

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 213

**Bamidbar** | A Kingdom of Torah with Humility



# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

פרשת במדבר | אנגלית

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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*❧* **Parshat Bamidbar** *❧*

**Opening Words**

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein recounted the following tale:<sup>1</sup>

In one of the event halls located in Bnei Brak, a Bar Mitzvah celebration was held for one of the relatives of Rabbi Ben Tzion Pelman, the rabbi of the Nachlat Moshe neighborhood, and Rabbi Ben Tzion and his family were in attendance.

Toward the conclusion of the event, on the street outside the hall, an argument broke out between two neighbors who lived close by, regarding some matter in dispute.

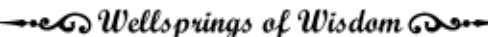
One claimed one thing, and the other claimed otherwise — and each insisted, forcefully, that his own view was correct and wanted his neighbor to accept it. Each one was a hundred-percent

convinced that he was right and that the other was the crook that was trying to extort him.

As a result, the quiet disagreement gradually grew louder until there were shouts that could be heard clearly by everyone passing by. Several windows in the nearby homes also opened when people heard the commotion.

At a certain point, one of the disputants picked up a cinder block that was lying nearby and threatened to throw it at the other.

A few well-intentioned individuals tried, gently, to calm down the men fighting, but all to no avail. There was simply no one to talk to — both combatants were too caught up in the heat of their dispute and paid no attention to the others.



1. 'Kovetz Vavei Ha'amudim VeChashukeihem' (issue no. 53, p. 130).

## Parshat Bamidbar - Opening Words

For curious onlookers passing by, it was quite a spectacle, and a small group of onlookers stood to the side, reveling and laughing at the strange and unusual sight.

Meanwhile, Rebbetzin Lefkowitz of blessed memory, the wife of the great Rabbi Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz, had left the hall, accompanied by her sister, Rebbetzin Hershler, and when they saw the fight, they approached the quarreling neighbors and rebuked them, remarking that how could Jews behave so shamefully and fight in such a manner.

But their words, too, fell on deaf ears — nothing interested the two except continuing their scuffle.

Inside the hall were a few of Rabbi Ben Tzion's young children, and when they heard from their friends about the "interesting" fight going on outside, they went out, as children do, to see what was happening.

Suddenly, Rabbi Ben Tzion himself came outside, and once he understood what was going

on, he seemed to be very alarmed — his face turned white as snow.

He did not say a word to anyone else; rather, he ran in a panic to his young children who stood by, grabbed them by their hands, and shouted loudly: "There's a fire, it's a raging fire! How can you stand by here?!"

He swiftly pulled his children away and continued to exclaim, "It's dangerous to stand here!" — and he distanced them from the area of the fight, much as one would drag his children from a burning house.

The onlookers on the side, upon hearing shouts of "Fire, danger!" and seeing the earnestness with which Rabbi Ben Tzion whisked his children away from the scene, they were suddenly filled with shame, and embarrassed that they were not concerned at all to stand right there in the middle of it all.

Each of them quietly hurried away from the spot.

And as for the quarrelers themselves: when they heard these cries and saw the shame on the faces of the bystanders who

had been standing near them, they realized how disgraceful their behavior was, and they too fell silent, and the argument subsided.

This story inspires many ideas, reflections, and thoughts, and connects with the subject we will discuss below.

## The 24 Holy Books

As is well known, our sacred Torah is divided into two parts: the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.

The Written Torah, the Tanach, is divided into three sections: The Torah (the Five Books of Moses), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings), and they altogether contain 24 books.<sup>2</sup>

Among the 11 books of Ketuvim, a group of books is referred to as the "Five Megillot," and is comprised of five works: Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs), Ruth, Eichah (Lamentations), Kohelet (Ecclesiastes), and Megillat Esther.

All of the Jews read Megillat Esther on Purim and Megillat Eichah on Tish'ah B'Av, and among Ashkenazic communities, it is also customary to read Shir HaShirim on Pesach, Ruth on Shavuot, and Kohelet on Sukkot.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, over the course of the year, the Five Megillot are publicly read in Jewish communities worldwide.

Two of these five Megillot were authored by King Solomon: Shir HaShirim and Kohelet.

We find that the Vilna Gaon wrote the following:<sup>4</sup>

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2. The five books of the Torah, eight of Nevi'im (the last of which is Trei Asar, which itself contains twelve small books), and eleven in Ketuvim.

3. To quote the Rema (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 490:9):

"It is customary to recite Shir HaShirim on the Shabbat that falls in the intermediate days of Pesach; and if Shabbat falls on the last day of the festival, it is said then. The same applies on Sukkot with Kohelet. And it is customary to recite the book of Ruth on Shavuot."

4. Commentary on Shir HaShirim (1:1, 1).

In the Book of Kings, it states:

“And Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all of the men of the East and all of the wisdom of Egypt.

He was wiser than all men — wiser than Eitan the Ezrachite, and Heman, and Kalkol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and he was renowned among all the nations around.

He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He spoke about the trees, from the cedar in Lebanon down to the hyssop that grows out of the wall, and he spoke about the animals, and the birds, and the creeping things, and the fish. People came from all nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon, sent by all the kings of the earth who had all heard of his wisdom” (I Kings 5:10–14).

The verse that describes Solomon’s lofty wisdom can be divided into three categories:

“He composed three thousand proverbs” — our Sages explain<sup>5</sup> that Solomon expounded on every single verse of the Torah with 3,000 parables, and on each parable, he gave 1,005 explanations.

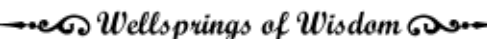
“His songs numbered a thousand and five” — meaning, Solomon composed 1,005 songs.

