

Never again has there been in Yisrael a prophet like Moshe, whom Hashem had known face to face. (34:10)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* merited an outstanding epitaph: the greatest prophet; an individual who spoke *panim el panim*, face to face, with Hashem. Yet, despite these accolades, Moshe was considered the most humble person to walk the face of the earth. To maintain one's humility in the face of such incredible, singular praise is in and of itself an uncommon virtue. Surely, Moshe was acutely aware of his eminence. How did he maintain such humility?

Veritably, the question applies to so many of our *gedolim*, Torah giants. These were men of unusual brilliance, who achieved unprecedented heights in Torah achievement. Yet, they were all paragons of humility. How did the two virtues coincide with one another? **Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl**, saintly *Mashgiach* of Mir, Poland, was wont to say, "Woe is to the one who is unaware of his deficiencies, because then he does not know what he is still missing to achieve perfection. Who is worse off, however, is he who is unaware of his attributes. He may be compared to a soldier who is unaware of his weapons."

Our personal attributes are the weaponry and ammunition which we require for support in our battle with the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination. The strongest warrior needs a weapon, something with which to do battle. Otherwise, his brute strength is of little significance. Each and every one of us is blessed with unique, individual attributes which are intrinsic to our character and temperament. They enable us to navigate the challenge of life – both from within and from without. If we do not acknowledge our innate strengths, we are setting ourselves up for failure.

In support of this idea, *Horav Aharon Levi, Shlita*, quotes an exposition from **Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl**, on the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (49:21), *Adam bikar bal yalin, nimshal ka'beheimos nidmu*, "Man is glorious, but if he understands not, he is likened to the silenced animals". He analyzes this to a horse that is pulling a wagon. The driver "motivates" the horse's efforts by regularly hitting him with a whip. Surely, the horse does not enjoy being beaten over the head by a whip, but that is the life of a horse. The horse could easily put a quick end to its troubles by speeding up its gallop, so that when they approach a sharp curve, the wagon will overturn, and the horse will be rid of its master. Why does the horse not avail itself of this option, asks Rav Chaim. The answer is, because he is a horse and lacks the intelligence to figure out what to do.

The same idea applies to a person. *Adam bikar* – a person possesses tremendous abilities, strengths with which he can grow and develop immeasurably. There is no limit to what he can accomplish. The problem is that *v'lo yavin*, he understands not; he is either unaware of – or does not understand – his incredible capabilities. Thus, he is *nimshal ka'beheimos nidmu* – no different than the horse, who remains clueless and never achieves much in its life.

Awareness of one's unique abilities and attributes has nothing to do with *gaavah*, arrogance. On

the contrary, someone who ignores his outstanding faculties, his unusual aptitude and other particular personal features, acts obtusely. Humility, on the other hand, means, that despite one's overwhelming abilities, he realizes that: (a) he is nothing in comparison to those who preceded him; (b) he is the recipient of a gift from Hashem which comes with incredible responsibility; (c) he realizes his own insignificance in comparison with Hashem and with what is expected of him. The more one is aware of his personal greatness, the greater is his level of humility. Small people are not humble; they are small! Great people are humble, because they know who they are, and it does not go to their head.

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, was the model of humility. He was once walking in the Lower East side of New York, when someone was calling out to his friend, "Moshe, Moshe!" Rav Moshe turned around as if it were he that was being called. Who would have the audacity to call the *gadol hador*, preeminent leader of the generation, by his first name? Without a doubt, the man was calling a friend, but it never entered Rav Moshe's mind that he was not calling him.

When this very same exemplar of modesty was told by his cardiologist that, following a recent heart attack, he would need a pacemaker implanted in his chest, he asked for a day to render his decision. A day later, Rav Moshe returned with a positive response. When asked why he had required a day to make what was a necessary life and death decision, the *Rosh Yeshivah* explained, "We believe that any moment *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* will arrive and redeem us from our exile. With the advent of *Moshiach*, the *Sanhedrin*, ruling judicial branch of *Klal Yisrael*, will be reestablished. I am certain that I will be among the members of the *Sanhedrin* (only the most erudite scholars were worthy of a seat on this august body of legislators). According to *Chazal*, one who has a *mum*, physical blemish, is disqualified from serving on the *Sanhedrin*. I had to research the *halachah*. Had this procedure rendered me unqualified for a seat on the *Sanhedrin*, I would not have it. It is more important to me to be a member of the *Sanhedrin*". Wise people know that they are great, but it does not go to their head.

