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A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

Parshat Vayishlach

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for a complete and speedy recovery



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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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Jacob offers an impassioned prayer to G-d to save him from the hands of his brother Esau. He doesn't come to G-d with a demand that He keep his promise to him. On the contrary, Jacob begins with a declaration - "I have become small!" He humbly asks G-d to save him and his family (Source 1).

B. Does The World Belong to the Young?.....7

The Talmud quotes a saying to the effect of "When we were young we received the respect due to elders, and now, when we are adults, we are considered like children." The Talmud finds a source for this in the Torah (Source 2). When the Jewish people were "young", G-d Himself went before them (Source 3), and when they grew up—after receiving the Torah—He sent an angel with them (Source 4). The Rebbe points out that there are scenarios where one has to be a "child" in order to receive "greatness." The Tzemach Tzedek explains that this is the meaning of the verse, "for when Israel was young, I loved him." Precisely because the Jewish people are "young" is why G-d loves them so much. Later, he cites a Midrash that illustrates this in detail (Source 5).

C. The Power of Humility.....11

Haughtiness pushes away the Divine presence (Source 6). When a person behaves with haughtiness, G-d cannot "dwell" together with him (a story about Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel from Apta addresses this point). By contrast, when a person behaves with humility, the divine presence rests upon him.

D. The Advantage of Being Small.....15

Greatness in Torah and mitzvot also brings with it self-importance. Smallness and lack of achievements also allow for self-nullification, and this is a tool for revealing the divine presence (Source 7). There are different degrees of self-nullification, Moses: Essential self-nullification, Abraham: Self-nullification like ashes - the category of the inanimate (domem), and King David: Self-nullification like a worm - the category of living creatures (chai). But even simple people can attain the virtue of self-nullification - and precisely because of their smallness and lowliness.

E. Humility and the Law.....19

Self-nullification, “My soul is like dust,” assists in Torah study - “Open my heart in your Torah.” Indeed, we saw this with regard to Beit Hillel, when a heavenly voice exclaimed that Beit Hillel merited that the halacha was established like them because of their humility and self-nullification (Source 8).

F. Humility in Prayer - Optional Section.....21

In the Amidah prayer, we speak directly to G-d, and we must therefore be in a state of complete self-nullification. For a “great” person, full of achievements, wisdom, etc, it is much harder to reach self-nullification. Such a person has to work very hard for this. It is much easier for a “small” (i.e. simple) person to reach a state of self-nullification.

Introduction

In this week’s Torah portion we read about the story of the reunion of the most famous pair of twins in the Torah - Jacob and Esau. Jacob prepares for the meeting in several ways. One of which is prayer.

The way he prayed teaches us a lesson for life.

השיעור לפרשת וישלח

משיחת י"ט כסלו, ה'תשט"ו
הנחה בלתי מוגה
תורת מנחם חלק י"ג עמ' 141

[לשמיעת השיחה \(0:45 ואילך\)](#)



A. Small Jacob

Summary of the story from last week's Torah portion:

In Parshat Vayeitzei we read about Jacob's hasty escape to Haran, due to his brother Esau's anger at the fact that Jacob "stole" the blessings that Esau wanted. Jacob marries in Haran, raises a beautiful family and accumulates a lot of wealth. After twenty-two years he decides to return home to his father Isaac. He sends spies (angels) to see if his brother is still angry with him. The spies inform him that, indeed, Esau has not forgotten what he had done to him, and he is actually marching towards him with an army of four hundred men to kill him.

Upon hearing the news, Jacob prepares for the worst in three ways: 1) He sends his brother Esau a nice gift—herds of all kinds of animals—with the hope of calming his anger. 2) If the gift does not appease his brother, he prepares his family to fight back. 3) After these preparations, he launches into an impassioned prayer to G-d.

Source 1 Genesis 32:10-12

Student's Jacob said, O G-d of my father Abraham and G-d
pg. 3 of my father Isaac, the L-rd, Who said to me, return to your land and to your birthplace, and I will do good to you. I have become small from all the kindnesses and from all the truth that You have rendered Your servant, for with my staff I crossed this Jordan river, and now I have become two camps. Now deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him, lest he come and strike me, and a mother with children.

Rashi

I have become small: My merits have diminished because of the kindnesses and the truth that You have rendered me. Therefore, I fear that I may have become sullied with sin since You issued me this promise, and these sins will cause me to be delivered into Esau's hands (Shabbat 32a).

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב, אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם
וְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק - ה' הָאֵלֵךְ אֵלַי
שׁוֹב לְאֶרֶץךָ וְלְמִוְלַדְתְּךָ וְאֵיטִיבָה
עִמָּךְ - קִטְנִיתִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל
הָאֱמָת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֵת עַבְדְּךָ!
כִּי בְמִקְלִי עִבְרָתִי אֵת הַיַּרְדֵּן הִזְהָה
וְעַתָּה הִיִּיתִי לְשָׁנִי מִחַנּוּת. הֲצִילֵנִי
נָא מִיַּד אָחִי, מִיַּד עֵשָׂו, כִּי יֵרָא
אֲנֹכִי אֹתוֹ, פֶּן יָבֹוא וְהִכָּנִי אִם עַל
בָּנָיִם.

