



HUMILITY, PREREQUISITE TO TORAH

Farbrenge – 19 Kislev, 5743-1982

The 7th of Adar is the Birthday and Yahrzeit of Moses, Moshe Rabeinu.

“Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and passed it on to Joshua.” The question is asked: Why the emphasis on Moshe, and why the emphasis on Sinai?

A summation of the answers given is: As a prerequisite to receiving Torah, one must be like Moshe.

How was Moshe unique? The verse says, “Moshe was humble before every person on earth.”

When you are about to rebuke another person, Torah tells you: Moshe was humble before every person on earth! The person that you are about to rebuke, —Moshe was humbled by him! This is a prerequisite to Torah.

How can one’s heart be opened to Torah? Only after, “My soul is as dust.” And not just as dust, but “as dust before all.”

When you see a Jew, and it appears to you that he has a certain shortcoming, or even if the shortcoming is clearly evident; you may say: “I must fulfill my obligation to ‘rebuke your fellow!’” —Never mind that The Code of Jewish Law states that this rebuke must be done in private, and if, after repeated attempts, the fellow does not improve, and if you are sure the failure is not in your style of rebuke —only then may you rebuke him publicly!

For some, however, the policy is: “I see someone possibly misbehaving and there is a need for rebuke, who is better qualified to rebuke than me!?” He doesn’t wait for the opportunity to admonish in private, he does it in public! And does so, “in the name of Torah.” As though Torah would, Heaven forbid, use such strong words about a group of Jews!

Where does such behavior derive from? When one wants to open his heart to G-d’s Torah, one first must “be as dust.” Moreover, one must be “as dust before all.”

This explains the emphasis that “Moshe received the Torah.” Moshe, said of himself, “Who am I?” —I am not important. And to whom did he say this? To the Jews he was about to rebuke! What was his precondition? “Who am I?” —I am nothing! And with that, he was able to rebuke them.

And even while he rebuked, “Moshe is truth.” He was not humble only on certain occasions or at certain times —Moses was truthful, and truth doesn’t change.



This also gives meaning to the Mishna's emphasis on the location. Where did G-d choose to give the Torah? At Mount Sinai.

Our sages say, why did Sinai merit that Torah be given on it? Because it was the lowest of all mountains. Someone who is not special —a "mountain" who is not a mountain but a valley is not commended for being "the lowest." Sinai, however was a mountain, it had greatness but "it was the lowest;" true humility.

And that is why Torah was given there.

When Torah is given, it is given with the "might of Torah." One who wants to study Torah properly, —wants to connect to G-d and His will—must know that G-d does not tolerate even the slightest egotism, so the Torah scholar is, so to speak, not even there. And then the Torah scholar is a "mountain" which is "the smallest of all mountains."

And it is not enough to feel humble in private, —but agrees when others consider him great. Rather, it must be evident in his behavior that he is a "mountain" who is smallest and is "dust to all." And then, as Sinai, Torah will be bestowed upon him.

This explains how Torah can expect one to regard himself as "dust to all," How could Moshe, in fact, be humble before all people, —knowing that he received the Torah at Sinai while "all people;" his students, Joshua, the elders, the Prophets and the Great Assembly, did not? The answer: Torah's true essence and true greatness is not its lofty existence, but the actual Mitzva and its fulfillment in this material world.

We can now comprehend Moshe's humility: When Moshe put on Tefillin, he would say, "What's so impressive?" For Moshe heard the commandment directly from G-d —with all the detailed laws—so of course Moshe put on Tefillin! However, when the common laborer, who toils just to bring home bread, but would not think of going out to bring home the food before putting on Tefillin, and he recites the blessing taking care to fulfill the Mitzva correctly; now that is Tefillin in all its glory!" So when the verse describes Moshe as humble before everyone, that is why he was humble!