“He spoke about the trees, from the cedar in Lebanon” - Solomon’s wisdom encompassed knowledge of everything in the world.

All of this wisdom characterized his early years, but as he advanced further in wisdom, he attained an even higher, Divine wisdom, which he then set down in writing, and these are the three works he authored:

Mishlei (Proverbs): a book of wisdom far surpassing the level of the “three thousand proverbs.”

Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs): a divine song of yearning



Parshat Bamidbar - The Longing of King Solomon

to G-d that surpasses the “songs numbered a thousand and five.”<sup>6</sup>

Kohelet (Ecclesiastes): a book of depth and insight that surpasses the wisdom of “the

trees, from the cedar in Lebanon down to the hyssop.”

Thus, these books that we read on Pesach and Sukkot represent the pinnacle of King Solomon’s most brilliant wisdom.

**The Longing of King Solomon**

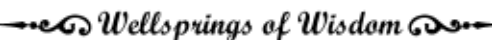
It is known that one of the mitzvot of the Torah is the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah (Red Heifer).

Anyone rendered impure through contact with a dead body is forbidden to enter the Holy Temple and is forbidden from eating sacrificial offerings, and if he is a Kohen, he may not eat terumah and tithes.

In order to become purified from such impurity, one had to undergo a purification process — by being sprinkled with the ash of the Red Heifer according to the halachic requirements — through which he would become pure once again.

The mitzvah of the Red Heifer is not a rational commandment but a rather a ‘chok’, a ‘decree’ that is beyond human comprehension, as it says: “This is the decree of the Torah which G-d has commanded, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel, and have them bring to you a perfect Red Heifer, one that has no blemish and upon which no yoke was laid” (Numbers 19:2).<sup>7</sup>

One of its astounding features — something we cannot logically understand — is its ability to achieve two opposite effects simultaneously: in the same act, it defiles those who are pure even while it purifies those who are impure.



6. Hence in the holy Zohar (Shir HaShirim 76b), it refers to the Song of Songs as ‘שיר תתרו’, i.e., Shir HaShirim is the

1,006<sup>th</sup> song (the numerical value of תתרו) and exalted above all of the prior songs.

7. Rashi comments on this verse:

**Parshat Bamidbar - The Reward of the Humble**

Yet even though it is classified as a 'chok', Moses was privileged to grasp the secret understanding of this mitzvah, as the Midrash states:<sup>8</sup>

Rabbi Yosi, the son of Rabbi Chanina, said: “The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, ‘To you I reveal the reason for the Red Heifer, but to everyone else it remains a decree.’”

King Solomon yearned all his life to comprehend this secret but did not merit to do so, as he said: “I said I would become wise, but

it is far from me” (Kohelet 7:23).

The Midrash comments:<sup>9</sup>

“Said King Solomon: I studied, examined, and delved into all of these matters. And the section of the Red Heifer, I exerted myself and investigated, and ‘I said I would become wise, but it is far from me.’”

We must understand: Why did Solomon, the wisest of all men, not merit this revelation? Why could he not grasp the secret of the Red Heifer as did Moses?

Before explaining this matter, let us preface.

**The Reward of the Humble**

At the end of Parshat Chukat, the Jewish people’s journey is described in a song that the Jewish people sang:

“From the wilderness to Mattanah, and from Mattanah to

Nachaliel, and from Nachaliel to Bamot. And from the valley plateaus...” (Bamidbar 21:18–20).

The Gemara (Eruvin 54a) quotes the teaching of Rava, the

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“This is the decree of the Torah’: because the Satan and the nations of the world taunt the people of Israel, saying, ‘What kind of command is this, and what reason is there for it?’

Therefore it is labeled a 'chok' — a decree before Me — and which you have no permission to question.”

**8.** Bamidbar Rabbah 19:6

**9.** Kohelet Rabbah 7:44.

Parshat Bamidbar - The Reward of the Humble

son of Rav Yosef bar Chama,  
who expounded as follows:

“From the wilderness to Mattanah” – If a person makes himself like a wilderness that everyone tramples upon, he will merit having the Torah given to him as a gift (מתנה).<sup>10</sup>

“And from Mattanah to Nachaliel” – Once the Torah was given to him as a gift, G-d holds him dear as an inheritance (נחלה as the term inheritance).

“And from Nachaliel to Bamot” – Once he is G-d’s inheritance, he ascends to greatness (במות being a raised platform).

“And from the valley plateaus” – If he becomes haughty (raised like a plateau), G-d, brings him low (like a valley); but if one repents, G-d, lifts him up again, as it is said: “Every valley shall be exalted” (Yeshayahu 40:4).

From the words of our Gemara it is understood that the reward for one who occupies himself with Torah in humility is greatness and exaltedness.

However, this requires further explanation: A person in whom the feeling of humility and lowliness of spirit truly shines lives within a content world that is illuminated and joyful. He should generally have no further interest at all in emerging from his inner world.

As such, what kind of reward is it for him to be elevated to greatness and to ‘have to’ lead others? It seems like a burden, not a reward.

Moreover:

When someone’s sense of humility is awakened within him, he feels that everyone else is better than he, in line with the well-known words of the

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10. As the Ohr HaChaim explains (Bamidbar 21:17) that “and from the wilderness, Mattanah” (מִן־הַבְּרָדָה מֵתְנָה) means: “They merited inheriting the Torah because they regarded themselves as a

desolate wilderness,” and as explained previously in the verse “they camped in the wilderness” (Shemot 19:2), that the Torah is acquired only through humility and lowliness.