רש"י

קִטְנִיתִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים.
נִתְמַעְטוּ זְכוּתֵי עַל יְדֵי
הַחֲסָדִים וְהָאֱמָת שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ
עִמָּי, לְכֵן אֲנִי יֵרָא, שְׂמָא
מְשֻׁהַבְטָחָתִי נִתְקַלְקַלְתִּי
בְּחַטָּא וְיִגְרַם לִי לְהִמָּסֵר בְּיַד
עֵשָׂו (שבת ל"ב):

This prayer of Jacob became a symbol of humility and modesty. He did not come to G-d with a demand that He fulfill his promise. He did not mention his rights and his observance of the mitzvot, by virtue of which he should be saved. On the contrary: he begins by exclaiming - "I have become small!" I am nothing. Only then, out of a sincere sense of submission and subservience, Jacob asks G-d to save him and his family.

This lesson will be devoted to learning about humility.

B. Does The World Belong to the Young?

Personal Escort Or A Representative

Source 2 Tractate Bava-Kama 92b (based on Steinsaltz edition)

Student's Rava said to Rabba bar Mari: From where is
pg. 4 the popular saying “when we were small we were considered to be men, and now that we are old we are considered children” derived? Rabba bar Mari said to him, “There is Scriptural support for this. Initially, it is written: ‘And the L-rd went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light’ (Exodus 13:21). G-d Himself guarded over the Jewish people. But at the end, after some time passed and it would be expected that the Jewish people would be more important, it is written: ‘Behold, I send an angel before you, to keep you on the way’ (Exodus 23:20), indicating that an angel was sent and not G-d himself.”

וְעוֹד אָמַר לוֹ רַבָּא לְרַבְהַ בְּרַי
מַרִי: מַנֵּינן דְּבַר זֶה שְׂאוּמְרִים
אֲנָשִׁים: כְּשֶׁהָיִינוּ קְטַנִּים
הָיִינוּ נְחֻשְׁבִים לְאֲנָשִׁים,
עַכְשָׁו כְּשֶׁאָנוּ גְדוּלִים אָנוּ
נְחֻשְׁבִים לְתִינוּקוֹת? אָמַר
לוֹ: יֵשׁ רְאִיָּה לְדָבָר, כִּי
מִתְחַלֵּה נְאֻמָּר: “וְהָ הָלַךְ
לְפָנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן
לְנַחֲתָם הַדֶּרֶךְ וְלַיְלָה בְּעַמּוּד
אֵשׁ לְהַאֲרִיר לָהֶם” (שְׁמוֹת
יג, כא), שֶׁהָ עֲצָמוּ הוּא הָיָה
הוֹלֵךְ לְשִׁמּוֹר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְלְבִסּוּף לְאַחַר שֶׁעָבַר זְמַן
וְהָיוּ צְרִיכִים לְהִיּוֹת חֲשׁוּבִים
יֹתֵר נְאֻמָּר: “הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי שֹׁלַח
מִלְאַךְ לְפָנֶיךָ לְשִׁמּוֹר בְּדֶרֶךְךָ”
(שְׁמוֹת כג, כ), מִשְׁמַע מִלְאַךְ
וְלֹא הָ בְּעֲצָמוֹ.

Rabba Bar Mari - An Amora in the third generation of the Amoraim. At first he lived in the Land of Israel, where he studied Torah from Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi and Rabbi Yochanan. Later, he moved to Babylonia and was one of Rava's teachers in Agadah.

Rava (circa 4038- 4112), one of the leaders of the fourth generation of Amoraim of Babylon and the head of the Pumbedita Yeshiva in Mechoza. He was a colleague of Abaye and his regular halachic sparring partner. The disputes between them are always resolved in Rava's favor, except in six cases.

The Talmud quotes a popular saying: “when we were small we were considered to be men, and now that we are old we are considered children.” In contemporary language, one can translate this to mean that the world belongs to the young.

We know that the Torah is the source of everything that exists in the world. Rava is saying that even the culture of giving greater respect to young people, also originates from the Torah.

Source 3 Exodus 13:17, 21-22

Student's It came to pass when Pharaoh let the people
pg. 4 go...The L-rd went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way, and

וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פְּרַעֲהוֹ אֶת
הָעָם... וַה' הָלַךְ לְפָנֵיהֶם
יוֹמָם בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן לְנַחֲתָם

at night in a pillar of fire to give them light, to travel day and night. He did not move away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire at night from before the people.

הַדֶּרֶךְ, וְלַיְלָה בְּעַמּוּד אֵשׁ לְהָאִיר
לָהֶם, לְלַכֵּת יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה. לֹא יִמִּישׁ
עַמּוּד הָעָנָן יוֹמָם, וְעַמּוּד הָאֵשׁ
לַיְלָה, לְפָנֵי הָעָם.

Rabba bar Mari compares the genesis of the nation of Israel to that of a human being. The Exodus from Egypt parallels the period of childhood. The people were “newborns,” they lacked skills and experience, and G-d Himself held their hand, and walked before them day and night to direct them and protect them.

Source 4 Exodus 23:20-21

Student's Behold, I am sending an angel before you to
pg. 5 guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Beware of him and obey him; do not rebel against him, for he will not forgive your transgression, for My Name is within him.

הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ מַלְאָךְ לְפָנֶיךָ
לְשָׁמְרֶךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וְלְהַבְיֵאֲךָ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר הִכְנַתִּי. הִשָּׁמֵר מִפְּנֵיו וּשְׁמַע
בְּקוֹלוֹ אֵל תִּמְרָ בּוֹ כִּי לֹא יִשְׂא
לְכַשְׁעֶכֶם כִּי שְׁמִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ.

After the Jewish people had already “grown up” and become wiser, following the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai and the acceptance of the Ten Commandments, G-d no longer accompanied them Himself, but rather, sent an angel to care for them.

This, says Rabba, is the source of the practice that gives greater respect to young people.

