

Singer-Jordan Edition

Bamidbar

Perceptions • Sivan 2, 5784 • June 8, 2024 • Issue #2049

In memory of **Eliyahu ben Esther, HY"D**, killed by the Jordanians in the streets of *Yerushalayim*, the 25th of *Iyar*, 1948, the day after the rocket exploded near him, killing his dear friend and *chavruta* immediately, and the seven children of woman nearby.

The desert is an unforgiving place, unless God is leading you through it with great miracles. To most of the world, a desert is a symbol of death because little grows there and even less may survive. And this is exactly why the Jewish people were made to endure it for 40 years altogether, as an integral part of becoming a Torah nation.

The reason is simple. A desert is ownerless, a place that can be trampled by all. For this reason the desert is a symbol of humility, the key trait for accepting and living by Torah. So much so that we are told that the mountain on which Torah was given, *Har Sinai*, was chosen over other mountains because it was small and “humble.”

This is interesting, since we place such an emphasis on *Kavod HaTorah*, honoring the Torah. We go to great lengths and have many *balachos* to protect the honor of Torah. And yet, at the very time we were to receive Torah, God chose the lesser of the possible mountains on which to give it. It’s a powerful statement about humility.

The *Gemora* explains why. Torah flows down to the world from above, and like water, it can only flow from a higher level to a lower one. At least metaphorically. The physical world does not usually defy gravity. The spiritual world is unaffected by it, but the point is the point: you have to be humble to learn Torah.

Do you? The world is filled with people who lack humility but who learn Torah on a regular basis. Or do they? They seem to. Or do they? How can you know? By the effect it has on a person. To the extent that Torah learning makes the person spiritually better, that is the extent to which they have “learned” Torah.

Torah is not just another textbook that you open, read, and put down again. It is not only “just” the word of God. It is a stream of Divine light that flows to a person whether they are reading from an actual *Sefer Torah*, a *Chumasb*, a *Gemora*, or a *sefer* based upon it. The Source is God Himself, the medium is whatever a person learns, and the recipient is the person who can be a vessel for it.

But if you pour water into a full cup, the water will run off. If you pour anything into a container that is closed, nothing will enter it. You can just keep pouring but it will not change the end result, just make a bigger mess. The same thing is true about Torah as well. A person who lacks humility will deflect the *kedushah* of the Torah they learn to the outside world, feeding the *Klipos* and making evil stronger.

But there may be more to humility than meets the eye, which may be the lesson of the following unusual statement:

When Rebi Yehudah *HaNasi* died, humility and fear of sin ceased. Rav Yosef said to the *tanna*: Do not teach humility, for there is still one: me. (*Sotah* 49b)

What a seemingly very unhumble thing to say. Usually humble people are the last to say anything good about themselves, let alone that they are humble. If you heard someone say this about themselves, what would you conclude about them? It is the Torah that tells us about Moshe *Rabbeinu's* great humility, not Moshe himself.

But if you had asked Moshe who the humblest person in the world is, he would have told you that he was. But it would not have been self-praise at all, just a statement of fact. Humility does not mean you have to lie about your greatness, just that you realize its source, God Himself. Therefore, when you talk about it, it is as if you are referring to someone else, even though you know you are talking about yourself.

Which is very hard to do. It is very hard to talk positively about yourself and not feel some sense of pride inside, even if only a little. But to the extent that one feels pride is the extent to which they, as a vessel, are filled with something else other than Torah. That sense of pride is not lifeless like a desert, but alive like an inhabited city, which is crowded with other people and personalities.

That is fine, if being your own physical self rather than a conduit for the light of God is more important to you as your soul yearns to be. We think that giving up our pride to serve God takes away from our sense of self and therefore, our ability to enjoy life. After all, how exciting is a humble desert compared to a proud city?

Not very exciting at all. Until that is, God transforms the desert and makes it bloom beyond any level of life a man-made city could ever hope to achieve, in this world and the next one. Then all of a sudden, life and death seem to change places.

• • •

History is changing quickly. Prophecies are coming true. We need to know what to work on during these challenging times. Subscribe to Thirtysix.org Plus for **Strategy For the End of the Days** at www.thirtysix.org or write to thirtysixorgplus@thirtysix.org.
Book now available through Amazon and Thirtysix.org.