

PARASHAT TZAV- SHABBAT HA-GADOL, 2015, 5775

Our parasha states (4:22) “*ASHER NASI YECHETA*” “When a ruler sins”. The Torah does not employ the phrase “if a ruler sins”, but rather “when a ruler sins”, because the Torah takes it for granted that a ruler will inevitably sin. It is a psychological principle that power corrupts. The Gemara tells us (Chagiga 5b) that G-d “sheds three tears” over the tragedies of human situations that people bring upon themselves. One of those tears is over people appointed to positions of leadership who misuse their authority. Thus, our parasha speaks of the Jewish king of Eretz Yisrael sinning and being able to offer a special kind of “korban chatat”[sin offering]. Our Sages point out (Horiyot 10b) that it is a good fortune and to the credit of that generation that the chosen leader is able to admit his mistakes. Recognizing and admitting that one has sinned is difficult for any intelligent person, and even more difficult for one in a position of leadership. If the chosen leader is able to admit his errors then that indicates that the people have chosen wisely.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the greatest Torah scholar of all times, precisely because of his great humility. The opening Mishnah in Pirkei Avot states, “*Moshe Kibeil Torah MiSinai*”. The simple translation is that Moshe received the Torah at the location of Mt. Sinai. There is another level of interpretation that Moshe was worthy of receiving the Torah because he was like Mt. Sinai, meaning, because of his humility. Just as Mt. Sinai was the smallest mountain in relation to other tall mountains in the region and was nevertheless chosen by G-d for the purpose of *Matan Torah*, so too was Moshe Rabbeinu. Anyone else, who is humble in spirit, stands a better chance of succeeding in transmitting and clarifying the truth of Torah to the next generation.

The last letter of the first word in Parashat VaYikra there is a small “aleph”, as opposed to the first letter of the word “Adam” at the beginning of Sefer Divrei HaYamim, where there is a large *aleph*. The small aleph is understood as representing the humility of Moshe Rabbeinu. The Baal HaTanya, cited in a shiur by Rav Hershel Schacter, explained that the extra large *aleph* of “Adam” represents the arrogance of Adam HaRishon. The cause of the original sin was the arrogant attitude of Adam and Chava by believing the words of the Snake, convincing them that by eating from the Etz HaDaat they would become as great as G-d! We see the destructive power of arrogance and the remedy power of humility. It is something we could and should always strive for.

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, when choosing a rabbinical judge for the city of Brisk to assist him in issuing halachic rulings in response to questions picked Rav Zelig over the other candidates. Because he alone was able to admit numerous times that he did not know the answer to several issues that Rav Chaim had posed to him. He explained his decision because we must all “train ourselves to say that we do not know”. This criterion is most important when selecting someone to a position of leadership.

Shabbat Shalom from Brooklyn, NY.
Hopefully next week it will come from Yerushalayim.

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