>> The Rebbe

Children Receive More Love

Student's There is a lesson here for us: Torah logic
pg. 5 allows for certain cases where the state of “children” is needed in order to be “adults.”

ענין זה מהווה הוראה - שיש מקום
בשכל התורה, שבמקרים מיוחדים
יש צורך במעמד ומצב של “זוטרי”
[תינוקות] כדי להיות “גברי”
[אנשים].

The Tzemach Tzedek explains that this is the meaning of the verse “because Israel was young, I [G-d] loved him.” In this verse, G-d is explaining the reason for His love of the Jewish people, that he loves them because they are “young,” as the saying goes, “when we were small, we were considered to be men.”

ומבאר הצמח צדק¹ שענין זה הוא על דרך מה שכתוב² “כי נער ישראל ואוהבהו”, היינו, שהקב”ה מבאר את הטעם על גודל אהבתו לבני ישראל, שזהו לפי ש”נער ישראל”, שהם בבחינת קטנות (“נער”), שזהו ענין “כד הוינן זוטרי - לגברי” [כשהיינו קטנים היינו נחשבים לאנשים].

The Rebbe quotes the Tzemach Tzedek, who brings the verse “because Israel was young, I [G-d] loved him.” He explains that specifically because the Jewish people are “young,” G-d loves them. This is like a parent that shows special love for their young child.

The Tzemach Tzedek then brings an interesting Midrash that illustrates this:

Source 5 Midrash Rabbah, Bamidbar 12:1

Student's Rabbi Azaria said in the name of Rabbi Yehuda
pg. 5
ben Simon, to what can this be compared? To a king that had a daughter, and he loved her very much. As long as she was young, he would talk with her in public, and whenever he would see her in the courtyard he would talk with her. Once she grew older . . . the king said: It is not honorable for my daughter that I should be talking with her in public. Rather, make her a private pavilion, and when I wish to talk with my daughter, I will do so in the private pavilion.

Student's So too, when G-d saw the Jewish people in
pg. 6
Egypt they were young, as the verse states: (Hosea 11:1) “For when Israel was young, I loved him, and from Egypt I called My son.” When He saw them at the sea, He spoke to them, as

אָמַר רַבִּי עֲזַרְיָה מִשׁוֹם רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן רַבִּי סִימוֹן, מִשָּׁל לְמָה הַדְּבָר דּוּמָה? לְמַלְךְ בֶּשֶׁר וְנָדָם שֶׁהָיָה לוֹ בַּת וְהָיָה אוֹהֶבָהּ יוֹתֵר מִדָּאִי, כָּל זְמַן שֶׁבָתוּ קִטְנָה הָיָה מְדַבֵּר עִמָּהּ בְּפִרְהֶסְיָא, רָאָה אוֹתָהּ בְּחֶצֶר הָיָה מְדַבֵּר עִמָּהּ, בְּיָנִין שֶׁהִגְדִּילָהּ... אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינִן זֶה כְּבוֹדָהּ שֶׁל בְּתִי שֶׁאֶהְיָה מְדַבֵּר עִמָּהּ בְּפִרְהֶסְיָא, אֲלֵא עֲשׂוּ לָהּ פֶּאֶפְלִיּוֹן, לְכַשְׂאֲנִי מִבְּקֵשׁ לְדַבֵּר עִם בְּתִי אֶהְיָה מְדַבֵּר עִמָּהּ מִן הַפֶּאֶפְלִיּוֹן וְלִפְנֵימִים.

כֵּן כְּשֶׁרָאָה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם הָיוּ נְעָרִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (הוֹשֵׁעַ יֵא, א): “כִּי נֶעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל נְאֻהְבָהּ, וּמִמִּצְרַיִם קָרָאתִי לְבְנִי.” רָאָה אוֹתָם עַל הַיָּם, הָיָה מְדַבֵּר עִמָּם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שְׁמוֹת יד, טו): “וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה מַה תִּצְעַק

(1) אוה"ת בשלח ע' שפב.
(2) הושע יא, א. וראה לקו"ש חכ"א ע' 20 ואילך. וש"נ.

the verse states: (Exodus 14:15) “The L-rd said to Moses, why do you cry out to Me?” When He saw them at Sinai, he spoke to them, as the verse states: (Deuteronomy 5:4) “Face to face, the L-rd spoke with you.”

But once they received the Torah and they became a full fledged nation, saying: (Exodus 24:7) “All that the L-rd spoke we will do and we will hear,” G-d said, it is not praiseworthy for my children that I should be speaking with them in public. Rather, make me a tabernacle, and when necessary I will speak with them from the tabernacle. Thus, the verse states: (Numbers 7:89) “When Moses would come into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him.”

אֲלֵי, רָאָה אוֹתָם בְּסִינֵי הָיָה מְדַבֵּר
עִמָּם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דברים ה, ד): “פְּנִימִים
בְּפְנִימִים דִּבֶּר ה' עִמָּכֶם.”

וְכִינּוּן שֶׁקִּבְּלוּ אֶת הַתּוֹרָה וְנִעְשׂוּ לוֹ
אִמָּה שְׁלֵמָה, אָמְרוּ (שמות כד, ז):
“כֹּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע,”
אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֵין שְׁבָחוֹן
שֶׁל בְּנֵי שְׂאֵהֶיָה מְדַבֵּר עִמָּהֶם
בְּפִרְהֶסְיָא, אֲלָא עֲשׂוּ לִי מִשְׁכָּן
וְקִשְׂאֲנֵי צְרִיךְ לְדַבֵּר עִמָּהֶם אֶהְיֶה
מְדַבֵּר עִמָּהֶם מִן הַמִּשְׁכָּן, הִנְדָּא הוּא
דְּכָתִיב [לְכֹן כְּתוּב] (במדבר ז, ז,
פֹּט): “וּבָבֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ וְגו'”

C. The Power of Humility

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 7 We will add clarity to this concept based on the teachings of Chassidus, which add clarity to everything. Most importantly, we will explain the practical lesson we can learn from this idea, for our Divine service of Torah and mitzvot.