**Parshat Bamidbar - The Difference Between a Jew and a Non-Jew**

Ramban in his famous letter  
("Iggeret HaRamban"):

“Let every person be greater than you in your eyes. If he is wise or wealthy, you must respect him. If he is poor, and you are wealthier or wiser than he, think in your heart that you are therefore more obligated by G-d’s commandments than

he is, and that if he sins, it is considered to be out of ignorance, while if you sin, it is willful.”

Since this is so, how can a humble person lead those whom he considers superior to himself?<sup>11</sup>

Before we answer this question, let us first introduce another concept.

**The Difference Between a Jew and a Non-Jew**

In Parshat Va’etchanan it says:

“For you are a holy people to G-d your G-d; G-d your L-rd has chosen you to be His treasured people from among all the nations on the face of the earth.”  
(Devarim 7:6)

The Torah then continues: “Not because you are more numerous than all of the other nations did G-d desire you and choose you, for you are the fewest

of all the nations” (Devarim 7:7).

The Gemara (Chullin 89a) explains:

“The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Israel: ‘I desire you because even at times when I bestow greatness upon you, you make yourselves small before Me.

I bestowed greatness to Avraham — yet he said of himself, “I am but dust and ashes” (Bereshit 18:27); I bestowed

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**11.** In the city of Konstantin lived a hidden tzaddik (righteous man), Rabbi Aharon, son of Rabbi Tzvi, who was the son of the Baal Shem Tov. Rabbi Aharon was entirely withdrawn from worldly affairs. Every

morning, he was the first to arrive in the Beit Midrash; every night, he was the last to leave. He hardly spoke to anyone, stood aside from the community, and focused solely on his service of the Creator.

**Parshat Bamidbar - The Difference Between a Jew and a Non-Jew**

The local chassidim, disciples of the Maggid of Mezeritch, financially supported Rabbi Aharon in secret so that he and his family would not starve. But at times they felt that his aloofness stemmed from pride — perhaps he distanced himself because of his illustrious lineage, being a grandson of the Baal Shem Tov. They attempted to engage him, urging him not to separate from others, but he showed no interest.

During one trip to Mezeritch, these chassidim spoke to the Maggid about Rabbi Aharon's conduct. The Maggid told them, "Through his pure devotion, his prayers will be accepted to bring salvation. Take care not to doubt him, for he is truly holy."

Stunned by the Maggid's words, the chassidim returned home determined to honor Rabbi Aharon, but he wanted no attention. Seeing that he could not avoid their reverence, he prayed that they forget the Maggid's praise. Soon enough, they forgot about it — to the extent that even the small support they had been providing him diminished until he and his family became utterly destitute.

Ultimately, and Rabbi Aharon's landlord evicted them, and they found shelter in a dilapidated hut outside the city. Time went on, at only at his son's circumcision, did the chassidim discover how dire his circumstances were and felt great remorse. They recalled again the Maggid's words,

and resolved to support him generously — but then forgot once more, exactly as Rabbi Aharon had prayed they would.

Time passed, and Rabbi Aharon's children could not attend cheder for lack of tuition. Breaking his lifelong restraint, Rabbi Aharon finally took to the stand in the Beit Midrash after morning prayers and made a plea for help — if only so his children could learn Torah.

The community responded with a sizable collection and once again pledged to provide him with ongoing support.

However, immediately afterward, Rabbi Aharon regretted having sought assistance from his fellow men. He fervently prayed to G-d to make them forget their pledge — and soon enough, they did.

Meanwhile, in the nearby city of Titov, a deadly plague broke out. In desperation, the local townspeople fasted, prayed, and searched for a means of salvation. A traveling scholar told them about the hidden tzaddik who lived not far from them in Konstantin, a grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, and who was living in grinding poverty.

The leaders of Titov decided: if Rabbi Aharon would come and pray on their behalf, perhaps G-d would save them from the plague.

They sent a delegation, but Rabbi Aharon firmly refused. The chassidim, remembering the Maggid's testimony, also joined in the efforts and tried to

greatness to Moses and Aaron — and they said, “What are we?” (Shemot 16:7); I bestowed greatness to David — he said, “But I am a worm and not a man” (Tehillim 22:7).

The gentile idol-worshippers, however, are not like this.

I bestowed greatness to Nimrod — he said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city’ (Bereshit 11:4); I bestowed greatness to Pharaoh —

he said, ‘Who is G-d?’ (Shemot 5:2); I bestowed greatness to Sancheriv — he said, ‘Who among all the g-ds of these lands?’ (Melachim II 18:35); I bestowed greatness to Nevuchadnetzar — he said, ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds’ (Yeshayahu 14:14); I bestowed greatness to Chiram, the king of Tyre — he said, ‘I sit in the seat of G-d, in the heart of the seas’ (Yechezkel 28:2).”

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convince him. When gentle persuasion failed, they resorted to force.

They readied a wagon and declared that either he would come with them willingly or they would take him bound in chains.

Reluctantly, Rabbi Aharon agreed, on the condition that the wagon remain harnessed and pointed toward Konstantin so that he could return immediately upon short notice.

Upon his arrival in Titov, the plague’s momentum miraculously halted. The fevered patients’ conditions improved, and no new cases appeared.

Convinced that Rabbi Aharon’s presence had brought the salvation, the townspeople flocked to him with generous gifts and donations. Yet, immediately, he slipped away, climbing onto the still-hitched

wagon and instructing the driver to return to Konstantin. The townspeople tried to stop him, but he called out, “Why do you seek me? The Al-mighty already showed you mercy before I even arrived.”

Undaunted, the Jews of Titov decided to travel en masse to Konstantin, bringing wagonloads of food in honor of Shabbat and hoping to persuade him to accept their support. Finding Rabbi Aharon and his family living in wretched conditions, they realized that only more advanced measures would succeed.

