

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

True Humility



RABBI  
DOVID TZVI  
MEISSNER

The Torah describes Moshe *Rabbeinu* as the most humble person on the face of the Earth (*Bamidbar* 12:3), even more humble than Avraham *Avinu*, who proclaimed, "I am dust and ash" (*Bereishis* 18:27; see *Chullin* 89a).

Let's not fool ourselves. Moshe most definitely knew how great he was. The Torah itself describes him in the most glowing terms testifying that no other prophet has arisen like him, who spoke to Hashem "face to face." No other mortal ever reached those levels. It thus behooves us to explain more about his humility.

*Nesivos Shalom* makes the analogy to a barrel full of water which has a certain value so long as it's freestanding. Once the water is poured into a lake or ocean, it immediately loses all its value. As long as the water is contained by itself, it has its own significance, but once it connects with massive bodies of water, what significance can all the water in the barrel have compared to the ocean?!

All the more so, when a Jew connects himself with Hashem, he becomes *batul*, "nullified," to Him. This explains the great humility of Moshe; he made himself completely nullified in regards to Hashem, more nil than dust and ash which, although not worth much, have some existence.

Specifically, Moshe's greatness and closeness to Hashem allowed him to reach the pinnacle of humility. Imagine one who enters the king's chamber. He observes all the royalty, prestige, and opulence. He then sees the officers around the king filled with fear and trepidation, and all the honor accorded to him. He immediately feels that he and everything else is minimized and valueless compared to the king.

However, those who have never seen the king and his glory lack the palpable feeling and understanding of his greatness, and, likewise, won't feel nullified to him.

Rav Moshe Feinstein wrote that many people came to him for blessings, but he couldn't understand why they would come to him of all people. However, since in their eyes he was a great man, he didn't want to let them down, so he would give them a blessing. This was a genuine feeling of his. A great man explained that Rav Moshe clearly knew he was from the elite Torah leaders of his generation, whom everyone looked up to with awe and respect. However, Rav Moshe knew that the Torah knowledge and spiritual distance between him and other people was a drop in the bucket compared to the distance between him and Hashem. Living with the knowledge that he was like a candle held to the sunlight helped him gain true humility, despite his knowledge of his colossal achievements.

The more one connects himself with Hashem and recognizes his own stature, the less arrogant and, consequently, the more humble he will be. 🕍

THE RABBI WAS ASKED  
ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH  
RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Q) Why are all three *passukim* of *Bircas Kohanim* (the Priestly Blessing) addressed to the individual. The word *yevorech'cho*, for example, is a contraction of *yevorech osecha*, He should bless you, in the singular, to each individual separately. For plural it would be *yevorech eschem*. Why is the *bracha* given in the singular form?

A) One way to answer this question is based on an interesting idea from the Chasam Sofer who makes the following observation. After reading through all three *passukim*, one is still unsure exactly what they were blessed with. Rashi brings several different conflicting opinions regarding what each word of the *bracha* refers to (money, children, etc). Why couldn't the Torah be more clear?

Explains the Chasam Sofer, there is no way the Torah can come along and say, for example, "you should all be wealthy," since for one person this would be a blessing, when he gives *tzedaka* (charity) and uses his money wisely, while for another, the money can be squandered and lead to his downfall. Therefore, the Torah left the *bracha* vague and Hashem says "place My name on the Jewish people and I will bless them." That is, every person gets a tailor-made *bracha* that is customized to their needs and will benefit them.

However, one might still expect that at least the final part of the *bracha*, "let there be peace," which we would assume means peace between two

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## THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

people, should be in the plural form “*viyosem lachem shalom*.”

I saw something in the *sefer Kol Rena* that answers with a fundamental life lesson. Peace between people can only happen if the individuals are at peace with themselves. That means when a person is satisfied with his lot; when he is not envious of anyone else; when he accepts what Hashem sends his way, even when it is not so pleasant; when he never gets angry because he knows that it all comes from Hashem; when he is happy to keep the Torah do its *mitzvos* and help others; then he automatically is at peace with everyone, as well as with the world. Therefore, the meaning of the *bracha* “to give you (singular) peace” means to give you inner peace to lead a peaceful life, which translates into peace with all others in the world! 🌍

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to [parasha@cincykollel.org](mailto:parasha@cincykollel.org). Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