ויש להוסיף ולבאר את הענין באופן של הבנה והשגה (שהרי בתורת החסידות בא כל ענין בהבנה והשגה), והעיקר - לבאר את ההוראה בפועל בעבודת האדם לקונו, על ידי קיום התורה והמצוות, כדלקמן.

Arrogance Pushes G-d Away

Student's pg. 7 The Talmud teaches that “Any person who has arrogance, G-d says: He and I cannot dwell together in the world.”

והענין בזה: איתא בגמרא³ “כל אדם שיש בו גסות הרוח אמר הקב”ה אין אני והוא יכולין לדור בעולם.”

Source 6 Tractate Sotah 5a

Student's pg. 7 Rav Chisda says—some say that Mar Ukva said this—“Any person who has arrogance, G-d says: He and I cannot dwell together in the world, as it is stated: ‘He who slanders his neighbor in secret, I cut him down; one whose eyes are raised up high and his heart is expansive, I cannot tolerate him [oto lo uchal]’” (Psalms 101:5). Do not read the verse as: “Oto lo uchal”; rather, read it as: Ito lo uchal, meaning, with him, I cannot bear to dwell.

אמר רב חסדא: כל אדם שיש בו גסות הרוח, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: אין אני והוא יכולין לדור יחד בעולם, שנאמר: “מלשני בסתר רעהו, אותו אצמית. גבה עינים ורחב לבב, אתו לא אוכל. עיני בנאמני ארץ, לשבת עמדי” (תהלים קא, ה-ו). אל תקרא “אותו” אלא “אתו לא אוכל”.

Rav Chisda - One of the greatest Amoraim of the second and third generation of Amoraim. He was known for his diligence and scholarship, and barely slept at night. He produced liquor for a living and became very wealthy, serving as an example of the concept of “Torah and wealth in one place.” Together with other scholars, Rav Chisda established the traveler’s prayer that is recited to this day. He merited to live an extremely long life.

Jewish sources strongly criticize arrogance. King David writes in Psalms that G-d says about an informer - “I will destroy him”, and about an arrogant person He says “I will not tolerate him.” The Talmud says that instead of reading it that “him” I cannot tolerate, it can be read that “with him” G-d cannot, so to speak, be in the same place.

>> The Rebbe

Empowerment For Physical Observance

Student's
pg. 8

Because such people feel so important in their own eyes, to the point of arrogance, they fail to fulfill the purpose of Creation - making a dwelling place for G-d in this world. Worse, even in the dwelling place that already exists they "push away G-d's presence," because "He and I cannot dwell together."

והיינו, שמצד זה שמציאותו תופסת מקום בעיני עצמו ועד לרגש של גאווה - שזהו היפך ענין הקטנות ("זוטרי") - הרי לא זו בלבד שאינו ממלא את הכוונה לעשות לו יתברך דירה, אלא עוד זאת, שאפילו בדירה שישנה כבר - הרי הוא כביכול "דוחק רגלי השכינה"⁴, כיון ש"אין אני והוא יכולין לדור".

The Rebbe highlights the severity of arrogance as a factor that impedes the spiritual function of a Jew. We were sent to this world in order to fashion a dwelling place for G-d. Naturally, a selfish and self-absorbed person cannot be focused on making this world a Divine place. Worse, the arrogant person "pushes away G-d's presence" from the part of the Divine dwelling that already exists. Meaning, not only does the arrogant person fail to give expression to G-d in the world, he even pushes G-d away from those places where His presence is felt.

A Story

Once, Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel traveled from Apta to stay in a certain city.

In his honor, two of the city's richest men each prepared a place where he could spend the night, and Rabbi Avraham was asked to choose where he wanted to stay. The two lodgings seemed equal to each other, and both were nice and spacious. There were rumors about one of the men that he had sinned in the marital sphere, but he had acknowledged his failure, and was a pleasant person, humble and modest. In contrast, the record of the second gentleman was spotless, but he was known as a haughty and arrogant person.

Rabbi Avraham chose to stay in the house of the first person - the humble sinner. When asked about it, he replied: "The Holy One, blessed be He, cannot be in the midst of a haughty man, because it is said of him, 'He and I cannot dwell together in the world.' And if G-d himself cannot dwell with Him, surely neither can I. The first man is indeed known as a sinner, but it is specifically said about sinners in the Torah that G-d 'dwells with them amidst their defilements' (Leviticus 16:16). And if G-d himself can dwell among sinners, so can I."

Humility Is The Key For G-d's Presence

Student's
pg. 8

As is the case with all matters of holiness, increasing holiness causes the negative forces to decline in power. In our case, the more we increase in humility the more G-d's presence will be revealed in our world, and it will become more of a dwelling place for G-d.

וכשם שבכל עניני קדושה, בהתגברות הקדושה מתמעט הלעומת זה - ועל דרך זה להיפך, שכדי למעט בענינים של לעומת זה, יש להרבות באור וחיות של קדושה - כן הוא גם בענין של היפך הישות - שככל שמתווסף בענין הענווה והשפלות, כך ניתוסף יותר בהשראת וגילוי השכינה, לעשות לו יתברך דירה בתחתונים.