That Shabbat, they effectively “installed” him as their spiritual leader, insisting that he no longer remain hidden and impoverished. Afterward, they prevailed upon him to move to Titov, where he became known as the holy “Rabbi Aharon of Titov” (‘Besod Avadecha’, vol. 8, p. 275).

The Gemara here emphasizes that the verse “For you are the fewest of all the nations” is not referring to the Jewish people being fewer in number than other nations. Rather, it refers to their quality of humility: even when G-d bestows upon them greatness, they always submit and minimize themselves before Him; and it is this quality of humility that causes G-d to desire the Jewish People.

This stands in contrast to the nations of the world, among whom arrogance reigns — and this is a main reason for G-d spurning them.

The Gemara illustrates this distinction by citing examples of those who ruled over the world: three from the Jewish people — Avraham,<sup>12</sup> Moses, and David — and five from among the nations — Nimrod, Pharaoh, Sancheriv,

Nevuchadnetzar, and Chiram, the king of Tyre.

When we contemplate these examples, the difference becomes clear:

The kings of the nations were granted great power: governance, strength, wealth, and honor — almost without limit. This power then led to a “dizzying” sense of self-importance; they were ensnared by their own hubris, believing themselves to be omnipotent, attributing all they possessed to their own wisdom, talents, and industriousness. Consequently, they denied the existence of the Creator of the universe.

In contrast, with the leaders of Israel, the more greatness and sovereignty they received, the smaller and more insignificant they felt before the Creator of the World.

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**12. As** expounded in Bereshit Rabbah 43:5, in the verse “to the valley of Shaveh, that is, the valley of the king”

(Bereshit 14:17), that ‘all of the nations of the world gathered and crowned Avraham as king over them.’

## The Essence of the World to Come: Self-Negation

In the Book of Yeshayahu it says:

“Trust in G-d forever, for in Y-ah, G-d, is the Rock of the worlds” (Yeshayahu 26:4).

The Gemara (Menachot 29b) interprets “Y-ah, G-d, is the Rock of the worlds” to refer to the two worlds — the World to Come and this present world that G-d created.

Our present world was created with the letter Hei (ה) of the Divine Name “Y-ah” (יה-וה), while the World to Come was created with the letter Yud (י).

The Gemara continues by asking: “Why was the World to Come created with the tiniest letter-Yud?”

It answers: “Because the righteous people within it are very few.”

Then it asks: “And why is its ‘head’ bent over (why is the Yud shaped with a bent top)?”

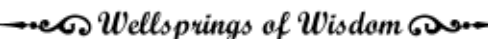
And it answers: “Because in the world to come, the righteous lower their heads before one another, since their deeds are each unique.”

When Rabbi Chaim Friedlander learned this passage, he raised the following difficulty:<sup>13</sup>

We are dealing with a teaching that defines the essence of the World to Come — a realm of reward.

Seemingly, the Gemara should therefore focus on the lofty levels of that future world of light, known as Olam Haba — about which is stated, “No eye has ever seen, but You, G-d, that which He will do for one who awaits Him” (Yeshayahu 64:3).

Why then does the Gemara highlight something that seems less central — that the righteous there are but ‘few’ and that each one lowers his head before his



13. ‘Siftei Chaim’ (Moadim I, p. 359).

fellow who is on a higher level?  
Is this really the essence of the  
World to Come?

We find that the Maharsha addresses this question, and in essence, he explains as follows:<sup>14</sup>

When the Gemara says, “the righteous in it are few,” it does not mean that few are the people who are righteous.

In fact, the letter Yud actually has a high numerical value relative to the other single-digit letters that compose G-d’s name. Rather, the meaning of this passage is that the righteous in the World to Come make themselves ‘few’ — they nullify themselves before G-d, cleaving to Him.

In the World to Come, one gains deeper and deeper

recognition of the Creator, who spoke and the world came into being — and this recognition continually leads the righteous to greater self-negation before G-d.<sup>15</sup>

For the righteous person, the more greatness he receives — and the more he grasps the true essence of greatness — the larger is his understanding of the Al-mighty’s perfection; hence, he humbles and nullifies himself toward G-d, and in turn, through that humility, he becomes ever closer to Him.

By contrast, when the wicked attain greatness, they become arrogant, and that arrogance distances them from G-d.

Thus, the more the righteous diminish their own ego, the

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14. Menachot 29b.

15. The Michtav M’Eliyahu explains  
(vol. 5, p. 380):

“A person who gains knowledge of the Creator’s greatness through proper and holy means, will then also perceive of his own smallness — and thus his attainment will be double as great.

But if he reaches this insight and understanding improperly, then upon seeing G-d’s greatness, he will also see his own greatness — ‘What a high understanding I have reached.’ — and so he is harmed doubly; not only is his internal relationship with his Creator not changed; moreover, he has turned a holy perception into impurity.”

**Parshat Bamidbar - The Reward of Humility: Complete Knowledge**

closer they draw to G-d; their self-minimization brings them to a deeper cleaving to G-d.

The words of the holy Zohar are familiar (Lech Lecha 168a): “Whoever is small is really great, and whoever is great is actually small.”

One who feels his own smallness — realizing human insignificance compared to the Al-mighty’s greatness — is truly “great.” But one who thinks himself great is in reality very small, for he does not comprehend what true greatness is.

It is with the capacity for this self-negation — developed here in this world — that a person ascends to the World to Come. In that future ultimate realm, one does not acquire new qualities; one goes there with the “vessels” of humility that he fashioned for himself in this world. It is through these “vessels” that he will continue to ascend,

ever more profoundly, eternally nullifying himself before G-d.

