that our thinking is correct, over anyone else.

That being said, there are ways to work towards being humble.

One idea is to let others talk! In other words, even if one knows he doesn’t agree with someone, at least he should let them say what they have to say without interruption. Surprisingly, by the time they are done, the other party might actually see their perspective!

Over time and enough experience, it can become a habit. And not only a habit, but instructive of recognizing that others certainly do have what to offer, and can enrich our lives, if we allow them to inform us.

In fact, we find that the *halacha* generally follows *Bais Hillel* over *Bais Shammai* because *Bais Hillel* always cited *Bais Shammai*’s opinion first. And they wouldn’t just cite it; they would work to understand it.¹ Only then would they explain their own position.

Torah favors the humble.

¹ Eruvin 13b, Rashi s.v. ושנין דבריהן

¹ Bamidbar 1:1

² Bamidbar Rabbah 1:7, Matnas Kehunah s.v. הפקר

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It is obvious that it is an absolute requirement to study works of Mussar every day, whether a little or a lot, and this obligation is greater than any other area of study - Reb Avraham Danzig,

Chayei Adam, 143

MEN OF BLESSING

In the spring of 2007 some *roshei yeshivah* from America went to Israel to give encouragement and support to the staff members and students of the Shuvu schools, which were founded to educate children of the former Soviet Union.

On a Friday morning, the *roshei yeshivah* went to the *Kosel*, where numerous people recognized them and immediately went to greet them.

Standing not far away off to the side, *davening* himself at the *Kosel*, was a recent *baal teshuvah*. When he finished *davening* he noticed a wide circle of people surrounding a few individuals. Curious, he went over and asked for an explanation.

He was told that a group of prominent American *roshei yeshivah* had come for a few days. "Would you like to get a *berachah* from one of them?" someone asked him.

"Sure," he replied, "but I don't know any of them."

"It's no problem," the gentleman said, "I will take you over to Rabbi Aaron Schechter. He is the *rosh yeshivah* of Yeshivas Chaim Berlin in New York and is a very great person."

The young man was thrilled at the opportunity. Rabbi Schechter realized immediately that this fellow was new to Torah observance. He greeted him warmly and spent a few moments with him inquiring about his journey to *teshuvah*. Rabbi Schechter then blessed him and wished him well. The young man walked away elated.

Wherever he went the rest of the day, the young man told people about his warm encounter with Rabbi Schechter. At one point, when recounting the story, someone asked him, "Did you get a *berachah* from Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky, the *rosh yeshiva* of the Yeshiva of Philadelphia, as well?"

When he answered that he did not even know who that was, a newspaper was brought out with a picture of the *roshei yeshiva*. "Here," his questioner said, pointing at the picture. "This is Rabbi Schechter, and next to him is Rabbi Kamenetsky."

The young man looked up in amazement. "Well, that's the man who took me over to Rabbi Schechter!"
There is greatness in humility.

Adapted from "In The Spirit of the Maggid," by Rabbi Paysach Krohn

DID YOU KNOW?

- Humility is defined as the middle path between arrogance and lowliness.¹
- Wherever you find Hashem's greatness, right beside you will find Hashem's humility.²
- Despite Moshe's fabulous intelligence, and wondrous ability to communicate directly with Hashem, the greatest praise given to *Moshe Rabbeinu* is in regards to his humility.³

1 *Rambam* on *Avos* 4:4 s.v. כבר בארנו

2 *Megillah* 31a

3 *Shnei Luchos Habris*, Gate of Letters, Letter ט