There are things that are a general cure for everything. Like a "master key" that opens all doors, they influence all kinds of fields. For example - exercise. The doctor will tell you that exercise will help you in all aspects of your health, physically, mentally, etc., Proper nutrition is another example: no matter what you are sick with, in what field you work, or how much you weigh, eating healthy food will be good for you.

In our case as well, Chassidism teaches us that the trait of humility opens all doors for us. And on the flipside, the trait of arrogance impedes us in every area. Think about it personally: Who do you want to be friends with, an arrogant person or a humble person who does not always dominate the conversation, and considers other people's feelings? What type of spouse do people enjoy living with? What kind of people would we like to choose as our co-workers?

An arrogant person is unbearable to everyone around them. Their ego destroys their relationships with family, friends, and everyone they come into contact with. By contrast, a humble person is someone everyone would love to be around. Arrogance is also harmful to the person's own life. A haughty person feels that everything belongs to him and everyone owes him. When these expectations do not materialize, he feels angry and hurt, and then becomes jealous and starts to hate. He gets eaten up from the inside, being constantly left unsatisfied, because nothing is ever good enough for him.

A humble person, on the other hand, does not feel that anyone owes him anything, and therefore is not aggrieved if he is not properly respected. His self-worth is not built from what the environment around him provides, but rather, from his own mental resilience and a rich inner world.

A Story

One of the Chassidim of Tzemach Tzedek once complained to him that he was constantly being “stepped on in the synagogue.” The Tzemach Tzedek answered him: “Who told you to spread yourself across the entire synagogue, that wherever people step - it’s on you?!”

The Rebbe explains that haughtiness and humility also play an important role in our relationship with G-d. Even G-d himself cannot dwell in the area of a haughty person. On the other hand, G-d loves to listen and respond to a humble person.

D. The Advantage of Being Small

>> The Rebbe

Student's Based on this we can explain the saying
pg. 9 “when we were small we were considered men, and now that we are old we are considered children” as it pertains to our Divine service.

ועל פי זה יש לבאר את תוכן המאמר
”כד הוינן זוטרי לגברי, השתא דקשישנא
לדרדקי” [כשהיינו קטנים היינו נחשבים
לאנשים, עכשיו כשאנו גדולים אנו נחשבים
לתינוקות] - בעבודת ה’:

Accomplishment Causes Feelings of Importance

Student's “Now that we are old” refers to a person
pg. 9 considered old in Torah terms, a person steeped in holiness, wisdom, and Torah knowledge. Since his soul is vested in a body, it is unavoidable that his greatness will cause him to feel a degree of self-importance. Because of his greatness, he will find it difficult to negate his sense of self and fully feel “my soul is like dust to all.”

”כד . . קשישנא”, היינו, שהתורה מעידה
עליו שהוא ”זקן” בענינים של קדושה,
גדול בתורה ובחכמה - הרי מצד התלבשות
הנשמה בגוף ואחיזת הגוף, לא ימלט
שהגדלות בעניני קדושה לא תביא הוספה
בהרגש עצמו, ומצד גדלותו קשה לו לפעול
בעצמו תנועה של ביטול במציאות - שיהיה
אצלו ההרגש של ”נפשי כעפר לכל תהיה”⁵
בתכלית השלימות.

There is an inherent paradox in the human condition that affects our Divine service. As we acquire more wisdom and Torah knowledge, it is unavoidable that our feelings of self-importance should grow. Such a person finds it difficult to feel self-nullification in the presence of G-d.

A Lack Of Achievements Causes Humility

Student's On the other hand, “when we were small
pg. 9 we were considered to be men.” This refers to a person who is small in Torah knowledge, but possesses the quality of humility. Regarding such people the verse says “with the lofty and the holy ones I

מה שאין כן ”כד הוינן זוטרי, לגברי”
[כשהיינו קטנים היינו נחשבים לאנשים] -
שהן אמת שהיה במעמד ומצב של קטנות
בידיעת התורה, אבל לאידך, הייתה אצלו
מעלת השפלות, שעל זה נאמר “מרום

Student's dwell, and with the crushed and humble
pg. 10 in spirit.” G-d’s presence is revealed most strongly to those that are humble.

וקדוש אשכון ואת דכא ושפל רוח”, היינו,
ששם דווקא ישנו גילוי השכינה ביתר שאת
וביתר עוז.

Source 7 Isaiah 57:15

Student's For so said the High and Exalted One, Who
pg. 10 dwells to eternity, and His name is Holy, “With the lofty and the holy ones I dwell, and with the crushed and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the crushed.”

כִּי כֹה אָמַר רַם וְנֹשֵׂא שָׁכֵן עַד
וְקָדוֹשׁ שְׁמוֹ מְרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ אֲשֶׁכּוֹן
וְאֵת דְּכָא וְשָׁפֵל רוּחַ לְהַחְיֹת רוּחַ
שְׁפָלִים וְלְהַחְיֹת לֵב נִדְכָּאִים.

>> The Rebbe

Student's This is the implication in the words of
pg. 10 the Talmud “Initially it is written: And the L-rd went before them etc” - in which it is implied that “smallness” is key for the revelation of the divine presence.

וזזהו הרמז בדברי הגמרא “מעיקרא כתיב
והוי' הולך לפניהם גו” - שבזה מרומז
שענין הקטנות (“זוטרי”) הוא “כלי” לגילוי
השכינה.

Having learned the principle that the road to Divine revelation runs through self-nullification, the Rebbe goes on to delineate different levels of humility.

Levels of Humility

In greater detail:

ובפרטיות יותר:

Absolute Nothingness

There are multiple levels of humility. First, there is a state of complete nothingness, such as that achieved by Moses, who said “what are we?” Moses was capable of this level of humility, as the verse says “Moses was the most humble person on the face of the earth.”