Compared to the boundless self-negation of the World of Truth (the World to Come), the righteous person’s humility here in this world is virtually nonexistent; the higher one rises, perceiving more genuine insights into the grandeur of G-d, the more one realizes how small he is, thereby drawing even closer to Him.

Hence, our Sages’ statement that “the righteous in it are few” (i.e., they make themselves few and small in their own perception) actually reveals the very essence of the World to Come: cleaving to G-d through self-effacement before Him.

Having established this, let us study the first king mentioned in the Gemara passage above: our forefather Avraham.

**The Reward of Humility: Complete Knowledge**

Avraham Avinu was the very first “Rebbe” the world had ever known — he was a beam of

divine light that was sent from the lofty heavens that began to illuminate the world. Like moths

to a flame, tens of thousands of people flocked to him, and with great love, he drew them close to the Creator.

The Midrash states<sup>16</sup> ‘Avraham would convert the men, while Sarah, his wife, would convert the women.’

After many decades of hard, strenuous work, Avraham Avinu merited greatness; at the age of ninety-nine, G-d added to his name the letter Hei. Until then, he was called “Avram,” and from that point and on, he was known as “Avraham”.

It was by the power of this letter Hei that Avraham attained kingship over the entire world, as it is said:

“No longer shall your name be called Avram, but your name shall be Avraham, for I have made you a father of a multitude of nations” (Bereshit 17:5).

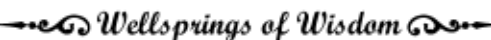
We must, however, understand the connection between the letter Hei and being “a father of a multitude of nations.”

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, of saintly memory, explains this as follows:<sup>17</sup>

A Jew is literally “a portion of G-d Above,” and therefore, he has the capacity to recognize his Creator, which he is a part of.

Still, each person’s individual attainment depends on his own efforts, and everyone perceives G-d according to his deeds, and being that everything depends on a person’s own labor, there is a limit to how far human beings can comprehend the Creator. In fact, there are five distinctions between human knowledge and G-d’s knowledge — distinctions that create a gap that no person can ever fully bridge.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, despite this limitation, a person can merit at the very least



16. Bereshit Rabbah 39:14.

17. Likutei Moharan I, 53.

18. The five ways in which His knowledge differs from ours:

**Parshat Bamidbar - The Reward of Humility: Complete Knowledge**

to a hint of the Al-mighty's knowledge.

When a person toils to attain Divine understanding, he uses the gift of intellect granted to him in order to reach whatever is possible within the confines of human perception. Once he has exhausted those confines, he touches the edge of the Al-mighty's knowledge — a realm that cannot be fully known or integrated by any human being.

That was the reward that G-d gave to Avraham and Sarah — He granted them some touch of His own knowledge. G-d's knowledge, so to speak, is alluded to by the letter Hei (which numerically hints to the above five distinctions between human understanding and that of the Creator).

Consequently, once he merited this knowledge, Avraham became worthy of royalty over the multitude of nations.

When a sense of humility is illuminated within a person, he becomes worthy of greatness, and greatness here means an expanded awareness of G-dliness.

When a sense of humility dwells within him, the recognition of G-d only deepens their sense of distance from the Creator, thereby intensifying his humility. And this cycle goes on and on.

Let us now return to the question we asked earlier: The Gemara states that the reward for one who studies Torah with humility and lowliness of spirit is greatness, But we wondered — what sort of “reward” is that for the humble and lowly?

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

“With His singular knowledge, He apprehends multiple concepts, yet there is no plurality in His knowledge; He knows things prior to their coming into being — even when as of yet do not have actual existence; His knowledge embraces things

that are infinite in scope; His knowledge never changes; it is not different before and after an event occurs; His knowledge does not ‘influence’ the possibility of the known event unfolding in any particular way” (Likutei Moharan *ibid.*).

## Greatness - the Dwelling of the Shechinah

The answer lies in the power that emanates from a person that merits for the Shechinah to rest upon him.<sup>19</sup>

By virtue of the Divine Presence, the four-letter Name of G-d rests upon him, which in turn enables him to attain the attribute and faculty of kingship.

The Tetragrammaton (the Name of G-d) indicates the unique Oneness of the Creator, Blessed be He, who possesses all powers, who brought all into being, and who governs every realm. G-d

created countless beings, each distinct in its nature and function, each with its own worldview and perspective, and notwithstanding all this, G-d's name includes and unifies them all — encompassing them and giving them life.

To quote the words of the Ramak (Rabbi Moses Cordovero) in Tomer Devorah, Chapter 1:

“Nothing is hidden from G-d's supervision, nor is there a single moment that a person is not nourished and sustained by the sublime power that flows to him.

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**19.** When Aharon and Miriam spoke about Moses, the Torah testifies:

“And the man Moses was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth” (Bamidbar 12:3).

Immediately afterward, G-d rebuked Aharon and Miriam, extolling Moses's level of prophecy:

“Not so with My servant Moses; in all My house he is faithful. I speak to him mouth to mouth, in a clear vision and not in riddles; and he beholds the image of G-d” (ibid. 12:7-8).

From here we learn that Moses's highest level of prophecy was granted by virtue of his humility.

Indeed, while the Gemara (Nedarim 38a) includes humility alongside other traits that bring about the Divine Presence — “The Holy One, Blessed be He, only rests His Shechinah on one who is strong, wealthy, wise, and humble” — the Torah specifically highlights Moses's humility in relation to his prophecy, which demonstrates that the link between humility and prophecy is even greater than that of the other desirable traits.

**Parshat Bamidbar - "And Wisdom — From Where Shall It Be Found?"**

And at every single moment, that flow of life and movement is renewed for every creature."

