

Weekly Teaching

June 1, 2018

The Torah records that Moses was an exceptionally humble individual.

This is a rather amazing attribute for Moses to possess, considering all of his great successes as leader of the Jewish People.

One rabbinic definition of humility is that the individual truly knows their strengths and weaknesses, and always acts accordingly.

Another definition is that the “truly modest” can withstand any insult without holding onto a grievance against the one who made the insult.

A midrash asserts that whenever a person “muzzles their mouth” by not reacting to any insult and/or degradation, then that person will be provided the ultimate reward reserved for the truly righteous in the World to Come.

The rabbis understood that leadership positions can become a very “slippery slope.”

The Talmud records that the Chazal (Sages of Blessed Memory) stated that “woe is often brought upon those in positions of leadership.”

It certainly is true that the more private a person can stay, the more secure their privacy would stay in place.

But, if we are to imitate God’s attributes, then we too must be willing to step up and lead others when our own strengths can be utilized for successful endeavors.

The key is to routinely remind oneself that even the hint of arrogance can confuse one’s ability to appropriately evaluate any given situation.

Moses was not perfect. He made mistakes, some grievous.

But, he learned from his mistakes. He grew as both a human being and as a leader because of his mistakes.

As rabbi for my congregational family, I try to routinely remind myself that I am gifted the opportunity to provide service for others.

It’s a sacred responsibility; not always easy, but always worth it.

That which is true for communal leadership is even truer for our sacred relationships with our own family.

Love often requires contracting one’s own needs and desires so as to accommodate the needs and desires of the other person we love.

Love commands us to practice humility; most importantly not holding onto our grievances, even if they have validity.

Relationships become toxic when two or more people hold on to their anger and hurt, and allow it to fester to point where it can no longer be contained.

Leadership begins at home; and humility is the posture that is of primary importance so as to be successful in meaningful inter-personal relationships.

There are three rabbinic rules that can help us in our pursuit of humility:

1. Always give the benefit of doubt to the other.
2. Bend like the reed, and don't be firm like the cedar.
3. Honor the ones you love well beyond the honor you feel you receive.

May God give us the strength to pursue daily our desire to receive the reward of the righteous, both in this world and the World to Come.

Shabbat Shalom,

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