בענין הביטול - יש סדר השתלשלות וחילוקי
דרגות: ישנו ביטול של העדר המציאות
לגמרי, כמו שנאמר⁷ “ונחנו מה”, שענין זה
היה יכול לפעול בעצמו משה רבינו - עליו
נאמר⁸ “והאיש משה עניו מאד מכל האדם
אשר על פני האדמה”.

Moses was the exemplar of ultimate humility. He said about himself “who are we?” because he genuinely felt himself to be nothing. Chassidus terms this level complete self-nullification.

Dust

Student's Then there is the level of humility of our
pg. 11 forefather Abraham, who said “I am dust and ashes.” This is not complete self-nullification like “what are we,” there is still a minimal level of self-consciousness.

וישנו גם את הביטול של אברהם אבינו, שאמר “ואנכי עפר ואפר”, שאין זה ביטול של העדר המציאות לגמרי כמו “ונחנו מה”, שהרי בכל זאת ישנה איזו מציאות.

Abaram represents a lower level of humility. This level isn't complete nothingness, as Abraham referred to himself as “dust and ashes.” Dust is indeed a lowly substance that people trample on, but it still is something.

Worm

Student's Then we have the level of humility of King
pg. 11 David. David was exceedingly humble, as he said, “I calmed and quieted my soul.” But David's humility was on the level of “I am a worm and not a man.” This is a level of great humility, not feeling like a person at all, but it isn't as great as the humility of “dust,” an inanimate object, and it is certainly inferior to the level of complete nothingness, “what are we.”

ועל דרך זה ישנו את הביטול של דוד, שהיה בתכלית הביטול באופן של “שויתי ודוממתי”¹⁰, אבל אף על פי כן היה זה באופן של “ואנכי תולעת ולא איש”¹¹, היינו, שעם היותו בתכלית השפלות עד שאינו בגדר המציאות של “איש”, מכל מקום, אינו בביטול כמו דומם, “עפר ואפר” (ובוודאי שאינו בהעדר המציאות לגמרי, “ונחנו מה”), אלא כמו דרגת החי - “ואנכי תולעת”.

King David compared himself to a worm. It is certainly no compliment to be considered like an invertebrate, but this is still a step above dust.

Student's All the rest of us, who aren't on the level
pg. 11 of the patriarchs, the “wheels of the Divine chariot” or King David, the fourth “wheel,” certainly don't reach the level of complete nothingness.

ועל אחת כמה וכמה בנוגע לאלה שאינם בדרגת ה”מרכבה” כמו האבות¹², ועל דרך זה דוד שהוא רגל הרביעי שבמרכבה¹³ - הרי בוודאי שאינם בתכלית הביטול כו'.

(12) ב”ר פמ”ד, ו. פפ”ב, ו.
(13) זהר ח”א רמות, ב. ח”ג רסב, ב. ועוד.

(9) וירא יח, כז.
(10) תהלים קלא, ב.
(11) שם כב, ז.

These are different representations of self-nullification, but the common denominator for all of them is that they concern the greatest men of our nation - the patriarchs, Moses, and David. Can simple people like us even aspire to such greatness of spirit?

Student's
pg. 11

Nevertheless, because "Israel was young," and we are small even in terms of Torah knowledge, this itself causes humility and a broken spirit, which in turn raises us to a high level, "we were considered to be men."

אמנם, מצד הענין של "נער ישראל", שנמצאים במעמד ומצב של קטנות, "זוטרי" - הרי אף שהקטנות היא גם בנוגע להבנה והשגה בתורה, מכל מקום, מצד השפלות ושבירת-הלב, מענין זה גופא, נעשה אצלו עילוי גדול, "לגברי".

Amazingly, the answer is yes. Precisely the realization that we're so far from the sublime holiness of our ancestors, which causes us to feel low and small, is what can create in us the sense of self-nullification that we so strive for.

E. The Humility and the Law

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 12 Moreover, the quality of humility also leads to an increase in Torah knowledge and understanding. This is what the verse states “my soul is like dust to all, open my heart to your Torah,” meaning that humility is a medium that enables proper Torah study.

We find this mentioned in Talmud as well, regarding the disputes between the schools of Hillel and Shammai. The Talmud asks, “Why did the school of Hillel merit that the law is established in accordance with their opinions?”

The reason the Talmud raises this question is because the school of Shammai seemingly had an advantage of the school of Hillel in Torah knowledge, because they were sharper analysts. The Talmud answers that the law follows the school of Hillel because they were “agreeable and forbearing . . . and would even mention the statements of the school of Shammai before their own.” Their forbearance, an attribute of humility and self-nullification, thus contributed to their Torah, leading to the law being established in accordance with them.

Source 8 Tractate Eruvin 13b

Student's pg. 12 Rabbi Abba said in the name of Shmuel: For three years Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagreed. These said: The halacha is in

ויש להוסיף, שהעילוי שנעשה על ידי ענין הקטנות, “זוטרי לגברי”, פועל גם עילוי יותר גדול בהבנה והשגה בתורה.

וההסברה בזה - על פי מה שכתוב¹⁴ “ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה פתח לבי בתורתך”, היינו, שענין השפלות הוא “כלי” שאחר כך יוכל להיות לימוד התורה כדבעי¹⁵.