In other words, the essence of G-d's Name is unity — the integration of all things; when many varied elements truly unite, they become as one single entity.

The humble person — by cleaving to this Name — expands and elevates his own inner "vessels," and thus becomes capable of encompassing the existence of others, perceiving their virtues and uniqueness, and he thereby merits that G-d's name rests upon him.

To clarify further: The primary characteristic of G-d's name is unity and integration — encompassing everyone, including those who are "different".

It is only through this Name that all the diverse hues of existence may live and endure.

All of the myriads of creatures in the world are fused together by the power of this holy Name, and were it to be revealed in full glory in the world, there would be universal love, unity, and integration.

Hence, the more humble a person is, the more they merit greatness — the state of love, unity, and integration.

It follows that the greatness and royalty one receives do not necessarily pose a conflict with one's sense of humility.

Their inner being has merely expanded and grown to the degree that they can now live simultaneously and reconcile the two realms: humility and kingship.

**"And Wisdom — From Where Shall It Be Found?"**

What remains for us to understand is why King Solomon did not grasp the secret of the red heifer.

In the Book of Iyov, it says: "And wisdom — from where shall it be found?" (Iyov 28:12).

Parshat Bamidbar - “And Wisdom — From Where Shall It Be Found?”

The meaning is that to attain the wisdom of the Torah, one must be filled with a genuine feeling of humility and lowliness. There is simply no way for a person to merit true wisdom unless he first nullifies himself, and the verse states: “And wisdom — from where shall it be found?” The verse also can be read as “wisdom — from nothing shall it be found,” that is, wisdom can be found specifically in someone who considers themselves like “nothing,” who does not hold himself to be something special.

For this reason, the word for wisdom, “chochmah” (חכמה), can be read as ko’ach mah, the

“power of what?,” i.e., a capacity that appears only in one who embodies complete humility and submission, just as Moses said: “And what are we (וְנִהְיֶה מָה?)” (Shemot 16:8)<sup>20</sup>

The Ben Ish Chai, Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad writes<sup>21</sup> that the quality of humility is called ‘מה — what?’ And whoever fully acquires this status merits that the Divine Name of Elokim dwells upon him.

This is alluded to by the numerical value of Elokim, which has the numerical value as 86, and in much the same way, if you write out the word “mah” (מ"ם ה"א) — it also totals 86.

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

**20.** Similarly, our Sages teach (Ta’anit 7a):

Rabbi Chanina bar Idi said, “Why are the words of Torah likened to water, as it is written, ‘All who is thirsty, go to the water’ (Yeshayahu 55:1)?

To teach that just as water flows from a high place and settles in a low place, so too the words of Torah endure only in one whose mind is humble.”

Rabbi Oshaya added, “Why are the words of Torah compared to these

three beverages: water, wine, and milk, as (in the above verse regarding water, and as) it says (ibid.), ‘Go buy and eat, and go buy wine and milk without money and without a price’?

To tell you that just as these three beverages endure only in the plainest of vessels, so too do the words of Torah endure only in one whose mind is humble.”

**21.** ‘Otzrot Chaim’ (Yosher HaMiddot, p. 116).

**Parshat Bamidbar - "And Wisdom — From Where Shall It Be Found?"**

Hence, Moses is called "Ish haElokim," "the man of G-d" (Devarim 33:1), because he

attained the ultimate level of humility, which is hinted at by the word "mah" (מַה).<sup>22</sup>

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

22. In a talk delivered by my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel of blessed memory ('Imrei Noam,' Parshat Beha'alotcha – Discourse 11), he said the following:

The Rambam in his Commentary on the Mishnah says (Sanhedrin 10:1):

"Moses our teacher was the father of all the prophets who preceded him and who arose after him. They all are beneath him in rank; he was chosen from among all humankind and attained a greater knowledge of G-d than any person who has ever existed or will exist in the future. He rose from the level of humanity to an angelic state. There was no partition he did not tear and pass through, nothing physical hindered him; nor did he have any defect, large or small.

His imaginative powers and sensory faculties were nullified, as was his ability to be swayed by emotion, leaving him with the pure power of intellect alone. Regarding this it is stated that he spoke with G-d directly, without the mediation of angels."

The differing prophetic levels depend on the prophet's degree of bitul — that is, self-effacement and nullification before the Holy One, blessed be He. The more a prophet was nullified before G-d, the more Divine spirit

rested upon him. The reason why Moses merited the highest level of prophecy is that Moses had a degree of nullification and humility that no other human being in the world ever attained.

Even in comparison with the Patriarchs, Moses was more self-effaced before G-d.

It is true that Abraham our forefather said, "I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27); Isaac our father also, from the time of his Binding, G-d regarded his ashes as if they were piled upon the altar. Jacob our father said, "I am unworthy" (Genesis 32:11); and King David said, "I am a worm and not a man" (Psalms 22:7).

At the same time, dust, ashes, a small person, or a worm still have some degree of existence; they are not wholly and entirely null and void.

Moses, however, said, "For what are we?" (Exodus 16:7) — as if saying, "I am nothing, considered as naught, like air that has no tangible substance."

Thus, he was worthy to be the "father of all prophets."

Therefore our Sages have taught regarding Moses (Zohar, Ra'aya Meheimna – Pinchas 232a): "The Divine Presence spoke from Moses' throat." In other

**Parshat Bamidbar - “And Wisdom — From Where Shall It Be Found?”**

words, Moses was so utterly nullified before G-d that even his faculties of speech were nullified to the Divine word — and served like a mere conduit through which the Shechinah spoke.

