

Initiative: BE A LEADER WITH PURPOSE

Study Packet • Parshat Vayikra

"...In order that they hear, and in order that they learn and fear the Lord, your G-d, and they will observe all the words of this Torah"—Deuteronomy

Dear Leaders,

I'm gratified to continue receiving feedback about your gatherings, with new participants continually joining this initiative. Patricia writes: *Shalom sisters, I started a group over a year ago of single women and widows to share Shabbat dinner with. Some had never experienced Shabbat before they started. We started as three and have grown to about 12. I would love to start doing this with the ladies who come over.*

This week, we tackle the topic of confidence. Can a person be confident while still being humble? How can we balance a healthy and realistic self-image while striving to improve? If we feel good about ourselves, does that hamper our desire to keep growing?

To answer these questions, we take a lesson from this week's Torah portion. Moses was a spiritual giant but still remained the humblest person ever. In "How To Be Humble Without Being a Wimp?" we look at the qualities that would cause someone to be humble versus the ones that would cause someone to be assertive. We also share a story about a prince who thought he was a turkey and how a wise man helped him, and, finally, we also include a short letter from the Rebbe on this topic.

What are some of your limiting self-beliefs? Are these coming from humility or wrong self-perception?

We'd love to hear your thoughts!

Have a wonderful week and an amazing gathering,

Chana Weisberg,
Editor, TJW

CONFIDENCE & HUMILITY

By Tzvi Freeman

True confidence is best found in those who are truly humble.

Moses was the most humble of all men. Yet he had the confidence to stand before the mightiest dictator on earth and assert his demands. He had the confidence to stand before G-d and listen without losing his composure. He had the confidence, when necessary, even to argue with G-d.

Yet he considered himself to be truly nothing.

The confidence of Moses was not confidence in his own self. He had no self. He was but an agent of Above. Above there is infinite power.

Self-confidence is limited, at best. But if you trust in the One who has sent you to be here and do what you need to do—that confidence knows no bounds.



THE SECRET TO A HEALTHY SELF-IMAGE

By Chana Weisberg

Here's the experiment: Count how many times today you send yourself negative self-messages.

Any self-directed criticism telling you that you "are not enough" counts as one. For example, tally how many times you berate yourself for not acting like a better parent/friend/spouse (why did I YELL?), or for not being more creative at work (why didn't I come up with that idea?), or for not choosing healthier food selections (did I really need to devour that ENTIRE chocolate bar?).

I'll bet you'll come up with a pretty high number. As a result of all our criticism, many of us feel unworthy and inadequate, like we will never measure up.

On the other hand, I've met more than a few individuals who have acted like they were the greatest gift to mankind. They don't see any of their inadequacies, nor any need to work on themselves to be kinder, more understanding individuals.

So, how can we balance a healthy and realistic self-image while striving to improve? Is self-esteem really about feeling like we've "arrived" and are as good or as talented as it gets?

This week's Torah portion teaches us a lesson from Moses who reached the heights of spiritual communication and connection with G-d. Moses should have had a pretty healthy self-image, and yet, we don't see even a tinge of arrogance.

Moreover, the commentaries note that the small *aleph* in the word *Vayikrah*, beginning this Parshah, hints to us that Moses was the most humble person who ever walked this earth.

How? Did Moses not realize his exceptional qualities? Why didn't he feel even a touch of arrogance?

Because true humility—as well as a truly positive self-image—does not come from denying or aggrandizing our talents but rather from acknowledging that all our abilities are a present from G-d. If G-d had given another person the same qualities, he may have surpassed my own accomplishments. But G-d provides me with these channels to accomplish His will in the best manner possible—as only I can.

So, humility as well as a healthy sense of self (—and maybe even that chocolate bar!) can coincide. We just need to bring G-d into the picture.

Ideas for discussion:

1. How did Moses retain his humility despite his great accomplishments?
2. How can we value our achievements while still striving to grow?

The Importance of a Positive Self-image

From correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; translated by Eli Touger

This is an excerpt of a letter was written to a Rabbi whose identity remains unknown.

Greetings and blessings,

In response to your letter from the seventh day [of Chanukah]:

Certainly you will be able to find four positive activities [to perform] ... and this will require only minor effort.

Despondency is certainly unnecessary. On several occasions, I heard from my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe *shlita*, that just as a person must not err with regard to his own

shortcomings, so too, he must know his own positive qualities.

Experience shows that often minimizing one's own self-worth is one of the tricks of the evil inclination to weaken [one's resolve] or cause a disturbance [and prevent one] from carrying out a positive activity, as each person certainly knows...

With the blessing
"Immediately





HOW TO BE HUMBLE WITHOUT BEING A WIMP

By Tzvi Freeman

Question:

Should I be humble or should I be assertive? These are both supposedly good things to be, but one precludes the other, doesn't it?