וזהו שמצינו בגמרא¹⁶ בנוגע לבית שמאי ובית הלל: “מפני מה זכו בית הלל לקבוע הלכה כמותן” - כי לכאורה, מצד ההבנה והשגה שבתורה גדלה מעלת בית שמאי ש“מחדדי טפי” [מחודדים יותר]¹⁷ - “מפני שנחין ועלובין היו כו’ ולא עוד אלא שמקדימין דברי בית שמאי לדבריהן”, היינו, שמצד ענין העלובין - שהכוונה בזה לענין השפלות והעדר המציאות בתכלית - ניתוסף גם בתורה, שנקבעה “הלכה כמותן”.

אמר רבי אבא אמר שמואל: שלש שנים נחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל, הללו אומרים: הלכה כמותנו,

(16) עירובין יג, ב.
(17) יבמות יד, א.

(14) נוסח ברכת אלקי נצור כו' (ברכות יז, א).
(15) ראה לקו"ת במדבר טו, סע"ב ואילך. ובכ"מ.

accordance with our opinion, and these said:
The halacha is in accordance with our opinion.

A Divine Voice emerged and proclaimed:
These and those are the words of the living
G-d. However, the halacha is in accordance
with the opinion of Beit Hillel.

Since both these and those are the words of
the living G-d, why did Beit Hillel merit to
have the halacha established in accordance
with their opinion? Because they were
agreeable and forbearing, and they studied
their own rulings and those of Beit Shammai.
Moreover, they mentioned the statements of
Beit Shammai before their own.

וְהִלְלוּ אוֹמְרִים: הַלְכָה
כְּמוֹתֵינוּ.

יִצְאָה בַת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה:
אֵלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֹהֵי דְבָרֵי אֱלֹהִים
חַיִּים הֵו, וְהִלְכָה כְּבֵית
הַלֵּל.

וְכִי מֵאַחַר שֶׁאֵלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֹהֵי
דְבָרֵי אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים,
מִפְּנֵי מָה זָכוּ בֵּית הַלֵּל
לְקַבּוֹעַ הַלְכָה כְּמוֹתֵנוּ?
מִפְּנֵי שְׁנוּחֵינוּ וְעֲלוּבֵינוּ
הָיוּ, וְשׁוּגֵינוּ דְבָרֵינוּ
וְדְבָרֵי בֵּית שְׁמַאי, וְלֹא
עוֹד אֶלָּא שְׂמִמְדֵּימֵינוּ
דְבָרֵי בֵּית שְׁמַאי
לְדְבָרֵינוּ.

Beit Hillel refers to the disciples of Hillel the Elder and **Beit Shammai** refers to the disciples of Shammai the Elder. The competing schools were regular halachic debaters and were active in the Sanhedrin (Jewish high-court) during the period of the end of the Second Temple and its destruction. The two groups respected each others legitimacy, despite their halachic differences. In almost all disputes between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, Beit Shammai tends to lean to the strict side and Beit Hillel to the lenient side. In the tractate of Eduyot there is a list of unusual cases in which Beit Shammai is lenient and Beit Hillel is strict.

The Talmud is saying something fascinating: Beit Hillel merited to have the halacha established in accordance with their opinion, because they acted with humility.

In the end, humility improves the quality of learning Torah.

(Earlier we said that increasing in learning creates haughtiness, since a person filled with knowledge and wisdom naturally has a sense of self-importance. But if in the background of his study he always makes sure to remind himself that “I am not the main thing here; my own intellectual achievement is not the focus of my learning, but rather, it is the giver of the Torah - G-d Almighty”, then his study will be very successful).

This was the advantage of Beit Hillel over Beit Shammai. In terms of intellectual ability and analytical prowess Beit Shammai had an advantage, but Beit Hillel were superior to Beit Shammai in their humble approach to learning.

F. Humility in Prayer - Optional Section

>> The Rebbe

Student's Similarly with regard to prayer:
pg. 14

The amidah prayer must be done with a feeling of self-nullification, "like a servant before his master" who can't even move without permission. In addition, the amidah prayer begins with the request "my L-rd, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise," framing the prayer as following G-d's cues.

In the amidah prayer we speak to G-d directly, face to face, and our emotions have to be in accordance with this. We need to feel like we are having a conversation with our Creator, and feel true self-nullification. This is why we say "my L-rd, open my lips" before the prayer, expressing our feelings of extreme humility and trepidation as we approach G-d, asking for His help so that we can even open our mouths.

Student's In order to achieve the requisite level of
pg. 14 self-nullification lengthy meditation is required. This is especially true in our times, that merely contemplating the line "my L-rd, open my lips" etc. is not enough, and even the preceding shema and its blessings are insufficient. This is why the pesukei dezimra (verses of praise) were added later to the prayers, and it was later stated that meditation is required even before beginning to pray. Unfortunately we see that, despite all these preliminaries, it still sometimes happens that we fail to pray with the proper state of mind, "like a servant before his master."

ועל דרך זה בנוגע לענין התפלה:

תפלת שמונה-עשרה צריכה להיות בתכלית הביטול, "כעבדא קמי מריה" [כעבד לפני אדוני]¹⁸, שאינו יכול לזוז ממקומו כו', ועד כדי כך, שאפילו דיבור התפלה עצמו הוא באופן של "אדני-י שפתי תפתח ופי יגיד תהלתך"¹⁹, היינו, שהתפלה שלנו תהיה כעונה אחר הקורא כו'.