Because the Shechinah spoke through Moses’ throat, he was able to speak before the entire nation of Israel — some six hundred thousand men, besides women and children — as we so often find in the Torah: “Speak to the Children of Israel,” and he did so without any microphone or amplification device and without even raising his voice.

Moses would speak calmly and softly, and everyone would hear him clearly.

Incidentally, a similar story is told about the Ben Ish Chai (Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad), who would deliver a Sabbath sermon before approximately ten thousand people, and although he spoke gently — all of the people heard his words perfectly.

After the Ben Ish Chai passed away, his son, Rabbi Yaakov, assumed his position. When he spoke on Shabbat in the synagogue, everyone cried out that they could not hear him well, even though Rabbi Yaakov raised his voice with all his might.

Rabbi Yaakov explained: “My father, may his memory be a blessing, was on such a level that the Shechinah spoke through his throat, such that even when he spoke softly, everyone was able to hear. But I did not merit to reach my father’s level.”

Just as a prophet’s greatness depends on his measure of self-effacement before G-d, so too the spiritual stature of the sages and righteous in every generation is measured by how nullified they are before the Holy One, blessed be He. The greater a sage’s humility and self-effacement, the more G-d grants him higher spiritual attainments.

A clear example appears in the Talmud (Eruvin 13b), which tells that after three years of dispute between the schools of Shammai and Hillel, a Heavenly voice called out and proclaimed: “These and both the words of the living G-d, but the halachah follows Beit Hillel,” for the reason that “they were pleasant and forbearing; they would teach both their own opinions and those of Beit Shammai — and not only that, but they would cite the words of Beit Shammai before their own.”

Although both schools of Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel were saintly Tannaim of unparalleled genius, when it came time to decide the halachah in heaven, they examined who was more humble and self-effacing, and upon finding that Beit Hillel surpassed in humility, the law was established in accordance with their view for all generations.

Our Sages also taught (Bava Batra 75a) that in heaven, there are righteous individuals who are “scorched” by the radiance of the canopies of other righteous individuals.

They see those others who have reached loftier levels. Indeed, there are myriads of spiritual ranks distinguishing one

## Parshat Bamidbar - “And Wisdom — From Where Shall It Be Found?”

righteous person from another, all according to each individual’s level of self-effacement and humility. One who attains greater self-nullification merits to sit closer to the Divine throne.

Of course, the only One who can truly measure the degree of self-effacement within each heart is G-d alone, who “sees into the heart” (Samuel I 16:7).

As Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said (Sukkah 45b): “I have seen those who rise to the higher realms, and they are few,” for only a few possess genuine, and absolute nullification before G-d.

Moreover, just as one must be self-effacing before G-d, one must also be so before other people.

In fact, a person’s level of bitul (self-nullification) is primarily measured by how he acts toward his fellow.

Thus, our Sages have taught (Reshit Chochmah, Sha’ar HaYir’ah, ch.12: Ma’asechet Chibbut HaKever, ch.4) that on the Day of Judgment a person will be asked: “Did you coronate your friend over you with graciousness?” — meaning, did you humble yourself before your friend and treat him like royalty over you?

If the requirement is to elevate one’s friend, how much more so is it forbidden to show him contempt or cause him pain or harm.

Sometimes two people study Torah together as Chavruta (study partners). One suggests one concept, and the

other responds with criticism, negating his friend’s explanation.

One must erase from their heart any trace of pride that leads them to belittle others, and likewise remove from one’s heart any impulse or desire to harm another person.

In this context, the Ben Ish Chai explains (Year 1, Acharei Mot 24 and Devarim 13), based on the teachings of the Arizal (Eitz Chaim, Sha’ar Partzufe Zu”n, ch. 2), that when one’s fingernails are long and extend beyond the flesh, severities of impurity clings to them, and therefore, one should hurry to trim them.

The allusion here is that protruding nails that can scratch another person, Heaven forbid, are thus considered extremely impure — because anyone who is capable of “scratching” others, of causing them pain, is as impure as can be. Therefore, even when you must rebuke your wife, your children, or anyone else, first “clip your nails” — that is, remove harsh, hurtful, humiliating speech.

Reprove when administered and is warranted, it must be dispensed gently and pleasantly, so as not to cause pain (Hayom Yom, 22 Elul).

This explains a central difference between “Musar” and “Chassidut”.

While Musar primarily focuses on a person’s own self-perfection and personal rectification, Chassidut centers on others’ well-being. It does not emphasize the individual’s own status, since from the Chassidic perspective, a person should

Parshat Bamidbar - “And Wisdom — From Where Shall It Be Found?”

We also find that Rabbi Yitzchak Tzvi Brennfeld wrote<sup>23</sup> that there are 12 levels of the concept of “mah,” and they correspond to the 12 times that the word “mah” appears in Shir HaShirim. But while Moses attained all of these twelve levels, and thus merited the revelation of the Red Heifer’s mystery, King Solomon did not reach perfection in those twelve levels and therefore did not merit to grasp the mystery of the Red Heifer.

To quote Rabbi Brennfeld:

“In Shir HaShirim, the word mah (מה) appears twelve times:

‘מה טובו’ (‘How fair’), ‘מה יפוי’ (‘How good’), ‘מה תגידו’ (‘What shall you tell’), ‘מה דודך’ (‘What is your beloved’), ‘מה דודך’ again, ‘מה תחזו’ (‘What will you see’), ‘מה יפוי’ again, ‘מה יפית’ (‘How fair you are’), ‘מה נעמת’ (‘How pleasant you are’), ‘מה תעירו’ (‘What will you arouse’), ‘מה תעוררו’ (‘What will you stir up’), ‘מה נעשה’ (‘What shall we do’).