Answer:

1. There are many reasons for being humble. Here are some of the common ones:
2. You think you're kind of ugly and stupid.
3. You perceive that people like you better when you are humble.
4. It's just your nature to be humble and keep your mouth shut.
5. You keep on falling on your face, so what's there to be proud of?

You didn't sleep well last night, so you're kind of depressed.

There are also many reasons for being assertive:

1. You think you're real handsome and smart.
2. You perceive that people listen to you and do what you want when you assert yourself.
3. It's just the way you are.
4. Nobody but you knows how to do things right.
5. You didn't sleep well last night, so you're in a barking mood.

Looks like humility and guts are not compatible bedfellows. So that's not going to work. Is there an alternative?

There must be. Moses, the Torah tells us, was the "most humble of all men upon the face of the earth." Yet he had the spunk to stand up to Pharaoh and even argue with G-d Himself. King David sang, "I am a worm and not a man." He meant it from the bottom of his heart, but you should have seen him swing that sword on the battlefield. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanus was known for his humility—he would never say a word of Torah that he did not hear from his teacher—yet he was in constant altercation with his colleagues and stood his ground to the end. The same with Rabbi Akiva, who was so humble he sat in a class

of small children at the age of forty—and yet stood in fearless rebellion against the awesome Roman Empire.

So how did these guys manage to swing two opposite attitudes at once?

Turns out there's an alternative form of humility. A humility that has nothing to do with self-deprecation, sheepish nature or even insomnia. It also turns out that the same humility comes with a sense of power—but not the sense of power that comes out of ego, pushiness or indigestion. Quite the opposite.

It's the sense of, "Yes I know who I am, what I can do and what I can't. But I stand in the presence of something much larger than my little self, so much larger that there isn't any room left for any vestige of my own ego. Something before which a thousand universes are less than dust and from which all things extend. Something which is infinite, transcendent and yet pervades all things."

Sensing the presence of the Infinite is kind of humbling, just like, say, standing before some incredible genius, superhero type you really admire. Only that this is Infinite. That's big. Very big.

Sensing the Infinite is also very empowering. Because you can't sense the Infinite without becoming absorbed within it. And filled with infinite power, yourself.

There, in that space, humility and guts don't struggle with one another. There, all your faculties are united as one to fly high above any challenge, smash through the most impervious obstacle, take on the entire world without flinching. And yet, all of you is but a transparent window for the Infinite Light to shine into the world.

Like Moses, like King David, like Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva. Transparent heroes.

Ideas for discussion:

1. What is true humility?
2. How is humility not being self-deprecating?
3. How can a person be humble and not be a wimp? Share an example from your life.

THE TURKEY PRINCE

Who Are You?

By Yossy Gordon

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov related the following parable:

There was once a prince who lived with his father and mother, the king and queen, in a splendid fashion. He received the finest education and upbringing.

To his parents' chagrin, one day the prince went through an identity crisis and came to the conclusion that he was really a turkey and not a human being.

Initially, the king and queen thought he was kidding. However, after he stopped joining them at the royal table and instead, moved under the table and sat there naked and pecking at crumbs, they knew that serious trouble was afoot.

Needless to say, the prince's strange behavior caused indescribable angst for his loving parents, and intense embarrassment for the royal family at large. The king was ready to spare no expense for the person who could cure his son. The finest doctors and psychiatrists of the land

came and tried to cure the prince, all to no avail.

The king was at a loss until a gentle-looking wise man came to the palace. "I hereby offer to cure the prince free of charge," declared the man. "My only condition is that no one interferes with anything I do."



Intrigued and desperate, the king and queen readily agreed.

The following day, the prince had company under the table. It was the wise man. "What are you doing here?" asked the turkey prince.

"Why are you here?" countered the man.

"I am a turkey," responded the prince emphatically.

"Well, I am also a turkey," the man replied. With that, he began to gobble like a turkey and peck at the crumbs on the floor. The prince was convinced. A few days passed in this fashion.

One morning, the wise man signaled to the king to bring him a shirt. He said to the prince, "I don't see any reason a turkey can't wear a shirt." The prince thought about it and agreed, and soon the two of them were wearing shirts.

Soon the wise man asked to be brought a pair of pants. He said to the prince, "Is it forbidden for turkeys to wear pants? Certainly not!" The prince thought it over and agreed, and soon the two of them were wearing pants.

So the process continued. Shortly thereafter, the wise man convinced the turkey prince that it was not forbidden for turkeys to eat human food, which was surely tastier. Then came sitting at the table and enjoying human conversation. Within a short time, the turkey prince, although still maintaining that he was a turkey, began conducting himself exactly like a regular person.

Fortunately, most of us don't suffer from turkey complexes. But here's a question we can all ask of ourselves: Am I limiting my potential because of my self-perception?

Ideas for discussion:

1. What did you learn from this story?
2. How can we help another person who has limited beliefs about themselves?
3. How can we change our own limiting self-perceptions?