אמנם, כדי לפעול ביטול זה יש צורך בהתבוננות ארוכה, ובפרט בימינו אלה שלא מספיקה ההתבוננות באמירת הפסוק "אדני-י שפתי תפתח גו'" עצמו, ולא מספיקה גם ההכנה בקריאת שמע וברכות קריאת שמע, שלכן הוסיפו גם פסוקי דזמרה, ובדורות שלאחרי זה הוסיפו גם את כל הענינים שאומרים לפני פסוקי דזמרה, ואחר כך הוסיפו שיש צורך בהתבוננות עוד לפני אמירת "מה טובו"; ואף על פי כן רואים - והלוואי לא היה כן - שקורה לפעמים שכל זה אינו מועיל לעמוד בשמונה עשרה בביטול "כעבדא קמי מריה" [כעבד לפני אדוני]...

(19) תהלים נא, יז.

(18) שבת י"ד, רע"א. וראה רמב"ם הל' תפלה פ"ה ה"ד. שו"ע אדה"ז או"ח ס"ט צה.

The text of the prayers established by the Men of the Great Assembly is a structured system. People that go through it with concentration experience a gradual emotional process that leads them step by step to a state of complete self-nullification in the amidah prayer.

The process begins with the morning blessings that give thanks for the simple blessings G-d bestows on us every morning. We continue to pesukei dezimra in which we contemplate the wonders of G-d's creation, and then move on to the shema blessings that describe the excitement of the angels and their self-nullification in G-d's presence. This is designed to bring us to cognizance of G-d's greatness and prepare us for the required level of self-nullification when we will stand before G-d Himself, face to face, in the amidah prayer.

But sometimes we find that even after all of this we don't have the requisite feeling of self-nullification...

Student's But this is all for people that are "old." But
pg. 14 when we are "young," we are like what the
Mitteler Rebbe says about a poor person—in
Student's the physical or spiritual sense—that he needs
pg. 15 no deep meditation, because as soon as he
recalls his impoverished state, he breaks
down in bitter tears. Similarly in our case,
humility helps us achieve the necessary
self-nullification in G-d's presence that
prayer requires. Prayer, like torah study, is
a general mitzvah that is compared to the
spine that supports the entire body and
holds up all of its limbs.

אמנם, כל זה הוא כשמדובר אודות מי
שנמצא במעמד ומצב של "קשישנא"
[אנשים], מה שאין כן "כד הוי זוטרי"
[כשהיינו קטנים] - הרי זה על דרך שמעיד
אדמו"ר האמצעי²⁰ בנוגע ל"עני" (מצד
ענינים גשמיים, או מצד ענינים רוחניים),
שאינו צריך להתבוננות כו', כי, מיד כשנזכר
במעמדו ומצבו שהוא עני, אזי כלה יבכה
במר נפשו! ועל דרך זה בענייננו, שמצד
ענין השפלות, "זוטרי", נקל יותר לפעול
את הביטול כלפי שמיא שצריך להיות
בעבודת התפלה (כמו בלימוד התורה) -
שכוללת כל המצוות, בדוגמת חוט השדרה
שנותן חיות ומעמיד את כל האברים.

A great person, filled with wisdom and achievements, finds it harder to achieve the emotional state of self-nullification. He needs to work very hard and meditate deeply in order to reach this. By contrast, a "small" person who isn't so wise and doesn't have many achievements is more readily capable of achieving the required level of self-nullification.

Student's It is therefore clear that when a person feels
pg. 15 small, they should utilize this feeling for a
positive and holy purpose, to reach true
humility (as opposed to the false humility
that the Alter Rebbe condemns in Tanya).

ומזה מובן שכאשר ישנו מי שמרגיש את
עצמו כ"זוטרי" - הנה לכל הפחות ינצל
את זה לעניני קדושה, לפעול בעצמו את
ענין השפלות (לא "שפלות של שקר"
ששולל אדמו"ר הזקן בהקדמת התניא,

True humility is the conduit for incomparably greater success in Torah study, prayer, and mitzvah observance. This is the meaning of “when we were young, we were considered to be like men.”

אלא) באמיתיות - שזהו ה"כלי" שעל ידו יתוסף שלא בערך בלימוד התורה, בתפלה ובקיום המצוות, שזהו ענין "כד הוינן זוטרי - לגברי".

משיחת י"ט כסלו, ה'תשט"ו בלתי מוגה
תורת מנחם חלק י"ג עמ' 141

To summarize, in this lesson we learned about the great importance of humility for all of us.

Firstly, humility makes space for G-d's presence. Secondly, humility helps us reach greater achievements in Torah, like the school of Hillel who merited to have the law resolved in accordance with their opinion. Thirdly, humility makes it easier to achieve self-nullification during prayer, the backbone of daily Divine service.

As Chassidut explains elsewhere, humility is also the key to good spousal and interpersonal relationships, and brings overall improvement to our quality of life.

Insight Miserable, but right

A wise man once asked: Why is it that adults bear grudges but children don't?

How many times does it happen that a child says “I hate you Daddy, I will never speak to you again,” but not even ten minutes later the father gives his son ice-cream and they are the best of friends again. A child says to her mother, “Mommy, I hate you, I wish I has a different mother,” and five minutes later the mother gives her child a hug and she's the best mother in the world once again.

By contrast, when an adult tells someone that he won't talk to him anymore, fifteen years later he still won't say hello to him, he won't invite him to the grandchildren's bar mitzvah - all because they had some misunderstanding or dispute fifteen years earlier...

This begs the question: children are childish, and adults are mature. How can it be that adults bear a grudge for such unreasonable periods, while children forget immediately?

The answer is that children prefer being happy over being right, while adults prefer being right over being happy.

We prefer to be miserable, so long as our ego isn't hurt. I will be “right,” I won't speak to an uncle or brother-in-law for 25 years because of a fight. I won't pick up the phone to call him and say sorry, because I am “right.” I will be miserable, but I will be “right,” and my ego will be uncompromised...