This concept of mah is the foundation of the attribute of humility, as Moses declared: ‘וְנַחֲנוּ מָה’ - “What are we?” (Shemot 16:8).

And through this attribute which Moses embodied, he merited all that he attained. King

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

regard himself as essentially non-existent — like naught and nothing. Instead, one’s primary focus should be on helping others, and certainly never causing them sorrow, Heaven forbid.

According to Chassidic teaching, a person descends into this world not for his own sake, but in order to benefit someone else.

As the Baal Shem Tov taught (Hayom Yom, 5 Iyar):

“A soul may come into this world and live seventy or eighty years just to do

a favor for another Jew — physically and especially spiritually.”

Therefore, each of us must strive to help anyone who turns to us seeking assistance.

We must constantly ask ourselves: “What can I do for the community or for an individual in need? How can I look out for others and help them?”

For that is our entire purpose in this world.

23. ‘Meisharim Magid’ (introduction to Shir HaShirim).

## Parshat Bamidbar - Summary and Practical Conclusions

Solomon, however, was on the level of של־מה (as though “depleted of mah”), and his own humility was diminished (by his transgressing the Torah’s injunction not to amass

excessive silver, marry many wives, and have unnecessary horses).

Therefore, when Shlomo sought to be like Moses, he did not succeed.”

### Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. To grasp and attain the wisdom of the sacred Torah, one must experience a genuine feeling of humility and modest spirit. There is no possibility for a person to merit true wisdom unless he nullifies his own self, as it is stated, “And wisdom — from [nothing] shall it be found” (Iyov 28:12).

In other words, wisdom is found specifically in one who regards himself as naught, holding himself to be of no special account.

Wisdom — “Chochmah” (חכמה) can also be read as ko’ach mah — the power of “What?” — its power illuminates only in a person whose soul contains the quality of “mah,” namely, humility and self-nullification.

2. When a sense of humility shines within a person, he merits greatness. Greatness here means an expanded awareness of G-dliness.

Being that a sense of humility illuminates within him, recognition of G-dliness makes him ever more conscious of how distant he is from

the Creator — thereby further amplifying his feeling of humility.

3. The difference between the Jewish people and the nations of the world is this feeling of humility.

Even when G-d bestows greatness and blessing upon the Jewish people, they always minimize themselves before Him, and it is this humility that causes G-d to so greatly desire the Jewish people.

In contrast, the nations of the world are naturally filled with arrogance, and this is a main reason as to why G-d spurns them. They are certain they can do anything on their own accord, while all that they possess is merely the product of their own wisdom, talents, and industriousness — thus denying the reality of the Creator of the universe who enlivens them and gives them the ability to do all that they are able to.

In contrast, when the Jewish people receive greatness and kingship, they in fact feel smaller and more insignificant, sensing how much they pale before the Al-mighty.

**Parshat Bamidbar - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

4. One who attains a recognition of the greatness of G-d in the most proper and pure manner will thereby also perceive his own smallness — and thus his attainment will be doubly enhanced.

But if a person gains such insight through improper means, he may see and perceive G-d's greatness but also see himself as exalted and magnified, and he has thus caused double harm.

5. The more greatness and benefit that a righteous person receives, and the more he grasps greatness, the deeper his comprehension of G-d becomes.

Through the greatness he receives, his awareness of the Creator's perfection is magnified, prompting him to be more humble and nullify himself before G-d, thereby drawing closer to Him.

In contrast, when a wicked person receives greatness, he becomes haughty, which pushes him even further away from G-d.

6. A person alone creates the spiritual “vessels” necessary for self-nullification here in this world.

In the World to Come, one cannot acquire new character traits; rather, one goes to the next world with the same “vessels of self-nullification” that he has fashioned here, and it is through these that he can ascend further and further in nullifying himself before G-d.

7. By virtue of humility, a person merits that the Divine Presence (Shechinah) rests upon him. And through the dwelling of this Presence, the Name of G-d rests upon him.

This is because a humble person merits to be near and cling to G-d, and thereby his spiritual capacities expand and grow to the point that he can encompass others' existence, recognizing their virtues and uniqueness as well.

And at such a stage of humility and openness, one merits that the Name of G-d rests upon him.

**Shabbat Shalom !**





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City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	8:02 pm	9:10 pm	9:32 pm
Miami	7:49 pm	8:46 pm	9:20 pm
Los Angeles	7:41 pm	8:43 pm	9:12 pm
Montreal	8:16 pm	9:31 pm	9:47 pm
Toronto	8:33 pm	9:45 pm	10:04 pm
London	8:48 pm	10:18 pm	10:19 pm
Jerusalem	7:24 pm	8:15 pm	21:10 pm
Tel Aviv	7:21 pm	8:12 pm	21:07 pm
Haifa	7:22 pm	8:16 pm	21:11 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:19 pm	8:13 pm	21:07 pm

### Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*One must be sensitive to G-d; something that G-d dislikes, one must not do.*

*G-d despises falsehood; regardless of what you might lose as a result, abstain from lies and falsehoods. G-d despises evil talk of others; even if you must not speak at all, do not speak evil with an evil tongue.*

*There can be no justification to violate G-d's command. Nothing should be able to persuade you to do so; only one who is insensitive to G-d, will be able to trample over G-d and disregard His world, only to later ask for forgiveness.*

*This must not occur.*



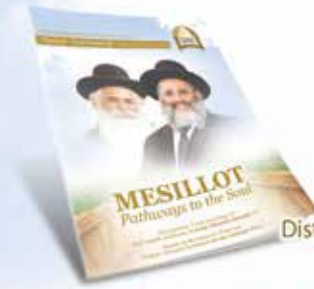
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