## A SHINING EXAMPLE

Yecheil was a boy full of life, so it was terribly hard to see him suffering from cancer with his strength taken from him. After a year of intensive treatment, the doctors declared that he was in remission and that he was cleared to resume normal life. Yecheil, though, had missed an entire year of school and had not interacted with other children for that long as well. His parents wondered how his transition would be. They started by sending him to camp in the summer, with the hope that at least he would get reacclimated to the social side of things before starting school. Their fears, at least on the social side, were totally put to rest, as Yecheil picked up right where he left off as a well-liked and fun boy. A highlight of camp every year was the trip to an amusement park, and when the camp was on their way, one of Yecheil's counselors asked him what he planned on doing at the park. “Ride the big roller coasters,” was his immediate answer. “Anything else?” “No.” And so it was. Yecheil did not go check out any

other attractions while there. He only did one thing – ride the roller coasters. On the bus back Yecheil's counselor had to ask, “Yecheil, there is nothing else that interests you at all?” “There is,” Yecheil admitted. “*Nu*, so why only the roller coasters?” “It's something that has meaning for me.” Suffice to say Yecheil's counselor was a bit taken aback. Meaning from an amusement park? “What do you mean, Yecheil?” “If you were in a car that started doing the same things you do on a roller coaster, would you be having a thrill or would you be terrified? Of course, we'd all be terrified, but on a roller coaster where you're strapped in and you're held to a track, your fear is turned into fun. My life this past year was a big roller coaster. There were scary drops, twist, and turns. I am afraid about what the coming year has in store for me as well, but I want to remind myself that Hashem has me buckled in. I want to remember I am on Hashem's roller coaster, not in a car out of control. That's why I rode the roller coasters over and over again.” 🌍

## THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

### FALSE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST RAMCHAL (PART I)

Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzzatto, commonly known by the acronym *Ramchal*, was one of the great Italian *kabbalists* of the 18<sup>th</sup> century whose numerous works, including the renowned *Mesilas Yesarim* (*The Path of the Just*) are treasured to this very day. During his short lifespan of just forty years, Ramchal suffered immensely from the accusations of rabbis and communal leaders across Europe. The nature of these accusations, which were of course proven to be false, and the rabbinic polemic which followed can be better understood if Ramchal's life is viewed through the lens of the era in which he lived.

Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzzatto was born in 1707 in the Jewish ghetto in Padua, Italy, to Jacob Vita and Diamante Luzzatto. The Jewish community of Padua, which was established as early as 1300, was confined to the ghetto walls since 1602 and would remain that way until 1797 when the French army arrived and liberated its Jews. The Jews in general were second class citizens and were required to pay heavy taxes each year to the government. In addition, the only field which the Jews of Padua were allowed to pursue was medicine, and many young Jewish students attended the University of Padua, which was founded in 1222.

Jacob Vita Luzzatto, a wealthy merchant, wanted to provide his son with an outstanding and all-encompassing Torah education, so he sent Ramchal to study under the legendary poet and scholar Rabbi Yitzchak Chayim Cohen Cantarini (1644-1723) and the renowned *talmudist*, *kabbalist*, and *rosh yeshiva* of the famed *Yeshiva* of Padua, Rabbi Yeshaya Bassan (c. 1673-1739). Ramchal also developed a close relationship with Rabbi Bassan's father-in-law, Rabbi Binyamin Cohen of Reggio who was, in turn, a student of the famed Italian *kabbalist* Rabbi Moshe Zacut. Both Rabbi Cohen and Rabbi Bassan would be Ramchal's primary defenders in the bitter polemic which was soon to erupt.

Ramchal, even as a young lad, had no interest in material pleasure and by the age of fourteen had mastered both the *nigleh* (revealed) and the *nistar* (hidden) parts of the Torah. By his late teens, Ramchal was held in extraordinary high esteem by all the rabbis of Padua, some of whom were thirty years his senior, including his own teacher, Rabbi Bassan, who testified that Ramchal, by the age of fourteen, had acquired all the knowledge which he had to offer his young student! At the age of seventeen, Ramchal completed *Leshon Limudim*, a work on literary technique, which was published three years later in 1727. At the age of nineteen, in 1726, Ramchal was ordained by the rabbinate of Padua. Around this time Ramchal also published a collection of plays including *Maaseh Shimshon* and *Migdal Oz*, as well as 150 poetic Psalms. 🌍