Dear Readers,

Twenty-five years ago, when I first put pen to paper with the intention of writing *divrei Torah* on the *parsha*, a quarter century milestone of achievement was an unrealistic dream. The incredible *siyata d'shmaya* which I was granted is overwhelming and defies verbal description. Mere words restrict my ability to express my true feelings of joy and gratitude. Therefore, in lieu of the right words, I begin with, *Modeh ani Lefanecha melech chai v'kayam*. Whatever I have achieved during these past years are a tribute to Hashem's beneficence. I pray that He grant me the ability to continue in this *avodas hakodesh* and that the fruits of my labor continue to be accepted by Jews of all stripes and persuasion, throughout the globe, for many years to come.

Since this is a letter of appreciation, it is only right to include all of those whose contribution to Peninim is invaluable – and without whom it could never have been possible. I do this annually, and, while it might appear redundant, I think gratitude is never superfluous, and appreciation

defines the humanness of a person. Indeed, gratitude is one value which cannot be overdone.

I have the privilege of once again thanking *Mrs. Sharon Weimer* and *Mrs. Tova Scheinerman* who prepare the manuscript on a weekly basis. It takes great patience – and, at times, creative ingenuity to read my illegible scrawl and understand what it is I am trying to say, especially when some of the words are missing. *Mrs. Marilyn Berger* continues to do an extraordinary job of editing the copy, often compelled to determine what it is that I wanted to say. She makes it presentable to the wider spectrum of the Jewish community. She subtly informs me when I veer too much, in either direction, away from the center. *Rabbi Malkiel Hefter* somehow finds the time in his busy schedule to see to it that the final copy is completed, printed, and distributed in a timely and orderly fashion.

Over the years, *Peninim* has developed its own network of distribution. While the constraints of space do not permit me to mention each and every person who sees to it that *Peninim* is distributed in his or her individual community, I will highlight a few. It was *Baruch Berger* of Brooklyn, New York, who came to me originally, requesting that he be able to distribute *Peninim* in his community. He later became ill, hindering his ability to continue his *avodas ha'kodesh*. As his illness progressed, Baruch was forced to halt his activities, but the *z'chus* is all his. It was just three years ago, shortly before *Rosh Hashanah*, when Baruch's pure *neshamah* returned to its rightful place *b'ginzei meromim*. May the *limud ha'Torah* which he initiated be an eternal *z'chus* for him.

Avi Hershkowitz of Queens, New York, and *Asher Groundland* of Detroit, Michigan, distribute in their respective communities. *Shema Yisrael* network provides the electronic edition for the worldwide distribution. A number of years ago, *Eliyahu Goldberg* of Yerushalayim, began a "World" edition. Through his efforts, *Peninim* has received extensive coverage in England, France, Switzerland, South Africa, Hong Kong, South America, and Australia. Eliyahu goes so far as to Anglicize the text to make it more readable in the United Kingdom. I finally had the pleasure this past summer of meeting him face to face. He is truly a good friend. *Rabbi Moshe Peleg*, Rav of Shaarei Zedek Medical Center, prints and distributes *Peninim* throughout the English speaking community in *Eretz Yisrael*. Kudos to *Meir Winter* of Monsey, New York, and *Moshe Davidovici* of Antwerp/ Yerushalayim, for including *Peninim* in their internet edition of *Divrei Torah*. May the *mitzvah* of *harbotzas Torah* serve as a *z'chus* for them to be blessed *b'chol mili d'meitav*.

My wife, Neny, has been supportive in many ways. Sharing with me all of the agonies and ecstasies of writing, her support and encouragement, as well as her constructive critiques, have played a vital role in *Peninim's* success. She avails me the peace of mind to write, regardless of the time or place – whether convenient or not. Her "early morning" editing has become a weekly ritual in our home. After carefully reading the manuscript, she offers her excellent suggestions, and, with her keen eye, she embellishes the punctuation. Indeed, she is literally the last word before my manuscript is printed. Without her, *Peninim*, like everything else in our lives, would be deficient. As a result, and for so many other considerations too numerous to mention, I offer her my heartfelt gratitude. I pray that we: are both blessed with good health; merit that Torah and *chesed* be the

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hallmarks of our home; and continue to derive much *Torah nachas* from our children and grandchildren, *kein yirbu*.