



5783 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Beha'alotcha / פרשת בהעלתך

Humility and the Sun of Yerushalayim

This week's parsha describes Moshe as being "the humblest of all people on the face of the earth."¹ This statement of the Torah is juxtaposed to the unique level of prophecy that Moshe experienced and is clearly intended as the reason for Moshe's elevated status.

How did Moshe, who had such great attributes and achievements, become so humble? Many of us who do not have as stellar a record as Moshe nonetheless, feel prideful over our accomplishments. How did Moshe cultivate the important trait of humility?

The Kedushat Levi² explains that the key to Moshe's humility is encoded in the words "on the face of the earth" (*al penei ha-adamah*). Read literally, this phrase can mean "above the earth" and can refer to Moshe's attachment to things that are above the earth. Moshe did not compare himself to other humans. Rather, he always felt attached to God and developed a God-consciousness and therefore always felt the humility that one naturally feels in God's presence.

Rav Levi Yitzhak of Berditchav connects this idea with the verse in Shir HaShirim "I am black but comely, O daughters of Yerushalayim! Like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Shlomo .Do not look upon me [disdainfully] because I am swarthy, for the sun has gazed upon me."³ The Jewish people describe their "blackness," which in the context of the chapter refers to their low spiritual status. However, this sense of lowliness is not totally accurate. In truth, they are beautiful, but only *feel* ugly due to their humility.

What is the source of their humility? It is due to the fact that "the sun has gazed upon me." This means that the Jewish people do not compare themselves with other terrestrial beings, but, rather, are constantly focused on the bright sun above. Since they are attached to the higher realms

¹ Bamidbar 12:3.

² Kdushat Levi to Shir HaShirim.

³ Shir HaShirim 1:6-7. Translation adapted from Chabad.org.



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and even to God himself, they are constantly comparing themselves to God which causes them to comparatively feel uncomely and unworthy. Similarly, Moshe's humility was due to the fact that he was focused on entities that were "above the surface of the earth" as opposed to only comparing himself to other human beings.

Perhaps based on this idea of the Kedushat Levi, we can explain the reference in Shir HaShirim to the daughters of Yerushalayim. It can be difficult for those of us who are not Moshe to keep our gaze focused on God and not compare ourselves to other humans. One way of helping us in this regard could be to live in or visit Yerushalayim. This city naturally helps us train our eyes on the "sun" above as opposed to just material and terrestrial concerns. Therefore, being connected to the "daughters of Yerushalayim" can help us focus on God and acquire the ideal sense of humility before God.